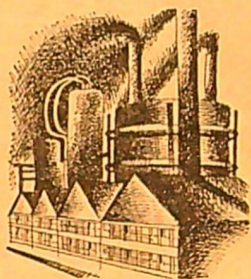


A NEW DEAL FOR WOMEN



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Published by the
AUSTRALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY
695 George Street,
Sydney

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FOREWORD

THE women of Australia, as in other democratic countries, have played an outstanding part in the great people's war against Fascism. They have joined the services in their thousands, provided a huge labor force for the war, transport, food and other industries, and in many other ways have contributed to the success of the Australian war effort.

What a blow these things mean to that reactionary view, that the place of women is in the home, and that socially, economically and legally their place in society is inferior as compared with men!

It is noteworthy that the most ardent advocates of this most reactionary view in modern times are the Fascists. Fascism results in the utter debasement of women. When he plunged the world into war, however, Hitler forced millions of women into the industries and politics, he started them on a path of development not envisaged by Fascism. The defeat of Fascism will have added meaning for women for they will rejoice in the liberation of all peoples from Fascism and, in particular, in the freeing of women from the degradation of Fascism.

When the war ends what is to be the place of women in the nation?

The Communist Party believes that just as victory over Fascism has been made possible only by the widest participation of women in the struggle, so it will be possible to win the peace only with the fullest and most active participation of women. Our post-war planning must embrace this viewpoint.

There is very much to be done before this war ends, however, to raise the standards of women and to provide facilities to enable them to still more actively participate in the war effort.

In this pamphlet, the Communist Party outlines a series of proposals which, if given effect to, will mean better conditions for women and result in more enthusiasm on their part and a greater war effort.

If these demands are to be won, they must be taken up by the Labor movement as a whole, the joint efforts of the men and women of the Labor movement will be required.

We cannot await the peace to tackle these urgent matters, and their solution now will create a better understanding in the Labor movement, and will help strengthen and unite the forces of the working class to meet the problems of the peace.

R. DIXON,

Assistant General Secretary, Australian Communist Party.
July, 1944.

INTRODUCTION

FROM home, office, factory and shop, women of all ages—grandmothers, mothers, daughters—have come forward to answer the call for greater and greater production, for increases in the vital supplies to the front line. They have come in their thousands to take their place at battle stations, at airports, in the hospitals; they have done so quietly, competently.

The call of untended animals, of ripened crops, the many demands of the farms, these too received a ready answer.

Without fuss or publicity, the women in the great clothing and textile mills learned to handle parachutes and uniforms with the ease with which they previously handled lingerie. In the canneries, extra effort went into the work they knew so well.

Everywhere the same story is told.

Since 1941, women have been working in some sections of the heavier industries producing munitions, aircraft, all the weapons of war, operating heavy machines as capably as they have done their "women's" work.

In commercial houses we have become used to being interviewed by women; the sight of women driving military lorries, mail vans, breadcarts, or asking for our fares on train and bus, no longer causes us to turn our heads.

Women have learned much in these past years.

They have learned to do without many comforts; to plan meals to fit into coupon ratings; to patch and re-patch; all the many demands of wartime economy have developed their ready initiative.

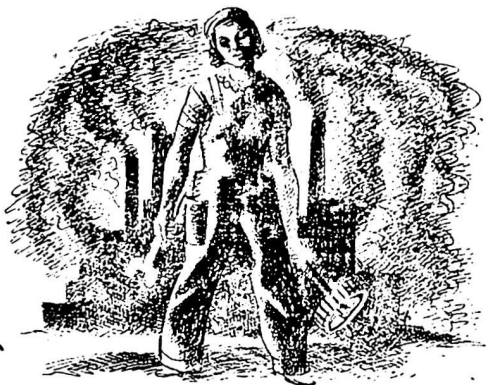
Women have also learned to notice the difference between the payment for work done by a man and the work done by a woman although that work may be identical.

But—

They have experienced the satisfaction which comes from doing all they can for the winning of victory in the war of liberation.

They have learned the value of working together. Whether it be for the proper consideration of their children's needs or for a correct appreciation of their value as workers, Australian women are learning the meaning of organisation and what it can achieve.

And the most valuable lesson being learned by many thousands of Australian women to-day, is that politics is of first importance to them.



In acknowledging the great contribution of Australian women towards victory, it must be said that yet more can be done.

The nation can release a further hundred thousand women to accelerate the great drive towards victory, by overcoming the difficulties which prevent their full participation in the war effort.



The Australian Communist party has a programme for women, a plan of action which gives the solution to these problems.

This programme includes immediate improvement in rates of pay for women workers, especially those on low rates; for more liberal child endowment; for extension of maternal welfare facilities and maternity hospitals, and for the

provision of a net work of child care centres.

The carrying out of this programme will assist to win speedy victory and lay the basis for security and happiness in the coming years.

