

## THE V.A.D.

The Stationery Office published on June 9th the report of Mr. Walter Elliot's committee on the proposal of the Army Council to merge the Voluntary Aid Detachments serving in military hospitals with the Auxiliary Territorial Service. Sir James Grigg told the House of Commons on June 8th that he accepted the report; the unanimous signatories include high officers of the Red Cross and the Order of St. John. The controversy, which has so greatly disturbed the minds of V.A.D. nurses for more than a year, may therefore be regarded as closed.

### A PRECIS OF THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE V.A.D. COMMITTEE SET UP BY THE ARMY COUNCIL.

In May, 1942, the Army Council proposed to merge the V.A.D.s into the A.T.S.

This proposal met with strong objections from the B.R.C.S., the Order of St. John, and the Council of County Territorial Associations. The Society and the Order jointly advanced an alternative Scheme for consideration by the Army Council, but at the same time they made it clear that their real desire was for the maintenance of the *status quo*, with certain modifications, if necessary, to meet specific difficulties. As it was not found possible to reach a satisfactory compromise it was agreed that the problem should be examined by a Committee under an independent chairman. This Committee was set up under the Chairmanship of Colonel the Rt. Hon. Walter Elliot, M.C., M.P., and consisted of members nominated by the B.R.C.S. and the Order of St. John, the three Service Departments, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labour and National Service, and the Council of Territorial Associations. Mrs. Stocks was added as an independent member. The terms of reference were "to consider the scope and method of employment of mobile V.A.D.s by and their relationship to the Services."

#### Findings and Recommendations of the Committee.

The Committee, in considering the problem, was influenced by the expansion of the A.T.S. and the conscription of women for national service, and regarded it as anomalous that V.A.D.s should enjoy privileges other than those inseparable from the efficient performance of their work, not enjoyed by comparable groups of the Women's Auxiliary Services or by members of the R.A.M.C. for whom they may be substituted.

The Committee recommended that:—

- (1) V.A.D. personnel be subject to Military Law in the same manner as members of the A.T.S. and be enrolled into the Women's Forces.
- (2) New V.A.D. recruits in possession of First Aid and Home Nursing Certificates or other civil qualifications recognised in Army Regulations be graded as Class III and be subject to the same trade tests and time rules for advancement as R.A.M.C. other ranks or medical auxiliaries of the A.T.S. A Class III V.A.D. member with previous experience of nursing, who has shown a special aptitude, may be advanced to Class II at any time, subject to passing the appropriate trade test and having been recommended by the Matron.
- (3) Nursing Members, Grade I, now in military employment to become Class I, subject to their passing or having passed the Army Trade Test for nursing

orderly Class I. When opportunities for acquiring the requisite standard of knowledge have been lacking they will be given a reasonable period for study and instruction before being required to enter for the Trade Test.

Nursing Members, Grade II, now in military employment to be classified as Nursing Members, Class II, provided they are certified by the O.C. Hospital as fit for such classification.

It is suggested that the period for advancement from Class II to Class I might be shortened on the recommendation of the O.C. Hospital.

- (4) Nursing Members to receive the same opportunities for trade and technical training as are provided for the R.A.M.C., except that when facilities are limited, R.A.M.C. personnel shall have preference.
- (5) Non Nursing Members to continue as at present, their advancement to be subject to the appropriate trade tests.
- (6) The range of duties for Nursing Members to be identical with that assigned to the trade of A.T.S. Nursing Orderly.
- (7) V.A.D. status to be that of comparable A.T.S. personnel involving their recognition as "other ranks" enjoying similar conditions in regard to accommodation, allowances and class of travel as would be appropriate to A.T.S. "other ranks" employed on similar duties.
- (8) The Office of V.A.D. Commandant to be abolished and V.A.D. Welfare left to O.C. units who are responsible for their accommodation, messing and pay and to the Q.A.I.M.N.S. officers who are responsible for their instruction and technical supervision.
- (9) Selected V.A.D. Members to be eligible for advancement to the rank of Warrant Officer to assist the Matron in supervising domestic matters affecting V.A.D. Members.

The establishment of these ranks to be on the numerical scale now authorised for Commandants and Assistant Commandants.

(The representatives of the B.R.C.S., Order of St. John and C.C.T.A. were reluctant to assent to this and the preceding clause because they regarded it as important that the welfare of the V.A.D.s should be the concern of particular officers having an intimate knowledge of individual members of the Unit. The value of the Commandants in this respect has been proved. The assent of the representatives of the three Bodies named has been given in response to explanations furnished by D.G.A.M.S. concerning the more detailed application and implications of the above arrangements, and they and the other members of the Committee are now satisfied that the welfare of the V.A.D.s will be safeguarded).

- (10) When a V.A.D. Member may desire to be considered for a commission in the A.T.S. Military Service as a V.A.D. Member will count as service in the ranks, and selected members will be eligible for direct commissions in the A.T.S.

Finally, the Committee recommend that assimilation of the V.A.D.s into the A.T.S. be not proceeded with, and that the V.A.D.s retain their separate identity under their existing name, also that their distinctive uniform be retained.

The Committee propose that for the V.A.D. Council be substituted to a Standing Committee representing the Voluntary Bodies and the C.C.T.A.

Complaints to be dealt with in a manner similar to that laid down by A.T.S. Regulations.

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