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Women Must not be Used as Cheap Labor In War Industry

REPLACEMENT OF SOLDIERS SHOULD BE ON EQUAL PAY BASIS.

"War may have its immediate problems of wet canteens, uniform shortages or censorship muddles for the Government of Australia and the various States, but one which transcends all of them in its future effects extending far beyond the end of the war is that of the safeguarding of industrial conditions so that female labor, with its present lower wages standard, cannot be exploited by unscrupulous employers. . . .

"Every day more and more men are enlisting, but who is getting their jobs? There is the danger that some employers are employing cheaper female labor to replace the men—a state of affairs that will undermine the Australian standard of living. . . .

"Women, when signing on for jobs to replace soldiers, should be assured of equal pay if they are to do the same work as the men they are replacing. . . .

"Unless women are receiving the same wages for the same work, it is scarcely likely that they will be replaced (having had ample time to become as skilled as the men whose jobs they took) by employers who can get the same results for less money under the present system.

"For their own sakes, for the sake of the soldiers who will come back, for the sake of maintaining Australia's high living standards, women must fight against any exploitation of their sex in the name of 'war conditions.' . . .

"Discussing the problem with 'Woman,' Sydney Trade Union officials agreed that unless the whole problem was tackled by straight-out legislation to enforce equality of pay for the same occupations, inevitable industrial chaos would follow in the wake of big-scale recruiting. . . .

"Every woman who steps up into industry to fill a job previously occupied by a man steps up into that man's responsibilities. More often than not she steps up also into the position of breadwinner."

Extracts from a comprehensive article, entitled "Women Must Fight Against Exploitation," in "Woman," published at Sydney, Feb. 26, 1940.

Equal Pay Supporters

ORGANISATIONS:

Conferences reflecting widely divergent opinion reveal remarkable unity in support of equal pay.

Organisations co-operating with the Council of Action include the N.S.W. Labor Councils and all influential N.S.W. Trade Unions. The N.S.W. Teachers' Federation, the N.S.W. Public Service Association and the Feminist Organisations are also affiliated. Federal Organisations formally co-operating with the Council are the Australian Teachers' Federation and the Federal Unions covering Engineering, Clerical, Clothing, Textile and Postal Workers.

COMMONWEALTH CABINET MINISTERS:

Sir Frederick Stewart, M.P., Minister for Supply, and the Hon. P. C. Spender, K.C., M.P., Treasurer, advocated equal pay in their last election policy speeches, and both of them have consistently supported the Council of Action for Equal Pay since its inception.

AUSTRALIAN LABOR LEADERS:

Mr. John Curtin, M.P., Leader of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party:

"Women are the partners of men, and sharers with them in the life of the world. There can be no question of inferiority or superiority where one is the complement of the other. Therefore, the claim for equality of status between the sexes is derived from the basic oneness of the highest human relationship. To deny it is to deny the fundamental laws of our existence."

Hon. W. Forgan Smith, LL.D., Premier of Queensland:

"I am definitely in favor of complete equality between the sexes, and where equal service is given, women should receive the same remuneration as men."

THOUSANDS OF FEDERAL ELECTORS:

Thousands of men and women in all parts of the Commonwealth, including eminent citizens, such as bishops, parliamentarians, graziers and employers, as well as workers, have already signed the petition addressed to the House of Representatives, which is now circulating in all the States, praying for an amendment to the Commonwealth Constitution designed to give wage-earning women an indefeasible constitutional right to economic equality with men.

This petition is being signed by hundreds daily, and when the objective of a million signatures is achieved it will be formally presented to the Prime Minister.

The Worker Trustees, 238 Castlereagh St.,
Sydney.—10-Hour Week.



The Case for Equal Pay



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Equal Pay Would

1. Raise the living standards of the entire community, because in nearly every family there are women wage and salary earners.
2. Eliminate many anomalies and injustices which result from the present systems of wage fixation.
3. Release additional purchasing power that would benefit the whole community by creating a new demand for consumption goods, thereby providing increased employment.
4. Create an incentive for women to develop their latent talents for the benefit of society.
5. Improve the social and physical wellbeing of women.

Definition of Occupational Rates.

"The essential principle which should govern all systems of remuneration, whether in private industry or in public employment, in manual working as well as brain-working occupations, is that of clearly defined Occupational or Standard Rates, to be prescribed for all the persons of like industrial grade; and, whether computed by time or by output, to be settled by collective agreement between representative organisations of the employers and the employed; and enforced, but as minima only, on the whole grade or vocation. There is no more reason for such Occupational or Standard Rates being made to differ according to the workers' sex than according to their race, creed, height or weight."

—Mrs. Sidney Webb.

Report of War Cabinet Committee on
Women in Industry.

(Great Britain, 1919.)

Aims of the Council of Action for Equal Pay

The Council of Action affirms the right of women to earn their living in industry, the professions and the public service, and strives to secure for all workers the legal right to equal occupational wage-rates based on the nature of the job, and not on the sex of the worker.

The Council, therefore, urges the enactment of Federal and State legislation to provide:

An increase in the adult female base rate (now 54 per cent. of the adult male base rate under N.S.W. State legislation) to equality with the adult male base rate.

Equal margins for skill and responsibility for male and female workers, irrespective of the ruling base rate for either sex.

Equal rates of pay for juvenile male and female workers employed in a like industrial grade.

Equality of opportunity and the removal from the statutes of all clauses which disqualify or limit the entry, training and advancement of women in any occupation or vocation.

Equal rights and benefits for all unemployed workers, irrespective of sex.

The removal of all restrictions on the employment of married women in gainful occupations and the recognition of their right to economic independence.

ACTIVITIES.

The Council of Action for Equal Pay meets on the third Tuesday of each month at Federation House, 166 Phillip Street, Sydney, at 8 p.m., when visitors are welcome. Further particulars of activities may be obtained from the Honorary Secretary-Treasurer, Muriel Heagney, Box 3645 s, G.P.O., Sydney.

Leaflet No. 2.—Issued by the Council of
Action for Equal Pay.

Unequal Wage Rates

1. Deny the democratic principle of equality of men and women.
2. Deprive the woman worker of full payment for her work.
3. Expose the male worker to the unfair competition of underpaid female labor.
4. Reduce male wages rates and standards to lower levels.
5. Ignore the fact that many women have dependents.
6. Result in the under-estimation of women's value to society as workers and home-makers.

Women and Men Must Work for Equality

"Women, too, are summoned not to remain behind in a struggle in which their own freedom and deliverance is at stake. It is now their part to show that they have comprehended their true position in the Movement, and that they are resolved to take their share in the present contest for a better future. It is the part of the men to assist them in freeing themselves from all prejudices, and to support them in the fight. Let no one underrate his own power, or imagine that one more or less makes no difference. No one—not even the weakest—can be dispensed with for furthering the advance of humanity."

From "Woman," by August Bebel.