

The Double Standard of Age in Industry

By CAROLINE M. HILL,
U. S. Employment Service, Women and Girls Division, cooperating with Illinois Free Employment Offices, Chicago.

High Lights in the Experiences of State and National Employment Services in Chicago

A MAN is not eligible to the Presidency of the United States unless he is forty years of age. A woman over forty is not eligible to an untried, paying position. In order to study this double standard, and to correct it if possible, the Chicago Women's Club has established a vocational guidance desk for older women at the United States Employment Service. Some five hundred applicants were registered in a few months, about one-fourth of whom had never worked before and most of whom had no professional training or business experience. They have been very difficult to place, for most employers did not want them.

Employers said that the older women were not accustomed to business hours or business discipline; that they believed too much in having their own way; that they were slower to catch on than younger women and less accurate than trained men. Some said the applicants were "too refined for work," or that they "preferred husky women." A few firms, in despair, asked for anybody they could get and afterward learned that older women have good points. They admitted that women over forty were less self-centred; they did not spend their time talking to the young men or "dolling up" in the dressing rooms; they were "stickers," not "floaters." If employers could be induced to see them the battle was half won.

The five hundred applicants have asked for a great variety of positions; practically all of them wanted dignified positions, such as matrons, institutional housekeepers, inspectors, even foreladies in factories, without the slightest experience except, they said, they had managed their own homes beautifully. Many said quite frankly, "I want to manage something," or "I want a position of trust, for I have great executive ability, but have never had a chance to show what I could do." They asked for "government work" without any clear knowledge of what it was. Many of them could not think of working in a munition plant, or taking the Civil Service examination. Some said they would not work under another woman. Truly, they had much to learn!

Highly Trained Women Hardest to Place

From the point of view of the ordinary examiner, the chief purpose of the vocational guidance

department is to take care of the impossible older women, but along with the impossibles are classed all extraordinary women. A Ph. D., an artist or a musician is as impossible to the other departments as a blind or a deaf woman.

The very hardest women to place are those most highly trained. A Ph. D. in educational psychology, who clearly belongs in the investigation section of the United States Department of Education, is doing library work for a very small salary. A native American woman, who took a Ph. D. at Heidelberg and was teaching German in one of the Middle West universities, became a saleswoman in Field's basement, but she was young enough and a good enough sport to look upon that occupation as a new angle on life and an illuminating experience. She took pride in the number of her sales, in getting a raise, and in waiting on whoever came in with a real zest for life as she found it. She remained there until a place was made for her in the French department of the university where she had taught German!

The return of the soldiers from abroad and of the clerical workers from Washington has brought many more clerical applicants than there are places for, and the older women are gradually being let out. Every day there are experienced bookkeepers or office managers in need of salaries at once for whom nothing can be done. There are college girls released from war work or from research work, or recent graduates with some business training, asking for work that has a human interest, unwilling to teach but anxious to work out something new.

Since the war has ended it does little good to urge the claims of the woman over forty in clerical lines. It is much more hopeful to try to create a place for her than to spend time persuading an employer to take her.

The educated negro woman is a part of this problem. The white woman who has imagination sometimes tries to think what she would do if she were a negro. Possibly she would start a school to train other negro women to the highest efficiency in the things in which they already excel. This has been done at Tuskegee, but there is room for it in every city. A school of domestic arts and sciences started by negroes, managed and taught by them, financed as far as possible by

them, would do more than anything else to open up the greatest opportunities which they so much desire.

Dealing With "Impossibles"

Among the "impossibles" are: 1. Special psychopathic cases. 2. Persons who cannot cooperate. (This includes many who are personally agreeable, but for some reason never keep any place long.) 3. Physical derelicts. (From age or some handicap.)

This class includes a runaway nun, several school teachers who have allowed themselves to get behind the procession, a number of music teachers who do not know how to do anything else, etc. The most pitiable of all are the older women who cannot do any kind of domestic work or cannot take pleasure in it. Any poor old woman who can sew can be sent to Mrs. McCarthy's sewing shop, or put into a factory to sew on buttons; but if she cannot sew and does not like cooking, and cannot endure children, she cannot be happy anywhere. The old actresses are perhaps the most helpless of all.

Psychopathic cases are sent to the Favill School at Hull House, where they are given some therapeutic handicraft.

When Work, Not Money, Comes First

It is not merely the abnormal woman, or the woman whom life has passed by, that enters into the problem; the normal woman, too, needs an outlet for her energies. Two of the most delightful women who have come in are widows with excellent social experience, suitable for heads of sorority houses or girls' halls. They have not quite the education to become deans of women in colleges, but are that type of woman. One of them is a happy grandmother, who does not let her daughter know that she has registered with us. She has a small income, but wants to be active. It is not enough to knit and play with the children.

Several have asked for positions because they were idle and could not continue to spend their lives for themselves alone. To spend the rest of life in playing whist does not look so alluring as it did before they had a share in the greatest

conflict in history. One woman said, "I came in because all the papers say you must do something." Others feel vaguely that they want to get into the game. Still another type is the woman who had helped to build up the

charity organization or settlement work. One woman with a long settlement experience wants to go into factory work, because "it is the real thing." One college professor's daughter makes the same request. Both of these want to become real

tions in accordance with their abilities.

