

work side-by-side with women cease to find them a disturbing influence within a week or two. But the girls are likely to prove pretty distracting to adjoining unfeminized departments. One company had to move the women's wash-room because production came to a standstill every time a girl passed an all-male assembly line on the way to powder her nose.

● **Antagonism Vanishes**—Masculine antagonism likewise vanishes pretty fast, once women are actually in the plant. Significantly, however, women have made their biggest inroads in the newer industries which haven't been set aside since time immemorial as "man's work."

That's one reason for their success in the aircraft plants—in one plant nearly 25% of the workers already are women. Though both A.F.L. and C.I.O. officially support a policy of nondiscrimination and equal pay for equal work, it has sometimes been hard to sell this to the rank and file of local unions, particularly when there were still a few unemployed men.

● **Resentment Over Output**—Where women's output has exceeded men's, resentment has sometimes become acute. In one Connecticut plant, output shot up 40% after women were taken on. The men got sore. They declared that the women were fresh on the job, hadn't settled down to a working "level" which they could sustain year in and year out.

One big problem in hiring women today is that many of them have never worked before; others, like some of the girls in the West Coast airplane plants have been lured by wartime wages from jobs as school teachers, movie extras, beauty-shop operators, and whatnot. The employer has little or nothing by which to judge their skills and abilities. To solve this difficulty, USES has drawn up a special series of aptitude tests for untrained women.

● **Special Work Laws**—Over half the states have special work laws for women—requiring one day's rest in seven, forbidding night work, or limiting the work-week for women to 48 hours. Virtually all of these laws have been relaxed since the outbreak of war.

Only a third of the companies questioned in the Princeton survey adhered to the policy of equal pay for equal work. Most of them admitted frankly that women were lower-paid largely because of the operation of supply and demand.

● **Differences Are Disappearing**—As the labor market tightens, pay differences are disappearing. The aircraft plants now have the same entering wage for women as for men. The London Economist comments that in England "the war has done the reformers' work for them," when it comes to women's wages. The same thing probably will happen here.

Nation Appraises Its Womanpower

Women are going to be needed, in staggering numbers, to man the nation's war production plants. Even more women will be called upon to replace men in civilian industries and services. So far, however, advance publicity has anticipated the need.

Because many women have rushed to volunteer only to be angered and disillusioned by the discovery that they couldn't sign up immediately as spot welders, machinist's helpers, and drill press operators, Washington is now applying the soft pedal.

● **Presidential Announcement**—This, in part, explains the President's announcement of a fortnight ago that a nationwide registration of women for war work was not immediately in prospect. Another reason is that the manpower registration is quite enough to handle at one time.

The U. S. Employment Service has announced that it has 1,500,000 women registered who are looking for jobs and that a special check of 12,500 war industry plants indicates that there is little immediate chance of their being taken on for war work. Of a total of 675,000 hiring which these firms expect to make by July 1, only 79,000 openings are for women.

● **A Shortage, But**—This does not mean that there isn't an acute labor shortage—of women as well as men—in many war production areas. But if New York stenographers take it into their heads to emigrate en masse to jobs in the Southern California airplane plants, the result will be chaos on a national scale.

An important related problem is housing. The chances are nine out of ten that wherever there is a labor shortage, there is an even more acute housing shortage. While this may operate against the hiring of any outsiders, it is also the answer to the argument that women should not be hired for men's work as long as there are still unemployed men in the country. If a company hires the wives and daughters of its men employees, no extra housing need be provided.

● **Local Registration**—Hence, the first answer to labor shortages is local registration of women. Connecticut housewives indicated their availability for war work when they signed up for sugar ration cards. In March, 99,000 Oregon women registered for work as harvest hands this summer. Hard-headed labor and personnel experts point out, however, that there is likely to be a considerable gap between the number of women that sign up and the number that actually

show up at the factory gate or farmhouse door. Immediate job openings for women are concentrated in a few areas—along most of the West Coast; around the Great Lakes; in New England, particularly Connecticut; in individual war-boomed cities like Baltimore, St. Louis, and Buffalo. In some cases, "priorities disemployment" has just about kept pace with hiring for war production.

● **What's Ahead**—By the end of 1942, or certainly by early 1943, the labor shortage will have become general. The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that a shortage of some 6,000,000 workers is in prospect for late 1943. With the exception of a few hundred thousand boys of pre-draft age, this gap will have to be plugged almost entirely by women—mostly by women who have never before been gainfully employed and who are not driven to seek work by economic necessity.

Today, out of an estimated total of 8,500,000 war workers, 1,000,000 are women. By the end of 1943, there will be 20,000,000 or more war workers and 4,000,000—or one-fifth—will be women. That means that 3,000,000 women will be needed in war plants in the next two years; and at least that many more will be absorbed into civilian industry.

● **Reserve Woman Power**—How do these potential needs stack up against the nation's reserves of unemployed womanpower? At the end of December, there were 13,000,000 women already in the labor market—all but about 1,000,000 of them employed. There were 3,500,000 women who were overage or unable to work. There were 4,400,000 women students (most of them under 18); probably four or five hundred thousand of these can be drawn into industry.

The big reserve, however, is the 29,600,000 women who are either housewives or at home. Of these, 6,700,000 are farm women—and nobody wants to take them off the farm. Some 8,700,000 are women under 45, but with children under ten. The BLS figures that no more than 1,100,000 of these can be employed. There are 9,300,000 women over 45. This is the group that employers are most reluctant to draw on. BLS thinks they will supply another 1,100,000 to the labor force.

● **Under 45 Group**—There are 4,900,000 women under 45, with no children under ten. If the real pinch comes, at least half of this group will have to be moved out of the kitchen and onto the assembly line.