1. Australia was Threatened

THE fall of Singapore and the loss of Malaya, followed by Japanese bombs on Darwin, made the war a close and terrible reality to Australia.

The life and work of the country had to be reorganised to meet the dire threat from the North.

The Labor Party, led by John Curtin, had recently taken office and was faced with the task of gearing Australia to a maximum effort to thrust back the threat of invasion.

The mobilisation of the people was the first step. Munitions and supplies were urgently needed. The services had to be strengthened and Australia had to learn to be self-sufficient in many new ways.

Australian women responded to the manpower demands and have proven their ability to work in hundreds of new spheres, willingly sacrificing comfort to assist the nation's war effort.

When we look back over the last four years, although we see many changes in our way of living, in one instance there has been very little change. That is in the wages of the majority of women workers.

In Australia, it had become customary to assess the wages of a woman at a little over half the wages of a man.

With the tremendous growth of war industries, the Curtin Government, which was in close touch with the trade unions, faced the problems created by the entry of women into occupations where previously no women had been employed.

2. Government and Trade Unions get Together

The Australasian Council of Trade Unions in March 1942, convened a conference of trade unions to discuss the placing of women in jobs usually done by men.

This conference decided to demand that where women replaced men they should receive the male rates of pay. The conference was followed by discussions with the Federal Government, which resulted in the setting up of the Women's Employment Board under National Security Regulations.

The Board was given power to fix rates from 60 per cent. to 100 per cent. of the male rate for women who replaced men, and for those doing work not previously done by women in this country.

The Women's Employment Board has had an interesting and lively history. Some employers, particularly in the metal trades, did not accept calmly a jump in women's wages from just over half (54 per cent.) to 90 per cent. or 100 per cent. of male rates of pay, and used all means of pin-pricking to create difficulties for the Board.

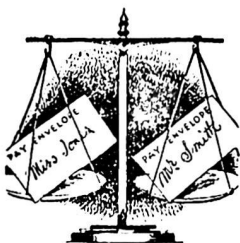
Eventually the representatives of the employers in the Senate disallowed the Women's Employment Board Regulations, so that the Board could not function for some months.

Finally, a little over a year after the Board had been originally set up, the Curtin Government, just returned at the general elections with an overwhelming majority, introduced regulations re-establishing the Board with full power to function.

3. Unions and Employers

It has been the policy of a number of employers, following decisions of the Women's Employment Board granting 90 per cent., to take the lowest classification in the industry for men and pay 90 per cent. of that rate to the women.

At Australian National Airways, for instance, the women were employed on skilled work and paid £3/12/- per week. After a decision given by the Board for 90 per cent.



of the male rates, the employers classified the women as process workers, which brought them up to £4/19/- per week.

The Union (Sheet Metal Workers) was not satisfied with this. All the women were in the Union and assisted in every possible way, with the result that after continued negotiations between the Union and A.N.A., the women

were classified as second class sheetmetal workers and had to be paid the correct rate of £5/15/- per week, which is 90 per cent. of the male rate.

Another striking example of increased wages gained for women by the trade unions is provided by the application of the Ironworkers' Union for back-pay on behalf of women members. By persistently following up every avenue open under the Women's Employment Act, the Union won £60,000 in back-pay for 770 women whom their employers had claimed were not covered by the Board. The same women are, as a result of this decision, receiving £1000 per week more in wages than previously.

4. Two Sides to the Picture

What were the results of the decisions of the Women's Employment Board?

The decisions have resulted in approximately 100,000

women receiving wages ranging from 80 per cent. to 100 per cent. of the male rates of pay.

In the metal and aircraft industries, which have a vital place in war production, the Board granted 90 per cent. of the male rates.

In assessing wages for women at between 60 per cent. and 100 per cent. of the corresponding male rates, the Board was required to take into account the relative productivity. This new method of assessing wages for women workers, while not in line with the principle of the "same rate for the same job," nevertheless brought about the biggest advance in women's wages yet achieved in this country.

But what has been going on in industries other than metal and aircraft? What has been done for the women who are doing essential work but not so-called "men's" work?

In February 1942 the Government introduced National Security (Economic Organisation) Regulations, familiar to us as the "Wage Pegging" regulations.

These regulations meant the "pegging" of wages as at February 10, 1942. Although the cost of living has increased, although taxation is much higher, although their work has produced and continues to produce essential supplies for wartime Australia, many hundreds of thousands of men and women workers have to be satisfied with low wages, wages that were low enough in 1942, but which are now barely above existence level.

At the Trade Union Convention held in Melbourne on June 6 and 7, 1944, the unions strongly pressed the Government for relaxation of the regulations to enable determination of claims on behalf of the lower paid wage groups.

The Government has strongly resisted all attempts by the trade union movement to secure a modification of the regulations, on the grounds that they are an essential part of wartime economy.

Included in the ranks of the workers so adversely affected by the wage pegging regulations are approximately 700,000 women, who are working at little more than half the wages paid to men.

