

# Lonely Navy wives

## BRITAIN SETS UP A SPECIAL TEAM TO STUDY THE PROBLEM

SINGAPORE, Sat.—

The British Ministry of Defence has set up a special eight-man committee to investigate loneliness among Royal Navy wives. It is possible that the team will come to Singapore in the course of the investigations.

Social problems arising from long separations of married couples are reported to be causing increasing concern in official quarters both in London and at bases overseas.

Therefore the investigating committee, which has just held its first meeting in London, may well decide to go on a tour of the Royal Navy's Overseas bases.

### Proportion

The committee comprises civilian sociologists as well as naval representatives. It is headed by Captain P.G. Lachlan, the Director of Naval Service Conditions.

In Singapore, a Royal Navy spokesman said to-

Conditions.  
In Singapore, a Royal Navy spokesman said today: "It is true of course that a proportion of the 16,000 officers and men serving with the Far East fleet do not have their wives with them.

"It is not the policy for the wives to come out here with their husbands unless they are in a position to spend an appreciable period of time together in Singapore.

"You will appreciate that there is no point in bringing out the wife and family of a man who is to spend 11 months out of the year here at sea."

There are, according to the spokesman, only about 5,000 wives and children of British naval personnel in Singapore.

## **Separations**

"In the other services, of course, the chances are better," the spokesman said. "This question of long separations has always been a problem with the Navy.

"You see, it is not so much the time a man spends overseas as the time he actually spends at sea. But I would say that a separation of more than 18 months is unusual in the Navy these days. In most cases it is much less."

In Portsmouth, Dr. Roger Congdon, the city's Senior Medical Officer for Mental Health, has issued a controversial report which says that the number of service wives who attempt suicide is disproportionately great when compared with civilian wives of the same age group.

Much of the trouble is said to stem from the immature outlook of many young wives, often in their teens, who have left home and friends in various parts of Britain to be parted in turn from their husbands in Portsmouth.