

WOMEN IN INDUSTRY.

From Ministerial pronouncements and other sources it may be gathered that the Federal Government, under the plan of national selective service now in process of incubation at Ottawa, intends to draw much more freely than heretofore upon women's services for war purposes and particularly for the augmentation of the labor force engaged in the war industries. On the evidence of the data of the national registration of 1940, there exists in Canada a large reserve of womanpower, which under proper management and direction could be very profitably utilized for the expansion of the war effort.

But for its most effective employment it is essential that some forethought be taken and some preparations made to ensure that the large body of women whom the Government hopes to be able to draft into industry should be given working conditions which will be acceptable to them and which will tend to make them contented and efficient workers. Accordingly it would be advantageous if the authorities responsible for the administration of the new mobilization scheme were to study carefully some of the lessons which could be learned from British experience with women's labor in wartime.

For example, it has been discovered in Britain that in the case of women who are suddenly assigned to industrial work, such as the manufacture of munitions, only exceptionally strong and hardy individuals are able to work right away the number of hours per day which are the rule in the average factory. If their physical powers were not overtaxed during the initial stages of their career as industrial workers, a substantial proportion of these woman recruits gradually became capable of facing the standard workday, but in plants where their strength was not carefully guarded the strain caused many to break down and retire to private life. Reports of the Industrial Fatigue Board which was established in Britain prove conclusively that excessively long working hours for women are uneconomic and defeat their own ends because they result in absenteeism, physical collapses and underproduction through fatigue. In the light of the British experience our Department of Labor would be wise to take precautions by regulations to ensure that employers in their eagerness to increase their output do not make demands upon women which they are not capable of fulfilling.

Apparently it is hoped to enlist for the industrial war program a large number of married women, and many of them will doubtless welcome an opportunity to contri-

bute their labor to the common cause. But thousands of married women who are quite willing to serve must be burdened with household duties and family responsibilities which occupy a great deal of their time every day. So some consideration should be given to plans which would help to remove this particular obstacle to the employment of married women on any large scale, and here again British experience can be a useful guide. The provision of meals ~~14~~ school children, which promises to become general in Britain for the duration of the war, is setting free thousands of married women for war work, and the idea might be considered profitably in industrial centres in Canada. Again not a few factories in Britain have established creches in which the young children of women working in the plants are carefully looked after until their mothers are ready to go home. Naturally young women are better industrial workers than their older sisters, and the establishment of creches makes possible the utilization of the labor of thousands of young married women who would otherwise have been tied to their homes. If we are to get the best possible results from the enlistment of more women for our war effort, careful attention should be paid to the special needs and responsibilities of women, and some imagination should be applied to the solution of the problems presented by their employment.

149
WAR
EUROPEAN
1939
CANADA
WOMEN

Handwritten:
149
WAR
EUROPEAN
1939
CANADA
WOMEN
mail

117-001-007