What is the reason for this?

5. How it all Started



With the discovery of steam-power and the introduction of machinery into the work of the world, a new era began, not only for the world in general, but for women in particular.

The field of production was gradually opened up to women, modern machine methods making it possible for far greater numbers of them to enter industry.

Capitalists quickly learned that the quick-fingered woman could handle his machines deftly, and what was of greater importance to him, cost him very little.

Karl Mark, in "Capital," quotes the textile manufacturer who employed women exclusively, giving preference to married females, especially those with families dependent on them for support as they were more attentive and docile than unmarried females, being compelled to use their utmost exertions to obtain the necessities of life.

This cold-blooded exploitation of the finest instincts of women is as real to-day as it was sixty years ago.

Working-class women were forced to work because of the driving need to assist in the upkeep of the home and family. The urgency of this need made them ready to accept whatever wages were offered.

So, with the passing years, the idea of lower wages for women became traditional. Women have formed a reserve of cheap labor which, as long as it is permitted to remain, is a threat to the living standards of all working people.

Let us look at some of these traditional "women's" industries. Let us see what can be done to help sweep away this exploitation.

6. Why there are Strikes

Recently the laundry workers in Sydney went on strike. It is obvious from the inconvenience caused to hospitals, shipping and rail transport by the stoppage just how essential is the work of these women. Yet essential though it is, the wages are not sufficient on which to live, and this is a "protected" industry engaged mainly on war work.

A senior girl working 44 hours a week receives £2/19/9, a girl of 18 years £2/1/3, and the 16-year-old £1/13/6! The senior girl is now paid a war loading of 1/6 per week.

How can these girls grow into healthy mothers and good citizens when they work 44 hours a week in an atmosphere heavy with damp and steam, with the constant handling of wet linens rotting their fingernails and clothes? And they also lose wages if absent from work through illness.

Another "women's" industry, textiles, employs many thousands of girls and women; what of this?

How many of us are aware that in N.S.W. alone, an average of 50 applications a week for release from this industry are made? This is the essential industry manufacturing cloth for uniforms, clothing, essential war textiles for parachutes, canvas, and so on.

The conditions here are appalling.

7. In a Textile Factory

Millions of threads running through the machines fill the air of the factory with fine fluff. The temperature must be even so that the threads will not break, which means that proper ventilation is something the girls have heard about but certainly do not experience on the job.

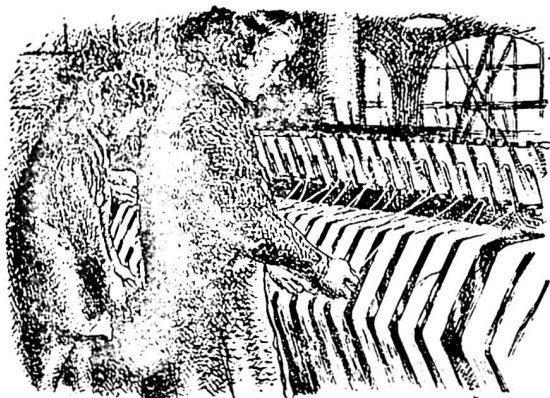
Doone Geddes, who has been working in one of the largest N.S.W. textile mills for the past three years, laughed when asked if the fluff was bad.

"What are those things the ice forms? Stalactites? Well, that's what we have hanging from the ceilings, from the electric light shades—stalactites of fluff! It makes my hair filthy and we are breathing it in all the time.

"One of the greatest discomforts is perspiration. At first I didn't think anyone could perspire so much and live, it just pours off you while you work. I get terribly thirsty but the only place to get a drink in my section is at the tubs. They're just old laundry tubs and the men use the water for some of the wool processes. Dirty? It's only because that's the only place where we can get water that we use it. We wash there, too.

"But you should see the lavatories. There are two hundred girls in my section and we have seven lavatories, but there are never more than five in working order, so we have to form a queue."

We asked Doone about lunch rooms.



"Well, we have one. There are 500 women in the shed I'm in and the lunchroom might hold 200 at a squeeze, but lots of us prefer to go out into the street and many of the girls sit in the gutter, where there at least is a breath of air."

Picture it! The factory air stale and heavy with flying fluff which settles everywhere—ceilings, walls and floor; obscuring the light and piling up around machines, settling on damp skins, collecting on eyelashes, dulling the hair of the workers. And women, future mothers of the race, are breathing this foulness for long hours every week and their eyesight is being ruined by the ceaseless strain and bad lighting.

What does the textile worker get for this? The most skilled woman worker in a textile mill can rise to the magnificent wage of £3/11/6 a week.

The lack of ventilation, the fluff, the bad lighting—all these things can be prevented. They are problems which can be overcome, but will mean that the employers have to foot the bill. They do not do these things willingly.

The only way to ensure this attention to conditions is organisation—good, strong, union organisation, and that rests with the women themselves.

