

It might have been expected that the cessation of war production and shortages of raw materials for civilian production would have meant at least a temporary recession in industry and a consequent decline in the employment of women. The removal of man-power restrictions and the great number of war-delayed marriages undoubtedly reduced the female labour force, but the quick change-over to civilian production and the loss of man-power in casualties combined to create an active demand for women, to the extent that there is a general shortage. The decentralization of industry and the housing shortage (which induces married women who have to live in small flats, or rooms, to seek employment) have contributed to increasing the numbers of women available, and the result is that the numbers employed have not been reduced to anything like their pre-war levels, although many of them may be part-time workers. The unprecedented increase in the number of men in the last year covered has caused a corresponding decrease in the proportion of women employed, and it may be assumed that these trends in factories exemplify the wartime and reconversion movements throughout industry.

(c) *Conditions of Work*

The acute shortage of woman-power has had its inevitable effects upon wages and conditions of work. Award rates of wages have increased as follows:—

Occupation.	Gross Minimum Weekly Wage at 31st March,	
	1939.	1947.
<i>Adult Females</i>		
Biscuit and confectionery worker	£ s. d. 2 9 0	£ s. d. 3 8 8
Boot operative	2 10 10	3 16 0
Clerical worker	3 5 0	4 3 11
Clothing-trade employee	2 10 0	3 11 0
Shop-assistant	2 19 6	4 5 0
Woollen-mill employee	2 10 0	3 15 0

The increases shown, however, are by no means fully indicative of the position. Actual earnings were increased during the war by the working of long hours of overtime and the payment of production bonuses. The principle of equal pay expanded the earnings of women employed in "men's" occupations. While overtime has now generally decreased, and men have displaced women, the competition for female labour has resulted in the continued payment of high wages and bonuses, and their earnings would generally be in excess of the award rates quoted. In addition, employers have been impelled to improve working-conditions to no small extent. Cafeterias have been provided, industrial nurses and welfare officers engaged, and hostels and day nurseries set up. Hairdressing services, dressmaking lessons, and the use of firms' machines on Saturday mornings have been used to attract girls, and various inducements offered to married and older women. In some centres, too, greater use is being made of the "outworker" system (see Section 3 (7)). Branch factories in modern design are being established in country districts.

There seems little doubt that the improvements in working-conditions will be permanent, and it is to be remembered that the advances resulting from the shortage of women workers will be consolidated and reinforced by the steady implementation of the Factories Act of 1946.