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WOMEN, WORK AND WAR : INDUSTRIAL
MOBILISATION AND DEMOBILISATION,
COVENTRY AND BOLTON 1940-1946.

by

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SUMMARY

The emphasis in this thesis is on women's popular attitudes towards the two processes of industrial mobilisation and demobilisation which took place between 1940 and 1946. Although the work includes a survey of the national picture of those two processes, it concentrates on case studies in two towns which exhibited different characteristics of women's employment, Coventry and Bolton. This is done in an attempt to see if the tradition of women's employment affected their attitudes towards war work. In Coventry, the best sources of women's employment were for single women. During the nineteen-thirties it was obvious that the motor industry employed increasing numbers of women, but, again, the unmarried. The economic participation rate in Coventry was slightly lower than the national average. On the other hand, the cotton industry in Bolton customarily had engaged married women as well as single women, therefore, the women's economic participation rate was about 10 per cent. higher than the national average. Local custom with regard to married women's employment appears to have affected women's ideas about their domestic responsibilities. Coventry women were more reserved and more conscious of their domestic role. However, the comparison between the two towns also brought out similarities as well as differences in women's attitudes to industrial mobilisation. During demobilisation, the similarities between Coventry and Bolton were more strongly marked. The majority of women war workers had no intention of staying on in the factory, in jobs which were still largely thought of as 'men's work'. Most women thought that their well-being was dependent on men's secure employment and high wages. They did not want to do anything to threaten it. There seems to have been little antagonism between men and women during the mobilisation and demobilisation period.

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INTRODUCTION

If we set down women at one end of the field and men at the other and then blindly cheer on our own lot, we may feel uplifted but it won't be history.

Arthur Marwick, 'Women's fight back on the Home Front'. The Times Higher Education Supplement, 10 September, 1982.

Studies of women's work in the Second World War have been relatively few in spite of recent theses by Margaret Allen and Penny Summerfield.¹ Moreover, this research tends to concentrate on either Government policy or the direct experience of the factory where women were recognised as dilutees. Penny Summerfield's work is an example of the former. Her comprehensive study focuses on the Government's policy and attitudes towards the woman worker in wartime. She clearly establishes the failure of the Ministry of Labour to understand the necessity for governmental intervention both inside and outside the war factories in order to secure the smooth introduction of women. Therefore her work concentrates upon the Government end of the problem although there is some discussion of women's reactions to the Government's policy, her emphasis is not on women's own responses.

Raynes Minns book Bombers and Mash attempts to describe the Second World War from the ordinary woman's point of view, but it was not meant to be an academic study. There is no serious study of women workers on the shop floor during the Second World War although historians like Richard Croucher and James Hinton have glanced at some of the issues raised in the course of their research.² The territory remains 'uncultivated land'.

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1. Margaret Allen, Women's Place and World War Two, M.A., University of Essex, (1979).
Penny Summerfield, 'Women Workers in the Second World War'. Ph.D. University of Sussex, (1982).
 2. Richard Croucher, Engineers at War 1939-1945 (1982)
James Hinton, 'Coventry Communism : A Study of Factory Politics in the Second World War', in History Workshop, No.10. Autumn 1980.

Recently feminist historians like Summerfield and Gail Braybon have argued that the advances made by women in wartime quickly disappeared with the return of peace. For example, facilities for women engaged in war work were arranged on the assumption that they were only temporary. As Summerfield points out that 'Women were mobilised "for the duration only"'.¹

One reason why these gains have proved so fleeting is that women did not directly replace men in men's jobs. The work process, in traditionally masculine areas like engineering, was altered or diluted to accommodate them as *women* workers and by far the largest numbers of women war workers went into "female" jobs like textiles or services. The image of women as wives and mothers was left unchallenged.

Arthur Marwick, criticises those historians who have argued that women had made no real gains.² He concedes that most women war

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1. Penny Summerfield 'Women Workers in the Second World War', in Capital and Class, No.1. (1977).

Ruth Preason also points to the similarity with the recruitment of women in Canada. Ruth Preason, 'Woman's Emancipation and the Recruitment of Women into the Labour Force in World War II' in S.M. Tratimnkoff and A. Prentice (ed.), The Neglected Majority : Essay in Canadian Women's History, Toronto (1977).

On the other hand, Paddy Quick seems to dismiss the whole issue of mobilisation and demobilisation, to stress the fact that many women had to work regardless of the War.

Paddy Quick, 'Rosie the Rivetter : Myths and Realities', in Radical America, Vol.9, No.45 (1975).

2. Arthur Marwick, 'Women's Fight back on the Home Front', in The Times Higher Education Supplement, 10 September, 1982.

workers went back to their pre-war work and positions, but stresses the importance of the self-confidence and assertiveness which he thinks women gained by their work experience in wartime.

A weakness of Marwick's argument is that he does not explain how women's self confidence affected their post-war position in society. This is, in fact, important since Gail Braybon has suggested that women might have had their collective confidence boosted by their efforts in the First World War, but that although they

.... had been offered a broader experience
by wartime conditions ... they were not
allowed by government, employers, unions
and workmen to capitalise upon it. 1

He does, however, point to one of the most important angles which has been frequently missed out in the discussions on women war workers.

The best basic unit to take is that of the family and the best assumption is that certain social values at any particular point in time are shared by men and women alike. However, pallid the sentiment may sound, the fact is that women in wartime serve the family, or believe that they are serving it. 2

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1. Gail Braybon, Women Workers in the First World War (1981), p.210.
 2. Marwick, op.cit.

Although he puts this point with too much sentiment it is right to argue the importance of the family as a unit, especially as an economic unit. What has been attempted in this work is to explore women's popular attitudes towards war work and relate it to their domestic responsibilities. Although mainly dealing with married women, it is fully accepted that many single women had domestic responsibilities. A woman's position was largely determined by her place within the family, e.g. whether wife or daughter living with parents. The War made no difference to these roles. The view taken here is that it is mistaken to study women war workers in isolation from their domestic position. In modern industrialised society, the family is an economic unit. It does not matter whether the husband and wife are in conflict over the control of the family budget; within the family, as an economic unit, they have a common interest in society. This shared interest provides the economic basis for them to have a common social outlook. Moreover, once a social outlook is established, people start to order their behaviour accordingly, even if it contradicts their economic interest. Married women naturally put priority on their husband's employment over that of other married women because it suits their economic interest to do so. Once it becomes a social convention that married women should not work, both men and women tend to behave accordingly, ignoring the fact that many married women had to work to support themselves and their families. A further aim of this study is to investigate what was the popular view of married women's employment, in particular to see if there were any differences which might stem from local traditions of women

work. Did such local traditions affect women's willingness to take up war work? Two towns were chosen for comparison, Coventry and Bolton. They were similar in size, but had different industrial characteristics, especially with respect to women's employment. The study concentrates on two processes; women's industrial mobilisation in 1940-41, and their demobilisation in 1944-45 in the two towns.

Chapters 1 to 3 are grouped together, as are chapters 6 to 8. The first three chapters examine women's reactions towards the mobilisation process and the last three concentrate on their response to demobilisation. Chapters 4 and 5 are meant to provide a bridge between the first three chapters and the last three. Chapter 4 explores some aspects of the propaganda behind Britain's demobilisation campaign, and tries to show how it reflected the popular notions and images of women's role in society. An attempt is also made to see if there was any conflict between traditional ideas about women's role and what recruitment propaganda was asking women to do. This chapter also tries to assess whether working-class women's ideas about their domestic responsibilities were different from the ideas of middle-class women.

Chapter 5 deals with life on the shopfloor. The emphasis is on how males, from operatives to managers, viewed the entrance of women into what had been long thought of as a man's world. The main focus is on male attitudes to the introduction of women war workers, and rather wider issues than simple dilution. Prejudices against women appear to have been shared by the male trade unionists and management. This part of the study also brings out differences in attitudes in dealing with

women's problems between the exclusively male unions in the engineering industry and the unions with mixed membership such as the Weavers' union in cotton. Chapters 4 and 5 suggest that the traditional image of women lingered on during the War years, helped by the fact that the Government and the male population clung to the assumption that women's entrance into the labour market, and especially married women's entrance, was a temporary phenomenon due to the War emergency.

It is notoriously difficult to discover how ordinary people think and feel even about clearly identified issues. Such views are seldom found in written documents. In this study three major sources have been used : letters of contemporaries which appeared in local papers; Mass Observation, and oral history. Each source has particular biases. People who write letters to newspapers are in a small and self-selected group. Worse still, there is no guarantee that the editor's selection of the letters reflected the opinions of all the letters which the paper received. Wartime restrictions and editing policy provide another bias to this source. Mass Observation presents the historian with two main problems. One is that since the observers were largely drawn from the middle-class, the possibility is that their observations of working-class life and opinions contained some class prejudice. The other is that Mass Observation never formed a clear idea about how they should decide on the validity of the opinions sent to them. We often come across opinions which can only doubtfully be considered as representative working-class opinion. Oral interviews also contain problems in relation to representativeness, for we have to depend on the memory of those who come forward voluntarily and they,

too, are a self-selected group. Generally speaking, people who offer their recollections were those who enjoyed the War years. Those with sad or bitter memories are conspicuous by their absence from this study. There is a real danger of drawing too rosy a picture of the War years when we rely on the recollections of people who generally had a 'good war'. Memory itself is often coloured by nostalgia.

This study tries to identify, describe, and account for the views and responses of ordinary working women in war-time. Popular attitudes and opinions are worth studying and the historian must use whatever sources come to hand.

CHAPTER 1MOBILISING WOMEN FOR THE WAR : SITUATION AND POLICY
1936 - DECEMBER 1941

(in a heavy engineering firm, talking about machines);

'Were you frightened yourself?'

'Me? Good gracious no! I've been in hairdressing!'

She saw I didn't follow that and added

'I was used to it all - If you've used the electric drier and given perms, there isn't anything to be afraid of with these planing machines!'

(Amabel Williams-Ellis, Women in War Factories, 1943, pp.12.)

This Chapter sets out to describe the general labour supply situation and Government policy towards it from the beginning of serious rearmament in the middle of the 1930s to the passing of the National Service (No.2) Act in December 1941. The main emphasis will be on the uneven evolution of Government policy in respect of women workers in munitions. The voluntarist idea was not immediately abandoned and the uncertainty thus produced was not ended until conscription for women was finally brought in at the end of 1941.

The movement for rearmament ¹ began in 1934 when Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, announced in Parliament that 'the Government had decided to establish parity with Germany in the air.' ² The plan was aimed to equip the Air Force on a scale which would enable it to engage in sustained warfare against Germany within five years. But until just before the actual outbreak of the Second World War, the Government was not very enthusiastic about rearmament. There were two inter-related reasons, for the Government's half-heartedness. One was diplomatic policy:

... the diplomatic and strategic assumptions which until the end of 1938 were not to be those of an eventual war. Disturbed as the international position had become, war was not yet thought to be probable, still less inevitable ... Until 1935 international disarmament was still a popular hope and still the object of British foreign policy. For at least another three years the object of the successive rearmament programmes was not so much preparation for war as the reinforcement of peace.

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1. The following account is mainly concerned with the development of plans for aircraft production between 1935 and May 1940. The expansion of the aircraft industry from the management point of view is explored in Malcolm Smith, 'Planning and Building the British Bomber Force, 1934-1939', in Business History Review, Vol.LIV No.1, Spring 1980.
 2. M.M.Postan, British War Production, (1956), p.14.
 3. Ibid., p.10.

The other reason was the economic and financial obstacles to expansion of the munitions industry. This kind of objection came mainly from the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

It was not until 1936, therefore, that a change in the pace of aircraft production took place which was symbolic of a new attitude towards rearmament. This was the introduction of Scheme F which was designed to equip the Air Force with more than 8,000 new aircraft over the next three years. It remained in force for two years, but failed to reach the target expected by the authors of the scheme. The next step was Scheme L, which was introduced in March 1938. This Scheme was 'to produce 12,000 aircraft in two years and it signified

... the end of the purely financial checks on rearmament ... What is more, the industrial limitations came to be felt almost at once. The flow of aircraft production failed to keep up with the industry's own forecasts, and for a long time industry appeared to be all but incapable of further rapid expansion. This also was a foretaste of the industrial problems of war-time production.

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At first the Ministry of Labour was optimistic about the supply of labour, both skilled, semi-skilled and un-skilled. It was of the opinion that skilled labour would go where it was wanted under the normal influence of supply and demand, whilst the untapped pool of over one million unemployed would, for some time ahead, provide the other kinds of labour needed. But those expectations, especially for skilled labour soon proved to be false. The labour problem of the rearmament period was the shortage of skilled workers, which not only caused a high 'turn-over' among them, but also pushed up their wage rates. At first, the Ministry of Labour

1. Postan, op.cit., p.18.

hoped to overcome this problem by persuading managers to abandon poaching voluntarily, but this was not successful. The engineering industry in the Midlands area was especially known to pay high wages and 'as late as May 1940, the Coventry employers objected to a voluntary agreement because it would not bind non-federated firms; nor could the employers agree to release some of their skilled labour until they were sure that the rest of it would be compelled to stay in their employment.'¹ The real answer to shortages of skilled workers, apart from training, was dilution and up-grading. However, little progress was made with dilution during this period. In the short run, if skilled labour was scarce, it had to be distributed fairly according to needs. 'This principle was easier to enunciate than to put into practice. For just as there was no homogeneous engineering skill, but the skills of borer, turner, tool-maker and so forth, so there was no single engineering industry but a series of engineering specialisations.'²

Soon after the outbreak of the War, the Government's expectations about the labour supply appeared to be too optimistic. It was agreed that the demand for labour required more precise forecasting. It was decided to establish an inter-departmental committee, under the chairmanship of Humbert Wolfe, the Deputy Secretary at the Ministry of Labour. The Wolfe Committee presented its report in January 1940. They did a rough and necessarily underestimating job, since they had limited their focus to general, electrical and marine engineering, together with aircraft,

1. P.Inman, Labour in the Munitions Industries (1957), p.25.

2. H.M.D.Parker, Manpower (1957), p.66

motor vehicle manufacture and shipbuilding. The manpower involved in the production of iron, steel and other raw materials used by industry was excluded. The Committee estimated that the labour force would have to be increased by over 1,300,000, or 70 per cent. by summer 1940, and by nearly 2,200,000, 117 per cent. by July 1941, in addition to the replacement of men called up for the armed services. Also, labour was needed for construction and for the chemical and explosive industries. Like other Government labour supply policies, the Wolfe Committee put the emphasis on increasing the supply of skilled workers in the engineering industries.

During the early stages of the War, little progress was made with dilution. First of all the technology itself was not always suitable for dilution. Even skilled engineers without experience in the aircraft industry sometimes found things difficult.¹ Production methods were eventually changed so that skilled and semi-skilled workers without experience of aircraft production could take up the job. Nevertheless, large scale dilution did not take place until the War-time Dilution Agreement in May 1940.

Neither trade unions nor managers were willing to promote dilution. The Amalgamated Engineering Union (hereafter the AEU), the trade union mainly concerned, was probably less opposed to dilution than they had been during the First World War, or than some of the smaller exclusively craft unions. They seemed to have realised that dilution could not be avoided

1. This occurred especially at the first stage of rearmament. Scheme C in 1935, for example, 'was still carried out by the old bench methods of production which called for a high percentage of skilled precision engineers with experience of aircraft work.'
Inman, op.cit., p.27.

in the Second World War, but it was also important to keep dilution under their control, so that they could restore pre-war conditions as soon as the War was over. This attitude of the AEU's could be seen throughout the War. Nonetheless, the AEU's opposition strengthened during the period of rearmament. They were reluctant to back dilution while any skilled men remained out of work.

The managers also hesitated to introduce dilutees. They put forward the fear of trouble with the union as the reason for their reluctance to proceed with dilution but the truth was that 'the whole force of conservatism and laziness was against dilution and the union's objection was sometimes a welcome excuse for inaction.'¹ On August 28, 1939, the AEU and the Engineering and Allied Employers' Federation (hereafter the EEF) came to an agreement on dilution which did not include the introduction of women. It was difficult to define what was skilled work, especially during the war when the sub-division of work developed much more quickly than during peace-time. It seems that the Relaxation of Custom Agreement was more favourable to the AEU than to the employers, especially to employers in the Midlands, where as we will see later, dilution and de-skilling were more advanced than in other engineering towns.

After the Wolfe Report, the Government hoped for quicker progress in dilution. On the basis of the Report, the Ministry of Labour held a series of conferences with the aim of promoting dilution. The AEU strongly objected, providing evidence that even existing capacity was being under-utilised and a number of firms were working short time. In principle, therefore, the AEU agreed on the relaxation of industrial custom on a temporary basis, but it objected to dilution until all their skilled members were fully employed.

1. Inman, op.cit., p.29.

How were women workers in the engineering industry treated during the rearmament period and the early stage of the war? Caroline Haslett, the President of the Women's Engineering Society from 1939 to 1941, later noted;

... whereas in 1915 men, for the most part, were incredulous, in 1939 they were, some of them antagonistic to the entry of women into their special fields. Possibly the majority of works managers retained the attitude of their 1915 predecessors, but the workmen themselves, with bitter memory of the nineteen twenties' slump, were unwilling to add to their competitors.

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However, this statement seems too sweeping. Most men were not irritated by women introduced into the factory as the lower ranks and, therefore, not as their rivals. But they were strongly against women in certain jobs who would be potentially competitors of male skilled workers. It was this latter kind of woman in whom the Women's Engineering Society (hereafter the WES) was particularly interested. The WES was founded in 1919 to preserve women's interest in engineering and technology which had grown during the First World War.² In the same year, when there was mass post-war unemployment, the Workers Dreadnought condemned the Government for setting up the WES to recruit women for work at lower rates.³ What

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1. Caroline Haslett, 'Women in War-time Engineering,' Presidential Address given to the Institution of Electrical Engineers on 27th September 1941, in Woman Engineer, Vol.V.No.8, Autumn 1941.
 2. Rosalind Messenger, author of the biography of Caroline Haslett who was her sister, quoted the aim of the WES. 'To promote the study and practice of engineering among women; secondly to enable technical women to meet and to facilitate the exchange of ideas respecting interests, training and employment of technical women and the publication and communication of information.' R.Messenger, The Doors of Opportunity, (1967), pp.31-32.
 3. Braybon, op. cit., pp. 179-180.

the WES aimed at was, however, different. They tried to facilitate training for women, especially young ones who wanted to have a career in the engineering industry. Since it could not be expected that women would be trained for engineering within the trade, they had to find places for would-be women engineers in technical colleges. Later, the WES started to discuss science education in girls' secondary schools with the aim of seeking more openings in the field of technology for girls with potential and ability. The WES in the twenties and thirties was no doubt, a small society of women engineers who had found their way to the knowledge and skills required in the industry in one way or another. This is reinforced by the fact that the WES had a strong connection with the British Federation of Business and Professional Women. Towards the late thirties the WES began to publicise and encourage women to gain qualifications which would enable them to enter engineering.¹ There was still no Government training scheme for women, in spite of the fact that the shortage of skilled workers was said to be serious. The WES started a series of training courses for would-be forewomen at South-East London Technical Institute in May, June and July 1939. The course was successful, and the Society decided to extend it to other parts of the country, such as Glasgow, Birmingham and Northampton. In spite of those efforts, women were not used effectively in industry during the period of rearmament and the early stage of the War. Haslett felt that the Government should have done more. 'In

1. In July 1939, the WES wrote to the national press:

'A large number of women throughout the land are preparing in a number of different ways to serve the country, if war should come. One form of work for women, however, seems to have received little attention, though its importance cannot be overestimated : we refer to munition work, and the production in general of war material and equipment. There is a section of further workers in this field which we believe would well repay training; it consists of those who would be supervisors and forewomen in control of woman labour...' Messenger, op.cit., p.111.

spite of the lessons learned during the Great War there was little evidence that any preparations were made for the widespread use of woman-power in industry.' ¹

In the first stage of the war, far from there being a shortage of women workers, unemployment among women increased because of the closing down of luxury industries and services.² The Times reported on March 5, 1940, that the number of unemployed women in the previous month was 362,222, an increase of 107,000 compared with August 1939. After this substantial increase the number started to decrease slowly from the spring of 1940. However, as late as December 1940, 334,992 women remained out of work either wholly or temporarily stopped of whom 276,898 were wholly unemployed.³ Vera Douie underlined women's frustration in the early days of the War.

With the declaration of War, the general impression was that there would be unlimited work for willing hands, and the women came forward early hoping to be of use, only to find to their bitter disappointment that they were not wanted. There was no work available. Their offers were rejected, and a feeling of frustration grew in them.

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1. Haslett, op.cit.
 2. For example, 'summer holidays came to a premature end, and substantial numbers of workers in the hotel and catering industries and in the entertainment world, particularly in seaside resorts, became redundant and were given notice.' Parker, op.cit., p.73.
 3. LAB 26/59, Note on Woman-power and the War Effort, n.d. (December 1940/January 1941?)
 4. Vera Douie, Daughters of Britain, Oxford, (1949), p.9.

Summarising the labour policy of the Government, Postan pointed out that although a labour shortage was proclaimed in a loud voice, no practical steps were taken towards mobilisation. That and the female unemployment suggested that the Government were lukewarm about women mobilisation. In short, '*Laissez faire* - do as you please - thus remained the practice, if not the theory in labour matters.' ¹

The establishment of the coalition government in May 1940 was a turning point. Two important arrangements were arrived at soon after the formation of the Churchill Government. The amendment of the Emergency Powers Act was passed on May 22, 1940. It was an extension of the original Emergency Powers Act (1939) and it gave the Minister of Labour the power to direct any person to perform any service he thought fit and set the wages, the hours and conditions of the job. On the same day, an agreement was made between the EEF and the AEU, the Transport and General Works Union (T & G.W.U) and the General and Municipal Workers Union (G. & M.W.U.) on the employment of women in the engineering industry. Negotiations had been in progress since the beginning of May 1940. The unions of male workers in industry, especially the AEU, claimed equal pay for equal work to protect their post-war position. When the agreement was finally reached on May 22, women were temporarily drafted into industry for the duration of the war. The agreement even included how much those women should be paid in the smallest details. (For the actual agreement, see the Appendix I of this Chapter).

1. Postan, op.cit., p.100.

The policy of the Government on the introduction of women in the engineering industry was straightforward, that is, 'to introduce female labour at the bottom as quickly as it can be absorbed and thus to promote up-grading and increase the supply of skilled men, such as toolmakers and fitters of which there is a very great shortage.'¹ The Government expected women to start work with minimum knowledge of the trade, and therefore Government training centres did not aim at training women at this stage.

The first shortage of unskilled workers was felt in the Royal Ordnance Factories, especially the shell-filling factories which made heavy demands for women, in the winter of 1940-41. Most of them were in isolated areas to which the workers had to travel, and the job itself was unpopular as we will see in our study of Bolton. Inman argued that the shortages in the filling factories were not absolute shortages, i.e., they occurred because of the delayed transfer of women from less essential work to the munitions industry.² But this argument misses one of the most important points in the whole process of mobilisation and demobilisation. Labour shortages in a certain job occurred not only because of the absolute lack of available women, but because of an unbalanced distribution. Women workers themselves had their own job preferences. They naturally wanted to have a job with good wage rates and working conditions, and the distribution became inevitably unfavourable from the viewpoint of the policy-makers. On top of those difficulties, transfer of workers involved their

1. Ministry of Information Reference Division (Home Front Section), Women at War in Great Britain, n.d.

2. Inman, op.cit., p.177.

geographical movement and new transport and billeting arrangements for them, which only made the situation more complicated. Those were especially weak aspects of the Government's labour supply policy. Quite frequently, the Government's manpower planning did not take those difficulties into account and the result was unavoidable delays. Although the Government resolve or to ease each difficulty as it became an obvious obstacle to their policy, it was never done before the obstacles had caused delay in the materialising of the policy and anxiety among the workers.

There had been for some time the need for more long-term planning of the labour supply. In August 1940, the Manpower Requirement Committee was formed under the chairmanship of William Beveridge. Its secret report finally came out in December 1940, and turned out to be a turning point in manpower policy in the war.¹ As a result of cross-examinations of the plans of each government department, the Committee was able to work out the number of people required over the next six months. So far as labour in the munition industries was concerned (not only engineering but also including chemicals, explosives and filling, and shipbuilding) and some civilian industries, this should be increased to 4,650,000 by August 1941. As for the demand for women, the overall result was that:

... one and a half million women would have to leave their kitchens, their hearths, or work in such relatively unimportant fields as catering and domestic service. Such numbers of inexperienced workers could only be absorbed if the Ministry of Labour could find enough highly skilled men to set

1. 'This was as much of a turning point in the economic history of the war as its author's much more famous report on social security was later to be in the political history.' Angus Calder, The People's War Britain 1939-1945, 2nd. (Panther) ed., (1971), p.270.

their tools, direct their work and so on. Training would provide a solution only in the long term. Meanwhile 'dilution' must be introduced to the point where three skilled men could do the work of four.

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The beginning of 1941 saw the implementation of the new labour policies. On January 20, Bevin presented three new proposals.² The first was the alteration of the basis of the reserved occupation. The second was the registration of people in age groups. The Registration of Employment Order was established on March 15, 1941. Under this Order, women were required to register with local employment exchanges by age groups. After registering they were to be called up for interview, unless they fell into one of the following categories;

- (a) women in full-time paid employment in an undertaking engaged to the extent of at least 75 per cent. on Government work or work for export;
- (b) women in full-time paid employment in an undertaking which had been scheduled under the Essential Works Order; 3
- (c) women who are reserved by the Schedule of Reserved Occupations, and
- (d) married women who were responsible for the household. 4

As time passed, the last condition got tightened, but in any case a woman with her children under 14 years of age living with her was not called for interview. After the interview, if a woman was identified as being able to

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1. Calder, op.cit., pp.270-271.
 2. Calder argued this was the beginning of the end of Bevin's Voluntarism. In fact, although Bevin tried to keep voluntarism in principle, after March 1941, labour policy was, in practice, under state control.
 3. For the details on this Order, see below.
 4. Labour Gazette, September, 1941

transfer to more vital war work, she was required to do so. She could state her difficulties in taking war work and if she refused to accept the decision of the interview officer at the Employment Exchange, she could appeal to the women's panel of the local employment committee.¹

The third of the new proposals was the Essential Work Order which became law on March 5, 1941. Under this Order, an employer could not dismiss his employees without the consent of a Ministry of Labour and National Service officer. Nor could a worker leave his or her job without consent. It was a compulsory resolution of the problem of 'poaching'. At the same time, by applying the Essential Work Order only to the firms whose working conditions were satisfactory, Bevin tried to use it as a means of fostering improvement.

The labour situation in 1940 and the first half of 1941 seems to be complicated and there are contradictory arguments. For example, the twenty-ninth report of the Select Committee on National Expenditure focusing on labour in the aircraft industry, pointed out both sides of the labour situation.

The evidence which the Sub-committee have had from the firms represented before them tends to show that some firms are short of labour. One firm stated that they required 1,000 men and 1,000 women in the next few months and saw little prospect of obtaining them. Most of them denied that there was appreciable waiting time in their works.

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1. The first 'call up' under this Order took place on April 19, 1941, when women of 20 and 21 years of age were required to register.
 2. Labour in the Aircraft Industry, 29th Report from the Select Committee on National Expenditure, 1941.

At the same time:

The Sub-Committee had been informed that there was a considerable amount of idle labour in the aircraft industry ... some firms were not fully employed and were nevertheless, retaining men in their service in the hope of improved conditions. ... the Sub-Committee are referring here to a far more serious matter, the suggestion that there was labour in the aircraft industry not fully employed and with no reasonable prospect of full productive employment in the near future, and that idle labour was becoming a permanent and undesirable feature in the industry generally.

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It seems also clear that the shortage of labour was by no means homogeneous all over Britain. It was different from one town to another, and from one industry to another. How far women workers were in short supply in 1941 is also arguable. Alan Bullock, author of a biography of Ernest Bevin claimed that such a shortage began in the summer of 1941.² Some of the official historians of the Second World War (Postan, Inman, etc.) have argued that there was little or no shortage of women workers in the aircraft factories even in the summer of 1941, when, as we will see later, many Coventry aircraft factories were crying out for women workers. Although there were many criticisms heard about wasting time in factories. Inman pointed out the reason why the aircraft industry was not suffering from a shortage of women, while the filling factories were badly hit by the lack of female labour.

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1. Labour in the Aircraft Industry, 29th Report from the Select Committee on National Expenditure, 1941.
 2. 'In the early months of 1941, semi-skilled and unskilled labour was already short in one or two areas (Birmingham and Sheffield, for instance) and on a limited number of industries in which the work was heavy or dangerous, conditions poor or wages low - iron-ore mining, drop forging and the shell-filling factories, the last of which needed large numbers of women workers. But the general shortage of all kinds of labour did not become serious until the summer.'
- Alan Bullock, The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin, Vol.2(1967) p.56.

This was not because the industry as a whole still enjoyed a high priority. It was due rather to other circumstances : vacancies in aircraft factories were relatively attractive, the demand for women workers in them was limited by the gradual progress of dilution and, finally, the Ministry of Aircraft Production's total demand for labour was in any case less than the Ministry of Supply's because production was developing more slowly.

