

# COMPULSORY WAR-WORK FOR WOMEN?

Women and the Home

## How They Feel About It In Britain

THE headlines inform us that Mr. Bevin, Minister of Labour and National Service in Great Britain, whose appeal to women to play their part in the national war effort seems to have failed, is now "getting tough." If he cannot urge he proposes to compel.

Last April all women in Britain of twenty or twenty-one were ordered to register. After registering each was called to an interview and then sent home to make up her mind which of several jobs she preferred. This apparently, was fatal. Now a bill passed on September 1 considerably narrows the field of choice and requires that a woman who is called up shall prove her indispensability in home or job, before she can refuse war service. However, it seems unlikely that conscription will be applied, and Mr. Bevin will have to provide better transport and housing facilities for his workers before he can compel women to leave their homes.

### Mrs. Roosevelt Has A Plan

*IF American boys are drafted, why not American girls? asks Mrs. Roosevelt.*

Her plan (according to a report in "Time") would not be as drastic as it sounds. The draft would be only an extension of women's compulsory education. Drafted girls between the ages of 18 and 24 would be placed on the same footing as men, and given the same wages. They would learn switch-board operation, hospital work, buying and preparation of food, truck-driving, map-reading, sewing and budgeting, as well as such mechanical skills as they wanted to learn. They could live at home while putting in their year of training.

When the president was planning his draft bill last year, Mrs. Roosevelt kept telephoning to urge that her draft-women programme be included. If you are going to mobilise a nation, she argued, why leave out half the nation? But the President knew, and said, that no Congressman would touch a bill containing compulsory training for girls.

A few weeks ago Mrs. Roosevelt, invited to examine prospective uniforms for women volunteers, confessed "to a little confusion in thinking about uniforms before being entirely certain what is to be done in them." But though no one in the Government, from the President down, supports her, she is still set on getting U.S. women into the draft.

He needs 200,000 more members of the Auxiliary Transport Service by next June.

### A Collection of Reactions

How do the women of Britain feel about this prospect of compulsory war work?

We recently received a copy of a talk by Freda Whittaker in the *Women's Outlook*. She has been collecting the reactions of women in Britain to the April registration.

"Opinions were not difficult to come by," she writes. "One day I met a young friend who is a pacifist, but not an 'absolute.' 'I'm joining the Land Army,' she said. 'It seems as if they'll make us do something, anyway, and of course I wouldn't go on munitions. So I decided to choose for myself—at least, farming is constructive, and you do feel you're helping and not destroying.'

"Then, next day, in a cafe, I got into conversation with a young married girl of twenty-seven or so.

"I wonder what they'll give me to do?" she said laughingly. 'Perhaps I'll have to drive a lorry. Well, I'd rather do that than be in a factory all day. Honestly,' she added in a more sober tone, 'it's all very well to talk about taking idle young things and putting them on strenuous war work. But personally, I don't think they could stick it—physically I mean. Frankly, I don't think I could keep going for long, doing twelve hours a day or something like that, in a factory—could you? As a matter of fact, I could do with staying just as I am. It's a full-time job running a house these days—no help to be got, and meal problems to deal with continually. I don't know how my husband would manage without me. He's a research chemist, and reserved, of course.'

### The Hairdresser's View

"She had many other opinions on the subject—wanted to know how young mothers were to manage; thought the lodging allowance inadequate, and wondered whether a lot of girls would ever prove 'trainable.' Then there was the hairdresser. 'I'll come under this registration scheme,' she said gloomily. 'I suppose we'll have to go where we're sent, but I don't want to go on munitions or into a factory. I can't understand those girls who've given up other jobs, just to go on munitions and earn plenty of money,' she added. 'There'll be nothing for them after the war, will there? Seems such a waste too, when you've been trained for something else, as I have. Mother spent a lot on giving me three years' training for this job. If I have to leave it for a year or two, it'll mean learning all over again when I get back to it—if I do get back. It's so easy to lose your touch and skill in hairdressing if you're not in constant practice.'

### Importance of Home Ties

"Not unnaturally, each girl and woman looks on this new move from a personal angle. Some will find it a fortunate escape to a different life; others will be definitely eager to go; others will want to make the change now and

have a pick of the jobs. But most women, individual considerations apart, are also concerned about the idea of young mothers being expected to abandon their children to the care of minders.

"I was talking recently to Miss Caroline Haslett, woman adviser to the Ministry of Labour, on this particular point. 'My view,' she said, 'and I would like you to stress it—is that first of all those girls should be called up who need to work for a living. Then the young, leisured women should be called on, and last of all the young married women. The home workers are so very important.'

### HOSPITAL RADIO

#### Sydney Developments

NEW features in radio and hospital call systems have been provided at the recently opened King George V. Home for Mothers and Babies, Camperdown, Sydney. Amalgamated Wireless has erected equipment whereby the patients in their beds can talk to the nurses without the latter leaving their quarters.

When a mother wishes to speak to a nurse, she simply presses a button at the bedside. This operates a light at the nurses' control station and indicates the patient's bed number. To answer the call, the nurse replies through an ordinary telephone hand set and the patient hears her by a loud speaker which in turn acts as a microphone while the patient talks back. The speaker can be switched on if the nurse wishes to listen during the night to the patient's breathing or to learn whether she is restless. This system embraces 240 beds.

For the entertainment of patients, 195 beds have been fitted with pillow phones for radio broadcast reception. A "community aerial" known as an antennaplex has also been erected to permit the inmates' radio receivers being connected direct to one efficient well-designed aerial.

### She Knew The Answers!

STATION 2ZB claims that it has the champion "Information Please" competitor in the person of Mrs. L. Robertson, who recently dropped out of the weekly class after being in the session for 18 broadcasts. As listeners to "Information Please" know, three competitors remain in the class after each broadcast, the fourth making way for a new competitor. Mrs. Robertson first competed on April 10, and was placed fourth on August 14. During that time she had won first place nine times, second place three times, and third place five times, winning a total of £11 15s. in National Savings certificates.

### CALLOUSES?

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