The greatest demand now for the older women is in the homes. People are calling up all the time, asking for "settled women" to keep the house or the apartment. This seems the last gasp of the old-fashioned homemaker. Most of my time is spent in trying to persuade the older women who have kept house for themselves that they will be warm and comfortable and have more money left for their old age if they take places in homes than if they take any other kind of a position, and in telling them that such work is not considered menial now because the war has changed all that. I have taken as much interest in trying to get together the right woman and the right home as



In these days grandmother eschews knitting and secretly seeks a job, while a Ph. D. sells notions in a department store basement.



General Federation of Women's Clubs and to secure the vote. Her need is to utilize her energy. Usually she does not try to compete with those who must work for pay. If the energy of this class of woman is utilized before it is scattered into merely personal or family interests, it may become a great active, public force. If women of leisure are not put to work at once they will slump back and become a drag on the wheels of progress.

The woman who is not forced to think of money first has almost without exception asked for something with a big human interest. She would like to be a matron or a welfare worker or an employment manager. She no longer asks for

mixers, and it is easier to adapt one's self to existing opportunities than to develop new ones. Now is the time which tries out the pioneer souls. To be a pathfinder in youth is natural, but to blaze a new trail at middle age takes real courage.

The same logic applies to white and to colored women. They must either take what they can get, or they must create or develop posi-

in putting the right social worker in the right place, and there have been perhaps fifty of the home needs to one woman needed in social work.

"Community" Is a Word To Conjure With

The war has developed machinery for the cooperation of all classes, political parties, races, creeds and colors. This machinery must not be



What the Middle Aged Woman Has to Get and to Give When She First Goes Out to Work

dropped. It must be carried on into the reconstruction. In all the war drives, labor and capital have worked side by side. President Wilson has urged the community council as to the form of local cooperation. The community centre of the schoolhouse is the fundamental social unit agreed upon by social workers and council of defence representatives. The community is the older woman's particular field. Community kitchens, bakeries, laundries, baby gardens, etc., are social labor saving devices as necessary to the individual home as vacuum cleaners and electric toasters.

Reconstruct "The Corner Where You Are"

The main purpose in the early neighborhood associations was to fight the evils due to congestion. Constructive work had to be a by-product. Now that national prohibition is coming to take away one of the main causes of sickness, poverty and vice, the way has been cleared for more constructive cooperation. As one neighborhood secretary said, "If we could neighborhoodize New York, Tammany wouldn't be in it any more." Tammany is in it now more than ever, just because of its superior ability to organize about the supreme necessity—the job. To learn from Tammany how to neighborhoodize the nation is the big idea, and it is the place where the mature woman citizen comes in. If she will devote herself to social reconstruction "right in the corner where she is," she can utilize her natural abilities and create all kinds of new jobs for herself, both volunteer and paid.

In this way the woman's war registration can be used. Its invoice of social assets is at hand all properly filed and cross-filed. Many women are disappointed that they were never called to service during the war. Now there is more need than ever to get every man, woman and child placed in the right job and to keep them busy. The fear of radical democracy which is now sweeping over the country would not exist if everybody were busy in the right job. The United States Employment Service has also machinery ready at hand to connect the right person with the right place.

It is for lack of vision and venture that the older women are to be criticised. Most of them are very conservative, holding to ideals that are fast passing away. The woman who lives on the houseboat to beat the landlord and a few of the social workers are all who have enough enterprise to try a new and promising thing. Nine out of ten of the life problems are merely questions of finding niches in the social order as it is, niches to fit homeless women, where they may subsist and feel safe the rest of their lives.

The opening of more social and civic centres in public schools will make more jobs for clerical workers, matrons and nurses. The de-

velopment of community laundries and community kitchens planned by the Chicago Food Administration will ease the burdens of women with small families and make more work for the older women. The Chicago Women's Club has a wonderful opportunity in its capacity of foster mother of new enterprises. Women's clubs in all big cities have an equal opportunity and responsibility.

Vocational Guidance For the Immigrant

The extension of vocational guidance by the government to boys and girls from sixteen to twenty-one years of age and by the Chicago Women's Club to women over forty years of age, suggests another extension. The East Side of New York and the West Side of Chicago are full of immigrants whose productive power has been lost because they were not guided when they landed in New York. The country loving Italians have had no money and no one to connect them with market gardening, but are living in Jewish quarters and are digging sewers; the Bohemians also are misfits in crowded city districts. Scandinavians guide their own people through to the Northwest, some Italians get to Pennsylvania and a few to Arkansas. A vocational guide in every port of entry in the United States is a necessity which it is to be hoped the government will provide before large numbers of immigrants begin to come in again.

More vocational guidance is also much needed in connection with Americanization. The League of Foreign Language Women can bring together women with industrial skill at lacemaking, embroidery, etc., and use their ability in arts and crafts that will add greatly to American homes and institutions. One of the recent applicants at the office is an educated Norwegian woman, capable of leading in such work. She has been connected with the Americanization work at the Woman's City Club.