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However, this kind of generalisation was useless and dangerous. One could not apply this picture to each and every city and town in Britain. For example, in some of the towns where aircraft factories were concentrated, the demand for women workers was quite heavy, and intensive recruitment drives were needed. In other parts of the country, where few sources of women's employment were available, young women without family ties were moving out to seek employment, while women with family responsibilities were not able to get any sort of job and were frustrated.

The Government's next step was the manpower survey of Autumn 1941. This survey was done to bring the Beveridge manpower report up-to-date. As a result it was estimated that 1,214,000 men and women (752,000 men and 462,000 women) were needed for the Armed Forces, Civil Defence and Women's Land Army, for the twelve months ending - June 1942. At the same time, 620,000 people (262,000 men and 358,000 women) were needed for munitions work, and together with some of the other essential works, the total demand of industry was 315,000 male workers and 460,000 female workers.² To meet the number of men required in the forces, which was raised to 778,000, the existing call-up system, which could m

1. Inman, op.cit., p.187.

2. Parker, op.cit., p.110.

468,000 men available, was not sufficient. Several solutions were suggested to fill the gap; one was to change the system of reserved occupations and the other to widen the age to make more people eligible for National Service. At the same time, the demand for women for the Auxiliary Services was unlikely to be met. It was decided that some element¹ of compulsion was needed. The War Cabinet had to agree that it was necessary to introduce legislation which would make women liable for National Service.

Both Churchill and Bevin were reluctant to conscript women, and Bevin kept on appealing to women to volunteer.¹ The press, like The Economist for example, generally favoured the conscription of women. As early as March 1941, they noted:

Mr. Bevin's appeal last week-end for the 100,000 women volunteers for factory work within the next fortnight had awakened a satisfactory response. The voluntary vanguard of women's industrial army is falling into line and will fill the gap until it is joined by the conscripted masses - if Mr. Bevin does decide in the end that conscription will be necessary. 2

The clearer it became that the voluntary system could not produce the women required, the more in favour of conscription The Economist became. In November :

1. Bullock, op.cit., pp.139-140

2. The Economist 15 March, 1941.

However the result of Bevin's appeal in March 1941 was reported to be unsatisfactory. As we will see later in this chapter there was strong criticism at the way Bevin made the appeal, even among members of the Women's Consultative Committee, which had been appointed by the Minister of Labour in the very same month.

The long and weary process of mobilising women for war work has reached yet another stage. We have now passed through the stage of appeal, the stage of exhortation, the stage of direction, and have arrived at the stage of semi-compulsion. At each stage much potential women power has been lost. Mr. Bevin has tempted them out of their homes, it is true; but in far too many cases the women thus tempted have very naturally, gone into frequently more remunerative and always more attractive, unessential occupations.

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When the announcement of conscription was made on December 2, 1941, "the cry in the press and parliament was chiefly, why had it not come before, rather than why had it come at all." ² On December 18, the National Service (No.2) Act, which included the conscription of women was passed by Parliament. Under this Act, unmarried women and widows without children who were between 20 and 30 years of age were to be called up. A woman could choose whether she would join the Armed Forces, or Civil Defence or go into industry. If she went into the Forces, she would not be posted to 'combatant duties' unless she volunteered for them. Women who were recognised to be doing vital war work would be reserved. This was the first time in the history of Britain that women were conscripted, and, although this would not wipe away the labour shortages at a stroke, manpower policy can be recognised as having reached a new stage. Thus far we have looked at the policy of mobilisation mainly from the legislative point of view. There were several policies and institutions which were aimed at sweetening the toughness of the law.

1. The Economist, 8 November, 1941.

2. Calder, op.cit., p.309

Economic incentives were one of the most important factors used to promote the mobilisation of women. One of the main economic incentives which the Government could create and manipulate were the allowances for the servicemen's dependents, especially, wives. Leila Rupp assessed the effects of the allowances policy upon the mobilisation of women in her comparative study of the USA and Germany. In the United States the level of allowances was low, but the dependant's earnings did not affect the amount of allowances she received. The German Government, on the other hand, offered much more generous allowances, but made deductions from them, if the wife was earning, even in the war factory. It is clear that the German system of the servicemen's allowances did not encourage soldiers' wives to take war work.¹ The level of allowances in Britain, were, of course, varied according to the soldier's rank, length of service etc., but in general they were low. One survey done by the War Office in the winter of 1940-41 shows that there were approximately 125,000 receiving allowances, of whom 36,000 received 13s. a week; 33,000, 18s. per week; 53,000 21s.6d. per week; and 3,000 25s. per week. The average was 18s.2d. per week. Although the amount of allowances were increased from time to time during the War, it was never enough. It was fixed regardless of the individual circumstances of the family. To assure the minimum 'living standard' for the servicemen's family, the War Office introduced 'War Service Grants' in November 1941. Under this scheme, the Government guaranteed a certain income for each 'unit' of the family (one unit was either one adult or

1. This was a difficult subject for the Nazis. On the one hand, Party ideology emphasised that the place of the married woman was at home. Moreover, the legend that the German Army had been demoralised during the first war by receiving letters from their starving families at home encouraged the payment of generous allowances. However, as the war progressed, women were increasingly needed in the factories and Government propaganda changed its course.

two children under 14 years of age). In case the family income including allowances did not reach this 'minimum standard', the dependants of servicemen could apply for the grants. The minimum income for a unit was 16s. per week when the scheme started, going up to 18s. in November 1942. The Government were anxious to use this scheme to push married women without dependant children into the factories. Commenting on the War Office's proposal, the Treasury noted that they:

... make no distinction between the wife with a family and the wife without. So far as the allowance for a childless wife who can work is concerned it seems to me that the proposals are definitely unjustifiable. We are anxious to induce women who have no household commitment to take work....

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In fact, the grant was not available to married women who did not have children under 14 years of age living with them, unless they had any special reasons preventing them taking up work. The War Service Grant had, however, built in disadvantages. Both soldiers' promotion and wives' employment reduced the amount of grant or cut it out entirely. The Government was afraid that grants might discourage the soldier from going for promotion and their wives from war work. The Army Mail Censor reported several letters from wives of soldiers who had recently obtained promotion, and as a consequence an increase of pay, trying to dissuade soldiers from taking

1. WO 32/9823. Letter from The Treasury to the War Office, dated 15 November, 1941.

further promotion because the wives were afraid it would cause a further reduction in their War Service Grants.¹ It was suggested that this was due to a misunderstanding about the aim of the grant by wives and possibly the soldiers themselves. The Government was well aware of the harmful effects of this kind of misunderstanding, but it was not certain how widespread it was or what it should do about it.

Certainly married women with families were awarded the grants although the Government were anxious to recruit them as part-time workers. However, it was realised that it was discouraging that the amount they could earn would lead to almost the same amount of reduction in War Service Grants. To give economic incentives to those women, the Government decided to make an allowance of 20s. per week for a wife with dependent children and 15s. in other cases. It was also expected that this would meet the extra expenses involved by the wives' employment. This allowance was also made for wives who took full-time employment.² The levels of the servicemen's allowances were low and, the evidence suggests that many soldiers wives found it difficult to make ends meet. So it could be argued that such levels acted as an economic incentive to push women (both with and without domestic responsibilities) into war work. The Government, then, made a crucial distinction between women with children under 14 years of age and those without. Although the Government encouraged the former to take up war work, especially on a part-time basis, whenever.

1. WO 32/9823. Army Mail Censor, 20 October, 1943.

2. LAB 8/584, n.d. (noted: "Not to be printed or broadcast before 00.30 hours 18th September 1942").

they could, they did not deliberately intend to use their policy on servicemen's allowances to push them into paid work. As for those women without children, by not allowing them to qualify for War Service Grants, the Government intentionally put economic pressure upon them. In their womanpower policy, the most important distinction among women was whether a woman had domestic responsibilities which were represented by children under the school-leaving age.

Not only did the Government pursue policies towards women designed to push them into paid war work. It also cooperated with other institutions to help persuade women of their duty. In particular it was essential for the Minister of Labour to obtain the help of women experts and leading organisations of women if the womanpower policy was to go smoothly. As Bullock has pointed out:

Bevin was very much alive to the social problem which the conscription of women would involve and the political repercussions which it could create if clumsily handled.

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Bevin did, certainly, seek assistance from women themselves, but that process seemed to be a long one, and it often caused irritation and protests by women themselves, especially among professional women whom Bevin most expected to help him in making his womanpower policy. As we have already seen, the first effects of the War on women's employment was their unemployment. Professional women were no exception. The British

1. Bullock, op.cit., p.56.

Federation of Business and Professional Women lobbied women M.P.'s demanding the fullest utilisation of women, especially of those like themselves. After having a series of informal meetings with Lady Astor, a Conservative M.P., the Women Power Committee was established with twenty-one female members, of whom ten were M.P.'s, three trade unionists, and the rest drawn from various women's organisations. It was an entirely unofficial body and had no power in policy making apart from that of a pressure group.¹

As the official body to assist the Minister of Labour in womanpower policy, Bevin appointed the Women's Consultative Committee in March 1941. It had eight members,² met every fortnight, and discussed any problems connected with women's mobilisation. One of its first jobs was to criticise severely the way Bevin and the Ministry of Labour organised recruitment campaigns, especially that of March 1941.

The eight women Mr. Bevin appointed as his consultative committee have decided to tell Parliament they do not approve of the way he has approached the women of this country to take part in the war effort. They met yesterday and agreed that his procedure was wrong psychologically. They feel the Labour Minister should have appealed to women emotionally rather than given them a series of orders and regulations. One of the committee said to me last night; 'Women are eager to serve. But they feel they have not been taken seriously into Mr. Bevin's confidence ... 'We are forced to tell Parliament tomorrow that we should have been given fuller details of what is wanted of us, a fuller explanation of the part we might play in achieving victory.'

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1. For example, in July 1940, the British Federation of Business and Professional Women gave a luncheon to celebrate the foundation of the Women Power Committee, to which Bevin was invited. In his speech he said that he had been aware of women's willingness to serve and promised to take positive steps towards the utilisation of women power.
 2. The eight members of the Committee were:
The Countess of Limerick, D.Elliot, F.Hancock, M.Maxse, E.Summerskill, M.Sutherland and I.Ward.
 3. Mass Observation Topic File 615.
'Why appeal to Women?' Criticism of Bevin's appeal to women to contribute to the war effort', 20 March, 1941.

In fact, how to organise the recruitment campaigns for women workers remained one of the main interests of the Women's Consultative Committee. When the National Service (No.2) Act was passed, the Committee felt that changes were needed in the publicity on women and war work from emotional appeals to informative ones to help women to realise how the National Service Act would affect their position so that they could make up their minds in advance which form of national service they would take when they were called up. This would help make them more willing recruits. In particular, it should be made clear 'that the whole of the proposals affecting women are part of a properly worked out plan in which each woman has her place.'¹

The Ministry of Labour sought cooperation with many different women's organisations in order to recruit women. Women's sections of all three political parties, trade unions catering for women, numerous associations of women teachers, of business and/or professional women, and university women, religious associations, and organisations such as the Girl Guides or the Mothers' Union, were all asked for help. Altogether 68 organisations were contacted. The Ministry hoped that these associations would encourage local branches to cooperate with regional officers of the Ministry to recruit women within the association who did not normally work by impressing upon them the urgency of the need for women workers.²

1. LAB 8/584, Circular of Womens Consultative Committee 45 n.d. (winter of 1941-1942.)

2. For details, see LAB 8/107, Autumn 1941.

The Ministry of Labour was especially keen to gain the help of the WES. In September 1940, Bevin appointed Caroline Haslett as his advisor on questions concerning the training of women for munitions work.¹ She later joined the Women's Consultative Committee. Around the same time he also appointed V. Holmes, another leading member of the WES, as Technical Officer attached to the Training Department.² Individual members of the WES took the opportunity presented by the war to spread interest in engineering among women and to improve their working conditions. Haslett was particularly enthusiastic both in helping the Government and in persuading women to take up engineering work. She gave a series of radio talks for this purpose under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour. They aimed to explain engineering work to the 'ordinary' woman who might feel that it was nothing to do with her. While she stressed the importance of women's willingness to learn,³ she adopted

1. Messenger described the first meeting of Bevin and Haslett:

"Mr. Bevin seemed to appear to treat Caroline in somewhat cavalier fashion, until she let slip the information that she had worked on the factory floor at Cochran's Boiler Works for the princely sum of ten shillings a week."

Messenger, op.cit., p.116.

2. The number of technical officers had been increased to seven by September 1943. The work of technical officers was complicated and required both technical knowledge and understanding of industrial relations, especially those relating to the introduction of women.

3. Here is a story which Haslett told in the radio series, of an elderly woman who applied for a training course involving the use of a micrometer: "Do you understand decimals?" asked the official. "No" was the frank reply. "Then I am afraid you will be unsuitable for this particular training scheme." "Not so far" retorted the worthy lady. "I have a grandson". The official looked surprised. "We are training women", he emphasised "not boys". "You'll train me, then" she replied "For my grandson will teach me these decimal things." She went home and spoke to her grandson, a youngster still at school. Every evening, the two of them sat at the kitchen table, until the old lady had mastered the principles of the decimal system. In triumph, she went back to the official. "Now show me that micro-what-ever-it-is" she said."

Messenger, op.cit., p.122.

methods often used in the United States, to compare the operation of machinery with small domestic tools familiar to women.

Caroline put over her message by linking the new processes women would have to learn to the familiar operations of the sewing machine. She took as her example a capstan lathe on which six separate tools had to be set up, each tool performing a different operation, accurate to thousandths of an inch. "It is almost", she informed her unseen audience, "as if instead of an ordinary sewing machine you had one that could cut out, hem together, embroider and button hole all at the same time, provided the right gadgets were accurately geared together.

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The members of the WES took these jobs with enthusiasm but not without criticism. Women technical officers, working on the shop floor together with both workers and management staff, found a number of problems which were hindering the smooth and full use of womanpower in the industry. One technical officer told a meeting of the WES about those difficulties which she had met. She did not hesitate to criticise the Government's half-hearted attitudes along with those of the management. She especially mentioned the process of appointment of women technical officers.

He (Bevin - N.N.) first cast his eyes on the WES and Miss Holmes ... He gave her the job of organisation and of advising him on the utilisation of women - women of the whole of England, Scotland and Wales. Then he

1. Ibid., p.122.

realised that she would need assistance... and he gave her this assistance by providing two more technical women, and then two more, until now there were seven altogether. My own area is that of the five south-western counties of England, Wiltshire Dorset, Somersetshire, Devon, Cornwall, I have to see the workers and shop stewards and the foremen and the managers; I have to talk to all of them 1

The Women's Consultative Committee was also concerned with the way women were introduced into the engineering industry. In January 1942, the Committee invited three representatives from the Engineering and Allied Industries Employer's National Federation to their meeting to hear the employers' viewpoint about women workers in the engineering industry, and especially about the training scheme. One of the members strongly attacked the employers' policy on training for women workers.

They had evidence which suggested that not only was the scale of training inadequate but also the skill which women acquired at Government training Centres was not always satisfactorily utilised when they went into the factory. It appeared that the policy of some industrialists was to regard all women as 'green' labour, and that there was a prejudice against training women and a tendency to postpone such training until the eleventh hour in the hope that skilled men would not be called up for the Forces. 2

Another member of the Committee also criticised the slow progress of the scheme of part-time employment for married woman.

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1. 'A Square Peg - a Round Hole or A Woman Technical Officer talks of Problems', in Woman Engineer, Summer 1943, Vol.V.No.15.
 2. LAB 8/584, Minutes of the 21st meeting, 7 January, 1942.

In defending their position, the employers clearly showed that they needed women first and foremost as unskilled workers, with some for semi-skilled work, but not any for the skilled jobs:

Women would be trained as they were needed and it must be borne in mind that even the woman who was engaged on a simple operation was replacing a man. Women who showed promise would automatically be upgraded until they became fully semi-skilled ... he suggested that the training of women for skilled work was at certain stages less important than immediate output and pointed out that considerable numbers of older semi-skilled men had been trained to do skilled jobs. Sir Alexander Ramsay added that this problem would probably solve itself as the need arose; hitherto there had been no extensive call-up of skilled men.

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Therefore, despite some women's high expectation of the possibilities for women in engineering, the employers had little intention of introducing and training women to be semi-skilled, let alone skilled workers.

During the War, a number of employers expressed their surprise when they found out that women could do much better than their expectation, and often Government propaganda and even women authors on female participation in the war effort, proudly used those quotations to encourage women. Of course such surprises showed that the employers had had low expectations of women's abilities in the engineering industry. Moreover, to accept that women could be as good as male workers, or even better than them as

1. LAB 8/584, Minutes of the 21st Meeting,⁵ January , 1942.

engineering workers was one thing; to pay them equally was quite another. There was a clear double standard on the employer's side, and even when a woman was undertaking a man's job without any additional supervision or assistance, the management seldom paid men's rates to her, despite the Agreement between the unions and the Employers Federation.¹

To sum up, the womanpower policy, both legislative and otherwise, had been patchy and inconsistent. Until the establishment of the Coalition Government it was not far from no policy at all. The appointment of Bevin as the Minister of Labour, and gradually tightening labour situations inevitably led to changes in womanpower policy. Despite Bevin's 'voluntarism' it was doubtful if his womanpower policy was really encouraging women to volunteer for war work. The Government, the employers, and trade unions in part, had an unspoken agreement that they were going to use women to fill gaps, as the bottom layer of the industrial structure for the duration of the War. Neither the Government nor employers were enthusiastic about training facilities for women. The first and foremost concern of the trade unions was not to let women be their potential competitors when the War was over.

1. Amabel Williams-Ellis came across an obvious case of this while she was visiting a number of factories all over Britain.

"In one Scottish factory the manager was telling me how well a group of girls were working and how quick they were. There was a casting job which women had never tackled before, and to which he had set them because he could get no more men ... This management trained girls for seven or eight weeks and put them on to work. The girls' production figures crawled up and up; soon they had beaten the men; in a little while more they were producing twice as much as the men, and finally, instead of seven castings per shift (average for two men - N.N.) they made over forty. "That sounds almost impossible. Perhaps you 'broke down' the job and made the work easier or quicker in some way?" "I assure you we didn't!" answered the manager ... Presently I asked "How do the girls get paid for it? If it's piece-work they must be the ones who are really coining it?" "Oh, we don't pay them as much as we used to pay the men!" was the answer.

. Amabel Williams-Ellis, Women in War Factories, (1943), p.45.

The Ministry of Labour appeals to women were very inadequate and lacked understanding of the women's viewpoint. As the Women's Consultative Committee pointed out, the approaches by Bevin and his Ministry were not encouraging women by supplying them with sufficient information, and asking them to understand the nation's urgent need. At the same time, the tightened labour situation made it necessary to force women into war work, by various orders. It was not surprising that these contradictory attitudes of the Ministry of Labour finally made the conscription of women unavoidable. The disappointment of the willing women caused by unemployment in the early days of the War, low expectations and lukewarm attitudes of employers and the Government helped to produce apathy among them. In Chapters 2 & 3 we will see how women reacted to the regional recruiting appeals in Coventry and Bolton, and how the reactions were different in these two towns and why. But, generally speaking, one of the reasons why women did not come forward as had been expected, can be laid at the door of the Ministry of Labour.

Before we proceed further, we will see how the mobilisation and red stribution changed during the first three years of the War. We will also examine the composition of womanpower broken down into age groups and marital condition. Industry can be divided into three categories. Group I included metal manufacture, engineering, motors, aircraft and vehicles, ship-building and ship-repairing, metal goods, chemicals, explosives, paints and oils, i.e. the munitions industries. Group II was what was called 'other essential work', which was, if not munitions industries, important in order to keep the production of munitions going and also vital to the continuance of the basic life of the people. It

included agriculture and fishing, mining and quarrying, transport and shipping, food, drink and tobacco, gas, water and electricity supply, and national and local government services. Group III comprised the less essential industries, including textiles and clothing, building and civil engineering, distributive, banking, insurance, entertainment, professions, hotel, restaurant, and other miscellaneous services.¹

Table 1-1 on page 41 shows changes in the occupational distribution of male workers between 1931 and 1943. Table 1-2 shows similar changes for women.²

The number of men in the Armed Forces and Civil Defence naturally increased throughout the whole period, especially between 1939 and 1940. The re-distribution of men within industry was accompanied, during the thirties and the early stages of the War, by a decline in the number of unemployed which seems to have ended by 1941. Absorption from the 'less essential industries' is characteristic after 1940. Since most men between 14 and 64 years of age will work both in peace-time and war-time, the total population of male workers did not increase remarkably. It was re-allocation that took place among the male population.

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1. It is very difficult to decide whether a certain industry was essential or inessential. It seems sensible to classify 'food, drink and tobacco' as essential industries, but should 'building and civil engineering' be placed in the less essential category? Certainly tobacco and to some extent, drink were regarded as luxuries in war-time, and therefore as less essential. On the other hand, building and civil engineering were important for the construction of new aircraft factories, for example. The classification is done to make it coincide with tables from the Manpower Committee of the War Cabinet. But indoor domestic servants were not included in any categories of industry and, therefore, were excluded from the total working population.
 2. The occupation tables of the 1931 Census Report have been used, whereas the figures for the years 1939, 1940, 1941 and 1942 have been taken from the surveys of the Ministry of Labour and National Service.

As for female workers, the same redistribution took place as for the male workers, namely, an increase in the number of women workers in the munitions industries and in the other essential industries. The number of women in the munitions industries increased by about 350 per cent, and women in the other essential industries quadrupled in this period. In 1931, women made up 7.4 per cent. of the labour force in Group I, and 5.4 per cent. in Group II. In 1939 these figures had grown to 16.6 per cent. and 15.9 per cent. respectively. It is clear that there was no significant change in the distribution of women between 1939 and 1940, other than the increased number of women in the Armed Forces and Civil Defence. The introduction of women into the munitions industries and the substitution of male workers by women in Group II industries seems to have accelerated after 1940. The total number of women working in industry increased by 8.4 per cent. from 1931 to 1939, and unemployed women decreased by as much as 60.4 per cent. Indoor domestic servants complicate matters. Domestic service was the biggest occupation for women even in the thirties, but it is unclear from this table how the number of women indoor servants changed over time. In 1931, there were 1,364,400 women indoor domestic servants in Britain, about 22 per cent. of all occupied women. Trends in the number of women indoor servants might affect the whole employment situation. Ashworth wrote about women's paid work during the thirties;

... it is probable that the proportion of women seeking paid employment declined a little in the thirties. This cannot be stated certainly because the Ministry of Labour Statistics had (until 1948) omissions of a kind which caused them slightly but persistently to understate the proportion of women in the labour force. 1

1. W.Ashworth, An Economic History of England 1870-1939, (1960), p.418.

TABLE 1 - 1

MANPOWER DISTRIBUTION 1931-1942 - MALES 14-64 YEARS OF AGE (Thousands)
 Index 1939 = 100

	1931	1939	1940	1941	1942
Armed Forces and Civil Defence	259 (100)	560 (216)	2,510 (969)	3,602 (1290)	4,088 (1578)
Industry					
Group I	1,413 (100)	2,600 (184)	2,885 (204)	3,140 (222)	3,285 (234)
Group II	3,775 (100)	4,487 (118)	4,256 (112)	4,176 (111)	4,061 (108)
Group III	6,384 (100)	5,996 (93.9)	5,019 (78.6)	4,204 (65.9)	3,646 (57.1)
Industry Total	11,572 (100)	13,083 (113)	12,160 (105)	11,520 (99.6)	10,992 (95.0)
Unemployed	1,834 (100)	1,013 (55.2)	432 (23.6)	100 (n11)	61 (n11)
Grand Total	13,665 (100)	14,656 (107)	15,104 (111)	15,222 (111)	15,141 (111)

Source: On Table 1-2.

TABLE 1 - 2

MANPOWER DISTRIBUTION 1931-1942 - FEMALE 14-59 YEARS OF AGE (Thousands)

	1931	1939	1940	1941	1942
Armed Forces and Civil Defence	nil	nil	108 (100)	164 (152)	387 (358)
Industry					
Group I	114 (100)	506 (444)	674 (591)	1,100 (965)	1,705 (1500)
Group II	217 (100)	850 (392)	983 (452)	1,266 (583)	1,490 (687)
Group III	3,721 (100)	3,481 (93.5)	3,596 (96.6)	3,482 (93.6)	3,307 (88.9)
Industry Total	4,052 (100)	4,837 (119)	5,253 (129)	5,848 (144)	6,502 (160)
Unemployed	649 (100)	257 (39.6)	211 (32.5)	98 (nil)	4 (nil)
Grand Total	4,701 (100)	5,094 (108)	5,572 (119)	6,110 (130)	6,915 (147)

Sources: 1931 : The 1931 Census Occupational Table.

1939-42 : Parker, op.cit., Statistical Appendix, Table 2, pp.481-482.

Figures at June each year.

Therefore the increase in the total number of working women in the thirties shown above could be a mere transfer from domestic service to other industries which were included in the Ministry of Labour calculations. The number of women in paid work, however, had been increasing rapidly during the first three years of the War.

If we look now at the age distribution and marital condition of women workers, we have to rely on certain wartime calculations. In the summer of 1942, for example, the Manpower Sub-Committee of the War Cabinet produced a report entitled 'Manpower position July 1940-June 1942', which showed both the actual labour situation in the middle of 1942 and the requirement for manpower for the following twelve months by the Armed, Forces, Civil Defence and by Industry. The Report also analysed the age-composition and the marital condition of women. The category of industry is the same as that of Table 1-1 and 1-2. Table 1-3 shows the marital condition of civilian women (both working and not working) and whether they had children under 14 years of age living with them. At the time the material was presented, about two-thirds of women were married and about two-thirds of them were living with their dependent children. This shows that the mobilisation of women was above all the mobilisation of married women, and it was absolutely essential to prepare facilities for child care.¹ Table 1-4 shows the proportion of women working

1. This will be reinforced by the fact that about 70 per cent. of single women were working in peace-time. Therefore, if a large number of *new* women workers were needed, it had to be met by recruiting married women. As for the nursery facilities, although the Ministry of Health granted 100 per cent. of their construction costs, and a large proportion of the running costs, the actual administration was done by the local authorities and there were large differences from one region to another. We will return to this problem in the local case study.

TABLE 1 - 3

AGE GROUP AND THE MARITAL CONDITIONS OF WOMEN (Thousands)

Age Group	Grand Total	Single	Married & Widowed	With Child Under 14	Without Child Under 14
14-17	1,373	1,368 (99.6%)	5 (0.4%)	Say 2 (0.2%)	Say 3 (0.2%)
18-20	1,038	918 (88.4%)	120 (11.6%)	35 (3.4%)	85 (8.2%)
21-30	3,569	1,357 (37.9%)	2,215 (62.1%)	1,315 (26.9%)	900 (25.2%)
31-40	3,790	720 (19.0%)	3,070 (81.0%)	2,370 (62.5%)	700 (18.5%)
41-59	5,940	1,040 (17.5%)	4,900 (82.5%)	2,900 (48.8%)	2,000 (33.7%)
Total	15,710	5,400 (34.3%)	10,310 (65.6%)	6,622 (42.2%)	3,688 (23.4%)

Source: Manpower Position July 1941 - June 1942. CAB 92/103.

TABLE 1 - 4

DISTRIBUTION OF WOMEN IN INDUSTRY BY AGE-GROUP

Age Group	Whole Population	Occupied Women	Group I	Group II	Group III
14-17	1,373	949 (69.0%)	190 (13.8%)	134 (9.8%)	625 (45.5%)
18-20	1,038				
21-30	3,569	8,397	4,346 (51.8%)	1,354 (16.1%)	1,083 (12.9%)
31-40	3,790				
41-59	5,940	1,380 (23.2%)	236 (4.0%)	312 (5.3%)	832 (14.0%)

Source: Manpower Position July 1941 - June 1942, CAB 92/103.

in a certain age group (owing to the way in which the original report was aggregated, we cannot divide women between 18 and 40 years of age into smaller age-groups) and their distribution into each type of industry. Although about 70 per cent. of girls between 14 and 17 were economically active, two-thirds of them were working in the Group III industries. A quarter of the older women (41 - 59 age group) were working. Two-thirds of those were in 'less essential industries'. Table 1-5 is a cross-classification of age-groups and the type of industry to which they belonged. It shows that in the less essential industries, there were more juvenile workers (14-17 years of age) and older ones (41-59 years of age) than the overall distribution would warrant. In other words, women aged between 18 and 40 were rather concentrated in the essential industries, especially in the munitions industries. It seems reasonable that adult, yet relatively young women, worked in the munitions industries, which were usually recognised to be heavier than many jobs included in the 'less essential industries' category, such as commerce or the distributive trades. Table 1-6 is a cross-classification of the marital condition and types of industry. Four out of ten women in the munitions industries were married and there were more married women there than the overall level would suggest. Table 1-7 is the same classification for women aged between 18 and 40. In this age group, single women were more likely to be working in Group II industries and married women in those of Group I and Group III. It seems, from Table 1-7, that when married women were recruited, they went either straight into the munitions industries, or into the less essential industries to release single women for more essential war work, while

TABLE 1 - 5WOMEN IN INDUSTRY BY AGE GROUP (Thousands)

	Age Groups			Total
	14-17	18-40	41-59	
I. Munitions	190 (10.7%)	1,354 (76.1%)	236 (13.2%)	1,700
II. Other Essential Work	134 (8.8%)	1,083 (70.8%)	312 (20.4%)	1,529
III. Less Essential Work	625 (18.5%)	1,909 (55.9%)	932 (24.5%)	3,357
TOTAL	949 (14.2%)	4,346 (65.2%)	1,380 (20.7%)	6,675

Source: Manpower Position July 1941-June 1942 CAB 92/103.