8. Here is a Different Picture!

"Mary, where is your cap? I'll have to report you."

"Oh no, Gypsy, I forgot it, but I'll get it in the tea break, honest!" A mischievous grin accompanied the reply. "Gypsy," the well-liked, genial staff manageress, was escorting one of the trade union speakers from the Industrial Panel of the War Loan Office around the big munitions factory.

"They are lovely girls, but I do have to watch Mary, she is so proud of her hair."

Mary, however, was working a long way from any belting, fitting pieces of polished steel with nuts and bolts, seated at a comfortable height, with feet protected from the concrete floor by duckboards, one of a long row of girls and women each manipulating pieces of machinery, deft, intent and careful.

It is noisy, but the atmosphere is pleasant. Some of the women have oily hands—there is one having a friendly argument with a fitter about some measurements: "Gypsy" stops to ask a woman how she likes her new work. A man comes along with the afternoon tea.

After the tea break the speaker is taken to the rest room. A nurse is in charge of the large separate building. Long, commodious steel lockers line the walls, a few tables and some comfortable chairs complete the furnishings.

Adequate wash basins and lavatory accommodation indicate that here the comfort of the women is considered.

At lunch in the canteen—another separate building, light and airy—earlier in the day the speaker had chatted to the secretary of the shop committee, over a hot three-course meal at a nominal charge. The women employees in this large factory are members of the Ironworkers and Sheet Metal Workers' Unions; it is a union shop and management and shop committee are co-operating effectively for highest production.

In this factory, which is typical of the Government munitions factories and annexes that have sprung up during the war, women are working on jobs which prior to the war had been closed to them.

9. It all Depends on the Union



We have mentioned the conference of unions held early in 1942. The major unions represented at this conference—the Ironworkers, Amalgamated Engineering Union and Sheet Metal Workers, with many others—were determined that the entry of women into the heavy industries would not be used by the employers as a means of lowering wage standards which had been won after

long and bitter struggles.

These unions have been in the forefront of the fight against the provocation of the employers who refused to accept the decisions of the Women's Employment Board; their determination to see that women received equal rates has resulted in many gains.

These unions are not only interested in wages questions but also in the conditions under which women have to work. Rest pauses, tea breaks, lunch rooms, lockers, showers, adequate washing facilities have been gained because of their work.

Women can and should assist their unions by attending union meetings and taking part in union activities.

A union is an association set up by the workers themselves to protect their interests, and covers a particular industry or calling. For example, the Boot Trades Employees' Federation covers workers in the boot trades and the Amalgamated Engineering Union covers engineers.

Many of the amenities granted as a result of the introduction of women into factories have been greatly appreciated by men workers. It is noticeable that where men and women are working together and the women receive 90 per cent. and 100 per cent., there is an atmosphere of comradeship between them. The reason is that in these factories men do not look on women as cheap competitors on the labor market.

There is another job that women have taken on during the war years, that of union representatives or, as they are better known, "job reps."

A job rep. looks after the interests of the girls on the job when day-to-day problems arise

Should overtime be paid?
Is Sue entitled to compensation? Can Joy claim for sick pay?

These and many other questions are dealt with by the rep. Numbers of girls have found that by using their union to assist them in checking on matters like these, they know just what should be done and go to the "boss" and tell him about it. Usually, they are



able to have matters adjusted satisfactorily, but in some cases where the unions do not show much interest it is not so easy.

THE NEW FEMALE MINIMUM RATES REGULATIONS.

On July 19, 1944, the National Security (Female Minimum Rates) Regulations were gazetted and are in force for the duration of the war and six months afterwards.

These Regulations open up possibilities for great improvements in the industries we have touched on, particularly the lower paid essential sections.

To come under the jurisdiction of these new Regulations it is first necessary that a particular industry or part of an industry be declared by the Governor-General as "vitally necessary" to the prosecution of the war.

Then a Court consisting of the Chief Judge and at least two other Judges of the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration shall decide what should be the minimum rate of pay for women in the declared industries. Leave is to be granted by the Court so that employers or organisations of employers or employees can participate in the discussions prior to the Court arriving at its decisions.

The Female Minimum Rates Regulations could do much to lift these essential but low-paid workers to a higher level. Unions concerned will be in a better position to move for improvements in wages and conditions for their members.

Wage Pegging Regulations will not apply as regards any inquiries made by the Court.

10. The Other Side of Nursing

The complacency of some people regarding the bad conditions and wages under which many women are ex-

pected to work recently received another shock. The nurses in N.S.W. threatened to strike!

This profession (another "women's" occupation), we are told, is a noble one, where a woman's tenderness and selflessness assist in the care of the sick. The other side of nursing, the long hours, heavy work, strict discipline and low wages, is never emphasised.



The normal working hours for nurses are longer than in any other profession. A trainee works 52 hours a week and a trained nurse 48 hours. On the night shifts all nurses work 55 hours. That is the normal working week.