The United States Employment Service stands at the crossroads. Everybody is going by, and everybody wants something different in the new day. The vocational guidance department is the most constructive, if not the only creative department of the division. The needs of the individual used to be met by charity, then by a friendly visitor or by settlement work. Now it is universally conceded that the best assistance is a suitable job. The labor department insists that labor must have a living wage, and also that it must render efficient service for the value received. The only hope of relieving the tension is by cooperative effort on the part of all the organizations, clubs and churches to develop new opportunities for both men and women. The women of leisure and means must lead the way to places for those who need pay.

England and France Struggle With the Servant Problem

By LILY L. ROWE

ENGLAND and France both have domestic servant problems, though the difference in the situations makes it almost impossible to put them under one classification. Mary Anderson, assistant to the chief of the Women in Industry Service of the Department of Labor, recently returned from Europe, where she was sent by the National Women's Trade Union League. She studied the domestic servant situation with a view to bringing back

suggestions for the organization of domestic servants in this country.

English girls in domestic service are taking themselves seriously, according to Miss Anderson. They have tasted the freedom and the economic joys of munition factory days. A few weeks ago they formed a domestic workers' division of the National Federation of Women Workers. One of the cornerstones of their organized movement to get better working conditions in the English homes is a campaign for

French Women Are for Working at Home Though They Make Munitions and Maggie of England Does Not Want to "Live In," Even to Cook and Sweep

the eight-hour day. Girls will report for duty at the kitchen door just as they have been registering for work at the factory.

No More "Living In" In England

The programme of their organization, which contains a movement for the eight-hour day and standardized wages, will mean, if it becomes a countrywide standard, that the "living in" system will pass out of existence. This "living in" means the residing of the domestic worker in the house which she serves, a situation universal before the war.

The domestic service system as England knew it before the hostilities began was entirely disrupted by the munition jobs given to women. Hundreds of families who had always employed servants were obliged to do their own work. One hears much talk there of the demoralization of the girls who ordinarily do domestic work because of the high wages given during the war.

"Maggie's" Views On Thrift

There is a story of a meeting held in the factories that illustrates how the women feel. The purpose of the gathering was a talk on thrift to

the girls employed in that particular factory. The address was duly given. As is the English custom, at the conclusion of the speaker's remarks the question was asked if any one in the audience had anything to say. Near the back of the room a typical English girl of the domestic worker class arose. Her answer to the invitation to speak took this form:

"I tell you how it is in this thrift and big wages. The first Saturday night after I drew my pay here I went to the store and I bought a whole roast chicken. My mother had never seen a whole roast chicken in her life. She liked the chicken and I will buy her one for Sunday as long as the big wages keep up.

"Then I bought a silk blouse. He came home from the trenches. He says, 'Maggie, you look different; you don't look like you used to. What have you done to yourself?' I says it was the silk blouse. As

long as he says he likes the silk blouse I will buy one from the big wages."

"That gives the picture, I think, as to why domestic service workers are organizing in England to get better conditions," said Miss Anderson. "While there was nothing said, as I recall, about agitation to have the houses lacking up-to-date equipment, such as running water indoors, altered to make the work easier for the girls, it is a fact that English houses are sadly lacking in that regard.

"I was not present when the domestic service section of the national body was organized, but I spent ten days in London. The women in industry over there are all federated under this national association, each trade having its own section and being called factory workers, or shop workers, as the case may be. The unemployment situation over there is acute, and this has forced some of the women who were in the

factories to return to domestic service. The government is giving allowances to relieve what might ensue from lack of employment.

There's a Difference In France

"France's domestic service problem is not so easily discussed. The French have no industrial competition to offer to the housekeeper other than that of the homemaker. There is a minimum wage law, a part of the national statutes, for these homeworkers, who are organized, even though they have never been in a factory. These homeworkers are the embroiderers who make those exquisite French things we admire. For generations the system of homework carried on by the women has been in effect, and any mention of the industrialization of France seems to the average Frenchman a menace to this time honored way of producing lingerie and other clothing.

"The French working people are well organized. Both men and women form the Shampoers' Union, the Theatrical Employes' Union and similar bodies. I do not believe the models are organized, however. So ingrained has become this home system of work for the women that even during the war

some part of the manufacture of munitions was done in the home. This, of course, was not the process involving explosives, but was some angle of the capping production.

"This war did upset the embroidery industry in France. There was no demand for such goods and the women went to work on the farms, in the munition factories and other places, for French women had to take the places of men everywhere. We went to one munition factory where there were 1,800 women and girls at work. This was

an arsenal. Before the war there had been eighty women connected with the plant. It was said that about 1,200 of these women would be retained to carry on some automobile production which is to be done.

"I do not believe, however, that the French women will be so prominent in industry as are the American and English women for some time to come. France is still mainly an agricultural country and to talk of making it an industrial nation does not find much favor there."



The Tribune Institute ..
In the World ..
of Women