TABLE 1 - 6WOMEN IN INDUSTRY BY MARITAL CONDITION (Thousands)

	Single	Married or Widowed	Total
I. Munitions Industry	1,053 (59.2%)	727 (40.8%)	1,760
II. Other Essential Industry	1,006 (65.8%)	523 (34.2%)	1,529
III. Less Essential Industry	2,116 (63.0%)	1,241 (37.0%)	3,357
Total	4,175 (62.6%)	2,491 (37.4%)	6,666

Source: Manpower Position July 1941- June 1942 CAB 92/103.

TABLE 1 - 7WOMEN WORKERS AGED 18 - 40 BY MARITAL CONDITION (Thousands)

	Single	Married and widowed	Total
I. Munitions Industry	785 (58.0%)	569 (42.0%)	1,354
II. Other Essential Industry	725 (66.9%)	358 (33.1%)	1,083
III. Less Essential Industry	1,107.7 (58.0%)	801.3 (42.0%)	1,909
Total	2,617.7 (60.2%)	1,728.3 (39.6%)	4,346

Sources: Manpower Position July 1941-June 1942 CAB 92/103.

single women who were in Group II industries seem to stay where they had been rather than be transferred into the munitions industries. The survey also shows what proportion of women were occupied in each category of industry : munitions industries 35.9 per cent. (16.1 per cent. in 1939), other essential industries 27 per cent., and the less essential industries 48 per cent.

Having critically surveyed the Government's early manpower policies in general we now need to see how these worked out in our particular case studies. Coventry had been a munitions centre in the First World War and would clearly be so again, and it is to Coventry that we go first.

APPENDIX I : Memorandum of Agreement between Engineering and Allied
Employers' National Federation and Amalgamated Engineering
Union.

Women workers may be employed on work of a suitable character hitherto performed by labour male labour, subject to the following conditions.

- (a) Such women workers shall serve a probationary period of eight weeks at the women's national schedule of time rates and bonus.
- (b) At the end of the probationary period and for a further period of twelve weeks the women workers shall receive an increase as follows:
 - (i) The basic rate shall be increased by one-third of the difference between the national women's schedule basic rate and the basic rate of the men they replace.
 - (ii) The national women's bonus shall be increased in the same way by one-third of the difference between that bonus appropriate to the men they replace.
- (c) At the end of the 20 weeks and for a further period of twelve weeks the women shall be paid:
 - (i) A basic rate equal to 75 per cent. of the basic rate of the men replaced.
 - (ii) A national bonus to 75 per cent. of the national bonus appropriate to the men replaced.
- (d) Thereafter:
 - (i) In respect of women who are unable to carry out their work without additional supervision or assistance, the rate and bonus shall be negotiable and arranged according to the nature of the work and ability displayed.
 - (ii) Women, however, who are able to carry out the work of the men they replace without additional supervision or assistance shall, at the end of 32 weeks, receive their basic rate and national bonus appropriate to the men they replace.

APPENDIX II : Women's Earnings During the Second World War.

In discussing employment and working conditions, it is impossible to avoid an examination of the financial side. What is most interesting in women's economic motivation in taking one kind of job or another, is the 'earnings' which they got rather than the wage rates. However, pay is made up of basic rates and various bonuses and allowances and it is extremely difficult to work out how much a woman actually took home in her pay packet. Although during the War, some women's basic rates and some bonuses were negotiated nationally, those were applied to women engaged in 'Work commonly performed by women' before the War. And its application to each district was left to the negotiation with the local 'Engineering Employers' Association and trade unions in the area.

Within the national rate, younger women (under 21 years of age) were paid according to their age. As the agreement between the EEF and trade unions shows (Appendix I) women who had taken over 'men's jobs' were paid by a different system. The local conference paper, for example, shows that basic rates were negotiated carefully within the small section and grade of the job. The wage which appeared in the local conference paper was 'rate' and not earnings. An increase of 1s. in basic rates would probably result in 1s. increase of earnings, but the absolute amount of earnings was never clear from the local conference papers. The situation was made more difficult by the fact that in the case of piece-work the ability of women workers was one of the crucial factors in deciding her earnings. In the case of time-rate workers, over-time must be considered.

It has been pointed out that rates were higher for night-shift and Sunday work. With so many factors to decide women's earnings, it has proved impossible to offer reliable statistics other than a vague national average.

The Ministry of Labour and National Service took the statistics series of average earnings in principal industries, by sex and age. They divided workers into four categories, namely men (aged 21 and over), youths and boys (14-20), women (aged 18 and over), and girls (14-17). Table 1-8 shows the average weekly earnings of workers in industry between October 1938 and October 1946. From the table, we can see that women's average earnings were around half of those of men throughout the War, while girls were earning roughly two-thirds of the earnings of youths and boys. The peak for war-time earnings was reached in 1944 except for girls, and between July 1944 and January 1946, earnings were on a down-ward trend. After January 1946, earnings started to rise again. The earnings of women and girls in October 1946 were higher than the war-time peak, those of youths and boys more or less level with the war-time peak, while those of men were lower than July 1944. It seems that the shortage of female and juvenile workers, which will be examined in chapters 6, 7 and 8, caused a rapid increase of earnings for those workers during the above period.

The most interesting statistics from our point of view concerns the difference of women's earnings between industries. Table 1-9 shows

women's (excluding girls') average earnings in several main industries between July 1940 and October 1946. The table shows that women in the so-called munitions industries (chemical and explosives, metal and engineering) were generally earning more than women in other industries. Payment in the motor vehicle/aircraft factories was especially good throughout the War years. Average earnings in the cotton industry, for example, the best in textiles, were 17s.9d. lower than those of the motor vehicle/aircraft industry, and 9s.5d lower than in the engineering industry in July 1944. Providing a woman worker in 'other industries', whose earnings were average in that industry could earn the average in the 'munitions industry', a woman could have a chance to earn about 10s. to £1 more by moving into the latter industry. Although this does not mean that a particular individual could always earn more in the munitions industry than any other industries, the general picture was that a woman worker was better-paid in the war factories.

TABLE 1-8

Average Weekly Earnings in Industry (Grand Total)

	Men	Youths/Boys	Women	Girls
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
October 1938	69.0	26.1	32.6	18.6
July 1940	89.0	35.1	38.11	22.4
July 1941	99.0	41.11	43.11	25.0
July 1942	111.5	46.6	54.2	30.3
July 1943	121.3	47.2	62.2	33.10
July 1944	124.4	47.4	64.3	34.11
July 1945	121.4	45.6	63.2	35.1
January 1946	114.1	43.4	59.10	34.3
October 1946	120.9	46.6	65.3	38.3

Source: Labour Gazette, February 1947.

TABLE 1-9
AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS OF WOMEN (OVER 18 YEARS OF AGE) 1940-1946

Industry	July 1940	July 1941	July 1942	July 1943	July 1944	July 1945	October 1946
Chemical and Explosive	32s.11d	45s.10d.	57s.10d.	65s.8d	67s.8d	64s.11d	65s.3d
General Engineering.	47s.7d	50s.7d	60s.7d	69s.8d	70s.10d	68s.9d	71s.2d.
Electrical Engineering	47s.6d	47s.2d.	56s.6d.	64s.8d.	64s.9d.	64s.9d.	71s.4d.
Motor Vehicle/Aircraft.	50s.2d.	54s.9d.	68s.11d.	79s.2d.	82s.10d.	78s.2d.	78s.2d.
Metal and Engineering Total.	43s.11d	48s.2d.	60s.7d.	69s.10d.	71s.0d.	69s.1d.	70s.7d.
Cotton	44s.1d.	44s.7d.	51s.2d.	57s.3d.	59s.9d.	64s.1d.	68s.3d.
Rayon/Nylon	37s.0d.	41s.2d.	51s.4d.	57s.3d.	63s.5d.	63s.3d.	69s.3d.
Textile Total	39s.9d.	41s.10d.	48s.5d.	52s.11d.	55s.7d.	58s.2d.	63s.7d.
Clothing	36s.5d.	41s.6d.	47s.1d.	50s.3d.	53s.4d.	56s.7d.	63s.0d.
Food, Drink, Tobacco.	35s.10d.	40s.4d.	45s.11d.	50s.10d.	53s.11d.	62s.4d.	60s.7d.
Miscellaneous Industry	38s.0d.	44s.1d.	51s.5d.	59s.3d.	62s.5d.	63s.7d.	68s.5d.

Source: Labour Gazette, 1940-1947.

Nevertheless, while there was a good deal of contemporary belief that women in the munitions industry were earning handsome money, such as £7 to £10, and some women actually mentioned that they were earning around this amount, the statistics show that women in the motor vehicle/aircraft industry, which was one of the best paid trades, were earning just over £4 on average at the War-time peak. In fact, in July 1944, even men's average earnings in this industry were just less than £8 (159s.11d). Women who could earn more than £6 a week during the war were either on piece-rates and very efficient workers or doing a lot of overtime. Such earnings seem rather exceptional among women war workers. Generally speaking, women war workers were earning £3 to £4, while those who had been left behind in other industries were earning £2. to £3. This meant that women were certainly better off in the munitions industry, providing her entering into war work did not involve much extra expense. This condition was not easily satisfied. We will see in Chapter 2, a Coventry woman's balance sheet. Her wage of £3.5s. a week was around average, and her opinion, after paying all the extra costs involved, was that the actual gains were small. It must be borne in mind that, although women had a chance to earn more in war industry, the earnings which women could expect was not much higher than that from other industries. Therefore, if obtaining war work involved extra expenses, women's gains were small, sometimes negligible, some women may even have lost financially. It was right to argue that financial incentives were driving women into war work, but wrong to assume that the pay women got in this industry was always much better than other industries.

Towards the end of the War, women's earnings in some sections of munitions saw a small decline between July 1944 and July 1945, while those in other industries, especially cotton, rose partly as a result of the

shortage of female labour. However, between July 1945 and October 1946, women's earnings increased again and overtook the War-time peak with the exception of the motor vehicle/aircraft industry where women were still earning best. This coincides with the general trend of women's and girls earnings. The overall shortage of women workers resulted in both the rise of wage rates and over-time which together pushed up women's earnings. Table 1-9 therefore, provides merely a guide when we come to discuss differences in women's wages between industries in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 2 : IN A CENTRE OF MUNITIONS PRODUCTION : COVENTRY 1936-41

.... A lady named Flo. came to work with us (at Morris Motors - N.N.) on one of the smaller capstans ... and she loved it too, she said her husband who had been called up to the Army had worked at the Morris and how sorry she'd felt for him when he came from work saying how tired he was and how hard the work was. After enquiring around among the older men who were still working there she found out that Gerald (her husband) had worked on that very same machine. Just let him come home moaning from work to me again says Flo, and he'll get a piece of my mind. I often wonder if he did as I didn't see her again.

(Letter from J.Hampson, an ex-war worker in Coventry, dated 15 September, 1981).

Chapters 2 and 3 are case studies of Coventry and Bolton on how the recruitment campaigns were organised and how women reacted to them. What were the problems which were brought out by the recruitment drives? What were the similarities and differences between the two towns? The differences between the local socio-economic backgrounds of the two towns will be fully discussed in each chapter. In short, Coventry was an example of a munitions centre which demanded a huge number of workers, while in Bolton, there was a mixed labour situation; it had several munitions factories which engaged women workers, and it also had to supply women workers for the nearby Royal Ordnance filling factory. Moreover, although categorised as 'non-essential' but not non-important industry, there was cotton in Bolton itself. As far as the employment of women in the inter-war period was concerned, both towns had entirely different characteristics, which, inevitably produced different local practices with regard to married women's paid work, and, possibly a different ideology about women's place. One of the most important points of comparison will be to ask if and how those differences affected women's reactions to the recruitment drives.

The first motor-car firm in Britain was built in Coventry in 1896 by Daimler. Since then Coventry has been a centre of motor-car manufacturing, and thanks to this 'new industry', it saw relatively low unemployment rates during the 1930s.¹ A good description of the atmosphere of Coventry in the mid-thirties can be found in J.B.Priestley's English Journey.

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1. Richard Croucher pointed out that unemployment in Coventry was always more than 2% below the national average throughout the inter-war years. R.Croucher, 'Communist Politics and Shop Stewards in Engineering' 1935-1946, Warwick Ph.D., 1978. passim. However, the seasonal unemployment was obvious in the motor factory, the workers were out of work for about three months each year.

These picturesque remains of the old Coventry are besieged by an army of nuts, bolts, spanners, gauges, drills and machine lathes, for in a thick ring round this ancient centre are the motor-car and cycle factories, the machine tool makers, the magneto manufacturers, and the electrical companies. Beyond them again are whole new quarters, where the mechanics and fitters and turners and furnace men live in neat brick rows and drink their beer in gigantic new public houses, and take their wives to gigantic new picture theatres ... Coventry seems to have acquired the trick of keeping up with the times, a trick that many of our industrial cities find hard to learn ... There are still plenty of unemployed here, about twelve thousand, I believe. But as I write the place has passed its worst period of depression, Coventry should be all right. Factories that were working on short time a year or two ago, are now in some instances back on double shifts. I saw their lights and heard the deep roar of their machinery, late that night. 1

Let us start by examining the changes which took place in Coventry during the thirties. Fortunately, Coventry City Council has a series of statistics based on the 'Approximate number of unemployment book exchanges at Coventry Employment Exchange', which show roughly how many people were insured against unemployment at a given time. They also indicate the number of insured persons in each industry. These figures show how many people depended on the ups and downs of a certain industry. However, the problem here is that they do not necessarily reflect a person's occupation. In other words, a clerk at a motor car firm was included in the 'Motor Vehicle/Aircraft' category with an engineer or an assembler on the shop floor. The other problem is 'insured persons' was always a smaller category than 'occupied persons', for the former did not include

1. J.B.Priestley, English Journey, (1934) (Penguin Edition, 1977), p.71.

certain kinds of occupation, such as domestic servants, which is important for our argument and until the late thirties, juveniles aged between 14 and 16 years, were not insured even if they were in full-time employment. However, the advantage of using this series is that it covered the period from the pre-war days and the height of the industrial mobilisation in 1943, to the late forties and early fifties (although the categories changed slightly which makes direct comparison difficult). As far as the economic participation of women was concerned, the 1931 Census showed that 23,300 women out of a total of 66,200 aged 14 years and over, or 35.2 per cent were economically occupied. Table 2-1 shows the industrial distributions of the insured in 1929. By 1929, almost half of the male workers in Coventry were engaged in the motor vehicle/aircraft industry. On the other hand, the industrial distribution of the insured women was divided mainly between electrical engineering (including electrical cable, wire, etc.), vehicle/aircraft and rayon/nylon, of which the rayon/nylon industry had the biggest share.

Coventry's engineering industry was most advanced in both the de-skilling of production, and the introduction of women. Being a 'new industry' the managers of the motor industry were eager to introduce machinery made in the United States, designed to lessen the need for skilled labour. The relative lack of a union tradition on the shop floor probably made it easier. Trade unionism was weak in Coventry throughout most of the inter-war years. Although there was a core of skilled engineers and some apprenticeship schemes within the industry, women were introduced to do semi-skilled work at an early

TABLE 2-1INDUSTRIAL DISTRIBUTION OF OCCUPIED PERSONS IN COVENTRY -
July 1929

	Male	Female
Mining	2,376	-
General Engineering	3,601	615
Aircraft/Vehicle	28,131	3,266
Electrical Engineering	2,671	2,340
Metal	3,501	2,031
Rayon/Nylon	3,338	3,635
Building	4,103	-
Transport	478	13
Distributive	2,503	1,586
Administrative	1,277	181
Bank/Insurance	84	34
Catering/Hotel	-	462
Laundry	-	360
Professional	142	123
TOTAL	57,474	18,074

Source: Approximate Numbers of Unemployment Books Exchanged at
Coventry Employment Exchange in July 1929 in Coventry
City Council.

stage. They were outside the apprenticeship system and had no chance of promotion to a higher position. Women worked in sections where all the employees, except the supervisors or tool setters, were women. A woman who began work at Rover in 1930 remembers the section where she worked as made up of about 20 women and 4 men.¹ The custom of employment in the engineering industry was not, however, much different from the traditional one, and women were expected to leave employment when they got married.

The single biggest employer of women in 1929 was the rayon/nylon industry, namely Courtaulds, which was an unforgettable feature in the working life of Coventry Women. Working conditions there were hard and the restrictions were severe. Joyce Hampson started to work there in 1935 when she left school. She was paid 12s.10½d. for a 48 hour week. The adult rate, which was paid to a woman aged 21 and over, was £1.10s. Although the work itself was not 'heavy', the workers were not allowed to sit during working hours. She remembers:

Rules were very strict and the nurse ruled the female staff with a rod of iron. She toured the factory twice a day and any girl wearing too short a dress or a sleeveless garment would be sent home and told to dress respectably for the next day. The nurse would be round early next morning to make sure that the girl was dressed in what she deemed suitable. Anyone caught chattering to a member of the opposite sex was 'on the carpet'. Even the canteen had separate rooms for men and girls, and no man was ever allowed in the surgery when it was time for any females to have any wounds re-dressed, even if the patient had only a finger dressing to be done. 2

1. Doris Preckett Interview, 23 March, 1983.

2. Joyce Hampson, 'Careers 1935 style', in Equity Life, Summer 1980, No.40.

The reason why she kept working there up to 1941 despite her absolute distaste for the work was, she said, the lack of opportunities for other employment. However, as we will see later, throughout the thirties, the range of jobs for women had been widened.

Shenfield and Florence analysed one of the characteristics of female labour in Coventry in the inter-war years:

While the expansion of industry in Coventry demanded a great increase in its labour force, there is reason to believe that the available surplus of women not employed in industry was in Coventry proportionately below the national average. The town was predominantly working-class in character. There was in 1931 a lower proportion among women of spinsters and widows, presumably not tied to family occupations as in other industrial areas such as Birmingham. Expansion which was to demand the recruitment of women locally was, therefore, bound to make heavy calls upon local industries employment female labour.

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However, the economic participation rate of women in Coventry in 1931, i.e. 35.2 per cent. was about the national average, and roughly 10 per cent. below that of Bolton. On the assumption that married women hardly featured in the labour force, Florence had discovered that the women available for further industrial expansion had been significantly fewer in Coventry than other West Midland boroughs such as Birmingham, Smethwick, West Bromwich and Dudley, since 1911.² What he did not emphasise was

1. A.Shenfield and P.S.Florence, 'Labour for the War Industry : The Experience of Coventry', in The Review of Economic Studies, Vol.XII, No.1. 1944-45.

2. P.S.Florence, 'A Statistical Contribution to the Theory of Women's Wages', in Economic Journal, Vol. XLI, No.161, March 1931.

that the percentage of married women among unoccupied women was clearly higher in Coventry than in the others. Together with the fact that the overall participation rates of women in Coventry were on the low side for the West Midlands, the above fact seems to show that, in Coventry, the practice of women retiring from the labour market at the time of marriage was more strongly observed. There were, of course, local economic conditions which made it possible, notably the lower male unemployment rate.

How did the rearmament policy of the late nineteen-thirties affect the economy of Coventry? In February 1936, the Cabinet decided that 'Scheme F' should provide the R.A.F. with 8,000 aeroplanes. In May of the same year, the scheme was put to a meeting of motor car manufacturers of the Midlands area. The shadow factory scheme became a reality. The Government built and invested in the factories, but the actual management was left in the hands of manufacturers who received management fees for their efforts. The first shadow factories were built around Coventry. Standard No.1. shadow factory was at the Fletchamstead Highway, about 2 miles west of the city centre. Daimler No.1 was at Capmartin Road, about 1.5 miles north, and Rootes No.1 at Stoke Aldermoor about 1.3 miles to the east of the city centre. Although these factories were built as rapidly as possible, production itself did not quickly reach its maximum. Difficulties were experienced in recruiting workers, especially skilled workers.

The first shadow factories were to produce engines for light bombers, and in May 1939, a new scheme had to be developed to provide engines for heavy bombers. The second series of shadow factories were built much

further away from the city centre. Daimler No.2 was at Browns Lane, Rootes No.2 at Ryton-on-Dunsmore, and Standard No.2. at Banner Lane, 3 miles north-west, 4.5. miles south and 3.5 miles west respectively from the city centre. Altogether, there were seven shadow factories in Coventry (the last one was Hobson Aero-Components which was at Holbrook Lane, about 2 miles north of the city). In the shadow factories, modern technology was introduced as much as possible so that semi-skilled labour could be used to the maximum.

The number of insured persons, both male and female, increased by 60 per cent. between 1929 and 1939. Despite rearmament, the industrial structure had not changed drastically during this period, except women in the rayon/nylon industry decreased in both absolute and relative terms. With the rearmament policy, not only relevant industries, but also the city itself grew in the thirties.

The munitions industries in Coventry kept on growing after September 1939. However, difficulties in recruiting labour, which had been noticed earlier in the thirties, became more serious. There were two sources of new workers. One was to recruit them from other parts of the country where labour shortages were not as acute as in Coventry. The other was a large scale recruitment of women. Immigration into Coventry was greatest in 1940 when the factory managements estimated their need for new labour at a minimum of 5,000 per month. The Recruitment of women, on the other hand, was greatest in 1941.¹

1. Shenfield and Florence, 'Labour for the War Industry' .

It was inevitable that the managers of the munitions industry would employ workers who were living far from the factories and the city itself, for most of the shadow factories, as we have seen, were built at the edge of the city. In their research on the concentration of the engineering industry around Coventry, Shenfield and Florence emphasised the difficulties of transport.¹

Charles Madge analysed the income of working-class people in Coventry comparing it with that in Islington 'a representative London Borough', in his study on war-time saving and spending in 1940.² In Coventry, 500 households, or one in 130, were selected, and an equal number of men and women were interviewed. The comparison of per capita income between Islington and Coventry shows the difference in the economic situation of those two areas clearly. According to his research, while in Islington about 80 per cent. of the people interviewed were earning less than £1.10s.0d per capita, in Coventry more than 80 per cent. were earning more than £1.10s.0d per capita. Further investigation in Coventry shows which class of people were benefitting most from the war economy. Among the upper and middle class, 35 per cent. thought that they had more income than pre-war days, 35 per cent. had the same income and 30 per cent. had less. Among skilled workers, the proportions

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1. Based on interviews with workers in 1940, they found that even among those who had been living in Coventry before the outbreak of the War, 18 per cent. of them spent more than half-an-hour travelling from their house to the works. In the case of workers who moved into the city after September 1939, the proportion went up to 27 per cent. Many people were commuting from Leamington, Rugby, Nuneaton, even from as far as Birmingham and the Black Country. In the case of the latter it often took more than one hour each way. A. Shenfield and D. S. Florence, 'The Economies and Diseconomies of Industrial Concentration : The Wartime Experience of Coventry', in The Review of Economic Studies, Vol. XII, No. 4, 1944-45.
 2. Charles Madge, 'War-time Saving and Spending - A district survey', in Economic Journal, Vol. L, Nos. 198/199, June-September 1940.

were 51%, 30% and 17% and among the un-skilled. 45%, 32% and 17% respectively. This suggests that while about a third of the upper and middle class thought they were worse-off than in pre-war days, less than one-fifth of the working class thought that they were worse off. The artisan class were benefitting most from the war, with about half of them believing that they had more income than in pre-war days. When asked why their income had increased, about two-thirds of the workers said 'over-time' and a little more than half put it down to 'increased wages'. The reasons for any decrease in income were given as 'the call-up of earner(s)', 'trade affected' and 'change of job'.

Madge's description of Coventry before the Blitz suggests a buoyant city.

Smart clothes in the street, prosperous-looking homes, busy public-houses, crowded shops, long queues, outside the cinemas, gave an air of vitality and affluence in Coventry... The manager of Coventry's largest store reported that sales were 30 per cent. up on last year, while the number of customers was up by 14 per cent. ... He thought that much of this was "forward buying" in a rising market. In his words "Every time there is a broadcast to warn people of a coming shortage, there is a rush next morning. I know people with enough toilet paper and paper doilies and serviettes to last them four years."

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It was the summer of 1940. Throughout the War, Coventry maintained its position as one of the main centres of munitions production. The labour shortage remained acute, a situation made more complicated by the air raids in November 1940 and April 1941. They not only damaged the city and the factories, but also affected people's morale.

1. Madge op.cit.

The first bomb was dropped upon Coventry in August 1940, and the air raids continued throughout the early autumn. Then came the heavy raid on the night of November 14, 1940, which killed about 560 people with about another 860 seriously injured. As far as the effects on the munitions industry were concerned, it was said that, 'although most of the principal factories were attacked, they were not much damaged. Immediately after the Blitz, the lack of services, such as gas, electricity and water did more harm to production than the actual damage to the factories themselves. Production slackened and registration for unemployment benefit went up to as high as 12,000.¹ Many people, especially those who were new to the city, left Coventry to take up jobs in other districts, or to heal their wounds. An example of the latter was a women worker at Alfred Herberts, who had come from Sunderland with one of her sisters and two of their friends in June of that year.

I had a broken big toe and nose, my sister broke an arm, also one of my friends, done in a desperate bid to dig ourselves free from the rubble. We were hungry, tired and very cold, neither help nor advice was at hand. ... Then at last we found help, but not before we were sick. ... The wardens on duty took us to a van and gave (sic) us warm tea, then on to a first aid post, where we were crudely patched up. ... We were given a ticket for a train journey home or anywhere to get us out of the city. So just as we stood in dirty work overalls, absolutely filthy from head to foot, we walked to Bedworth where we found transport to take us to join the evacuation train. ...

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1. 'Lesson of Recent Heavy Air Raids', LAB 8/362. January 1941.

2. Letter from . Muriel Jones, dated 13 September, 1981.

However, the production was not hindered for long. Even if reconstruction of houses and other civilian needs was slow and several people were living in shelters for a few months.¹ The Government was naturally anxious to get war production back to normal as soon as possible and this seems to have been achieved. As Tom Harrisson suggested, it was helped by the needs of the work people for wages and their fear of unemployment.

Coventry saw other heavy raids on April 8 and 10, 1941. 451 people were killed and 1,009 were wounded seriously or slightly on those two nights. Damage to war factories was said to be heavier than in the previous year. Among the firms hit were Armstrong-Siddeley, Daimler's main plant and No.1. shadow factory, Morris Motors, G.E.C. and Courtaulds. A woman worker, who started to work at Morris Motors in June 1941, remembers that she worked short-time during the first five months owing to the damage caused by the April raids.³

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1. A woman in Coventry who was bombed out from her house at Kingsway with her husband on the night of November 14, 1940, lived in a shelter without any cooking facilities to talk of, until February of the following year. Then they found a house at Ransom Road, which was half destroyed and in need of repair before they moved into it. Doris Preckett, Interview, 23 March 1983.
 2. "This industrial recovery had been closely tied to the profit incentive and to professional skill : and that depended, in this case, primarily on the willingness and ability of most workers and staff to get back to work. Despite all discomforts and physical displacements, they got back with speed. For family wage-earners simply had to earn. In those days of the early forties, Britain was far from a welfare state. Money, too, was much tighter, real poverty widespread. Fear of unemployment was a living reality for the labour force. Patriotism apart, the need to keep at the job was over-ridingly powerful." Tom Harrisson, Living Through the Blitz, (1976,) p.141.
 3. '... after the first week I went onto shift work, doing 6-2 one week and 2-10 the next week. This was the summer of '41, following the big Easter raids wh the factory had been damaged badly and was just beginning to get back into full production. So as machines were dug out of the rubble and set up again so more people were taken on to work them. The roof had been damaged so the blackout was not 100%, it was double summer time so was light until 11 at night so we were able to work late. In November '41 the factory was fully operational again so we started to work day and night shifts. We did not start this until after the anniversary of the November Blitz at first it was thought that we would be working nights on the actual anniversary but change over put it back a week. (Letter from Joyce Hampson, dated 15 September, 1981)

For the purpose of this research it is important to ask what effect these bombings had on the morale of the people in Coventry. However, the assessment of the morale is difficult. Contemporary reports are available but not easy to use. The myth that 'Coventry carried on' is very powerful, especially in retrospect. Nevertheless, there is enough evidence to suggest that the people's morale was quite low at least after the 'Easter Blitz' in 1941. The Ministry of Information reported:

On April 11, the day following the second serious raid, the main features were extreme tiredness of the population, and 'definite lowering of morale.' People were seen going to sleep in the feeding centres and on the streets. There was much grumbling that the new raids were the result of optimistic press statements after Coventry's first Blitz, indicating that the industries of the town were carrying on. There were many requests that nothing of the kind should be said on this occasion. One incident is described by the Deputy Regional Information Officer, as 'significant and symptomatic'; An anonymous note was left in a Ministry of Information loud-speaker car which read: "It's time the so-called Ministry of Misinformation was closed down. Any more blah about Coventry factories not being affected, and you ought to be hounded out of the city." This feeling of sensitiveness has continued and an article in the Daily Sketch of April 12, headed 'COVENTRY CARRIED ON - AS BEFORE' was regarded by the public as likely to provoke further raids. 1

Some evidence suggesting that the fear of further raids was deep-rooted was the so-called 'nightly exodus', that is, spending nights away from Coventry to avoid the blitz, which continued until the autumn of 1941. In October, when the Ministry of Home Security investigated it, it was

1. INF 1/292, 16 April, 1941.

reported that between 25,000 and 50,000 people were still spending their nights outside the city. Though the number of people decreased from the maximum of 100,000 during the air raids, it was significantly large considering it was six months after the last big raid. However, the main features of the exodus had changed. During the raids, it was, as a matter of course, a desperate runaway from the blitz. Those who came out of the city used any transport available, rode bicycles or even went on foot. Accommodation at the other end of the journey could be anything, official rest centres, churches or farm houses in nearby villages. By October, the 'nightly exodus' had become only for the better-off, who had private cars and accommodation was arranged at some cost.¹ It was, perhaps, an obvious sign of the gap between the classes within the city. It seems that Coventry then was a rather gloomy place in the autumn of 1941, for all the high wages which the munitions factories could offer. A woman remembers that morale 'was a bit low with all the ruins around us and our homes badly damaged.'² It was against this background that the major recruitment campaigns for women war workers were carried out in Coventry in 1940 and 1941. Although the main emphasis in this research will be placed upon the campaign which began on November 15, 1941, and continued until December 5, 1941, The earlier smaller recruitment campaigns will also be examined.

