

# PRISON WITHOUT BARS?

## Home-Life for the Married Woman

THIS talk is about the home and the problems that face women in their job of running a home to-day. To the child the home means chiefly a refuge where he is assured of love and attention—a place full of dear, familiar objects—the source of comfort and nourishment. To the wage-earner the home is mainly a place for relaxation after the day's work, at week-ends and holidays. For the married woman—well what is it? Some people tell us that the home is a machine for living in with the woman as the operator. Others that it is a work of art which the woman creates. Others still protest that it is a prison in which the woman is sentenced to hard labour. And I suppose there is some truth in all these views. I think we would all agree that the mechanics of housekeeping—the washing, cleaning and cooking should not absorb all our energies. Machines should be used as much as possible so that the housewife has time for the more creative part of her work—anticipating the needs of the various members of her family, harmon-

An NBS talk in the series  
"Women's Affairs,"  
by CAROLINE WEBB

ising their interests and smoothing out their troubles.

The danger of the home becoming a prison is a fairly recent development. It was not possible when the home was the industrial unit as well as the family dwelling. Though women may have had to work hard in those days they were working with the other members of their household, just as they still do on farms. It is in the towns where the men's work has moved away from the home, either to the factory or the office, that women can now be so isolated and lonely. Spending 10 hours a day with only small children and babies as companions can become very tedious, especially when they can't be left at night either. The trouble should not be difficult to remedy where there are no young children. Don't you think a woman with grown-up children or without children should have opportunities

to do at least a part-time job? The idea that she should stay at home to wait on the other adult members of the family is surely antiquated. House-keeping can well become a co-operative enterprise now that a 40-hour week leaves a sufficient margin of leisure to wage-earners. So I hope the ban that existed before the war in various occupations and professions against the employment of married women will never return. And provided we are able to maintain the aim of full employment, is there any reason why it should?

### Help in the Home

As far as the woman with children is concerned, her need to escape from her home and her family at least once a week should be recognised and provided for. This raises the very difficult problem of help in the home. Has any problem been more discussed among women than this one I wonder? I have been amused to find in the diaries of some of the earliest women colonists in New Zealand just the same endless talk of the difficulties of getting help as one hears to-day. And I suppose it has gone on all the hundred years



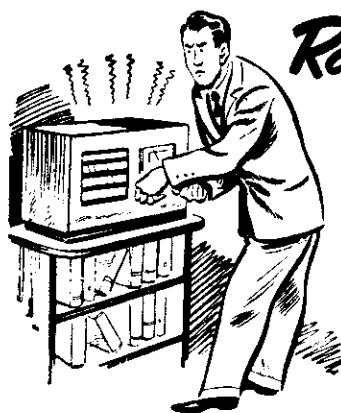
of our history. Surely it is time we found a solution. We might give it a try anyway.

First of all, I think we have to recognise that in a one-class society such as we are developing, people won't take work which makes them feel inferior to those who employ them. Personal service of any sort, such as washing other people's dishes, waiting on them at table or making their beds is felt to place the worker on a lower social level than those he works for. Secondly, I think we have to realise that the day of live-in domestic workers is over. There was a time when shop-assistants were expected as a matter of course to live on the premises and accept their



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