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LOCAL WARDENS IN AIR RAIDS

300,000 VOLUNTEERS TO BE RECRUITED

ADVICE TO AUTHORITIES

The Home Office Air Raid Precautions Department yesterday issued a memorandum, which has been sent to local authorities, on the work to be performed by air raid wardens in the event of air attack (Stationery Office, price 2d.). About 300,000 volunteers are to be recruited as wardens, whose duty will be to advise residents in certain areas on the officially recommended precautions against air raids, to assist in the distribution of civilian respirators, and, in the event of war, to play an active part in helping the public both during and after an air raid.

The memorandum explains the need for the organization of citizen volunteers to perform a number of important duties in time of air attack, and thereby to augment and relieve the normal resources of the civil authorities for safeguarding the general public. The work which these volunteers will be asked to undertake will, in normal circumstances, be close to their homes or places of work, and will constitute an essential part of the air raid precautions services of local authorities.

WOMEN NOT EXCLUDED

It is proposed that every borough and district, singly or in cooperation with its neighbours, and in consultation with the police, should arrange for the organization and training of a body of air raid wardens. It may be possible in forming local schemes to utilize the organization of some existing body or association. An offer by the British Legion to place its organization at the service of local authorities for this purpose has been accepted; but this acceptance does not prevent local authorities obtaining their wardens from other sources or forming their organization in some different way. The memorandum states that, though wardens should be men, there is no intrinsic reason why women should not perform the duties, particularly in residential districts, where nearly all the men are away at work throughout the day.

Wardens, it is added, will operate from fixed posts, each responsible for a defined group of streets or "sector," and each manned during times of air raids by two or perhaps three wardens. Posts will be established in all parts of the area—one post to every 500 inhabitants in residential districts and one post to every quarter of a mile in industrial and business areas. Where necessary each post will be provided with two or even three reliefs. The proposals indicate a requirement of approximately 300,000 for the whole country, including 70,000 to 80,000 for Greater London, and 20,000 for Scotland.

Air-raid wardens, it is advised, should be responsible men, over 30 years of age, not enrolled in the Territorial Forces or Auxiliary Air Force or liable to recall as Reservists to the defence forces, police or fire brigades. They should be of good character, level-headed, and free from obvious physical or temperamental disability. They will be trained so as to have a knowledge of the air-raid precautions organization, the anti-gas precautions, and the scheme for distributing respirators in their sectors. They will be taught how to fit civilian respirators, how to recognize gas bombs and detect the presence of gas. This will mean full anti-gas training, preferably by an instructor who has qualified at the Civilian Anti-Gas School.

DUTIES OUTLINED

Duties of air raid wardens will be:—

To know the organization of air raid services in their locality and the means by which they should communicate with them; to advise persons in the streets after an air raid warning where to find the nearest shelter; to report immediately the fall of bombs; to report fires to the fire brigade; to report at once if the presence of gas is suspected and, if provided with local gas alarm, to sound it; to reconnoitre the extent of bomb damage caused and supplement their report as soon as possible by further details; to assist occupants of damaged buildings to find new shelter; to guide the police, fire brigade, first aid parties, rescue parties, &c., on arrival to the scene of damage, and convey messages and render any other assistance that may be required by police or fire brigade officers; to assist in every possible way to prevent panic, and set an example of coolness and steadiness among their neighbours; to help householders or the personnel of fire posts to fight incipient fires pending the arrival of the fire brigade.

Equipment for personal protection will be provided for wardens by the Government, and in certain circumstances posts will be provided with some simple means that will enable the wardens or voluntary helpers to tackle fires pending the arrival of the fire brigade. Details regarding the scheme for distributing civilian respirators are being worked out. Civilian respirators for the general public will be stored in depôts throughout the country under arrangements to be made by the Home Office and in each area a scheme will be prepared in collaboration with the local authorities for the rapid distribution of respirators.

DETECTION OF GAS

ORGANIZATION OF NEW SERVICE

The Air Raid Precautions Department of the Home Office has asked societies of experts in chemistry to help in the organization of a gas-detection service.

The purpose and organization of the new service are outlined in a circular which has been sent to members of the Association of Principals of Technical Institutions, the Chemical Society, the Institute of Chemistry, the Pharmaceutical Society, the Science Masters' Association, the Society of Chemical Industry, and the Society of Public Analysts. The service, it is explained, will be organized eventually in most urban areas, and will be part of the local authorities' air-raid precautions organization. In order to gain experience it is proposed to try the service on an experimental basis at Birmingham and Liverpool and in London.

In London the service will be organized by the Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis and the Commissioner of Police for the City of London; at Birmingham, by the City Analyst; and at Liverpool, by the Chief Constable and the City Analyst.

In an air raid, the duties of members of the service would be to proceed to an area in which poison gas was suspected or reported; to decide whether gas was present, and, if so, which gas; and to advise on the extent of the resulting danger.

In recruiting for the new service, preference will be given to persons over 30 years of age who are not engaged in work which would be of vital national importance in time of war.

NO NEW GASES

DR. L. HADEN GUEST, of the Air Raid Precautions Department of the Home Office, speaking at the annual meeting of the Property Owners' Protection Association, held at the Connaught Rooms on Wednesday afternoon, on precautions against poison gas attacks, assured his audience that there were no new gases to be feared. The gases used in the 1914-18 War would be used again, he said, and except in the case of concentrated doses of chlorine, phosgene, and mustard gas, such attacks would not cause permanent injury or death.

SIR JOHN LORDEN referred to the difficulty of property owners in protecting their property from damage by air raids. It was the Government's duty to protect them, he said, and he urged that a compulsory insurance scheme should be put into force. For the sum of 2s. a year every house in the country could be protected against air raids and bombing.