1. For a full account of the exodus, see Report on the nightly exodus from Coventry. HO 207/1069.n.d. (October/November, 1941).

2. Letter from Joyce Hampson, dated 3 September, 1981.

How acute was the labour shortage in Coventry in 1940? Although there is no material which offers us a precise calculation, there is a list of the War Cabinet which shows the new labour demands. Altogether 128 factories all over Britain had planned to build new establishments or extend existing ones. 6 out of 128 factories were to be located in Coventry, and 9 factories in Birmingham and Warwick, which possibly would compete against Coventry for labour. According to these estimates, 11,000 workers were needed for the factories in Coventry, 22,000 for Birmingham and 2,000 for Warwick and this apart from the demand of existing factories.¹

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that on May 21, 1940, an appeal was made to the Coventry women asking them to take up war work in the Midland Daily Telegraph.²

We want workers *now*, we must do our bit *now*.
The women of Coventry and surrounding districts have a splendid record for work and grit : we appeal to them to come forward now and offer their services. This appeal applies to married women as well as single women : we particularly need women with engineering experience, others can be taught. All willing and able to help in this way, and who are not already employed on munitions should register at once at the Coventry Employment Exchange or at any Employment Exchange in the neighbourhood of Coventry ...

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1. LAB 25/142, n.d. (1940).

2. The Midland Daily Telegraph changed its name to the Coventry Evening Telegraph in November 1941.

3. Midland Daily Telegraph 21 May 1940.

During the following three weeks, 1,200 women came forward, which disappointed the authors of the appeal. On June 11, the Midland Daily Telegraph condemned Coventry women for not flooding into war jobs:

... A well-known local industrial spokesman made this telling point today. 'When we said the women of Coventry and the surrounding district had a splendid record for work and grit. And now where are they? There are 83,000 women in Coventry alone. At least 70,000 of them appear to think the appeal was not addressed to them. They are wrong.' This, then, is a challenge to women who with the greatest conflict of all time raging not so very far away have time to take their usual morning cup of coffee or spend an hour in the afternoon choosing a new hat. ... Mr. J.C.Hutchison, manager of Coventry Employment Exchange said this morning : 'The demand for women for work in Coventry is enormous. We want them, not in hundreds, but in thousands, we want women as 'bus conductors, as post office workers, and as clerks, but above all we want women to go to work in the factories.' ... We are officially asked to say 'Madam, this means you.'

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This article provoked some anger among women in Coventry. There was a tide of letters of protest from would-be women war workers. Most of the letters pointed out the lack of provisions for looking after their children. Not only were there few facilities for caring for children under school-age, but the problem of the younger school children after school was over and at weekends was preventing many women from taking up war work. In this context, a woman pointed out that the low level of servicemen's allowances was a strong economic incentive for many women to take up jobs.

1. Midland Daily Telegraph, 11 June, 1940.

There is a big sprinkling of appeals from wives of soldiers whose argument is that with their meagre allowance from the Army they possess a double incentive to find employment but are prevented by the fact that they have to care for a young family.

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Some women suggested that the form of employment itself should be changed to meet the women's convenience.

I would suggest a shift system for women with families and free week-ends to do the house-work. Should the manager of the Employment Exchange be able to provide afternoon employment, I am sure he would meet with a ready response.

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At the same time, there was a complaint that, far from there being a need for labour, it was difficult to find a job.³ Such experiences were not uncommon in other parts of the country in the summer of 1940, when unemployment of women was at a high level, and their morale was low.

Without confronting those grievances, the officials of the Coventry Employment Exchange made another appeal to ask for women workers for the night shift, on July 1, 1940. The first part seems to be a morale booster rather than strictly in accordance with the facts :

There was a very good response to various appeals for day-time workers ... and now we feel that they will not be far behind men in doing their bit for the country. Every consideration will be accorded them, we feel sure they will rally round when they realise the urgency of the call.

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1. Midland Daily Telegraph, 13 June, 1940.

2. Ibid.

3. A woman wrote that she and her neighbour tried six factories, offering to take on anything. But they could not obtain any job. (Ibid)

4. Midland Daily Telegraph, 1 July, 1940.

Several other small appeals were made for women workers between the beginning of 1941 and the November campaign. Margaret Bondfield, for example, visited Coventry and Leamington in February 1941 and the Regional Information Officer for the Midlands area asked for more women on February 26. Towards the end of March, new plans for a recruitment campaign were considered. One was a fortnight's film campaign beginning on March 31. The other was an exhibition entitled 'Women in Industry', which was to be held in the city centre from April 16 to 23, although in fact it was postponed until November. One of the sections of the exhibition devoted to the Armed Forces and the Women's Voluntary Service, but the emphasis was put on industry with a section displaying working machinery especially suited to female labour.

Although it was not a part of the recruitment campaign, Bevin paid a brief visit to Coventry on 19 April, 1941, when the first national registration of women took place. He called at the Central Hall where the registration was going on and chatted with some women. The Midland Daily Telegraph reported that he told them that women were responding very well, and "speaking of Coventry generally he said the way work-people were returning to duty was marvellous and he found that there had been 'no running away.'" ¹ (which sounds another morale booster.)

But all those minor appeals did not produce the required effect. On 1 August, 1941, the Midland Daily Telegraph tried again with an article entitled 'Coventry Girls Who Do Not Realise That This Is Their War' and condemned strongly the reluctance of women, especially young women to take up war work.

1. Midland Daily Telegraph, 21. April, 1941.

... Although Coventry (Employment - N.N.) Exchange has noted a good deal of patriotism - particularly among older women at the beginning of the War - unfortunately another type is evident. People who do not look on the War as "their War" but are willing to go on living comfortably regardless of whether our forces are receiving all the materials they need or not.

Meanwhile, the entry of the USSR into the War on 22 June, 1941, appeared to provide an encouraging boost to recruitment. The organisers of the campaign tried to enlist the sympathy of women for the Russian people, which, in the autumn of 1941 seemed particularly strong. Towards the end of October, about six thousand signatures of women (which was considerable, for the whole population of Coventry was around 200,000 at that time), were collected for a message to be sent to Stalingrad. The Women's Anglo-Soviet Unity Committee was behind it, which was mainly made up of communists and their supporters. After June 1941, communists got behind the production drives and were very active both on the shop-floor and on the streets.² Margaret Gay, who was also a member of the Women's Anglo-Soviet Unity Committee, was a party member. Remembering those days, she wrote:

I remember addressing meetings of men and women in the factories exhorting them to produce more, etc. ... As to recruiting women I have very little recollection of what I did in this, but my husband says I was taken round street & housing

1. Midland Daily Telegraph, 1 August, 1941.

2. For the activities of communists inside the factories and the party's instant success in Coventry in 1941 and 1942, see Hinton, op. cit.

estates by car and spoke to the women living there! ... I cannot say now what the attitude of women was to the recruiting drive. I remember feeling disappointed at the apparent indifference of many people in the factories. 1

Before we examine the labour situation in Coventry in the autumn of 1941 and the November campaign, let us explore the arrangements designed especially to help married women lighten the burden of 'two full-time jobs.' The care of children was the most obvious war-time problem in Coventry as well as in other parts of the nation. War-time nurseries for the under-fives, although not necessarily relevant to all working married women, especially captured the attention of contemporaries as it has of historians since it almost had a symbolic meaning. It should be borne in mind that other household duties, such as cooking, family washing and shopping, were as important as child-care, and relevant to larger numbers of women. Having said that, facilities for the care of children were particularly crucial owing to the difficulty of making private arrangements. On the other hand, towards the end of the War, the responsibility of the mother for her children became the easiest argument to use to keep women at home.

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1. Letter from Margaret Cohen (nee Gay), dated 31 May, 1981. .
The text of the greeting read : 'We, the women of Coventry, greet the women of Stalingrad, and with you the brave women of the entire Soviet Union, in your splendid resistance to our common enemy, Hitler Facism. Coventry stands as a symbol to the world of the ruthlessness and murderous brutality with which the Nazis wage their war against the civilian population of both of our countries. ... In this vital industrial centre, we, Coventry women, many of us wives and mothers of armament workers, many factory workers ourselves undertake to do everything in our power to remove all hinderances to maximum production so that the brave soldiers, sailors and airmen of both our countries will not lack arms.' The greeting was presented to Madame Maisky, wife of the Russian Ambassador to Britain. Coventry Standard, 1 November, 1941.

We will look closely at the shopping difficulties later.

There was also a laundry problem which does not appear to have drawn much attention. The British Restaurant and factory canteens were providing meals at reasonable prices. Not only did they help housewives to cope in a period of rationed food, but they also provided mid-day meals (in the case of factory canteens, mid-night meals for workers on the night shift), so that housewives could be relieved from the preparation of mid-day meals for their husbands. At the same time, the number of school children who were taking their lunch at school canteens increased rapidly from 85 in January 1941 to over 4,000 in 1943.¹ At the beginning of 1943, more than a quarter of elementary school-children were taking lunch at school. The cost was about 6d. per meal per head. The Education Committee realised from the beginning that this scheme was aimed not only at providing children with nourishing meals but also with lifting the burden from mothers so that they could answer the recruitment drive.² The corporation took a further step, late in 1942, when they offered 'take-away' food, known as 'cash and carry'. Though it had been planned at the end of the previous year, the Ministry of Food had been reluctant to sanction it as they wished to avoid possible competition with retailers. The 'cash and carry' scheme had been already in practice in Birmingham, though only cold meals were served. It was planned that in Coventry hot meals as well as cold ones would be available.³

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1. For example, in January 1943, 4,408 pupils had their mid-day meals at school. (Minutes of the Attendance and Physical Welfare Sub-Committee of the Coventry Education Committee, 1 February, 1943, 15 April 1943).
 2. Midland Daily Telegraph, 11 October, 1940.
 3. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 5 December, 1942.

However, the absence of a follow-up report makes it impossible to examine how it was used by working women.

Let us go back to the arrangements for child-care. In May 1940, the Public Health Committee decided to take positive steps for a war-time nursery scheme answering the request from the National Council of Women. At first, the Medical Officer of Health suggested to the Coventry and District Engineering Employers' Association that day nurseries might be attached to their works. However, the Association was not in favour of the idea. There were difficulties in obtaining accommodation, fear of not being able to protect the children in case of air raids and fear of interrupting women's concentration on work. Since the engineering manufacturers would not provide day nurseries in their firms, it was the Corporation that had to establish them to stimulate the recruitment of married women. There was, of course, pressure from the central government urging the establishment of day nurseries. In June 1940, it was decided that four nurseries would be set up. In August the Public Health Committee resolved on a further two nurseries. They would accept children aged between six-months and five-years in principle, although in certain circumstances babies under six months were accepted. The parents' contribution was 1s.6d. for the first or only child per day and 1s. per day for each subsequent child.

In August 1940, Mrs. J.L.Jones (presumably the wife of J.L.Jones who was the district organiser of the T. & G.W.U. in Coventry), wrote urging further nursery facilities.

The problem of providing nurseries is urgent, and surely it must be appreciated that two nurseries for the whole of Coventry is inadequate. Many hundreds of women with children are now working in Coventry's factories : their children need to be properly cared for. Many hundreds more women would rally to the appeal made daily in your advertisement columns for women to undertake national work, - if, they were sure that their children would be looked after properly by trained people while they were at work. It must be obvious that to meet this need, nurseries under adequate supervision should be opened in all the residential districts in Coventry.

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The first nursery to be opened was at Foleshill Road, about 1.5 miles north of the city. The children's attendance was first reported to be small, but eventually it became the biggest war-time nursery in Coventry with 76 children on the roll in October 1943.² In May 1941, the matron of the Foleshill nursery told the Coventry Standard; 'We have about 28 children come in every day ... but we can take 60. We open at 7 a.m. and close at 8.p.m. The children have all meals at the Nursery.'³ It was not always clear to what extent wartime nurseries were either demanded or used. A Mass-Observer reported that 'Two excellent day nurseries in Coventry are thinking of closing down because the women just don't bring their children. It seems that a lot of work will have to be done before they will contemplate leaving their children at day nurseries in any numbers.'⁴ It did not seem

1. Midland Daily Telegraph, 24, August 1940.

2. Answer by the Town Clerk to the Questionnaires of the Ministry of Labour (n.d.) deposited with the Coventry City Record Office.

3. Coventry Standard, 17 May, 1940.

4. Mass Observation, Town and District Survey Topic Collection. Box 4. (Hereafter Town Box), 25 November, 1941.

that the war-time nurseries were received enthusiastically by women. It may be because, as some feminist historians suggest, the opening hours of nurseries were too short for working women and nurseries were therefore of practically no use, rather than that women were reluctant to leave their children in other people's hands. Whatever the reasons were, it is clear that women's reluctance could not be simply reduced to lack of child-care facilities. Nevertheless, the number of nurseries and of children attending in Coventry rose as time passed and, by the end of the War, nine war-time day nurseries had been opened altogether, with 451 children on the register.

Residential nurseries provided a more comprehensive service. They were to look after the children of women war workers both by day and night. A mother did not have to look after her children at all while they were in this kind of nursery. As early as December 1941, the Daily Mirror had an article on a 'residential nursery' attached to a munitions factory in Yorkshire.

Mothers working at a munitions factory in Yorkshire are released from all responsibility for their children during the week they are on night shift. Having left their children in a nursery, they need not see them again for a week although if they have time during the day they are always allowed to pay them a visit. Twelve children ranging in age from a few weeks to five years will take up the quarters at nursery one week in every three, when their mothers are on night shift. ... When the children are taken into the nursery for the night, the mother leaves him for days also, so that when she gets home after the night shift, she can rest undisturbed and do her housework unhindered in the morning before returning to the factory ... The charge to the mother for the nightly care of her child has not been settled but it will probably be a little more than the day charge of 1s. 1

1. Daily Mirror, 8 December, 1941

There was no residential nursery in Coventry before 1942.

The Warwick County Medical Officer of Health offered to reserve 10 beds for children of women war workers (under five years of age) in Olton. However, the Local Authority was not in favour of the residential nursery. Though eventually the Authority agreed with the reservation of 10 beds.

Evacuation might also have released the mothers of young school children. As an industrial town, Coventry was expected to be a target of German attack. It was an 'evacuation area'. As in many other evacuation areas, the official evacuation began on 1 September, 1939. However, the number of children evacuated dropped after August 1940 when little less than 4,000 children were removed from the city, with a temporary increase after the April Blitz in 1941. Even at its height, only a quarter of the school children on the rolls were ever evacuated. The number of school children itself increased in 1941 and 1942, which means that many children who had left Coventry after the November Blitz, 1940, with or without parents, came back. Of course, some of them must have been children of parents attracted by the secure employment and high wage rates which the munitions industry could offer. On the whole, the city council was not as enthusiastic about the war-time nursery scheme as one would expect a centre of the munitions industries to be. In practice, nine war-time nurseries accommodated about 500 children under the official scheme. Those numbers were not large compared with the number of women workers required. The nurseries were perhaps one of the less effective parts of the scheme for the mobilisation of women in Coventry. They did, however, remove the burden of child-care from the shoulders of a small minority of women.

In the autumn of 1941, the Ministry of Aircraft Production announced plans for an increase of bomber production.

The Prime Minister asks for a 32% increase in the bomber output for the period July 1941 - July 1943. ... We shall need many tens of thousands of women. We are already falling badly short of our requirements in Coventry and Bristol, both key places for the aero-engine programme. ... I am afraid much more must be done in these and other already difficult areas.

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In September 1941, J.B. Abraham of the Air Ministry wrote a letter to Frank Tribe of the Ministry of Labour and National Service, offering to release 8,000 skilled and semi-skilled airmen for aircraft production. This letter caused the recipient some surprise.² Although it is not clear how these airmen were distributed, it seems that many of them were dispatched into the Midlands area. However, this was a temporary solution and it was not clear what would happen after the airmen left.³

On October 11, 1941, one of the Ministry of Labour officers sent a telegram to Geoffrey Ince, Director-General of Manpower of the Ministry.

1. LAB 25/146, 15 September, 1941.

2. In fact Tribe answered: "Your letter of 26th and 27th September were the first we had heard of a proposal that you should release 8,000 airmen for work in aircraft factories etc. As you know my Minister following the Beveridge Report had been emphasising the deficiency of skilled men in the RAF and I am bound to say that we are very surprised to find that you are willing to make these arrangements. I presume that the arrangements have been made directly between Air Ministry and the Ministry of Aircraft Production." 'LAB 25/146, 30 September, 1941 .

3. 'The situation in the Midlands would have been still worse had it not been for the provision of airmen released from the Royal Air Force for employment in women's vacancies in the aircraft industry and these airmen may shortly be required to return to RAF service.' CAB 92/103, n.d.'

After careful preliminary survey with MAP production chiefs and principle works executives involved safely estimate the aircraft programme required half million exclusively women increase over present total MAP labour effectives. Spread over next TEN MONTHS this means one thousand extra women per week per region average. This figure included present unsatisfied MAP women vacancies. Must tell MAP no additional men available or necessary ... (original emphasis),

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This officer sent another telegram on the labour situation in Coventry on 16 October 1941, which sounded a rather desperate note.

Urgent attention.... Coventry position confirm former prediction that we stand threatened by dangerous aero and tank engines production crisis imperilling whole aircraft and tank programme unless we take immediate steps. Increase Coventry weekly women placing from present 300 to 500. Coventry hostel and billeting position improving. Total Midland Regional requirement about 2,000 women per week. Increasing pressure is producing local results but imperative instruct all exporting region concentrate on Midlands and instruct Mackintosh to raise his weekly export figures from 100 to 200 by tapping Glasgow area.

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At the beginning of the November campaign, it was announced that 'five hundred women recruits are wanted each week and they are not coming forward up to now, about three hundred had volunteered weekly, but numbers are dropping gradually.'³ The main part of the November campaign was an

1. LAB 25/146, 11 October, 1941.

2. LAB 25/146, 16 October, 1941.

3. Coventry Standard, 15 November, 1941.

exhibition entitled "Women in War Work." The organisers of the exhibition tried to make the most of the fear of the brutality of the Nazis and of the popular sympathy with Russia. In fact, in early November, an officer of the Ministry of Information wrote to the Anglo-Soviet branch of the Ministry asking them to send some copies of Russian posters for the Coventry November campaign. The Anglo-Soviet Branch naturally, showed the greatest interest.

... There is a strong feeling in this city (Coventry - N.N.) to which we are appealing by means of photographs of the Russian, Soviet women, films, special posters on "Arms for Russia." An exhibition of posters would greatly augment the foregoing.

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At the opening of the exhibition, an address which was intended to remind people of the horror of the Nazis was given through a loud-speaker so that it 'could be heard all over the centre of the city.'² In the Central Hall, where the exhibition was held the flags of the United Kingdom and the USSR were hung in the centre. In the inaugural ceremony, the Mayor outlined the objects of the campaign and stated that the organisers were expecting 2,500 women to enroll during the two weeks' exhibition. Apart from the Mayor and Mayoress, several local leaders, both from the management and labour side, such as the general manager of Armstrong Siddeley Motors, the regional organiser of the AEU, and the Midland organiser for the Ministry of Information, were among others on the platform.

1. INF 1/676, 6 November, 1941.

2. Coventry Standard, 22 November, 1941.

The display of the exhibition was arranged as a model factory with actual machinery used in the factories by women on show. The Coventry Standard drew an interesting picture of one of the women workers who was demonstrating how to operate the machinery.

Six months ago Miss Barbara O'Donnell of Coventry was a barmaid. In a Warwick public house she pulled the pump filling up pints. Now she pulls another kind of pump. She is an expert on a horizontal milling machine. As she demonstrated how it was done, she said, "When I first took on the job I thought it would be difficult. I soon got on to the work. Now I like it so much. I would not go back as a barmaid. Factory life isn't bad. The authorities made it comfortable for girls. We have a good canteen, a matron looks after us, and we are not overworked. The pay is good." Asked about other girl workers, she replied, 'It's a very decent crowd.'

This display was very popular. The machining processes done by women attracted a constant stream of visitors.² A women worker who attended the exhibition to represent the British Thomson-Houston Co. remembers that there were 18 women representing factories and a bus³ conductress, to answer questions from visitors. The opening hours of the

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1. Coventry Standard, 22 November, 1941.
 2. A Mass Observation reporter pointed out that practically everyone in Coventry knew about the exhibition, it was well attended (although she thought that wet weather was one of the reasons for this.) Then she reported 'Interest in machines was obviously high. People were eager to talk to the girls operating them, and the girls were always friendly and pleasant, in spite of being asked the same questions dozens of times each day.' (Mass Observation, Town Box, November 25, 1941).
 3. Letters from L. O'Brien, dated 25 Septembrr, 1981.

exhibition were from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, which would not have made the attendance of women in other jobs very easy.¹

Apart from the exhibition itself, which was very costly, the widest publicity available was employed. Posters were put up throughout the city, there had been a series of advertisements and publicity in the local paper. Banners had been strung across the central streets, and a van with photographs was driven about the city. In the Central Hall, film shows were put on twice daily. There was also a parade of women workers on the 22 November. One of the lorries was equipped by the Anglo-Soviet Unity Committee. Mass Observation also had two reports on this parade. Both reporters were stressing the informality and spontaneous attitudes of the women workers who were on the parade which made the procession enjoyable.² The interest among the population of Coventry was high and people gathered in the streets to see it. The Mass Observation reporters, however, were

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1. The Ministry of Labour, together with the Ministry of Supply, had a big recruitment campaign for women workers in the Bradford, Dewsbury and Halifax areas of the West Riding, Yorkshire, from 22 November, 1941. The object of the campaign was to persuade women to take up war work in a Royal Ordnance Factory in Staffordshire. The advertisement said: 'Shell and Bombs - you can see them being made now at the War Job Bureau by girls from this factory. And you can talk to the girls who will tell you all about the life there. You can also find experts here who can answer all your questions.'
The opening hours of the War Job Bureau was from 9.30 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily, including Sunday. Bradford Telegraph and Argus, 22 November, 1941. ,
 2. Women workers brought home-made banners which read, for example:
 - 'Tanks for Women, good for slimming'
 - 'Combine beauty with duty'.
 - 'Siddeley Girl doesn't lack for Charms .
 - 'We think it's men that lack for Arms'.
 - 'Russia doesn't ask for Thanks
 - What she wants is Britain's Tanks'.

Mass Observation, Town Box, 23 November, 1941.

cynical about the effects of parades. One reporter wrote that the impression that the whole thing was looked upon much more in the light of free entertainment than taken seriously as an appeal for women workers.¹

On November 27, the paper noted that fresh efforts were under way. Two more women were employed by the exhibition to walk about and to answer the questions on factory life in general and the jobs in particular. Meanwhile, on the same day, an increase of wages for women war workers of 3 per cent per week at 18 years and over and 5s. per week at 21 and over was announced. At the same time, both employers and unions tried to draw attention to the wages which Coventry women received.

Mr. John Varley, Secretary of Coventry and District Engineering Association and Mr. J.L.Jones, District Organiser of the T. & G.W.U. have issued a joint statement, pointing out that the vast majority of women workers in Coventry earn greatly in excess of 25 per cent. of the new base rate provided for the national agreement of November 6.,. In Coventry payment by results is almost universal as was well known. Women have been earning generous bonuses for many years. In so far as Coventry was concerned they have in effect had the increase in advance.

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1. Ibid

There is further evidence to support the opinion of Mass Observation. Mrs. Joyce Hampson writes: 'Looking back now, and I've never thought of this aspect, why on earth did these parades take place, as we were all registered for work and didn't have much choice anyway. It was most likely to bolster morale...' Certainly she was working at that time, and the campaign was not aimed at women who were already working, but it was clear from her letter that the purpose of the campaign was not fully understood by Coventry women.
Letter from Joyce Hampson, dated 3 September, 1981.

2. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 27 November, 1941.

Although the number of women who volunteered increased towards the end of the exhibition (at the end of the fortnight the paper claimed that about 30 women a day volunteered) it never reached the original target, and the organisers decided on a week's extension. At the same time, it was decided that a final effort to stimulate interest be made using extra loudspeaker vans. The exhibition finally ended on 4 December, recruiting 1,044 women. About 140 women were enrolled during the first week, another 150-160 came in the second week, and roughly 700 turned up in the last week of the exhibition. It was reported that women rushed in to apply for War work on the last day. The manager of the Coventry Employment Exchange stated that he was feeling much happier about the result. He attributed the slowness of women in responding to the appeal to their desire to talk over the matter with their parents, husbands and other people and to take time to make up their minds. However, the most important, though unmentioned, factor was the announcement of the conscription of women on December 2. In Bradford, for example, a rush of women volunteered after the announcement.¹

The relation between the announcement of the conscription of women and the sudden rise of women volunteers was not as clear as it looked. Moreover, the rumour of the conscription of women had been in the air for some time. The Ministry of Information morale and public opinion reports more than once mentioned that women were holding back knowing that they would be called up sooner or later. On the other hand, it certainly pushed some hesitating

1. 'More Bradford girls are coming forward for service at the new Royal Ordnance Factory in Staffordshire, evidently as a result of the Government's announcement on conscription. Girls rightly feel that volunteering now they will have a choice of work which may not be open to them later.'

Bradford Telegraph and Argus, 1 December, 1941.

Having pointed out the similarity with the phenomenon in Coventry, we must bear in mind that, of course, it was possible that this article was a piece of propaganda aimed at women who were still reluctant.

women into war work which they thought 'tolerable' or 'less bad.' It was probably used by women to persuade reluctant husbands and parents to accept their taking up war work. A woman in Coventry, who had retired from work when she got married at the age of 19, successfully converted her husband, who was a skilled engineer at Daimler, to agreeing to her going on munitions full-time by using this rumour. Her argument was that if she waited to be called up (they had no child), she could not choose where to work, while if she volunteered early enough she could obtain a job near their home. She remembers that though her husband was unhappy about her work, he could not but accept it in the end.

On the whole, the November campaign was a failure. It was clear that the number of women who volunteered in those three weeks fell far below the original target, although it is not clear if the original target was exaggerated in order to stimulate a sense of urgency. However, it is certain that there was a feeling of disappointment among those who cooperated with the Government. The Coventry Women's Anglo-Soviet Unity, Committee, for example, being communist-orientated, found themselves in a complicated situation.

Some members feel that wasted time and faulty organisation in certain factories is largely responsible for apathy amongst women. But the committee believed that these problems can only be solved from the inside, and that women must get into the factories first. Through their trade unions, shop stewards, and production committees, they could then attempt to solve the difficulties. The Committee decided to approach the management of local factories to find out how many part-time women workers they were prepared to take.

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1. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 9 December, 1941.

More interestingly, the newspaper article on the unsatisfactory results of the recruitment drive provoked another shower of women's grievances and resentment about wartime difficulties both inside and outside the war-factories, as well as the anger of some 'patriotic' women over the alleged reluctance of others. The patriotic letters were in a minority. Most of the letters which appeared in the Coventry Evening Telgraph pointed out the reasons why women held back. Some of the letters blamed the factories for low wages or wasting time. The majority of the letters, however, argued that it was practical difficulties, especially domestic ones, which prevented women from volunteering and if these were removed, then a different picture would be seen. Let us examine more closely each type of letter.

The first type was very straightforward, for example;

All this controversy over women partaking in war-work is terribly overrated. Many married women, like myself, are at work all day, and still manage their household quite well. Shopkeepers are not such ogres, and if approached in a proper manner, invariably cooperate. Some unrationed foods are admittedly difficult to get, but the outcome of the war is surely more important than ½lb. of sausage meat or a half dozen cakes. Russian women make no bones about unessential foods; so why should the well-fed British women? As for transport, that was a problem long before the war and was in those days treated as a practical joke. However, in this connection perhaps you can tell me why there is a definite trend of the resident working people to select employment in factories long distances from their homes when other factories are practically on their doorsteps?