To-day the considerably increased demands placed on the nurses are resulting in breakdowns, and in many cases nurses are leaving the profession. Those who carry on work many hours' overtime.

The urgency of the need for more nurses cannot be over-stated. Neither can the urgency of improving their conditions be overlooked, so that this shortage can be met.

In March this year, the employees of five large metropolitan hospitals in Sydney received a wage increase of 5/- per week, but this should be only a beginning.

In N.S.W. the trainee starts on a salary of £2/12/6, from which is deducted £1/8/4 for board each week. An allowance of 2/- a week is paid right through the training period for uniforms. The salary for the final year of training (in some cases the 4th year and others, 5th year) is £3/7/6 per week, less the deduction of £1/8/4 for board.

In many hospitals, the nurses' quarters are unpleasant and opportunities for relaxation very few. In some cases the food supplied is unsatisfactory.

Women are needed for the nursing profession.

To ensure the care of our sick, it is essential that the conditions for nurses be improved. An over-worked nurse is like any other over-worked person, unable to carry out her duties satisfactorily.

In three large country hospitals in N.S.W. (Cessnock, Wollongong and Kurri Kurri), and at the Crown Street Women's Hospital in Sydney, 8-hour shifts are worked. The resulting efficiency is a strong argument in favor of this method of shift work being made general in all hospitals.

Improved wages and adequate allowances for uniforms should be included in the programme for nurses.

Nurses' quarters should be adequate, comfortable and pleasant and, where possible, away from the hospital atmosphere. Opportunities for recreation and social activities are essential for the maintenance of the morale of trainees.

11. Married? Take a Reduction in Wages!

Women teachers are keenly interested in the fight for equal pay. The present position causes much discontent among them. The rate for women teachers is 80 per cent. of the male rate and it frequently happens that three teachers in the same school, doing the same work, are receiving three different grades of salary.

The man receives the full rate, the permanent woman teacher gets 80 per cent. of that rate, and the temporary woman teacher is paid from £20 to £40 a year less than the 80 per cent., yet all are doing the same work!

In 1932 the Married Women Teachers and Lecturers' Act was passed by the N.S.W. Stevens Government as an alleged emergency measure to provide employment for unemployed students from the Teachers' College. But—there were unemployed ex-students until 1940, so the Act failed to achieve its objective.

However, it is still in existence.

This Act resulted in the loss of many teachers in the early years of their career, just when they were acquiring experience and skill. The acute shortage of teachers in N.S.W. forced some changes. The State Education Department has prevailed on women teachers to remain in

the service as "temporaries" after their services have been compulsorily terminated under the Act.

Until recently this meant that they continued in the same job, but at a lower rate of pay than they received previously. The reduction is from £20 to £40 a year depending on the grade of the teacher.



The present difficulties being experienced by the Education Department in keeping schools adequately staffed have resulted in a further change. To encourage married teachers to remain in the service, they are now granted continued, but temporary, employment with no reduction in salary provided that they do not lose more than five working days at the time of their marriage!

When a teacher marries a serviceman whose salary is not being made up by his employer, she is retained nominally on the permanent staff but only for a certain period at a time, usually for a year. She may either be dismissed or made a "temporary" at the end of the period.

The Act is a direct restraint on their democratic right to marry and continue in their chosen profession; it is also anti-social in that it prevents many marriages.

Our schools are under-staffed. The McKell Government should end this state of affairs by repealing this reactionary piece of U.A.P. legislation, thus following the example of the British Parliament which has recently lifted the "marriage ban" on women teachers.

Women teachers feel keenly the social injustice of such discrimination and it must affect their work. For our children to be well taught, teachers must be free to give of their best.

12. Women in Uniform

Back in 1941, women in uniform caused amusement. Nurses were accepted, we were accustomed to seeing them. Gradually, we became used to the trim service women. We became proud of their healthy happy faces. Our feeling of respect grew for the many women who gave up comfortable jobs to live in barracks and tents, who had enlisted, trained and now worked under the same conditions as men. The only difference in conditions between servicemen and women is that women do not meet the enemy face to face.

Officers and men of the services generally agree about the capability with which these women have accepted and carried out their new responsibilities. Almost every week we read in the daily press news of the extension of work undertaken by service women. In this new sphere, too, women are competently replacing men who go on combat duty.

But here too, are great differences between payment for the services of the men and those of the women.

In America, women in the services get the same rates as the men; in Australia, service women get two-thirds of the male rates of pay.

However, in addition to this we have something that is unique, brought in by the U.A.P. Government—minor rates of pay in the services. And these minor rates apply only to women.

To illustrate this innovation, in the Army a girl of 18 years will be working with a lad of the same age and a girl of 21. They are orderlies, ranking as privates, their wages for this job are: the 18-year-old girl, 3/10; the girl of 21, 4/4; and the lad, 6/6 per day!