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1. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 2 December, 1941.

Nevertheless, most women were not as 'patriotic' and 'simple-minded' as the author of the above letter. They had too much to complain about. Naturally, the Communists were blaming Government policy and the munitions firms for not making the work more attractive, and it was their inefficiency that turned the women away. The letter from Margaret Cohen was an example of this:

The Ministry of Information and all concerned are to be congratulated upon an excellent campaign, but I believe that the main reasons for the poor response lie in the factories themselves. Prevailing conditions, of which most Coventry women are well aware, give the lie to the somewhat rosy picture painted by the authorities. Wages, although varying, are generally low. I know of at least one factory where girls of 18 were earning 34s. a week, of which 30s. went straightaway in lodgings. The new basic rate plus bonus of 43s. for women over 21 cannot be considered a fair living wage today. Add to this the refusal of many foremen to give 'pass-outs' for shopping, the complete lack of arrangements with shopkeepers to put aside unrationed foods for war workers, the generally bad condition of Coventry compared with other towns in regard to food, the poor canteens, the scarcity of day nurseries, the wastage of time going on in the factories, and it is small wonder that women are not flocking into industry....

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1. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 28 November, 1941.

Of course, the 'communist' line was not common among other women. Many women claimed to derive their opinion from their actual experiences. Many of them were strongly concerned with men's under- or unemployment. For those women, the priority was clearly the men's employment, and they feared that their entry worsened the labour market situation.

We have not volunteered because we think the recruitment campaign is futile. We know too much. From our menfolk we hear so much of idle hours at local factories that we cannot see that our time would be fully occupied. There is not sufficient work for our menfolk. Why should we flood the labour market at their expense?

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It would be interesting to see if those opinions of women on work and family earnings remained unchanged throughout the War. Certainly, in 1941, some women thought and expressed clearly that it was men that should be able to get jobs first, for they were the bread-winners of the family. Women should not and would not compete for jobs against men if job opportunities were thin.

1. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 4 December, 1941.

This seems a common opinion. 'The women of Coventry are wives and sisters of the men in the Coventry factories. The menfolk relate their grievances at home, and there is really nothing to wonder at in the seeming reluctance of the women to come forward when they know that male labour is not being utilised. I can attest the fact that many machines are idle - not for the lack of manpower. Find full-time employment for the men and then recruit the women.'

Coventry Evening Telegraph, 4 December, 1941.

Women also resented wasted time of their own. The fact of wastage of time in war factories was not a new one to Coventry women in the winter of 1941-42. In June 1941, the Midland Daily Telegraph had printed an article told to their reporter by a woman worker, who was an ex-shop assistant, with their own comment that this was not uncommon in Coventry:

This (the fact that the shop where she had been working was burnt down by the November Blitz - N.N.) brought me face to face with unemployment for the time, so I entered the office of a Coventry factory. ... For several Sundays now a roomful of girls ... have been requested to come into work - for what we have yet to learn. The first day we spent the morning in absolute idleness. The next time being wiser, we took our knitting with us and worked on it every minute of the time without ever seeing as much as a sign of the real job. After this had gone on for several weeks we decided as a team not to come in next Sunday morning to waste our time. Neither did it seem right to be paid wages which we did not earn. The following Monday I was 'captured' - the general manager sent for me and ticked me off thoroughly. So we all went to work again last Sunday morning and the same old process was repeated much to our increasing indignation. ... I believe intensely in the justice of the war against Hitlerism, but I'm blessed if I can see the reason for the recurring wastage of time, money and effort.

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Although it was right of the communists to point out that it was such waste that reduced the willingness of women to volunteer, most women did not follow the communists' solution for that, i.e. to get into the factory first and to improve from inside through trade unions, production committees etc. The women were much more concerned about the labour situation for the men, or like the above ex-shop assistant, they were confused and indifferent to the fact that their efforts were not fully utilised. ²

1. Midland Daily Telegraph, 19 June, 1941.

2. A Mass Observation report was of the opinion that the effects of such rumours were not far reaching, although it did not deny that there were effects; 'How far those rumours are true we could not assess, but they certainly had some effect - chiefly on the more sophisticated type of women: there was not any widespread working class anxiety about it.'
Mass Observation, Town Box, 25 November, 1941.

Wage levels were, of course, one of the most important factors in the women's decision-making process. Here, we must bear in mind that we have also to take account of the expenses involved especially married women's absence from the home. A women worker without any economic obligation to work, gives us her balance-sheet.

... One of the advertised enticements is a good wage. Yet, I propose to show this advertisement is based on an illusion. A married women war worker does not get the money she earned. Take my case as an example. My wage is £3.5s. a week. Two shillings or more is deducted for insurance, etc. I have a deduction of 25s.4d. a week for income tax. My income is assessed separately from that of my husband and the rate is 10s. in the £. The result is that though my wage is £3.5s. I come away from the factory with 37s.8d. Let us further analyse this little budget. My hours are from 8.30 a.m. until 5.30 p.m. I am left no time for washing, and in consequence my laundry bill has been trebled. Last week it was 8s.6d., the week previous 12s.4d. Subtract an average of 10s. and there is £1.7s.8d left. I have neither the time nor opportunity to do all the domestic work so have a woman helper several times a week. She receives 15s. There is now 12s.8d. left - and that is all I have to show for a week's work. I have not deducted any money for canteen meals. We will set that sum off against the saving of food in the home. I thought this does not justify an equal mark. Neither have I stressed the fact that I am handicapped in shopping, which, as all women know, means a lot. ... Moreover, I have to cycle to work to save 'bus fares, which would make further inroads into that majestic 12s.8d. Through my being at work my husband has to have lunch out. That costs him 10s. or so a week. ...

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Clearly we can not simply take a married woman's gross incomes at their face-value. The writer of the above letter had to pay income tax

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1. Coventry Evening Telgraph, 6 December, 1941.

2. For details on the problems of married women's income tax, see Vera Douie, The Lesser Half, a Survey of the Law Regulations and Practices Introduced During the Present War which Embody Discrimination Against Women, (1943) pp.81-82.

and insurance. The absence of the housewife (or any woman who had domestic responsibilities in this regard) from domestic routine cost a considerable amount of money as was shown. If a woman had a child(ren) to send to nursery it would cost about 1s. per child per day. There were several additional costs which would be saved by women's domestic work, such as mending clothes or even re-making them, and home-cooked lunches for the family were usually cheaper than those from the canteen. If a woman was unlucky enough not to be able to afford domestic help or to find one, the dual burden would be significant even if less expenses were involved. In discussing women's economic gains by war work, we have to set those expenses against it, although it makes generalisation difficult. The expenses varied from person to person and from time to time, according to the domestic circumstances. For working women, to have facilities for such as the war-time nursery, the British Restaurant or laundry service was one thing; to pay for those services was another.¹

The third type of letter were the ones which set out some practical reasons outside the factory why women were not keen to take up war work. Transport difficulties were apparently one of them, though it was not a major part of this category. Shopping difficulties were the most mentioned and this kind of letter was the most common of all those letters which appeared in the local paper. Shopping problems usually meant difficulties in obtaining unrationed food. It was *relatively* easy to obtain rationed food,

1. A Mass Observation reporter reported a working-class women:
 'Well. There's women who've got families and they don't want to go out and work? They earn good money in the factories, but not as often It costs you as much to go out to work when you've got a husband and children - it's not worth it.'
 Mass Observation, Town Box, 21 November, 1941.

but some unrationed though essential food such as sausage, cooked meats, fruits, and fish were sold out immediately on delivery. The following letter signed FED UP was short but to the point:

Who blames married women for not going to the factories? Where have we to get food from when shops are closed at the time we finish work? If a man and wife go out to work they inevitably suffer in the home. The scramble for food and shops closed early is an atrocity. It is time something was done before despair sets in properly as a result of this closed shop situation. 1

Many women wrote about shopping difficulties clearly based on their own experiences. Most of them resented the unsympathetic attitudes of shop assistants. When it came to the point of making a decision on their work in this connection, however, they usually chose not to go on war work or to stop working.

... I am in an essential war industry - food distribution. Calling at a shop this morning where I am registered there were over twenty women in the queue. Asking if I could be served as I had to go to work, there were rude remarks from the women in the queue. Appealing to the shop manager, his smart remark was, 'You don't expect the world to stand still just because you are on war work.' Result: If I queue I have no time to eat my dinner; if I don't queue I get nothing to eat. Naturally there is only one thing to do, give my job up and so have plenty of time to queue. 2

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1. Coventry Evening Telgraph, 27 November, 1941.
 2. Coventry Evening Telgraph, 28 November, 1941.
Several similar letters appeared on 28 and 29 November.

The lack of official shopping arrangements for women war workers not only discouraged women from volunteering and tempted women with jobs to give them up. It also affected some shopkeepers who were sympathetic with women war workers and made their own arrangements.

... only last week I was heavily fined at the local court because one Saturday during the potato shortage in July my wife refused to serve a lady with potatoes which I was saving for the workers when they left off work. After this experience, my motto now is 'First come, first served.'

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Naturally, the District Engineering Employers' Association were interested in shopping difficulties. However, they seldom attempted to reorganise their production to help women workers with this problem. Their solution was longer opening hours of shops and they did try to put pressure on the Chamber of Commerce towards that end.² Alfred Herbert, a leading employer, was most interested in the matter.³ In February 1942, he stressed the desirability of Sunday opening of shops, which had already

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1. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 2 December, 1941.
 2. Coventry and District Engineering Employers' Association, Executive Committee Minutes . (Hereafter EEA Coventry) 11 August, 1941, 20 October 1941).
 3. Alfred Herbert wrote to the local paper on this matter.
'At present most shopping in the city has to be done on Saturday afternoon, and there is consequently great congestion at the shops and much loss of time, the result is that women are tempted to take time off during the week, and this in the aggregate involves a great loss of working hours. I am very sympathetic with the difficulties of the married women, I have been searching for a remedy. I think the solution of the problem is to arrange for essential shops to be open on Sunday ...'
Coventry Evening Telegraph, 9 December, 1941.

been brought up in the Chamber of Commerce where it met strong objections.¹ Working hours at Alfred Herbert's were very long,² and shopping difficulties were experienced by all its women workers. However, women who kept on working there managed to make their own arrangements,³ and some of them thought that the firm's attitudes towards them was helpful. A woman who had worked at the postal department remembers that she could occasionally be late queuing for unrationed food in the afternoon with no problem. She concluded that 'they were very good to women.'⁴

The shopping difficulties of women workers in Coventry was also one of the Government's concerns. In November 1941, the Ministry of Food sent an official to Coventry to make an investigation. The report painted a cynical picture of Coventry as 'a spoilt child.' The official concludes that it was not shopping difficulties that were preventing women from war work, but that Coventry women were escaping from the war effort using shopping difficulties as an excuse.

... Mr. Fox, acting deputy for the Town Clerk at the Food Office, ... did not think that there was any definable women war workers' shopping problem; the shopping problem of the women war workers was that faced by 80% of the population, which was how to obtain their fair share of unrationed foods. Mr. Fox ... did not think that the removal of food difficulties.

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1. EEA Coventry, 16 February 1942.
 2. Two women remembered that it was 12½ hours a day (including rest) 7 days a week.
 3. They usually rushed for shopping during lunch, or other family members, especially mothers or younger sisters at school did the shopping for them.
 4. Doris Preckett Interview, 23 March, 1983.

would result in the elimination of trouble and unrest in Coventry. ... all agreed that there was no women war workers' shopping problem in Coventry as such, but the shopping difficulties formed a convenient stalking horse for more fundamental grievances. It was agreed that the chief difficulties were in the distribution of unrationed foods, and the useful action the Ministry of Food could take would be to expand rationing. ... I came away from Coventry with the distinct impression that the problem is primarily one of improving morale; that there is no definable women war workers' shopping problem, and the food question is only part of a complicated situation.

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Although it is probably true that the shopping difficulties were a convenient form to cloak more fundamental complaints, it is clear that the Government paid no attention to shopping difficulties of either of a 'superficial' or 'fundamental' sort. As far as the 'superficial' side was concerned, there is enough written and oral evidence to suggest that there were shopping difficulties in Coventry, even if the degree of difficulty was not higher than in other parts of the country. Ex-women war workers clearly remember how it was difficult to obtain unrationed food, although the interesting point is that, unlike some women, they did not think that they should give up their jobs in the face of those difficulties. As for the 'fundamental' side of the phenomenon, it was reasonable for the Ministry of Food official to mention the low morale of the people brought about by the air raids. It seems that the morale of Coventry people was not as high as some propaganda suggested. There was no evidence which suggested that the people wanted reprisal air attacks upon German cities. However, the above

1. Report on the Shopping Difficulties of Women War Workers in Coventry, HO 207/1069, 3 November, 1941.

report had overlooked the significance of the desire of married women to do their domestic work properly regardless of the War. During the November campaign, no attempt was made to suggest to those women that they re-think their domestic routine. The Government failed to deal with married women's difficulties in two main ways. One was the slowness in arranging facilities for them, the other was the lack of real insight into women's (and men's) idea of housekeeping.

Women who had sensed that their difficulties were not understood by the Government and the organisers of the recruitment campaign blamed the drive itself:

Perhaps the Ministry of Information will inform us of the situation of these difficulties. Is it beyond the power of imagination of the people behind this drive for female labour to put themselves in the women's place? Instead of planning exhibitions and parades which waste hours of valuable working time, to say nothing of petrol, which is, I suppose, a minor detail, but which would have been better used in extra transport for the workers already recruited, surely they could organise a scheme to make things easier for women to relinquish their household responsibilities. 1

Another women reminded her readers, and us, of the importance of family life.

1. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 28 November, 1941.

Unfortunately - for the national effort - women fall into two distinct groups, married and single. The former have, naturally domestic responsibilities which cannot be waived or forgotten at the sound of a patriotic slogan. Taking a broad view, their difficulties, well known and too numerous to list here, are really national rather than democratic, and even Hitler, for all his ruthlessness, has failed largely to find a solution. And the reason is not hard to find. The happiness, or morale, of a nation is centred around its home life, which cannot be broken up and families parted without impairing the spirit of the people. Women, keener intuitively than their menfolk, know this and resist accordingly.

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Although some women were under economic pressure and keen on taking up war work, many women had no such compulsion. For the former, the actual lack of facilities to ease their domestic burden was the most important problem. The latter, on the other hand, were more careful in their calculation of the economic gain the extra expenses involved and enhanced domestic burden, apart from their sheer patriotism. Some women decided to go for war work not so much for the economic gains, but for mainly patriotic reasons, or simply for a change. However, for many married women without economic compulsion, family life and domestic duty was the top priority. The relative absence of the tradition of married women's paid work reinforced the idea and image of women at home doing housework. Many women were living with this image, and the Government's intensive campaign without enough insight into the women's own idea of housekeeping did not change this priority. The rumours of under-employment and unemployment of male workers at local factories made the situation more confusing. The majority of women, especially married women,

1. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 27 November, 1941.

dare not go and take war work, when there was a seeming possibility of risking the men's jobs. For many women, domestic responsibilities and their men's secure job were most important, and as long as they had enough income for the family budget, they were not tempted to go out to work for money.

It was clear from the reaction of women to the massive November campaign that they were not influenced by the loud-voiced patriotism of the campaign into rushing into war work. This does not mean that women did not want to be patriotic and helpful to the country. But they did not think either that they should sacrifice everything to take up war work. Especially for married women, family life and their domestic responsibilities had the first priority. Without much practical assistance for working mothers and not much in the way of financial incentives, many married women, at whom the recruitment drives were largely aimed, held back. It has been noticeable that many married women were quite prepared to take up part-time employment. The importance of women's preference in part-time work will be discussed later in connection with women's post-war employment. Meantime, the scene shifts to Bolton, where in 1939, cotton still ruled.

CHAPTER 3 : FROM COTTON TO MUNITIONS : BOLTON 1937-1941

... the Euxton officials appear to have done much to attract new labour Almost every precaution is taken to prevent workers contracting industrial diseases. Workers are supplied with ointments, magnesia and preventatives, but many admitted to be careless in their use of such aids. (was introduced to a girl worker who 'cashed in' on her somewhat golden yellow complexion. She had black shiny hair, and her lipstick toned with the general exotic effect; of which she appeared to be rather pleased.)

Mass Observation Topic File 856, 15 September 1941.

Bolton, which is located roughly 10 miles north of Manchester, had been known as a cotton town since the early nineteenth century. It was particularly famous for its fine spinning. Anyone who took the trouble to study the industrial structure of Bolton in the early twentieth-century would have to admit the dominant role of the cotton trade. In fact, as late as the 1950s, Keith Winnard, an urban geographer, could write that out of the fifty-three firms he visited in Bolton, twenty had some sort of link with the textile industry, either directly or indirectly.¹ Therefore both the occupational structure of Bolton and its economic ups and downs could not be independent of the cotton trade. The labour participation rate of women was bound to be higher than the average because, as is widely known, the textile industry employed a number of women from its earliest days. This was the most significant difference between women's work in Bolton and that in Coventry. Table 3-1 shows the male and female occupational structure of Bolton based on the Census Report of 1931.

So far as the economic participation rate of the male population is concerned, there is no difference between Coventry and Bolton. But it is statistically possible to say that a larger proportion of women were economically active in Bolton than in Coventry. Approximately, one out of five occupied men were engaged in the textile industry in Bolton, as were half of the occupied women. This not only underlines the general importance of textiles, but also shows that, for women, it was the biggest employer of labour. Looking closely at the composition of labour in the textile industry,

1. Keith Winnard, 'The Economic and Urban Geography of Bolton in the Twentieth Century', M.A. Thesis, University of Manchester, 1956

TABLE 3 - 1
OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURES IN BOLTON 1931-

	Male	Female
Total Population	82,997	94,253
Over 14 yrs. of age (1)	65,030	76,568
Occupied Persons (2)	60,590	35,976
Per Cent. of Occupied (2)/(1) x 100	93.2	47.0
Major Occupations (number in brackets shows the proportion occupied by 'each industry among 'occupied persons' (2)		
Mining	2,184 (3.6)	nil
Metals	7,779 (12.8)	nil
Textiles:	11,597 (19.1)	18,638 (51.8)
Carding & combing	197 (nil)	5,957 (16.6)
Spinning and piecing	6,551 (10.8)	1,055 (2.9)
Weaving	397 (nil)	5,009 (13.9)
Textile goods & dressmaking	775 (nil)	1,504 (4.2)
Domestic Servant	nil	2,520 (7.0)

Occupied persons included management grades and persons working on their own account as well as operatives.

Source: The Occupational Table in the Census Report 1931.

it will be noticed that there was a clear sexual division in the trade: i.e. more than half of the male workers in the trade were employed as spinners and piecers, but the number of women engaged in this section was small. Most women were working in the cardroom or weaving sections which were regarded as less skilled jobs.

Bolton was at the edge of the coal mining area and had its own engineering industry. In fact, the latter was known for its textile machinery, and Courtaulds' kept on using machinery made in Bolton after they had moved to Coventry. One in eight occupied males were engaged in the 'metal' industries. For men, it was a major source of employment. Mining, on the other hand, played a small role in the Bolton economy. Women were practically unknown in either industry. When the munitions industry started to employ women, it was an entirely new phenomenon for engineering management, trade unions, the male workers, and even for women themselves.

The cotton industry had had an important impact on the lives of Bolton women, especially those of married women. Much has already been written about the tradition of married women workers in the Northwestern region and its effects on the family.¹ Bolton, being a spinning town, had a smaller proportion of married women working than would have been true for a weaving town such as Preston or Burnley. However, the cotton industry had provided Bolton with certain characteristics which were common with other Northwestern cotton towns.

1. For example: Margaret Hewitt, Wives and Mothers in Victorian Industry, (1958) Michael Anderson, Family Structure in Nineteenth Century Lancashire (1971) Elizabeth Roberts, 'Working Wives and their Families', in T.Barker and M.Drake, (ed.), Population and Society in Britain, 1850-1980. (1982).

One of the most important was the tradition of married women working outside the home after marriage. One reason for this was, of course, that there was employment available to them. But that was not enough, in itself, to 'push' married women into paid work. Elizabeth Roberts has argued that in the cotton towns, men's wage rates were fixed at a low level which, without the earnings of other members of the family, could not support the whole family.¹ Therefore, if the children were too young to earn, it was the wives who had to go to work since there were such apparent good opportunities for paid full-time jobs.² Roberts concluded:

It must be emphasised that in this area of north Lancashire, the majority of the working-class continued to be concerned with the family wage, and families remained family wage economies until the Second World War. Married women worked not for reasons of personal satisfaction but to keep the family free from poor relief or charity.

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The fact that many married women went out to work full-time and that their earnings were necessary for the family affected their home life, both the relationship between husbands and wives, and the relationship between the house and outside. The husbands of married women workers naturally

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1. In the case of spinners, their wage rates would be high enough for the support of the whole family. However, the proportion of male spinners who received the full rates was not large.
 2. For details of women's economic activities, see J.Scott and L.Tilly, Women, Work and Family, (New York, 1978), pp.104-145. As Scott and Tilly asserted, and Roberts found in Barrow and Lancaster, where the chances of married women obtaining paid full-time jobs were slim, they took all sorts of part-time work, often done at home, such as child-minding and washing, while some worked as charwomen.
 3. Elizabeth Roberts, 'Working-class Women in the North West', in Oral History Vol.5 No.2, 'Autumn 1977'.

had to help wives with the domestic chores. On the other hand, where there had been no or little tradition of married women's paid full-time work, there was a clear role separation within the home. Moreover, where married women worked full-time it inevitably meant that some external arrangements were necessary, especially for the care of young children. A mother usually tried to leave her children in the care of her mother or sisters, or in some cases with neighbours. But in either case, she might often have to pay for their services. Roberts quoted a Preston male weaver who had found that the cost of child care took a large proportion of the income of his wife (a weaver - N.N.). Some married women workers in Coventry were to make the same discovery during the War.

When the wife and I worked ... her sister lived next door but one. We paid her for minding our oldest child David and he would be about two when Ella went out to work. We paid 10s. a week for him being minded. ... I knew it happened one week the wage was 18s. and she had to pay her sister ten so she worked all week for 8s. She went to her mothers for dinner and paid her and I went to my father's and paid there. So, we went actually out of pocket sometimes. 1

As the weaver above mentioned, the mid-day meals were another difficulty and caused further expense. When parents had several children to feed, it was much more economical to arrange to have their meals cooked. A weaver remembered 'Cook-houses' in Preston where a hotpot was brought in, usually by children, in the morning, and which had been cooked by dinner time, so that both working parents and children could eat a hot dinner.² There, of course, were a lot of 'fish and chip' shops which provided a kind of 'take-away' food. However, they were not usually cheap.

1. Roberts, op.cit. (1982), p.159.

2. Ibid., p.161.

It had long been known, in the cotton towns, that married women's full-time work outside the house needed careful arrangements to ease the burden of housework, and that those arrangements involved expenses which were not small compared with the women's earnings. However, many women must have been accustomed to such arrangements, and paid work outside the house had given women self-confidence. Jill Liddington,¹ who undertook research on the suffrage movement among cotton workers, particularly emphasised the importance of the skills acquired at work in the formation of their feelings of security, self-confidence and comradeship with fellow workers, which could be turned into political consciousness. Women mill workers had their own 'culture'. Liddington quoted a Bolton woman who worked in the weaving and winding sections of a local mill during the first decade of this century.

The monotonous drudgery of machine-tending was occasionally broken by our traditional 'footing' when a work-mate announced her approaching marriage. This usually took the form of a mock procession down the broad-alley, the bride-to-be draped in a curtain or white sheet followed by a squealing cluster of well-wishers, the elder ones offering ribald jokes, the younger girls giggling to hide their embarrassment. ... For me the deadening monotony of machine-minding was rendered bearable only by the harsh necessity of earning a living and redeemed solely by the day-to-day fellowship of countless other toilers.

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1. For a full account of the radical suffrage movement of the Northwestern area, see J.Liddington and J.Worris, One Hand Tied Behind Us, (1978).
 2. J.Liddington, 'Working Women in the North West : II,' in Oral History, Vol.5 No.2, Autumn 1977

Although technological changes and the general downward trend after the First World War ¹ and especially the depression in the 'thirties, considerably undermined the feeling of security and the tradition of confidence, the existence of such traditions was a striking characteristic of the textile towns with their much higher proportion of women in paid work than the national average.²

Sidney Pollard divided the major British industries of the inter-war period into two, namely; 'the new and growing industries' and 'the old and declining industries'. It is a commonplace that cotton was among the latter. After enjoying a brief boom period following the First World War, the cotton trade went into a long-lasting depression. It was not simply because of over-production during the previous boom period, but was more structurally deep-rooted because of the growth of overseas competition from places such as India and Japan which could take advantage of cheap labour. Re-organisation of the industry was very necessary and was begun during the inter-war years.³ Bolton, being a fine spinning town, was not hit as hard by the competition of the Eastern countries as some other towns. Nonetheless, by 1922 it was 'about to enter a twilight world of neither prosperity nor

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1. Bowley pointed out in his Bolton survey that 'there is a growing tendency in the mills not to engage married women'. A.L.Bowley and M.H.Hogg, Has Poverty Diminished (1925), p.152.
 2. Unfortunately, there is no detailed research on industrial folklore in the Lancashire cotton district. Betty Messenger has done some work on the industrial folklore of the Irish Linen industry in the first third of this century. Some of their practices had a clear similarity with the 'footing' described above. Betty Messenger, Picking up the Linen Threads : A Study in Industrial Folklore, (Austin, USA, 1975). For the customs connected with weddings, see pp.175-180.
 3. Sidney Pollard, The Development of the British Economy 1914-1967, 2nd ed. (1969), pp.120-123 *passim*.

depression.¹ Textile machinery, on the other hand, was enjoying a fairly prosperous period in the early 'twenties. However, the 1929 crisis put more pressure on Bolton's main industry. The average monthly unemployment figures, which never reached 10,000 between 1923 and 1928, went up to 12,304 in 1929.² The depths of the depression saw them rise to 22,471 in 1931 and as high as 32.4% in June 1932. Until 1939, the average number of unemployed was never less than 10,000 a month, with the sole exception of 1937.³ As Paul Harris has pointed out, this depression affected every aspect of Bolton's life.

... the suicide rate which in Bolton had been an average of 25.6 a year in the 1920s, was 34 in the 1930s and 39 in 1931: crimes of theft increased, bankruptcies came thick and fast, shops closed up and by 1931 it was reported that shops in the town centre were impossible to sell.

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Depression hit not only the textile industry. Bolton's second biggest industry was engineering, and it had also suffered from declining demands. However, it was on its way to recovery from 1935 onwards, prompted

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1. Paul Harris, 'Social Leadership and Social Attitudes in Bolton 1919 to 1939', Ph.D. University of Lancaster, 1973. p. 154
 2. The highest number between 1923 and 1928, was 9,516 in 1926, because of the General Strike and the second highest was 8,982 in 1928.
 3. Paul Harris, op.cit. p.167.
 4. Ibid. p.166

by rearmament. In 1936, the Government invited De Havilland to Bolton to establish a large shadow factory for propeller production. The factory was located at Lostock which was an area of high employment, as well as out of range of German bombs. The negotiation was completed in 1936 and the construction was started in March 1937; ' five months later work began on the first - before the windows were in.'¹ However, in spite of the growth of engineering due to rearmament, it was only able to replace some parts of the jobs lost by the depression in cotton.

This relatively gloomy picture of Bolton was also reflected demographically.

TABLE 3-2.

BOLTON'S POPULATION 1901-1951

Year	Total Population
1901	168,215
1911	180,851
1921	178,683
1931	177,250
1939	167,900
1945	153,756
1951	167,167

Sources: Census Report for each year, except 1939 and 1945, which are from the Registrar General's Annual Estimates. K.Winnard, op.cit.

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1. Hawker Siddeley Dynamics - Lostock Bolton, Leaflet from the Bolton Central Library, n.d.
The Bolton and District Engineering Employers' Association accepted, in March 1937, the application for membership from De Havilland Aircraft Company. Bolton and District Engineering Employers Association, Executive Committee Minutes (Hereafter EEA Bolton) March 17, 1937.

On the whole, Bolton's experiences in the inter-war years were quite different from those of Coventry, where, as we have seen, with new industries, like motor vehicles and artificial textiles, job opportunities were widespread and unemployment relatively small. At the same time, Bolton had had a strong tradition of women working, especially married women. Both the depression, which sometimes caused the unemployment of the breadwinner, and the tradition of women working outside the home is supposed to have stimulated women to go out to take up jobs during the War. We shall explore this problem in the following pages.

Bolton had a number of munition factories in and around the city: Dobson & Barlow Ltd. (formerly a textile machine firm), employed about 3,200 men and 800 women; De Havilland at Lostock provided 3,000 jobs, including 900 for women; Horwick Loco works employed 9,000 workers, of whom 1,500 were women, and there was a Royal Ordnance Factory next to Dobson & Barlow, producing shells, bombs and munitions generally, established in 1940. The number of employees at the ROF was 5,000 of whom it was said women constituted a large proportion.¹ There were, also, many small engineering works devoted to war production. In November, 1942, the Bolton and District Engineering Employers' Association noted that 6,330 women were employed in the federated firms in the district, as against 600 before the War.²

1. Mass Observation Topic File No.856. 'Bolton's Industries Report on Engineering, Mining and the Cotton Industry'. (Hereafter HO.856) 1 September, 1941.

2. EEA Bolton, 12 November, 1942.

Mass Observation reports claimed to have found no criticism of the women. On the contrary, it seemed that male workers were enjoying women's company on the shop floor. A male worker at De Havilland, for example, said 'Nights don't seem as long if you have a few women around.'¹ However, to enjoy women's presence for the duration is one thing, to accept women as a fixed feature of the industry is another, and it is important to look more closely at the attitudes of the Amalgamated Engineers' Union towards female labour and this will be done later. Meantime, some attention needs to be paid to the labour needs of the two industries in Bolton and district which put a heavy demand on women's labour, namely shell-filling and cotton.

The filling factories were first to suffer shortages of labour, or more precisely, shortages of unskilled women workers. A serious shortfall occurred at the beginning of 1941. The ROF in Chorley was one of the biggest shell-filling factories, and consequently one of the worst affected. Recruitment campaigns were organised to attract women into Chorley, and Employment Exchanges in the district were instructed to give priority to the allocation of women into the ROF for fourteen weeks from February 8, 1941. However, it was not simply the absolute shortage of new women workers from which the Chorley factory suffered; the number of workers which the factory lost every week was astonishingly large. The net increase, therefore, was usually very small, there was an actual decrease in February and March 1941.²

1. MO 856, 1 September, 1941.

2. A Progress Report on filling factories, LAB 25/144, 9 May, 1941. According to the Report, Chorley Filling Factory lost 139 workforce during the fortnight between March 8 and 22, and a further 93 during the following fortnight.

The Essential Work Order was applied to the ROF from 31 March, 1941, to prevent workers from leaving for trivial reasons. At the same time efforts to improve welfare facilities were made, a hostel for workers was established and the two-shift system changed to a three shift one. The Chorley factory took workers not only from all over Lancashire,¹ but, via the divisional controllers of labour, from London, the Northern area, Scotland, the Midlands and Northern Ireland.²

The cotton industry had its boom at the beginning of the War due in part to military demand and in part to exports. In January 1940, the Bolton Evening News reported that the unemployment figures in Bolton on December 11, 1939, which stood at 5,204, was the lowest since 1929 and was still falling. The paper claimed that the major reason for this was the improvement in the demand for labour of the cotton industry, and that the manufacturers could not get enough plain and fancy weavers, side- and little-piecers. It was also noted that women workers were wanted to substitute for those male workers who were being called up. By the end of 1940, after almost twenty years of depression, the labour shortage had become so acute that the Government sent two M.P.s to investigate the problem in Oldham, Rochdale and Bolton in November 1940. The M.P.s concluded that if the labour shortage was to be met it would be necessary to recruit workers from outside the labour market, especially married women from the home. The M.P.s. also

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1. A Lancashire women who was working in the Chorley ROF remembered that 'People travelled from everywhere to work there, Blackpool, Liverpool, Manchester...' Pete Grafton, You, You & You! The people out of step with World War II, (1981), pp.61-62.
 2. In June-July 1941, the Progress Report wrote that: "As a result of an intensive recruitment campaign conducted during the past fortnight the Government of Northern Ireland has arranged for two of the Factory's Female Labour Officers to go to Belfast and interview women. It is anticipated that the results should yield from 200 to 300 workers.' LAB 25/144, n.d. (June-July 1941).

recommended a propaganda campaign aimed at Lancashire people and urging the importance of cotton to the war effort. Soon after they started their investigations in Bolton, the Bolton Evening News printed an article entitled 'Cotton goods are munitions - Appeal to married women to return to mill.' The article was, as was clear from its title, an attempt to persuade married women, especially those with mill experience to go back to the industry.¹

But these energetic activities of the Government were reversed completely three months later when it was decided to proceed with the concentration of the industry. Under the concentration scheme, certain firms were given nucleus status where labour and machinery were highly concentrated, both in the spinning and weaving section. The Essential Work Order was applied to those firms to guarantee their production. On the other

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1. 'There are more than 100 cotton mills in the Bolton area. Yet it is a curious fact that although all these mills are engaged on work of considerable national importance very few of the 50,000 people who work in them seem to be aware of it. ... Nevertheless they are munitions. They are as essential as guns and shells, aeroplanes and tanks and all such more obvious accoutrements of war, and without them we should be unable to carry on the war for a single day. ... Then there are essential home services to be provided for. When, for example, Coventry was so heavily bombed thousands of tarpaulins were sent there from Lancashire to protect damaged homes from the weather and make them habitable until repairs could be put in hand or other accommodation found. ... Finally, ... we must endeavour to maintain, and if possible increase, our exports of cotton goods. ... and cotton operatives working for export have the satisfaction of knowing that in this way they are also helping to pay for the ships, guns and aeroplanes now being sent to us from that country (the USA - N.N.)... There has been a big drain of men into the Forces, and other workers, not realising the national importance of cotton, have left the mills to go into other industries. New workers must now be found if the cotton mills are to meet the heavy demands being made upon them for Government purposes, essential home services and exports. ... As a first step towards maintaining production they are making an urgent appeal to married women to enter the mills. There must be large numbers of women in Bolton who have had mill experience and still retain the skill now so urgently needed.'

Bolton Evening News, 9 January, 1941.

hand, some firms were compelled to close down in order to release their premises and labour.¹ Calder has noted that concentration contributed to the tragi-comic fate of the cotton industry.² As cotton itself was an important part of the war effort, concentration produced its own difficulties different from those of the luxury industries. The Ministry of Labour and the Board of Trade were jointly responsible for the reorganisation. But their interests were not the same. The Ministry of Labour, distracted by the serious labour shortages in the filling factories in the Northwest, was much more anxious to release as many workers as possible from cotton, while the Board of Trade was keen on maintaining a certain amount of production and therefore was more anxious to retain workers.³

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1. For details of the concentration of each section of the industry, see Hargreaves and Gowing, Civil Industry and Trade, (1952), pp.351-367. The EWO was applied to the spinning section in October, 1941, to the weaving section in January 1942, and the finishing section in May 1943. In July 1941, the Board of Trade estimated that the concentration scheme would release 6,000,000 sq.ft. from the spinning and weaving sections, of which 4,000,000 could be used as firms or storehouses.
 2. Calder, op.cit., p.378.
 3. The Ministry of Labour expected that concentration would bring a number of women into the ROFs. 'The cotton industry now in process of concentration must necessarily supply the bulk of the additional labour required for the factory (Chorley filling factory - N.N.). In anticipation of a regularised concentration scheme that is being pressed by the Board of Trade effort continued to be made to encourage a flow of labour from individual undertakings in the industry.' (LAB 25/144, May 9, 1941). On the other hand, the Board of Trade wrote: 'The most important consideration has been the need to maintain essential production of the industry despite the large degree of concentration of the industry and exceptionally urgent demands for labour in certain parts of Lancashire and the adjoining area.' (BT 64/1773, n.d. (July 1941?). Sometimes the Board of Trade expressed their obvious anger with the way that the Ministry of Labour operated. In the clothing industry, for example, 'Evidence accumulates that the withdrawal of labour from design firms is proceeding at an alarming rate. It is at its worst in Birmingham, Nottingham and Manchester. It therefore looks as if the Ministry of Labour is playing Shylock, while unauthorised schemes which we have tried to discourage through Association, are making worse confusion.' (BT 64/883, n.d. (1942?)).

As far as the releasing of workers from cotton was concerned, concentration seemed to be successful. The Board of Trade reported that by May 1942, 112,000 workers had been released under it, which was many more than the original calculation had forecast.¹ On the other hand as far as the object of maintaining essential production was concerned, it failed to achieve its purpose.²

As a town dominated by the cotton industry, Bolton had to go through the 'tragi-comic' complicated and sometimes contradictory processes of concentration. Until March 1941, aware that the cotton industry was losing its workforce, the Bolton Evening News ran a series of articles to boost the morale of the cotton workers. For example, one entitled 'Wait for it' to discourage workers from leaving the industry, in February 1941:

Haphazard leaving of the trade, it is pointed out, might result in a surplus of one class of labour and a shortage in another. ... Mr.A. Roberts, general secretary of the Cardroom Amalgamation, ... maintains that even if a third of the mills were closed down a large number of displaced workers would be required to keep the remainder running at 100 per cent. production.

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1. BT 64/1773 n.d. (May 1942?)
 2. Calder accurately argued; 'Concentration, so far from ensuring fuller use of capacity, accomplished the reverse. ... The cotton workers, who even before concentration had been drifting into war industry in search of higher pay had turned the drift into an avalanche as soon as they had heard about the new scheme. In 1941, the industry had lost nearly thirty per cent of its workers, and even thereafter losses had exceeded new intakes. When it had been announced the Essential Works Order would be applied to the industry, still more workers had escaped. Those who stayed were generally stiffer, older and less efficient.' Calder, op.cit., pp.378-379.
 3. Bolton Evening News, 11 February, 1941.

The concentration scheme naturally caused great anxiety and confusion among the operatives. Soon after it was announced, the Ministry of Information weekly report on morale and public opinion clearly caught the confusion among the workers. It was a general statement, not specifically about Bolton, but there is little doubt that it sums up the feelings of Bolton workers.

Confusion has been caused in the minds of cotton workers by what appears to be a sudden reverse of Government policy. Until a short time ago, the Cotton Board was trying to convince the workers of their importance in their war effort. Now, however, supplies of raw materials are restricted and mills are closing down. ... It is officially explained that shipping space is too valuable to be filled with bulky cargoes, that only certain export markets continue to be important, and that although mills close, the Government is anxious to keep their machinery in condition so that they can open again at short notice. The suggestion is put forward that general propaganda to Lancashire cotton workers along these lines would be useful.

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Just before the publication of the detailed plan of concentration, a cotton union leader expressed his worries. 'We are told that the Government won't permit thousands of workers to be idle through closed or partly closed mills, but I can see 50,000 to 60,000 of them without work

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1. INF 1/292 report for the week April 9-16, 1941.

The Bolton Evening News also reported this kind of confusion in a rather comical way:

A notice appearing outside a weaving mill at Moses Gate read 'Nucleus Mill - Weavers Wanted'. Dozens of workers on the way out were attracted by it, and one was heard to say "Ee". Ah wouldn't mind having a try there. Ah', fed up wi' this shop". Actually, of course, the notice referred to the mill she was already employed at. Perhaps she thought "nucleus" was some sort of special textile material. Being a weaver at a nucleus mill she is one of the employees whose future in the cotton trade is more or less assured, but she doesn't realise it.

Bolton Evening News, 23 June, 1941.

throughout Lancashire in the next few weeks. I don't think the Government are in anything like a position to place so many work people on munitions at once.¹ The Government decided to set up local advisory committees to make arrangements for the displaced workers. In Bolton, a committee was appointed, which was made up of 7 members, three of them representing manufacturers, three from the unions, plus the manager of the Bolton Employment Exchange. But in spite of this committee the problems of moving labour around following concentration persisted. Two difficulties seem to have been particularly common in Bolton. One involved local employment exchanges, while the other related to the workers' previous employers. Neither problem appeared in the local paper nor in other published materials, but the Bolton Weavers' and Winders' Association recorded a series of complaints from their members.

One of the complaints about employment exchanges was that they had sent workers to unsuitable jobs, often against their will, during the temporary stoppage of the firms where they had been hitherto employed. An example of this was the case of some workers who had been transferred to munition work at Rinsley and Clifton by the Farnworth Employment Exchange. The reason why those young female winders were against the transfer was not given in the union's records, but it is not hard to imagine that they disliked shell filling work. The union took a strong line on it. They sent a letter of protest to the Divisional Controller of the Ministry of Labour, while they had an interview with the manager of the Farnworth Employment Exchange.

1. Bolton Evening News, 28 February 1941.

The Divisional Controller finally accepted the release of the ex-winders.¹
 This incident offered two interesting insights on the mobilisation of women in Bolton. One was the attitudes of the textile unions towards their members, the other was the women's distaste for powder work. Engineering work, many of them happily accepted. In fact, the weavers' union had one complaint that the employment exchange did not send a worker to an engineering factory, when the section where she was working was closed.²

Other workers complained of misplacement in the cotton industry itself. In the weaving section the most vital war work was balloon fabric from fine yarn for parachutes and the employment exchanges were keen to send any kind of weavers to that section when their original work stopped. The Weavers' and Winders' Association protested strongly that many quilt weavers were sent to the firms weaving balloon cloth.

Many other weavers who were temporarily stopped were being sent to work on these fine cloths, but were not accustomed to fine yarn, and as the work was only for a temporary period, they did not expect to attain proficiency before they would be recalled to their normal employment.

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1. Bolton Weavers' and Winders' Association Executive Committee Minutes (Hereafter Weavers' Executive Committee), 9 June - 7 July, 1941, passim.
 2. Bolton Weavers' and Winders' Association Complaints Investigation Book (Hereafter Complaint Book) 15 July, 1940.
 3. Weavers' Executive Committee, 1 July, 1940.

Even the employers of the balloon cloth firms sometimes refused to employ weavers from guilt weaving firms.

Long waiting time in employment exchanges while registering as unemployed was another common complaint. A woman officer from the Weavers' and Winders' Association had an interview with the manageress of the Bolton Employment Exchange, Miss Tenant, whom the trade union officer found unhelpful and unsympathetic. Miss Tenant 'had taken up the attitude that those women had nothing else to do and had plenty of time to spend on their hands, and that, as the clerical staff at the Exchange had to spend a lot of time now interviewing women who had registered under the Registration of Women Act, it would help them, and do the unemployed women no harm if they had to wait a bit.'¹ The activities of the employment exchanges in the district often turned out to be unsatisfactory and caused many complaints.

Employers also caused difficulties and bottlenecks in the flow of women workers to munitions. Some cotton firms in particular feared that they were losing their women workers to the engineering industry. Usually, troubles occurred when textile mills were closed for a short period, and workers found jobs in the munitions industry. The workers wanted to have their unemployment books (often called the 'green card'; without it nobody could start their next job) returned, and the employers refused. There are four cases recorded in the weavers' union record in 1940 and 1941, of which three were precipitated by the shortage of work in the mills initially.

1. Weavers' Executive Committee Minutes, 26 May, 1941.

In one case the employer of a cotton weaving mill got into touch with the De Havilland to prevent his women workers from getting jobs there.

Miss Forley reported that negotiations were taking place in regard to the release of a weaver from Messrs. Ainscow's Beehive Mill. The weaver in question, Mrs. Ethel Holland: ... had given notice (in writing) on account of short-time working due to waiting for the weft. She had later obtained work at the De Havilland Aircraft Co. and should have started there at 7.30 a.m. on Monday, May 12. On presenting herself for work she had been informed by Miss Pratin, the welfare supervisor at De Havilland's that she could not start as Mr. Ainscow had rung up to say he was not prepared to release this employee as he had work for her and they had never accepted Mrs. Holland's notice. It was learned from Miss Pratin that a private agreement existed between De Havilland's and Messrs. Ainscow's that the former would not take Ainscow's work people. 1

The Weavers' Association protested that this private agreement was 'most unsatisfactory'. The case was reported to the Northwestern Division Controller of the Ministry of Labour. A week later, the secretary of the Textile Employers' Association informed the union that Messrs. Ainscow's had agreed to release the weaver, and that she could work at De Havilland. The union also sought legal action against the weaving firm claiming the loss of her week's wages.

1. Weavers' Executive Committee Minutes, 12 May, 1941.

This was a most obvious case of textile employers trying to interrupt the women workers' flow into engineering. The other three cases were more or less similar, though there was no private agreement between the firms involved. Sometimes, it was partly the worker's fault for they did not know the procedure for giving notice. Nevertheless, it was clear that the textile employers were one of the obstacles to the successful transfer of women workers. It is also not hard to imagine that those attitudes of the employers in the early stage of the War affected women's willingness to work in the cotton trade and made some at least more reluctant to go back as demobilisation proceeded.

By October 1941, the concentration scheme, which had 'looked very well on paper so far as manpower in munitions factories and the cotton industry was concerned',¹ had turned out to be a failure. In the first place, two problems beset the released workers: one was that women, especially elderly or married women neither re-entered the nucleus mills nor went into munitions, but stayed at home, in other words, disappeared from the labour market completely; the other was that the younger and more mobile part 'had faded out', in search of high wages and 'even the Labour Exchange could not trace them.'² Although it had been anticipated before concentration took place,³ once the scheme started the disappearance of the older, married women released from the concentrated mills became a serious problem. As early as August 1941, when the recruitment campaign for women workers for the ROFs was on, the Bolton Evening News appealed to those

1. Bolton Evening News, 9 October, 1941.

2. Ibid.

3. For example, see Journal & Guardian, 28 February, 1941.

women workers who had disappeared to go back to the cotton industry to release younger operatives for munitions. The Bolton Employment Exchange believed that the reason for the vanishing women was 'perhaps in some cases, the husband's earning capacity has improved under war conditions, and the wife feels she can now afford to stay at home.'¹ This explanation, which was based on the idea that married women were going out to work to obtain a supplement to the family income, would apply to a handful of luckier women whose husbands earned sufficiently high wages to, at least, maintain the standard of living.

In fact, the disappearance of the women from the labour market was not so much their fault as that of the manufacturers' and the authorities. First of all more than 60 per cent of those workers displaced by concentration were married women. They were usually asked to travel to munitions works outside their areas, which they could not always afford to do. Others were debarred from some firms by their age. There was evidence of reluctance among some employers to take on women over 40. Travel difficulties and age limits forced many women to stay at home.

By the Autumn of 1941, the cotton industry in Bolton was feeling the labour shortages very strongly. They were desperately trying to fish in the only available pool of labour, namely, married women at home. To do so, they were obliged to change their traditional system of production. One of

1. Bolton Evening News, 11 August, 1941.

the most frequently proposed ideas was the introduction of a part-time system. Roughly there were two kinds of part-time systems: one involved working a few days a week to enable women to do housework for the rest of the time. The other was the half day shift, 'which it would have been impossible to apply a few years ago.'¹ The aim was to make two weavers into a pair who would work on the same set of looms as part-time workers. One of them would work the morning, and the other in the afternoon.

This is the moment to take a closer look at the recruitment campaign in Bolton and how the Bolton women reacted to it. The most significant difference which we must bear in mind before we start to examine the details of the recruitment drives was that the campaigns were arranged in order to persuade women to take up jobs, either in the Royal Ordnance Filling Factories, or the cotton industry, but *not* in the engineering industry. This does not mean that engineering firms did not need women workers. In fact, as we have already seen, they employed a number of women. The reasons for the different emphasis of the recruitment campaigns will be discussed more fully later, as they will only be made clear by a direct comparison with Coventry. However, what is clear is that both the filling factories and cotton mills were less attractive to workers than most munitions firms. In both industries, working conditions, wage rates and welfare facilities, were generally poor and the public were well aware of these differences.

Until the Autumn of 1941, the recruitment drives were mainly designed to tap women workers for the Chorley filling factory. In 1940,

1. Bolton Evening News, 19 November, 1941.

there had been a small campaign aimed at mobilising women workers for the Royal Ordnance Filling Factory (the location was not specified). Working conditions in the factory had been discussed in advance of the campaign in the Bolton Evening News, in July 1940. According to the article, working hours were a minimum of 60 a week with Sunday work extra. Wage rates were 50s. for day shifts, and 60s. for the night shift. Organised recruitment was begun on 15 September, 1940. This campaign did not receive as much publicity as the one a year later. However, on September 20, the local paper reported:

Up to date over 300 applications have been received at the Employment Exchange. In view of the urgency of the need special arrangements were made to facilitate interviewing and medical examination of the applicants, and some of the women who applied on Sunday were examined at Bolton on Wednesday and started work yesterday.

1

An appeal to women urging them to take work in the ROFs was issued in May 1941. The Bolton Evening News played a big part in what followed. A series of articles began on May 17, asking women between 18 and 55 years of age to go to powder-filling and fuse-examining work in the ROFs. The following week, the same paper reported a statement of the Bolton Employment Exchange that they had received many applications. (The first appeal was made on Saturday, and it was reported that the Exchange had received between 40 and 50 applications by Monday, another 30 on Tuesday, and an unspecified number on Wednesday). The next major appeal was in August. Between the first and second campaigns, however, there were a few small morale boosting moments in which the local press was prominent.

1. Bolton Evening News, 20 September, 1941.

In fact, the target rate of the increase of the labour force at the Chorley filling factory in a fortnight was around 1,000. LAB 25/144,n.d. (June-July 1941?).

One of these was a visit which Bevin paid to Bolton in July 1941. He addressed a public meeting which was organised by the local committee of the Ministry of Information on July 6. Bevin was accompanied by his Parliamentary Secretary, George Tomlinson, who admitted that there had been a confusion of policy, since it was but four months ago that the Ministry of Labour had been urging married women that they should go back to the mills.

I had more than one letter from Bolton asking if I couldn't make my mind up what I wanted the workers to do. ... I had to tell them that I couldn't, I was not a free agent: Hitler was making up my mind for me... Now I am asking women to give up the mill and go into the making of munitions.

1

Caroline Haslett, by now advising the Minister of Labour on questions concerning the training of women, addressed girl pupils in Bolton secondary schools in May and told them that the war would give women many opportunities for bringing about more equality between the sexes.²

But the major effort to attract women was War Work Week in Bolton which took place from August 3 to 9, 1941. This campaign was under the auspices of the Ministries of Labour and of Supply. The first publicity had appeared on July 15, stressing that the aim was to push women into three different types of war work. The first was, naturally, jobs in war factories, especially in filling factories. Those women who could not do

1. Bolton Evening News, 7 July, 1941.

2. As we saw in Chapter 1, Caroline Haslett was a leading member of the Women's Engineering Society. For the activities of Caroline Haslett during the War and her idea of sexual equality, see R. Messenger, op.cit., pp.110-153, passim.

that were to be appealed to, either, look after the children of women war workers, or, to accept the billeting of workers from other districts. Although the local information commissioner emphasised that the latter two were as valuable as the first, there was no doubt that it was the first which was the main purpose of the campaign. The Journal and Guardian did its bit with an article describing working life in the filling factory, putting the emphasis upon the good working conditions and welfare facilities. It highlighted the importance of the job for the national effort, by calling women workers in the filling factories 'front line girls'.

There is a great atmosphere of friendship among these girls, they work as teams, they work with a purpose. Many of them have brothers, husbands, fathers and lovers in the fighting services. They feel themselves to be charging the weapons of their kith and kin in the fighting line. It may be that a message goes with a shell destined for a destroyer on the high seas, Or perhaps a filled bullet becomes a love-token to a soldier serving in the East. 1

War Work Week itself began with a public meeting at a cinema on the night of August 3. The mayor made a statement that he was expecting 15,000 Bolton women to go into the filling factories by Christmas. He tried to ease the fear of working on 'powder', while urging single young women to leave the cotton mills to enter munitions as 'members of Britain's "great army without uniform"'.² He concluded by stressing a well-worn theme that 'in such serious and critical times he felt sure no women with a husband, son, sweetheart, or friend in the Forces would see him go short of the necessary munitions of war.'³ A councillor also made a speech

1. Journal and Guardian, 25 July, 1941.

2. Bolton Evening News, 4 August, 1941.

3. Ibid.

along similar lines and appealed to local chauvinism when he said 'If Preston could find 1,000 women to answer its appeal, Bolton should contribute no fewer than 1,500.'¹ Five Ministry of Information films were also shown at the meeting. It was reported that the attendance was very good.

On the following day, the War Work Inquiry Bureau was opened. The Bolton Evening News was again used in an attempt to answer women's common questions about war work. According to the article, the three most common ones from the women who visited the War Work Bureau concerned wages during the training period, what was the chance of being placed in engineering, and transport arrangements. Again it was clear that women preferred engineering to shell-filling.

The War Work Week was over on August 11, and the results were again disappointing. The Journal and Guardian reported that the number of women recruited during the week was far short of the 1,000 which had been the original target. The secretary of the campaign grumbled that if they were unable to obtain 1,000 women then some form of compulsion was needed.² The Mass Observation investigator concluded that 'War Work Week was a complete failure'.³ How can this failure be explained?

1. Bolton Evening News, 4 August, 1941.

2. Journal and Guardian, 15 August, 1941.

3. MO 856, 9 September, 1941.

One local paper did point to the strongly-held prejudice against filling work and argued that it was the chief reason for women's reluctance to go to the ROFs. Mass Observation also admitted that this was one of the most serious obstacles.¹ Although the authorities and the Bolton Evening News had emphasised the improvement in transport facilities again and again, these too had not gone far enough. Not only did the inadequate transport arrangements discourage the women themselves, they also provided a good reason for their relatives to persuade the women not to go. The transport complaints were mainly about the badly scheduled buses and trains. The three shift system had been introduced at Chorley and the workers had to travel late at night and early in the morning when the transport service was reduced to a minimum. When the workers on the morning shift came back from the factory, they found the buses were full of day time shoppers. One letter in the Bolton Evening News went so far as to say:

It is not the conditions at the factory
which turn our girls away, but the prospect
of spending the few hours of leisure allowed
them waiting for buses or walking to and from
the station early morning and late at night. ... 2

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1. Mass Observation reported that some women said that they would only go into the Chorley factory if they knew they did not have to deal with powder.
 2. Bolton Evening News, 14 August, 1941.

But, apart from those practical difficulties, the Mass Observation investigator also condemned the way in which the campaign had been organised. He/she noted the resentment among the ex-mill workers against a woman recruitment officer from the ROF and their general irritation at the existence of paid recruitment officers. A girl was reported as saying that only after the organisers went into the filling jobs would she go into it. There was also some evidence of feeling against 'class privileges' among war workers. The 'staff', such as canteen supervisors and welfare inspectors, were drawn mostly from the middle-class and working-class women had no chance to obtain those jobs which were better paid and probably more interesting. Such resentment was thought to contribute at least in part, to the reluctance of women to go to the ROF. There was also a letter in the local press expressing ill-feeling among workers against management staffs who were of military age, and engaged in non-productive jobs which guaranteed them higher salaries than the ordinary workers.

The Bolton Evening News spearheaded another attempt to persuade women to work in the Chorley Factory in August 1941. On August 29, it ran a feature article on factory life in Chorley which was entitled 'Chance for Bolton women - Happy Work in Shell-filling Factory.' Although the article had to admit the danger of the powder to the human body, it strongly insisted that the harm was slight and any ill-effects could be quickly diagnosed and treated. On the whole, it drew a rosy picture of factory life, suggesting that working conditions there were far better than those in the cotton mills.¹

1. Although the general tone of the Mass Observation report was critical of the recruitment campaigns of the Government, it admitted that an ex-cardroom employee said that she thought it was much easier to work in the filling factory than in a cardroom, and was more exciting. MO.856 9 September, 1941.

The conclusion of the article was a further appeal to women's patriotism.

'No higher service can be given to the winning of the War, no finer expression of patriotism is possible to any woman than is to be found through work in this factory where the essential and destructive explosive is filled into bombs of every size....' ¹

After all these efforts to persuade women to give up work in the mills and to enter the filling factories, it was the height of inconsistency, from October 1941, to shift the emphasis in the publicity back to the labour shortages in the cotton trade. The first real sign was a speech by the M.P. for Bolton in the House of Commons, warning that the concentration of the cotton industry had caused a decline of the workforce. He urged the Government to apply the Essential Work Order to cotton. Several letters in the Bolton Evening News tried to explain the reasons why cotton workers were leaving the industry. The arguments were quite familiar.

Here is an example of why they wanted to get out. In every trade to which the Essential Works Order has been applied the minimum wage clause operated. But not so in spinning. Now these side-piecers left in the nucleus mills find themselves with a wage of about 50s., which includes the 8s. office grant, 5s. extras for working without a little-piecer, whilst minders from closed mills are getting £5 for the same job...

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1. Bolton Evening News, 29 August, 1941.
 2. Bolton Evening News, 10 October, 1941

A woman worker in Bolton, who had been working in cotton mills since 1923, moved into De Havilland's at an early stage of the war. As she said 'both were war work, ... the pay was higher than in the cotton industry, this was why I changed jobs.'¹ The Bolton Evening News once again took up the fight on behalf of both the local cotton manufacturers and the Government. The married ex-mill worker must re-enter the industry, if necessary, on a part-time basis. In order to encourage women to take up part-time war work, the example of Germany was invoked in an attempt to prick consciences.

It appeared from reliable reports that Germans have more resourcefulness in enlisting women for war industry than we have. The troubles of shopping, housework and looking after the family have been met by the provision of nurseries, canteens and so on, and by the special arrangement of working hours, including part-time.

2

On December 1, 1941, a conference of the local trade committee took place in Manchester to discuss practical methods to bring married women back into the factories. As a result, it was recommended to the Cotton Board that they should highlight the improvement in working conditions and welfare facilities in the mills which had taken place in 1940 and 1941, to break the resistance of ex-workers.

1. Answer to my questionnaires from L.B.Davies, April, 1982.

2. Bolton Evening News, 15 November, 1941.

For details of the attempts to mobilise German women, see Leila Rupp, Mobilizing Women for German and American Propaganda 1939-1945, (Princeton, 1978), pp.74-136, passim. In spite of the intensive attempts by the Nazi Government to mobilise women for the war effort and probably better arrangements for working wives and mothers, the campaign to place women in munitions in Germany was a complete failure.