There would be a greater and more enthusiastic response by women to recruiting appeals if this unnecessary discrimination were done away with. It does not apply in U.S.A., and in Britain service women are demanding equal pay. In Australia, service women who are so frequently told how well they do their jobs, have earned it and should also demand it. This demand should be supported by all Australians, and particularly by servicemen.

Catering for service personnel on leave has overlooked the service woman. In Sydney, for example, there is accommodation for approximately 200 girls. In other centres little or nothing has been done to cater for women on leave. This demands immediate attention.



In all leaves centres, recreation huts and hostels could and should be provided. Some of the £2,000,000 reserve canteen profits could be well-spent in providing such essential amenities for our service women.

Over forty thousand women are in the Navy, Army, Air Force and Nursing services. In two years the majority of these women have reached a high level of proficiency in many varied occupations from tele-printing to anti-aircraft prediction.

After the war Australia will need every pair of skilled hands. This brings us to a new problem, one in which Australia has had no previous experience—the reinstatement of service women.

In a recent survey made by the Ministry of Post-War

Reconstruction, it was found that 69 per cent. or over two-thirds of the women in the Services would be wanting employment after victory has been won.

This question of rehabilitation was mishandled by the Hughes Nationalist Government after the last war. We must profit by that experience and avoid any recurrence.

Just on 25,000 women will need training for their absorption into civil life. A Commonwealth-wide scheme should be commenced now, so that service women can have the same facilities for vocational training as the men, whilst they are still in the Services.

In return for their contribution to the war effort, the Government must ensure that they are able to enter any field of activity for which they are suited.

13. It's Tough Being a Mother



Most women want a family and a home. Periodically, however, wise old men get together and shake their heads over the "selfishness" of Australian women who apparently won't have babies.

It is high time that women looked this accusation in the face and gave the lie to its incorrectness and stupidity.

What does a woman face who gets married and has to keep house on the basic wage? Usually there is a baby in the first year or two. The young wife, who has received no proper training in housekeeping or baby care, is overwhelmed with petty cares and worries, just when she should be learning to adjust herself to a new life.

The young woman who for years has been supporting herself, and perhaps saving for the future home, has to do without many things which were part of her life but which, when she marries, come under the heading of luxuries.

She has been used to varied interests, maybe belonged to civic or political organisations, but the subscriptions to these may also be marked "luxuries."

The needs of young children are many and varied. The husband has to be looked after. The amount of leisure becomes more and more limited.

Opportunities for leaving the children in a kindergarten or day nursery are not many, such services as exist being unable to cope with the very real needs of mothers to-day.



The humdrum tasks of the home, the washing, cleaning, scrubbing, polishing, the preparation of meals and ever-recurring washing-up, the special preparation of food for growing children, all these tasks become monotonous and wearisome if the mother is unable to get away from them for a few hours.

The work being done by the Day Nursery Association and the Kindergarten Union is splendid and of real assistance to many mothers. Unfortunately these organisations are unable to meet the demands which are constantly growing.

The Australian Communist Party advocates the provision of Government-subsidised child care centres such as kindergartens, day nurseries, children's libraries and supervised playgrounds and recreation centres.

The provision of such child care centres will give the mother freedom to enjoy social and cultural activities, secure in the knowledge that her children are being well cared for in the best possible surroundings. Children themselves will benefit from the companionship of youngsters of their own age.

14. Why the Birth-rate is Low

The Australian Communist Party advocates the provision of much more liberal child endowment for all children.

In 1920, A. B. Piddington, Justice of the High Court, when reporting the findings of a Royal Commission on the Basic Wage, recommended that 12/- a week for each child should be the amount of endowment paid to parents on the basic wage. Remember, that was over twenty years ago, when money went much further than it does to-day.

Following further investigations by Justice Piddington, in March 1927 in N.S.W., J. T. Lang's Ministry passed a measure which provided for the payment of 5/- per week in respect of each child after the first. This was paid only if the family income did not exceed the then N.S.W. basic wage of £4/5/- per week. Compare this with Piddington's recommendations and see what a paltry gesture it amounted to!

In 1940 the unions conducted a big case before the Full Bench of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court for an increased basic wage. The increase was refused and some time later, to offset the unions' discontent at the blatant injustice of the Court's refusal to increase the basic wage, the Menzies Government introduced Federal child endowment of 5/- per week after the first child.

With the 1940 basic wage at £4/8/-, this niggardly gesture brought the weekly income of a family unit of five to the grand total of £4/18/-. Contrast this, too, with Piddington's recommendation, which would have meant a weekly income of £5/16/- for the same family unit, in 1920!

In New Zealand, if the family income is less than £6 per week, an endowment of 7/6 for each child is paid. The English Beveridge Plan provides for 8/- to be paid after the first child and then varied according to the age of the child.