These appeals, however, caused some irritation especially among the older women who could not obtain war work for one reason or another. Sometimes, it was domestic responsibilities which prevented them from taking a job.

Three months ago the mill closed down and I, with a lot more went to the Labour Exchange. The only job they could offer was away from town and I had to refuse this because of my family. ... There has been no sign of any work up till now, when they offer me a job in the mill I know nothing at all about; and every factory hand knows that each job needs a certain amount of experience or they can become more of a hindrance than a help. 1

Some were turned down because they were not young enough. 2

Why all this appealing to women to go to it? When we do go to the Labour Exchange we are told there are no vacancies. ... I have been told so many times I am too old at 41 that I am getting disgusted everyday. I have worked at three cotton mills all of which closed down.... 3

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1. Bolton Evening News, 3 November, 1941.
 2. We have already seen the 'age limit' which some individual firms set. It is surprising, given the labour shortages, that these restrictions survived until the end of 1941.
 3. Bolton Evening News, 25 November, 1941.

Some weeks ago when there was an appeal to the women of Bolton to volunteer for war work, I offered my services at the Labour Exchange. I was interviewed and asked what kind of work I was willing to undertake. I told them 'I am a widow aged 35 (not in receipt of a pension), willing to be trained for war work. Would work shifts, including night work, I am able to drive. Also have knowledge of book-keeping. But I don't want to go on 'powder.' I was told there was nothing at all for me, only women from 21 to 25 years of age. Is it not women of my age, position and experience who should be given a chance? 1

Such were the recruitment campaigns (both the official and unofficial) which took place in Bolton in 1940 and 1941, and the attitudes of women towards them. At first sight, it seems that the women of Bolton and Coventry adopted similar attitudes to the appeals for their labour. Certainly the local papers claimed that women in both towns were reluctant to answer the organised war work campaigns. But the problem is not quite so simple. As we have already seen, the labour situation in the two places was very different. The Government wished to recruit as many women workers as possible in both towns. In Coventry, they were mainly for the local aircraft factories, and there was seldom an alternative war industry which women could choose. In Bolton, on the other hand, the circumstances of the local labour market were much more complicated. Urgent needs came first from the Chorley Royal Ordnance Filling Factory, then cotton too suddenly began to demand more labour. The nucleus firms in particular found themselves faced

1. Bolton Evening News, 7 November, 1941. A similar letter can also be found in the 3 November issue.

with serious labour shortages. In principle, Bolton women could choose either between the filling factories, cotton mills or engineering factories. The major organised recruitment campaign in Bolton took place for the ROFs, not for the district's engineering factories.

This points to one of the significant differences between Bolton and Coventry. Mass Observation reported that a certain number of women were employed in engineering works in Bolton, but there was no campaign nor appeal to women to persuade them to go into engineering. Neither the Bolton Evening News nor Mass Observation mentioned labour shortages in the engineering firms.¹ On the contrary, it was noticeable that there were several articles which aimed to discourage the flow of workers from cotton to engineering.

The fact that major recruitment campaigns were done for the filling factories which were located roughly ten miles from Bolton makes a direct comparison between Bolton and Coventry more difficult. First, the transport arrangements were more important when workplace and house were far apart. Although there were a number of articles and letters discussing transport difficulties in the Coventry Evening Telegraph, they occupied a much smaller proportion among all the grievance letters than in Bolton.

1. The only evidence to show the female labour situation in the engineering industry are found in the documents of the Bolton and District Engineering Employers Association. In January 1941, when the EEF recommended an advance of 5s. per week in women's national basic rate, the Association in Bolton resolved to 'notify the Federation of difficulty of retaining women workers owing to the high wage being paid by the Local Authorities - and by Government shell factories.'
EEA Bolton, 13 January 1941.

Second, and this is a much more important factor to consider, was the prejudice against the filling factories, especially, the fear of T.N.T. poisoning.¹ Mass Observation reported:

One old lady told me of chatting with a woman in a shop queue. The old lady imagined the woman was a foreigner, and asked her how she liked Bolton. 'I ought to do, I was born here. I've got like this from Euxton' (she had a yellow skin). 'I met her a few weeks later' went on the old lady, 'and she could hardly breathe.' I wouldn't let a daughter of mine go to that factory. I'd see 'em in prison first. Not for Jesus Christ would one of my lasses go' finished the old girl.

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1. Nor was this a local phenomenon confined to Bolton or the Northwestern area. In November and December 1941, during a large recruitment campaign for the ROF in Staffordshire among women in Bradford and district, the most serious obstacle to its success was not the fact that women in the Bradford area had to leave their homes, but the fear of T.N.T. poisoning.

Many of the girls ... raised the question of workers turning yellow after contact with powder. In some cases their parents had told them about 'canaries' - munitions workers in the last War.

Bradford Argus, 1 December, 1941.

Apart from the unpopularity of the filling work itself, the Chorley factory had had a bad name since its construction days.

... a heritage of the two years (1937, 1938) when a terrific amount of labour was required for building purposes. Some extra 2,000 men, earning higher wages had to find residence in Chorley and district. The working class social life was upset and medical and social authorities gave undue prominence to the phenomenal increase in drunkenness (sic), street fighting and venereal disease. Prostitutes travelled from Bolton, Manchester, Preston and Blackpool to the new field of Chorley. An atmosphere was created around the building of Euxton ROF that clings to the present factory itself. 1

Unlike Coventry then, in Bolton, the attempts to get women into work were always aimed at the less favoured jobs. And the application of the Essential Work Order to cotton was resented by women who saw themselves trapped in a low wage industry, while friends and acquaintances made money out of munitions.

I am a cardtender earning very little over 30s. a week. My husband is serving in H.M. Forces, and a few extra shillings would help to simplify matters. I have tried to get on munitions, only to be told I cannot leave my present occupation. 2.

1. MO 856, 9 September, 1941.

2. Bolton Evening News, 12 August, 1941.

Summing up, therefore, we have noted the strong prejudices against shell filling and much bitter feeling among cotton workers, both those who were retained in the nucleus firms and those who were released. The Government's plan to persuade elderly women to return to the cotton mills to release the younger, fitter ones for munitions caused anxiety among the elderly, in particular, about their post-war prospects. As the cardtender quoted earlier, pointed out:

If there is any slump in the cotton mills after the war, the married women will be the first to sign on the dole, and those single girls now earning their £2.10s. and £3.7s. a week will take our place. 1

Therefore, the so-called reluctance of women to answer the war work campaigns did not necessarily mean that women in Bolton were refusing to take *any kind* of war work. What the evidence seems to be suggesting is not that Bolton women lacked patriotism, or were unwilling to work, but that they wanted to choose work which seemed to offer them the best deal. The answers from eight Bolton women, who were actually working during the War, to the questions why they took up war work are suggestive. (The occupation of the women during the war was: engineering 6, transport 1, Land Army 1.) One woman gave a negative answer in that she joined the Land Army because of her health. One other woman said simply that she was drafted to release men and did not give any personal reason. Out of the other six women, one said to help the country, one to earn more. Two were a mixture of the two previous reasons, and one said that the War gave her a chance to get out of the cotton

1. Bolton Evening News, 12 August, 1941.

industry. It looks, therefore, as though women *were* anxious to help the war effort, but were also concerned with their earnings. Some of them had to take up some sort of work, because of the low level of soldiers' allowances. As one of them, a woman who had been a housewife before the war wrote, she took up the job 'to help the war effort and to earn some money to keep my children as I was living on £3 per week army pay.'¹

Another difference between women's attitudes to war work in Bolton and Coventry is suggested by the letters discussing why women were reluctant to answer the appeals. What did the women themselves think the most important obstacles to their volunteering for work? In Coventry, although some mentioned transport difficulties or, more importantly, unemployed men and wasted time in the factory, the difficulties most frequently mentioned were practical domestic ones. In Bolton, on the other hand, the emphasis was much more on those difficulties beyond the workers' control, such as transport and working conditions, including wages.

It is instructive now to explore these differences about the importance of domestic issues in inhibiting women to come forward. In Coventry it was the shopping difficulties of women workers which were most frequently discussed. In principle, this problem should have been serious in Bolton as well. And in September, 1940, it was a controversial issue there. Customers strongly condemned the 6 p.m. closing time, and were critical of

1. Answer to my questionnaire from M.Roberts, April 1982.

shop assistants who they thought were enjoying shorter working hours than themselves.¹ They also demanded that the Chamber of Trade should alter the opening hours of shops. But the letters of complaint never became the expression of wider and deeper grievances as they did in Coventry. No contributor wrote that she had to stop working because she could not buy her necessities.² It is true that in December 1940, the Bolton Weavers' and Winders' Association sent a letter of protest to the Chamber of Trade on the closing hours of shops. There seems to have been some fear that women would give up their jobs unless more flexible opening hours for shops were brought in. As one husband told the Bolton Evening News:

... Sir Cyril Entwistle and Mr. Tomlinson, M.P. are appealing for women to re-enter industry and yet shopping is made almost impossible for them. Three women in our street have given over working on

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1. Here is an example of how women expressed their anger with shop assistants:

We are told that civilians are all in the front line of battle. So, it appears, that shop assistants and their officers, the Chamber of Trade who are the supply column, are going to desert at six o'clock and leave us front-line fighters munition workers in my case, to retreat from the line to look for supplies... What's wrong with those who look after the shops. Are they tired or yellow? ... we work through air raids among high explosives. Our motto is service first and that is what we expect from others. We are urged to 'Go to it'. Who is going to tell those shops and assistants to 'Go to it' and help, not hinder the cause of right?

Bolton Evening News, 25 September, 1940, signed Mrs. T.N.T.
For a shop-keeper's reply see Bolton Evening News, 26 September, 1940.

2. Although some women obviously found shopping hard to fit in.

I myself ... finish work at 5.30 p.m., but do not arrive in Bolton until 5.55 p.m. By running all the way I can sometimes manage to get in one shop before closing time, and if that shop has not got the article required I have to go without. The argument that Saturday afternoon should be used for the week's shopping is ridiculous, because it is obviously impossible to buy in a week's supply of such things as bread, meat etc. I find that if it were not for the kindness of neighbours I should at the end of a day's work, be forced to go home to an empty table.

Bolton Evening News, 7 February 1941.

essential work because of this. ... My wife has been working as a weaver on Government work, but I am insisting on her stopping as I am sick of scratch meals, and her trying to rush around before the shops close.

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But this was the only letter which stated that shopping difficulties were causing the retirement of women from the labour market. In early 1941, it was decided that closing time would be 6.30 instead of 6.00 p.m. from Monday to Thursday, and 7.00 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays. After this decision was taken, only a few letters regarding shopping hours appeared in the Bolton Evening News, which suggests the situation was getting better.³

Coventry, on the other hand, provided several letters from ex-war workers who gave up their work because of the shopping difficulties. In Bolton most letters from women workers on this matter reflected the feeling of social injustice, that it wasn't fair that shop assistants could close their shops earlier while many war workers had to work until late. In other words, women workers in Bolton assumed that they had to work, whilst in Coventry, women felt that they could choose to work or not. This difference of nuance between opinion on the same problem in Coventry and Bolton seems to reflect a difference of paid work outside the house in the lives of women, especially in connection with their domestic responsibilities. It seems that women in

1. Bolton Evening News, 7 February 1941.

2. The Bolton Food Control Committee had a meeting in February 1941 on this problem, but they did not suggest any practical solution.

Bolton, having been accustomed to combine paid work outside the home with domestic problems, did not doubt they could do both war work and housework at the same time. The problem was the facilities to enable them to do it easily. In Coventry, meanwhile, many women doubted if they could do two jobs at the same time. Instead of suggesting and discussing the practical ways to resolve the problems, their grievances, based on insufficient time for the proper housework, quickly made them decide to stop working.

The problem of war-time nurseries or the care of children was, strangely enough, not widely talked about by women workers in either town. Nonetheless, the need for war-time nurseries in the Northwestern area had been realised from an early stage of the War. It became an important problem for the Government because of the labour shortage in the Chorley ROF. In May 1940, the regional officer of labour for the Northwestern area wrote to the Ministry Headquarters explaining the situation with regard to females in the area with special reference to the Chorley ROF. He stressed the urgency of setting up nurseries.

The limited enquiry already made showed the need for such provision at Chorley, Preston, Blackburn and Wigan. If we assume a rough calculation that a hundred per cent enquiry as regards the 5,000 women at present would have shown a proportionately increased need for nurseries, it is reasonable to suppose that a case would be established for nurseries at the towns which are the main recruiting centres for women workers... You will have noticed how the numbers on our registers are decreasing. I may also mention that in the weaving section of the cotton trade the employers are anxious to absorb all applicants on the registers with experience and as the days go by, the available labour supplied will continue to decrease and the need for the publicity campaign becomes more

pressing. The future prospects are, that more married women are likely to be employed, hence the need for nurseries in which children of these women can be cared for will become more urgent.

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In August of the same year, the divisional officer for the Northwestern area reported a similar situation in Wigan.

It seems that official arrangements for children's care alone was not a very effective stimulant for women to go out to work. Women stayed at home when the work available was not favourable from a financial point of view. Even if nursery facilities were provided, they often made their own arrangements with their neighbours and relatives. Both in Bolton and Coventry, financial incentives seem to have played a bigger role in getting women into the war factories than either patriotism or the availability of domestic help. The recruitment campaigns were not very successful. In general, attitudes towards the employment of women, especially married women, reflected local traditions. Work for married women had been much less common in Coventry than in Bolton, and it was in Coventry that domestic obstacles to full-time work for married women were most important. In the next chapter, we want to look more closely at the Government's appeal to women, and what assumptions lay behind it. What image of women did the organisers of the recruitment campaigns have? Can any differences be detected in the response of middle-class and working-class women?

1. LAB 26/57 20 May, 1940.

CHAPTER 4 : PROPAGANDA AND WOMEN'S PATRIOTISM

'It wont's be easy for Maree to get a job after she's bin given her cards from 'ere, and she won't be able to say why, 'cas they don't tell 'er why.' Feather said 'of course she'll get a job in war-time.'

'Do you think so?'

'Well, they want workers, don't they? I mean, they're screaming out for them on the wireless, morning, night and evenings - 'Join up and make weapons for the air, the land, the sea and under the sea'.

'Yes, that's what they say ...'

Inez Holden, Night Shift, (1941), p.52.

In an earlier chapter, we examined the Government's industrial mobilisation policy. Certainly those legislative arrangements were of great importance, but a fully rounded picture also involves looking at women's willingness to work in the war factories. If Government legislation made a 'framework' for the process of the mobilisation of women, it was the latter which gave it life. This chapter will attempt to look at the relationship between the propaganda designed to promote among women a willingness to work, and the response of women to it. In this chapter we want to survey the psychological element in women's decision-making process, the impact of official and unofficial propaganda and women's patriotism.¹

There are quite a few general books on propaganda and its various forms, i.e. broadcasting, films, posters, etc., both relating to Britain and other belligerent countries.² Most of the British studies, however, have concentrated on the history of the institution concerned, such as the Ministry of Information or the BBC, and seldom explored the issues from the

1. Official propaganda means that organised or arranged by the Government, mainly by the Ministry of Information, and by the other Ministries such as Labour, Health and Food. The Ministry of Information films and broadcasting by the BBC were included in this category. Unofficial propaganda meant everything else, for example, articles in magazines, commercial films and books. Some of them were not intended by the producers as propaganda as such, but they contributed to form public opinion and images. Therefore they were regarded as 'indirect propaganda.'
2. For example:
 Ian McLaine, Ministry of Morale, (1979).
 Asa Briggs, The War of Words, the History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom, Vol. III, (1970).
 N. Proney & D.W. Spring (ed.), Propaganda, Politics and Film, 1918-45 (1982)
 Zbynek Zeman, Selling the War : Art and Propaganda in World War II, (1978)

point of view of the 'receivers' of the propaganda. Neither has there been any analysis of specific propaganda, aimed at a single object, for instance, the mobilisation of women.¹

On the other hand, Leila Rupp has produced a fascinating account of the propaganda to persuade women to take up war work and its effects in both the United States and Germany.² Her work is not entirely successful in relating the four factors which she suggests 'governed women's willingness to work, especially the relationship between the economic and the psychological. Nor is she fully aware that the economic situation during the War could have either a negative or a positive incentive on women and that much would depend on local economic circumstances. She tends to treat Germany and the United States as homogenous economic units. Again, the meaning of the War and, therefore, the meaning of patriotism was completely different in the two countries. However, Rupp's study is additionally interesting in two respects. One is that she not only compares war-time propaganda in those two countries but also provides a good account of the differences between the image of

1. An article by Tom Harrisson in Propaganda, Politics and Film, entitled "Films and the Home Front - the evaluation of their effective use by 'Mass-Observation'" is probably the single exception. But, as we will see later, this article, although containing many interesting and worthwhile points, especially on the ineffectiveness of the propaganda films, lacks the evidence to be totally convincing.

2. Leila Rupp, op.cit.

the ideal woman in pre-war and war-time days. The other is that she tries to connect the effectiveness of the mobilisation campaign with other factors which might have persuaded or dissuade women to take up war work.¹

Rupp suggested four major factors which might affect women's willingness for war work : economic incentives, facilities for working mothers, status barriers and women's patriotism. She places the greatest emphasis on economic incentives. Nevertheless, she gives a well-balanced account of the role of propaganda in the decision-making process of women:

To suggest that propaganda played some role in mobilisation does not necessarily imply that women were simply manipulated into, and out of the labour force. The concept of manipulation, accepted by some historians of women in the war and vehemently rejected by others, assumes that women were passive objects with no motivation or will of their own. But those who reject the idea that women were manipulated have concentrated entirely on women who had worked before the war, arguing that they worked because they had to, and such a conclusion cannot explain the motivations of the women who joined the labour force for the first time during the war. Certainly the women who had always worked, and who suddenly had the chance to move into high-paying factory work, are an important element in the history of women during the war. But they were not the women addressed by official and unofficial propaganda, and their motivations do not explain the relationship between the propaganda and mobilisation. 2

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1. She came to the conclusion that in the US the mobilisation was successful without any legislative or other enforcement while in Germany it largely failed even with some legal obligation. All four factors listed above were supportive of the mobilisation of American women and Rupp made no significant difference between them. The important exception was the pre-war image of women, which, in both countries, put emphasis on the woman's role as wife and mother. But in Germany, the ideal woman was supposed to be prepared to sacrifice anything for the country, which naturally included work outside the home if necessary, while there was no such implication in the American image of the ideal woman.
 2. Rupp, op.cit., pp.167-168.

Rupp points out three ways in which propaganda could play a part in mobilising women for the war effort : one was to publicise the better wages in the munitions industry, secondly to break the prejudices of the middle-class women against factory work, and thirdly to appeal directly to women's patriotism. Rupp concludes that the first type of propaganda was seldom used in either country. In Germany, the important thing was to sacrifice everything for the country and its great mission. It was too 'individualistic' and indeed 'unpatriotic' to mention wages. In any event, wages in the munitions factories there were low.¹ In the US, on the other hand, wage rates in the munitions industry were better than in most of the traditional women's jobs. But the US Government and the Office of War Information, being afraid of the possibility that this kind of propaganda might provoke inflation, were reluctant to employ it.²

The second kind of appeal was to break the class barrier by glorifying war work. Rupp concluded that the US was successful in transforming the image of the ideal women from a housewife running a peaceful home for her husband and children into a glamorous factory worker

1. Rupp, op.cit., p.170.

2. Rupp concluded on the US and Germany that:

The lack of appeals to women's needs or desires to earn money in both countries strengthens the impression that wartime propaganda avoided challenging traditional assumptions about women. By ignoring or playing down economic motivation, it was possible to view women as wives and mothers responding to the needs of the country or of their men rather than as workers.

Ibid.

producing munitions for her man, although it turned out to be short-lived.¹ This change of image made it possible to recruit middle-class women into war work. The German Government, on the other hand, failed to glorify war work to an extent which was acceptable to the middle-class.²

The third but actually most important part of propaganda was to appeal to patriotism. Patriotic propaganda appealing to both men and women was by far the largest part of all kinds of propaganda,³ although

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1. "As a result of the government campaigns, the housewife-turned-factory-worker came into the limelight. Because the pre-war image had ignored working women, and official and unofficial propaganda concentrated on women in industry rather than in other sectors, the war transformed the image of American women. In spite of the fact that most women did not work in factories, that the need for women to replace men in other jobs, such as teaching, was also great - the women in the factory dominated the war-time public image. The women in the armed forces received a great deal of publicity, although their numbers were so small. Magazine illustrations and advertisements pictured women in uniform to an extent out of all proportion to their actual numbers."

Rupp, op.cit., p.143.

2. Jill Stephenson noted the consistent resistance against being involved in either Nazi women's organisations or war work by German middle-class women. "It was particularly the same middle-class women who had resisted involvement in the DFW (Deutsches Frauenwerk - German Women's Enterprise - N.N.) in the 1930s who now refused to volunteer for war-work, and found ingenious expedients for avoiding conscription once it was introduced."

Jill Stephenson, The Nazi Organisation of Women, (1981), p.181.

3. Patriotic propaganda took very different forms for men and women. For men, both Allied and German, the appeal was to the glory of 'fighting for the country.' In Germany, it was for the mission of the Aryan race. In the United States, men were asked to fight for their freedom and the country's glorious history and its future. In Britain it was the beautiful country itself as well as their freedom and the better future.

the way in which the different governments appealed to the general public varied from one country to another.¹

Rupp has some interesting things to say about the patriotic propaganda which was especially designed for women. Its main appeal to them was to join the munitions industry, although there were, of course, some posters encouraging women to enlist in the women's section of the Forces. What is striking is the different way in which patriotic appeals were made to the male and female population. For example, those posters appealing mainly to men's patriotism tended to put the main emphasis on the glory of victory, on their nations' proud history and on the importance of freedom of liberty. They were showing straightaway that it was honourable to fight for those abstract values. On the other hand, the patriotic propaganda aimed at women seldom showed these concerns. An interesting exception was a Greek poster emphasising women's role in the partisan resistance to the Italian invasion. Many women were climbing a rocky mountain where an actual battle was going on, and they were carrying boxes of TNT, above the caption, 'The Heroines of 1940.' Rupp concluded:

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1. For example Zeman pointed out: 'The 'total war' character of the Second World War meant that mass propaganda had aimed at the largest possible part of the population and convinced it to be utterly loyal to the state. At the same time the state was making demands on the people which in peace-time would have been intolerable. The strain must not lead to disloyalty, nor political doubt and dissent to treason patriots had to defend their countries, to do their national duty, where required. Without such group loyalty the state could not have prosecuted the war. Patriotic posters are therefore by far the largest group of wartime posters...'

Zeman, op.cit., p.31.

... the appeal to patriotism usually took on a personalised cast, urging women to work for men rather than for their country. Such an appeal made use of a concept of extended motherhood identical to that found in Nazi propaganda. The difference between American and Nazi propaganda however, was that Nazi propaganda also utilised the abstract ideal of sacrifice for one's country, while the great majority of American appeals to women were couched in personal terms.

1

All the campaigns aimed at women were very emotional, rarely logical. The personalisation of patriotism in the US was so thorough that one could feel that a woman was being asked to take up war work for a particular individual man (mainly her husband or sweetheart) in the forces, not menfolk generally, and not for the country and its honourable history and liberty (which, as we saw earlier was the main emphasis of the appeals to men.) For example, a recruitment poster showing a young women with a letter, probably from her husband, with the caption 'Longing won't bring him back sooner ... Get a War Job!' ² Another, for recruiting women ordnance workers had a soldier on it who was proudly showing a picture of his girl-friend working in a shell-filling factory saying 'My Girl's a WOW!'

The United States Government tried to appeal to both husband and wife together in an attempt to break any reluctance which the husband might have to his wife's war work and any wifely doubts about her not being a good housewife if she went to the factory. The caption of

1. Rupp, op.cit., p.156.

2. Rupp, op.cit., p.154

the appropriate poster read 'I'm Proud, My Husband *Wants* me to do My Part.' (Original italics). Rupp quotes a radio spot:

This is (name) speaking ... speaking earnestly to the housewives of (city). I'm a housewife, too, never worked outside my home until this year. Feeding my family and buying war bonds just didn't seem enough. So, *I got an 8-hour-day job, and managed to run my home besides, my husband's proud of me...* and I've never been happier. (My italics - N.N.) I feel I'm *really* helping to make the war end sooner ... and may be saving the life of just one boy from home. (original italics). 1

The campaign for mobilisation of women in Britain, shared some of the characteristics that Rupp found for Germany and the United States, but there were also interesting differences. But first, we will see how the British campaign appeals to women focused around the three points which Rupp identified, i.e. the use of economic incentives, glorification of war-work and patriotism.

As in Germany and the States, economic incentives were rarely employed as a way to appeal to women in Britain. As Appendix II of Chapter 1 shows, the British war factory was offering higher wages for women than anywhere else, and this might have provided a more effective argument. It is not clear from the sources why the Government did not employ this method. It is, however, possible to imagine, as Rupp did, that the Government's assumption about women was that they would best respond to the more general needs of living and country, like the men. According to this school of thought women were alienated from economic activities.

1. 1-Minute Spot No.12. 'Women-power Spots' RG.208, Box 587. Quoted by Rupp.

The second main pillar of American propaganda was the glorification of factory work aimed in turn at puncturing the class barrier. In Britain, the glorification of factory work did take place to some extent, but British society had a more rigid class structure than the US, and it was doubtful if this new-found enthusiasm for factory work had enough power to break the 'status barrier'. In official propaganda, the Government tried to avoid exaggerating the importance of women's war efforts. It is a well-known episode in the history of the war in Britain that one poster appealing to women to join the ATS was turned down because it was 'too glamorous for the serious business of war recruitment.'¹ The Government seemed to realise that some celebration was necessary, if women were to join the colours. An accepted poster for the WAAF showed a photograph of an actual airwoman which 'was chosen from hundreds of suitable idealistic types.'²

The caption read 'Serve in the WAAF with the Men who Fly'. It was not so easy to make factory work attractive. One of the most famous British posters of the Second World War was the one appealing to women to take up war work, 'Women of Britain, Come Into the Factory.' But it was hardly as attractive as those made for the services. A picture of Sarah Churchill, the Prime Minister's daughter in a munitions factory in her overalls appeared in various newspapers. This could be categorised as an attempt to break the class barrier as well as to impress people with the equality of sacrifice.³

1. Denis Judd, Posters of World War Two (1972)

2. J.Daracott & B.Loftus, Second World War Posters, 2nd ed. (1981), p.29.

3. 'It is suggested that wives of those occupying leading positions should be encouraged or enlisted into munition work.'

INF 1/292, 8 October, 1941.

While official propaganda fell somewhat short of glorifying factory work, unofficial propaganda approached the problem in a much more light-hearted manner. It was obviously determined to draw a rosy picture of factory life. Woman provides a good example. According to White it had the largest circulation of all women's magazines in the 1930s and 40s.¹ It is probably true that this magazine, as well as Women's Own was aiming at women in the lower middle-class and the working-class, who might be attracted to work in a war factory because of economic necessity. An exclusively middle-class women's magazine, such as Vogue never dealt with any aspect of factory work.

The covers of Woman occasionally showed drawings of a pretty, healthy and smiling woman engineer in her overall, jammed between those women in beautiful dresses, in uniform (as well as in the US which were easy to glamourise) and June brides in white lace.² Moreover, it had started a column entitled 'Woman War Service Bureau' from 24 May, 1941, which was mainly a series of articles introducing various kinds of war work for women.³ Woman published an article (not part of the above series) entitled 'Betty's off to make Tanks' which was a good example of how women's magazines drew the image of the young women who were joining the munitions factories.

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1. White's survey of women's magazines strangely missed out the whole period of the Second World War without giving any reason. Her estimation of circulation combines the numbers in 1938 and those during the War. According to this, the circulation in 1938 / Second World War was: Woman, 750,000, Woman's Own, 357,000, Women's Weekly, 496,000, Woman and Home, 301,000. In 1946, Woman, 1,079,600 (the second half of 1946). Woman's Own, 670,000, Woman's Weekly, 727,500, Woman and Home, 405,000 (405,000 (Woman's Weekly and Woman and Home for the first half of 1946)). Cynthia L. White, Women's Magazines 1693-1968 (1970), Appendix IV
 2. For example, the cover of 9 August, 1941 issue.
 3. A similar series 'Winning Jobs' started in Woman's Own from 17 October, 1941.

Betty is joining up. She's off to a front line job in a factory to make the tanks that are going to put (her boyfriend) where he belongs. It's a new job, exciting, important. But it will mean leaving home, doing new work, making a new life. Perhaps Betty finds it a little bit frightening. But she's got her share of British courage and she's going off with her chin in the air to back up the lads who do the fighting.