And yet we in Australia have the spectacle of the National Health and Medical Research Council conducting an earnest inquiry into the reasons why Australian women are not having babies!

A young woman of 20 years of age, married for 18 months, is now expecting her first child. When asked if she was happy about it, she replied, "I'm very worried about the money side, as Bill only earns the basic wage. I've been working since we married and the loss of my wages is going to make a big difference to us."

Obviously, this is not a desirable way for a young wife to be anticipating her first baby. Instead of saying, "Well, lots of other people have to manage," it is essential that something be done to prevent the extra strain of financial worry being laid on the mothers whose content and well-being is of first importance, not only to the coming child, but also to the nation.

15. "Ambulance Babies!"

In the most closely settled State in the Commonwealth—N.S.W., there are but three large public maternity hospitals, all of them in Sydney.

In one outer Sydney suburb, the difficulties of transport have resulted in a very high percentage of "ambulance babies" born on the way to hospital.

Many expectant mothers have to travel as far as 150 miles from country towns, arriving at the hospital with the announcement that "Baby will be here any time now!"

The maternity hospitals are dangerously overcrowded, wards built to cater for eight beds now contain fourteen, and the already overworked nurse is burdened with further heavy responsibilities.

It is obvious that mother, baby and nurse suffer as a result of this lack of proper accommodation and facilities.

To improve immediately this dangerous situation, existing maternity hospital accommodation must be extended by the building of maternity blocks, and where the lack of adequate maternity facilities can be demonstrated, the Ministry for War Organisation should release materials and manpower to provide this essential service.

Instead of the usual lip-service given to the dignity of motherhood, the nation must show appreciation of its mothers by practical planning for their care.

In doing everything that is possible now in the interests of morale and the war effort, the way is being prepared for such a planning of social services after the war as will include the provision of maternity centres in large suburbs and country towns.

These centres should include pre- and post-natal clinics. Included in the work of these clinics, as part of the necessary care of the mother, would be such matters as the arrangement for hospital accommodation, the care of the family while the mother is in hospital, and the supervision of the health of the growing baby.

The splendid record of service of the baby health centres scattered thinly throughout the country, and the value of constant supervision of the health of babies by specially trained nurses, adds emphasis to the demand for more of these centres.

There must be considerable extension of research facilities dealing with the problems of mother and child, to enable the use of the latest scientific discoveries to prevent unnecessary suffering and to eliminate those "preventable causes" which result in such a high percentage of miscarriages and still-born babies.

16. Where Ignorance Isn't Bliss

The headlines that scream "Increased immorality among our girls" make mothers of teen-age girls apprehensive.

The great majority of children are brought up in complete ignorance of sex matters. There is no sex education allowed in our schools.

The limited facilities for recreation, the lack of girls' clubs, and other specialised attention to the needs of the growing girl, result in narrow and unhealthy ideas. War-time excitement brings a feeling of restlessness and the careless spending of many servicemen places temptation in the path of young women, many of whom ignore the dangers confronting them.

The problem of the high percentage of abortions in Australia must be tackled.

Experiences of medical men indicate that very often

young women, frightened and ashamed, endeavour to bring on abortions themselves, with the result that permanent injury is done to their health. Very often the doctor is called in when the damage is done and it is too late to prevent serious after-effects.

The economic position of young working men and women in our society does not encourage early marriage. The average age for marriage has become later and later over the past sixty years, and this too has an important bearing on the so-called immorality of young people.

A general system of adolescent and adult education should be organised by the Department of Education.



17. It Is No Wild Day Dream

To ensure early and complete victory, the production of essentials—food, clothing, military supplies—must be maintained and improved.

In the preceding pages we have touched on some of the major problems confronting our country to-day, problems

which must be dealt with if we are to achieve the fullest use of the great force of womanpower in the fight for victory.

In some of the trade unions women have been elected officials and are giving splendid leadership to the women members of their organisations. Women are showing a keen appreciation of the power of organisation, learning from their trade union experiences how to improve their conditions.



In the lower paid industries, which include clothing, textile, rubber, food preserving, electrical, waitresses, hospital employees and clerical workers, women workers should speak through their unions with a united voice, demanding the rate for the job regardless of the sex of the worker, and demanding decent working conditions.

Women are fighting, not only for themselves, but also for the removal of the ever-present threat to the wages of men, when they demand the removal of all sex discrimination and the elimination of the cheap labor reserve of women.

In America, in Britain, the women are fighting for the rate for the job. In four states in U.S.A., laws have been passed which give equal pay to women.

No woman, working in the home or in industry, can say to-day that the wages of women workers are no concern of hers. The Australian standard of a half to two-thirds of the male rate of pay as a wage for women assists in keeping the living standards of all men and women low.

No longer can women say that as they are only working until such time as they marry, they need not worry about such matters as wages, trade unions or politics. The percentage of married women who have to work to assist in the upkeep of their families is very high. It was a very high percentage before the war and to-day, in the textile industry for example, the greater percentage of the women employed are married.

Equality of status, opportunity and wages, with the assurance of economic security, is no wild day-dream. It has already been achieved in the Soviet Union, where, since the socialist revolution of 1917, men and women have been occupied in laying the foundations for Communist society.



Like its brother parties in the Soviet Union and other countries, the Australian Communist Party stands for complete social and economic equality of the sexes, but such equality cannot be realised in full under our present social system. It will only come with Socialism. Lenin, great founder of the Socialist State, said that a complete victory for Socialism could only come with the fullest participation of the women.

The results of sex equality have proved of the greatest benefit to the Soviet Union, the contributions of Soviet women to the social, economic, cultural and political life of the country being very much greater than in any other country.

The out-worn cry that "equal pay would mean empty cradles" has been given the lie in the Soviet Union, where equality is a reality. That country has the highest birth-rate in the world.

Expectant and nursing mothers in the Soviet Union have free medical attention; if they are working, they receive their wages during their absence from work before and after confinement. Every service that assists in making easy the job of child-bearing and rearing, is available to all mothers.

One of the most serious social problems under capitalism—prostitution—has been eliminated in the Soviet Union. This is because under Socialism it is possible for such problems to be tackled unhampered by false ethical notions, and because the main causes of prostitution—poverty and insecurity—have been eliminated.

Australian women have a great history of achievement. From the early days when Australia was a colony up to the present, our women have proved their courage, endurance and ability.

In the splendid history of the trade union movement in this country, women hold a high place.

Women's achievements in the war years have proved beyond all doubt their right to equality.

After the war has been won, Australia will face the task of re-organising the country for peace-time production.

The skill and experience gained during the war period by the women will be needed in the execution of post-war plans.

The tremendous scope of industry in the post-war period should ensure the right of women to remain in the new spheres of activity where they have proved their ability.

Equality gives womanhood the opportunity for the highest development, it frees a great force to work in the interests of the nation.

Let us all work towards the achievement of it.

18. The Australian Communist Party Program

The Australian Communist Party programme, adopted by a Conference held in Sydney on January 16, 1944, is a plan of action which includes all the demands of the Australian people that require immediate attention and those of the post-war period.

Every aspect of this programme affects women in one way or another.

Take, for example, the demand for an immediate improvement in the basic wage. This is of utmost importance to Australian women, housewives, office, professional and factory workers.

The need for improvement in the co-ordination of medical services; housing schemes to be commenced immediately; planned demobilisation of servicemen and women; educational improvements; the construction of hospitals and clinics; these and many other points included in the Party's programme are of vital importance to Australian women.

In this pamphlet we have dealt with only that aspect of our programme which affects the immediate and specific demands of women.

The solutions we propose are:—

1. Organisation through the industrial and political Labor movement and other progressive bodies, of a demand for the revision of women's wages to establish the principle of the rate for the job regardless of sex.

Women in jobs outside the jurisdiction of the Women's Employment Board, such as textile, food and other industries, and in professions such as nurses, to receive no less than the minimum rate for adult males in the particular industry or profession.

2. The development and extension of social services to provide:

- (a) More liberal child endowment for all children;
- (b) Special maternity hospitals in suitable surroundings;
- (c) Provision of a Government-subsidised network of child care centres, playgrounds and day nurseries where children can be cared for in the vital formative years under the best conditions;
- (d) The immediate establishment of training centres to provide personnel for child care centres.

3. The elimination of minor rates of pay and the payment of women in the auxiliary services to be equal to that of men of similar rank.

The carrying out of this programme, in addition to furthering the war effort, would lay the basis for the full and equal participation by women in the vital post-war reconstruction years.



Would You Like to Join Our Party?

When I think of the years I have been a member of the Australian Communist Party, I wish that other women could have shared the wonderful comradeship and sense of serving the greatest idea on earth, the welfare of humanity, which I have found in the Communist Party.

In the Australian Communist Party, we learn how to serve this objective, theoretically and practically in all the issues of our lives. We learn to analyse experiences of the past and of the present and arrive at sound conclusions for action.

Events of the past few years have proved the correctness of Communist theory and practice. In every political, social and economic crisis, the Australian Communist Party has advised and led activity to preserve the democratic rights of the Australian people and the international interests of all peoples in the struggle against Fascism and oppressive conditions.

There was never a time when it was more a matter of pride and joy to be a member of the Communist Party. There was never a time when it was more urgent for women join the Communist Party and help in the great scheme reconstruction for a better world.

We welcome all honest and sincere women who wish work with us as good Australians and good citizens.

Housewives and factory workers, shop assistants, intellectuals and scientific workers, no matter what your qualifications or lack of them, there will be a warm greeting for you in the Australian Communist Party. So join now! And let us say, "Welcome, Comrade!"

KATHARINE SUSANNAH PRICHARD,
Member, Central Committee, Australian
Communist Party.

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