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Probably this was not enough to break the prejudices against factory work, but it might be useful in encouraging those women who were thinking of taking up war work for one reason or another to actually do so. Neither official Ministry of Information films, nor commercial films played a big part in attempts to break down the class barrier. The Ministries of Information and Labour together produced short films with the purpose of recruiting women into munitions. Among them, 'Jane Brown changes her job' told how a personal assistant to an executive member of a company answered the nation's call and left her job to go on a Government training course in order to learn how to use tools and read blue-prints. Then she began work in an aircraft factory making Spitfires. (Incidentally, the atmosphere of the film was very much middle-class. For example, it was classical music by professional musicians that was performed in the canteen during the lunch-break.) This film obviously hoped to persuade women without any experience of factory work to join the munitions industry. It is difficult to know how effective this nine-minute film was. Rupp's third point emphasises the use of patriotism in persuading women to do their shop-floor bit. It is very common to appeal to patriotism to help a country

1. Woman, 11 October, 1941.

but then there were differences in the way these appeals were made from one country to another. It is interesting to examine how an ideal patriot was expected to behave. We have seen that the American Government employed personalised patriotism.

In England, as far as official propaganda was concerned, there was less personalisation of patriotism than in the US, though in some cases, of course, the British Government tried to appeal to women's sentiments in a personalised form. An example of this was a series of 4-panel cartoons entitled 'War Work's True Stories' issued by the Ministry of Labour. No.2 of this series was called 'London Shopgirl Attacks Nazis' and it goes:

1. With the shop half empty and so little to sell, my old job began to seem pointless and useless.
2. My boy is in the RAF -- so they arranged at the Employment Exchange for me to train for War Work.
3. Soon I was passed to a factory, for a worthwhile job helping to make big bombers -- those that go to Berlin.
4. *And Jim has just got his wings. Who knows? I might have worked on the plane he flies.*

(My italics - N.N.)

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All the other 'stories' were more or less similar. But it is difficult to generalise about the image of women in British official propaganda. While we can say with some safety that the official propaganda image of women was difficult, in the US it was that of a glamorous woman working in a munitions factory for her husband/sweetheart, that in Germany it was of devoted mother sacrificing for her sons, in Britain it was less clear cut.

1. 'War work true stories' series No.2.

Women were expected to back up the fighting men or to give a helping hand in order to terminate the war as soon as possible. Such appeals were, however, by no means uncommon in the US. On the other hand, Britain, in general, tried to appeal to women as members of society, expressed in the phrase to 'do one's bit.'

At the same time, unofficial propaganda, like magazines, entertainment films and war work exhibitions organised by the private firms, were using more personalised techniques. For example, the article in Woman whose first part we have already seen, went on:

For later there are bound to come black days ...
 You may wobble a bit and want to chuck it up and go home, or off to another job. But you won't to that, Betty. You know that Bill Smith in his A.A. post on the Essex marshes, Bob Grant in his merchant ship, Tom Brown in the Middle East and millions of other men will stay on the job till the war is won. And you'll stay on yours too. Because all these men are finished if you don't. Their sacrifices are useless if you, and thousands like you, don't turn out the tanks, guns and planes they are waiting for eagerly - yes and anxiously. When they all come home again, you'll be the girl they'll want to meet. The girl who didn't let them down when they were in a really tight spot.

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On the whole, British women during the War were expected to contribute positively to the nation's war effort. If the ideal German

1. Woman, 11 October, 1941.

woman was a mother with several children,¹ the ideal British woman was not expected to simply stay at home. This difference was well brought out by the lives of two heroines in two films dealing with young women during the war, one produced in Britain and one in Germany. The German film was Goodbye Franziska produced in 1941. In the film, Franziska's husband, Michael, was a reporter following adventures all over the world, leaving her and their children behind. Soon after his return, the War broke out. It was Franziska who persuaded her reluctant husband to go to the front. "The film ends with Michael and Franziska saying goodbye to each other at the station, as they have so often done before. But this time Franziska is one of many German soldiers' wives, and what she says is echoed by all the mothers, wives and daughters left behind on the platform: *"All I want is to love you and wait for you until at last, when there is peace again, you will stay with me forever."* (My italics - N.N.).² Though the Nazis want to send the husband, who had just come back after a long absence, to the front for the nation,³ there was no sense that Franziska should make any specific contribution to the war effort to

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1. Stephenson noted how the deep-rooted image of mothers obstructed the recruitment of women in Germany. "And, no doubt vitiating alternative propaganda urging them to go out to work to help the war-effort, women were to rest assured that the Fuhrer was so determined that their 'physical and spiritual identity' should be safeguarded that he had refused all labour conscription to be introduced." Stephenson, op.cit., p.183.
 2. Erwin Leiser, Nazi Cinema (English Version), (New York, 1974), p.65.
 3. Naturally, Franziska behaved exactly in the way that German women were expected to do in this situation, saying 'But you managed to do it (to leave her alone - N.N.) for thrills and adventure for all those years. *And now, when there's some meaning to it at last, you can't do it?* (Italics mine - N.N.)
Ibid

help his earlier return. What was expected of Franziska in this film was that she should endure loneliness and wait for her husband 'patiently, but not to work in a munitions factory to make arms for him.

On the other hand, the life of the heroine in the British film Millions Like Us (1943), was completely different. Celia was a young woman who had been drafted into an aircraft factory, while one of her elder sisters who was married had got her old job back, and another sister had joined the ATS. Celia met a young pilot in the factory and eventually got married. Soon after the marriage, he was reported to be missing over Germany. *Despite this news, Celia carried on her work in the factory.*¹ The 'right' behaviour was to carry on war work despite the bad news of her husband. At the same time, Celia's two older sisters were also making their own contributions to the war effort. Women were expected not only to wait for their men, but to contribute more positively and actively to the country and the society, even if it was felt by women themselves that they were working for particular men they loved. There was, therefore, a particularly British gloss on Rupp's three major pillars of propaganda but in Germany, the USA and Britain, the appeals were similar enough.

There were, however, three further characteristic points in British recruitment-of-women propaganda of which it is not easy to find

1. Monthly Film Bulletin, Vol.10, No.120, 31 December, 1943.

the counterpart in the US or Germany. First, the employment of the fear of conscription. Second, the use of sympathy with Russia, and third, the recurring theme of anti-German propaganda.

The first only occurred in fact, in a small section of the propaganda, just before the actual announcement of conscription in December 1941, but it is worth mentioning an exhibition entitled 'War Jobs for Women' organised by a local steel works at Wembley, London in November 1941 provides a good example. Under the title of the War Jobs Bureau, it said 'Come in now WHILE you can STILL choose your war job.'¹ This approach was supposed to play on women's fear of being sent away from home or of being compelled to take up a job unsuitable for them once they were conscripted. By November, 1941, the advent of the conscription for women was recognised as being only a matter of time. Though it was generally favoured by the public, some women were anxious about their position.² It is doubtful, however, if it was as convincing an argument as the propagandists intended. The Ministry of Information report on morale and public opinion noted women's feelings after an intensive campaign for women workers in the Birmingham area.

Many women are said to be holding back because they feel that compulsion will come in the end and they might just as well wait till it does. 3

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1. 'War Jobs for Women.' Exhibition at Wembley, 18 November, 1941. Mass Observation Topic Box No.32 (Hereafter Topic Box).
 2. For details see INF 1/292, October-November, 1941, passim.
 3. INF 1/292 8 October, 1941.

The playing of the Russian card became a common characteristic of official propaganda, after June 1941. Indeed, there did seem to be a lot of interest in and sympathy for the Russian people in Britain. M. Maisky, Soviet Ambassador to the UK during the War noted it.

... Mme. Maisky was visited at the Embassy by a deputation who asked her to accept an album of signatures by Birmingham munition workers "who were determined to suffer with the women of Russia to rid the world of Fascism..." And Lady Astor, among many British women, telegraphed to the women of Moscow: "We pledge you our word that we will do our utmost in the services and at home, so that Britain and the Soviet Union, in close alliance, and supported by the rest of the democracies, can defeat our common enemy in the shortest possible time, thus bringing victory to the peoples throughout the world.

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Anglo-Soviet Unity Committees played a role in the recruitment of women campaigns in many districts, although it is doubtful to what extent their work and those pledges of sacrifice for Russia did lead to actual sacrifices, i.e. taking up war work regardless of personal circumstances. Nevertheless, it was certainly one of the most common motifs for the Government and the propagandist to press on the people.

The use of this sympathy was characteristic both of official and unofficial propaganda. One example of such official propaganda was a safety poster with the caption 'Cover Your Hair For Safety, Your Russian Sister does!' The poster showed a Russian women, her hair covered with a scarf, which was an example 'for their British sisters to emulate.'²

1. George Biliانkin, Maisky, Ten Years Ambassador (1944), p.346.

2. Darracott, op.cit., p.65.

The official policy on propaganda aimed at women was to try to make full use of the Russian alliance in the campaign to persuade women to take up war work.

The policy line there was: Russian women work very hard in all forms of industrial and agricultural activity - nevertheless they could be beautiful. Women are taking their husbands' places in industry and agriculture now that the war requires all available manpower. This exhibition aims at assisting the recruiting drives for munition factories and the ATS. 1

The unofficial propaganda also made the most of the sympathy for Russia. A Mass Observation observer who visited the Wembley Exhibition, which we have already seen, noticed this phenomenon as well.

There were ... a number of copies of the same Soviet poster showing the clasped hands of Britain and the USSR across the figure of Hitler and the wording 'Rush British Arms to Russian Hands.' 2

Picture Post exploited the visit of Klavia Ivanovna Nikoloyeva, 'one of the five leaders of the Soviet Trade Union movement' and 'a deputy to the Supreme Soviet', to a foundry factory in the North, to express *their concern* on the situation of munitions production.

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1. A memorandum from Mr. Smollet, Soviet Relations Branch, the Ministry of Information to Mr. Parlor, Home Division, the Ministry of Information. INF 1/679, 28 November, 1941.
 2. Topic Box

What does she think of it all? Often it is hard to get through the barrier of accompanying officials to find out. Statements to the press are guarded. Nikoloyeva smiles and says 'English workers are very friendly, very warm hearted. Especially the girls in the textile mills. They're just like our girls at home in Ivanovo.' Pressed a bit further she'll admit that in her opinion Britain can do far more. She has seen machines idle. She has seen wasteful methods used. She wants the skilled craftsmen to work in closer cooperation with women to teach them all they know and quickly. 1

During the Second World War, both sides devoted a lot of publicity to the purpose of promoting understanding and sympathy with their own allies and aimed at breaking the unity of the other side.² But no example has been found in either the US or Germany of using sympathy with a particular country to recruit workers in general and women in particular, into the munitions industry, or for urging greater production.

The third British characteristic in propaganda aimed at recruiting women was the use of anti-German feeling and the fear of the Nazis. It was, of course, very common for both the Allied and Axis to

1. Picture Post, 31 January 1942.

Earlier in the article it was stated that she started her working life in a textile mill in Petrograd and that during the First World War she was filling shells in a big munitions factory there. Some of the pictures accompanying the text and the explanations of them are of particular interest. One large picture showed a young English woman worker giving a farewell kiss to Nikoloyeva. The explanation below the picture of her arrival at the factory said that "The Soviet delegation enter a North Country foundry. The workers greet them with enthusiasm. The Russians smile. The workers smile, *Even the Work's Manager smiles* (My italics - N.N.) And the wording to a picture of her stretching her hands out to the workers was 'If we strike together we can make mincemeat of Hitler.'

2. For example, see Zeman, op.cit., pp.80-99.

accuse the other side of being sub-human, brutal, etc., etc.,

A large part of the government's propaganda was designed to promote people's hatred against the enemy. In Allied countries the emphasis was put upon the brutality of Nazi Germany and Japanese militarism. Incidents like the massacre of Lidice, Czechoslovakia, were used as examples of the horror of the Nazis, and a film entitled Silent Village was produced in the UK with assistance from the Czechoslovakian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in exile. While in Germany the commonest subjects were anti-semitism, anti-Bolshevism and anti-British capitalism, frequently combined in some way or other.¹

In Britain, this kind of propaganda could be very effective especially after the fall of France and the German occupation of the Channel Islands. The fear of actual invasion was ever present in the early years of the War. The Government felt the necessity of intensive anti-German propaganda, since it was not until September 1940 that there were any reports of bitterness against the Germans. Even then they were said to be aroused not by Nazi ideology or German victories in Europe, but by direct air attacks on Britain.² In fact, it was reported in June 1940 that many working women were saying about Hitler that "He won't hurt us, it's the bosses he's after. We'll probably be better off when he comes."³ Ian McLain mentioned the feeling among shopkeepers, businessmen

1. For a series of This-is-the-enemy kind of poster from the both sides, see Zeman, op.cit., pp.100-119.

2. Ian McLain, op.cit., p.143.

3. INF 1/264 18 June, 1940.

and industrial workers that 'things might go much the same way under Hitler.'¹

The anti-German propaganda by the Ministry of Information was carefully organised to adapt to the feelings of each section of society. For the working class, direct and emotional appeal was employed and the 'sophisticated and educated classes' were to be given 'more restrained and factual evidence.'² For professional people, the fates of the refugee professional people were supposed to be effective. Under those circumstances, it was not uncommon to employ this kind of propaganda directly to promote women's willingness to contribute to the war effort. The Wembley Exhibition had an example:

There were enlarged photographs (a what purported to be photographs) of people hanging from trees. Here the caption was 'Are you women going to let this happen here?'

3

Newspapers and magazines played an important role in this propaganda. One often comes across a picture in any paper during 1940 and 1941, of a hanged man in a town of the occupied countries, who had resisted the Nazi occupation. Under the picture would be a caption

1. McLaine, op.cit., p.145.

2. For the details of anti-German propaganda organised by the Ministry of Information and its effects, Ibid., pp.137-170.

3. Topic Box.

such as 'This is what the Nazis did with the occupied population.'

Probably the Picture Post was one of the most active magazines in this respect. In December 1941, for example, it had an article entitled 'What to do with Nazis' written by Edward Hulton.

It is actually regrettable that our Ministry of Information has failed completely to bring home to our people what would happen to them if Hitler won. There are still troops of fools who are saying that stories of Nazi outrage are 'just so much atrocity propaganda.' One answer to these people is that most of those deeds are not denied by the Nazis themselves. Rather are they boasted of! Up to 200 entirely innocent people have been killed for the death of one German soldier and 50 for each German soldier wounded. These are Nazi figures. 1

As soon as Japan declared war against the Allies, the Post devoted a whole issue to that country. The point which they made was that in spite of its attempts at modernisation, it still had strongly-held traditions under the mask of its westernisation which tended to be barbarous. The article emphasised the duality of Japanese society.²

1. Picture Post, 6 December, 1941

However, this article could be seen as a product of chauvanism with a trace of racism rather than an article by a liberalist/radical questioning the Government's attitude on anti-German propaganda. 'In truth most 'primitive people' have behaved much better than Nazis. The Maoris of New Zealand in particular compelled the admiration of early British settlers by an almost fanatical insistence of adhering to their code of decency and risking their own lives to bring water and comforts to our wounded men.'

2. This point was most clearly made by the first two pictures of the issue. Both were of the Emperor: in a . . . western formal suit, which was introduced by saying that he had visited Europe as the Crown Prince. The other in the traditional Japanese costume (which has been the formal one for the Japanese Royal Family for more than a thousand years.)

The situation of women in Germany was supposed to be a good subject for horrifying women in Britain. The 'stories' were often exaggerated. Woman's Own had a long article entitled 'Fuhrer in Skirts', on German women, their fates and on how the Nazis' dehumanised them.¹ Together with the widespread fear of the Gestapo, the major emphasis was put on the corruption of marriage, love and child-bearing, which was supposed to be the most sensitive problems for women. It even had a grotesque touch to it.

Women are reminded that if they have reached the age of 35 without mothering five children they are "unworthy of the great Father-land!" Children, children, children ... more soldiers for the Aryan King who will rule the world. If you haven't found a husband, the League's representative visits you and wants to know why. No excuse is good enough. Love doesn't matter -- only the needs of the state. There is no shortage of young soldiers anxious to woo the unmarried woman. Perfect strangers are herded together like animals to do the bidding of the State. Marriage doesn't always follow, of course, but the League is always ready to assist the cause of "spiritual motherhood." Thousands of un-married women are forced to sin, bribed by the promise that they and their offspring will be looked after by the State. The Love Bureau is having a great success in pagan Germany. But Frau Gertrude is not concerned only with the unmarried. Childless couples are visited by her agents who cross-examine them with the usual Hun brutality. Doctors and Social workers are brought in. Pamphlets are left with the couple, urging them to do their patriotic duty to the Fatherland. Money is offered as a "bonus" for the babies.

2

1. Woman's Own, 26 September, 1941.

In a different column on the same page it says, "The mother of a Nazi airman in Germany was told by the Luftwaffe her son was dead. Later the BBC broadcast that he had been captured, and next day eight neighbours told her the good news. She at once had them arrested for listening to foreign broadcasts."

2. Ibid.

The next question to be asked is how far all this propaganda affected women's patriotism and willingness to work. The measurement of the effectiveness of the propaganda is as difficult for the historian as it was for the propagandists themselves. Some commentators, like the late Tom Harrisson of Mass Observation, deny that propaganda has any serious impact.

Morale is not, in my view - and I spent years studying it in those days - affected by things like film. Pints of beer affect morale; being healthy and all kinds of other things affect morale. But official film never came into it in people's own estimate of what affected them in the crunch. ... in my view, looking back, it was events and experiences, and people's own innate feelings that determined morale. Not only that - there were about 45 million morales in England, not just one. People did not really change at all in the war; they just had to do different things because there was a war.

1

It is certainly true that morale, being a kind of feeling, while patriotism is a consciousness, was much more changeable and affected by personal happiness and unhappiness as well as news of the progress of the War and other factors. Having said that, one cannot expect a certain level of morale without a reasonable patriotism. It seems that Tom Harrisson defined propaganda too narrowly. In other words, the

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1. Tom Harrisson, 'Films and the Home Front - The Evaluation of their Effectiveness by 'Mass-Observation'', in N. Pronay & D.W. Spring, Propaganda, Politics and Film, (1982), p.244.

propaganda discussed in his paper was the official morale-boosting propaganda. What his argument lacked was the realisation that propaganda was not only made by the Government during the War, but that it was made invisibly and unofficially, and in peace-time as well. Social values are more or less the makers and the product of these invisible and unofficial influences. So is the image of women. If, as Rupp argued, American propaganda could change that image during the War, even if only temporarily, then that propaganda has to be recognised as effective and successful. Therefore, it is not possible to judge the effectiveness of propaganda until a careful look has been taken at women's notions on the War, and on British society to find how a woman interpreted the society to which she belonged, and what she thought about the necessity of her contribution to defend it. It is a commonsense interpretation of a rather abstract word, patriotism.

Naturally, most women were anxious to be patriotic and to be recognised as such by friends and neighbours.

Recently, I have changed from a school-teacher-housewife-warden to a mere housewife-and-mother-of-Judy. I welcomed my baby and decided that for the first few years, at least, she must have the security of a settled home life with a mother as a permanent fixture. Now my friends suggest that I am dodging war work and wasting my expensive teachers' training, because I don't hand Judy over to a nursery and go back to my job. I am sure my plan to provide the nation with several (I hope)

children , inspired by the ideal of the home life as the essential unit in national life, is the right one, but how can I make others see it? Do you think, too, that I am being unpatriotic?

1

Sometimes, the patriotism took a very personalised form. James Hodson heard about elderly women in a Sheffield foundry firm.

If a woman has too many throw-outs (spoilt jobs), they get tears in their eyes. (sic) Sometimes when you try to hurry one up, she'll say 'You needn't tell me - I've got a son in Libya.'

2

In retrospect, women claimed that they took up war work from patriotic motives. A woman in Coventry wrote:

... I was a milliner, when war was declared in 1939, and in a very non-essential job, therefore I had to consider what I was to do, as the government sieged everyone at home to take up essential work to help the nation. In those days patriotism was high on the agenda, everyone practically without exception wanted to do everything possible to help the war effort. ... As I had recently married I chose engineering (Alfred Herbert Machine Tools!) which was close to home. This was 1940 and believe me I entered a different world.

3

1. Woman, 5 December, 1942.

The letters from a 'Letters from Readers' column in a magazine are not entirely reliable material, especially when the name and address are not given. (In the case of Woman, only the initial and the name of the city where she lived was published such as Mrs.A.B.,Coventry). There is always the possibility of amendment which could change the context of the letter drastically; at worst the letter might be made-up by the editor. Since the letters are not kept as in archives, no check can be made. Having said that, the above letter is of interest, because it was an example of how the pre-war image of a woman who was first and foremost a good wife and mother, met the change of image into a woman who was participating in the nation's war effort.

2. James Hodson, Home Front (1944), 18 June, 1942, p.93.
3. Letter from . Emily Phillips, 15 September, 1981.

As we have seen neither patriotism nor morale were as high as she seemed to believe in the period from the declaration of War to the Summer of 1940, and there was much confusion among many people. Perhaps she did have strong patriotic feelings in 1939. Equally she might only think now that that was how she felt then.

It is not easy to determine which kind of propaganda was most effective in recruiting women for war work. Propaganda was recognised as effective when it clearly succeeded in persuading women who otherwise would not be working to take up war work. However, as we have seen, it was the economic incentive which was most frequently mentioned by women themselves as being the goal. Apart from the lack of Government appeals stressing economic incentives, it is difficult to conclude that those women who had to work were moved by propaganda. The problem of the allowances for wives and other dependents of the men in the Forces have been already discussed in Chapter 1.

Some women who had already been working before the War said that they changed their jobs because the munitions industry offered higher wages. Other women put the emphasis upon the fact that the War was a good opportunity to escape from an unsatisfactory previous job. A woman who came to Coventry from Sunderland wrote:

The war to me was a blessing in disguise.
At 28 years of age, unmarried, one of a
large family, with unemployment high, I was
lucky to have a job in domestic service in

a big house for a Lord. ... My employer, being a member of Parliament, was not going to let his reliable trustworthy staff go. ... I also got to know in the very early days of war that women as well as the men, would be recruited. So as soon as the debt (sic.) to my employer was paid in full, and I had a few shillings laid by, which brought me into May 1940, I did not wait for my King and country to call me. In the past, both meant very little to me. During that time of my life I only had the will to survive (sic). Off went my sister and I, with lots of other young women to the Labour Exchange to report for war work, the excitement was great, unknown to our employers, who would have sacked me straightaway. ... 1

Nonetheless, among those women who offered other reasons than economic for taking up war work, patriotism seems to be the most common. But even patriotism was not always enough. As we have seen the first economic impact of the War on women workers was negative.² During the summer of 1940, the Ministry of Information noticed that war-induced unemployment often demoralised women, as in the Woolwich area of London:

Welham Green: "two hundred women receiving unemployment pay between 11.00 and 11.30 a.m. one day last week. Large number of women recently thrown out of work in neighbourhood. Much criticism of Government heard during this time by women, and references to Bevin's recent appeal. Typical remarks from poorer women 'the Germans find plenty of work for their women' and 'our Government don't trouble about unemployment. 3

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1. Letter from Muriel Jones, 5 September, 1981.
 2. It was reported that 'Unemployment has been growing in many districts owing to the closing down of luxury trade. New depressed areas spring up: munitions failed to absorb idle workers. Chief problems: women who cannot leave districts because of family ties to seek work elsewhere.
 3. INF 1/264, 15 July, 1940.

In this situation, the recruitment of women propaganda had the opposite effect on women to that intended.

Ministry of Information film 'Women and Munitions' rousing storms of protest by women in Woolwich and surrounding districts who cannot get munition work and want it badly. Labour Exchange manager inundated with deputations, telephone calls and visits from angry women, Arsenal having just reduced overtime. ...

1

A more serious danger to patriotism than temporary economic uncertainties might be class differences. What the Ministry of Information called 'class-feeling' was allegedly significantly stirring from the Autumn of 1941² and got stronger towards the end of the year as the shortages of women workers became more acute and conscription became more foreseeable. Some of this resentment came from women who were working in war factories already and struggling to run a house at the same time.

There is 'considerable resentment among women who are already working that middle and upper classes are still being allowed to 'getaway with

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1. INF 1/264, 26 July, 1940.
 2. The resentment was aimed to whichever social group, it was thought, was not contributing to the national effort as much as it should be.

In some areas there is reported to be a good deal of feeling that Jewish girls are finding some method of escaping war work, caustic references are made to the 'number of frail Jewish mothers who need to keep their daughters at home to look after them.'

INF 1/292, 19 November, 1941.

voluntary war-jobs as drivers, helpers in canteens, etc.' which can be made to look like whole-time work - but if such women want time off, there's never any difficulty in their getting it.

1

These feelings were also aimed at the young wives of officers and servicemen who had no house to run and therefore had no reason for avoiding war work, but had been 'exempted' for sentimental reasons.²

There are persistent grumbles about 'Wives of Army Officers who dodge the registration by following their husbands round the country.' There is also some feeling about young wives of men in the services who have no responsibilities and in many cases, no home.

3

It was a common strongly held belief that prosperous women were able to avoid war work. Their critics did not recognise some of the voluntary work as 'proper war work.'⁴

As conscription became inevitable, it was reported that many women preferred compulsion to the voluntary system, on the grounds of fairness to everybody.

1. INF 1/292, 3 September, 1941.

2. One can find the same sentiments among servicemen. On the occasion when women's registration was announced:

From the Services come great anxiety. 'A man does his best because he has a wife or sweetheart waiting for him at home' is an expression which covers many of the men's feelings.

INF 1/292, 26 March, 1941.

3. INF 1/292, 26 November, 1941.

4. 'There is a definite feeling that well-to-do women and the upper-classe tend to avoid war work altogether, or else undertake work of a semi-charitable nature.'

INF 1/292, 8 October, 1941.

The present system offers an understandable, if misguided argument to those who feel they must justify their inactivity. A remark quoted as typical is: "I would go at once if I knew that everybody had to go, but I'm not going if that Mrs. ... is to go on having a good time.

1

The working wives and mothers on the one hand and the idle middle and upper class women on the other was hardly a new phenomenon during the War. Working class women must have been used to that. The war-time situation probably sharpened women's sensitivity about social fairness.

Those images of 'dodging middle-class women' were not just the product of working class women's imagination, there was a good deal of evidence to support the charge that middle-class women were reluctant to take up war work. The Ministry of Information was anxious about it.

There is little sign that women of middle classes without previous experience of paid work are considering taking steps to become employed.

2

However, it would not be very fair to middle-class women to assume that all of them were avoiding munitions. Some of them went into the

1. INF 1/292, 12 November, 1941.

2. INF 1/292, report for the period for February 26 - March 5, 1941.

munition industry, even if they were employed as clerk, store-keeper, welfare officer, billeting officer and so on, rather than on the shop floor. Of course, some of them did work with machines and although the number was almost certainly small, it was one of the most common themes both of the contemporary novelist and film-producer. For example, there was a 'posh' middle-class woman in the aircraft factory in Millions Like Us.¹ The middle-class woman in the munitions factory was one of the main episodes in Inez Holden's novel, Night Shift.

I did not know why this girl was in the factory. She was not of the working class, and I thought she was the sort of girl who would have been 'ladying it' at a First Aid Post attached to some auxiliary service. Perhaps something had happened to shake up her journey in the slow coach of security. 2

1. Monthly Film Bulletin, Vol.10, No.120, 31 December, 1943.

2. Inez Holden, Night Shift, (1941), pp.12-13.
And the unpleasant side of it:

Peggy was inclined to superiority, because she had been a clerk. In the canteen I had heard her saying 'I always thought factory girls were a low class of girls. I was always told they were cheap with men, and continually getting themselves into trouble with fellows.'

Ibid, p.36.

There seemed to be some prejudice even among working-class women who were not working in factories against those who did. A Coventry women aged 25 said that 'They've got a very low class of girls in the factories now and I think the exhibition is to encourage a better class. I've heard from several sources that they're a low type at present - they use bad language and they're dirty. Not dirty from the factory, I mean. ... But dirty heads and that sort of thing. They've got a lot of imported labour from slums and Irish girls. They want to get girls from offices, but I've heard lots of girls say they wouldn't work in a factory for anything. And that's the reason - that the girls are such a rough lot.'

Mass Observation, Town Box, 21 November, 1941.

One of the best explanations for the reluctance of the middle-class women to take up factory work is suggested by The Diary of a Bristol Woman 1938-1945. The woman who kept this diary, whose name and age are unknown, had a husband and grown-up daughter in her house as well as a daily help,¹ when she wrote this:

Have been asked to join the staff at Bristol Aeroplane Works, as they are very short of typists. I like doing voluntary work, but feel I cannot undertake regular employment, with a fairly large house to run, and both Daddy and Joyce to cater for.

2

Later she occasionally took up part-time clerical work but reluctantly and only when she was personally asked.

The Hon. Secretary of the S.S.A.F.A. (Soldiers' Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association - N.N.) asked if I could help the whole day tomorrow. I was sorry I could not promise, as I have not made any arrangements with my daily help, but agreed to go for two hours tomorrow at 2.30 p.m.

3

It was amazing how often she gave her responsibility for her daughter as the reason why she could not take up regular employment.

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1. Later she found it difficult to keep her home-help. 'My help has obtained a very good war post as a machine-worker and will be leaving me in two weeks' time. Have advertised for another.' M.V.A., The Diary of a Bristol Woman, 1938-1945, (Ilfracombe, 1951), 7 November, 1940. p.91.
 2. Ibid., 23 March, 1940, p.74. Joyce apparently her only child, was 15 years old at this time.
 3. Ibid. 29 October, 1941. p.114
Incidentally, she wrote in her diary on the previous day that 'Helped Joyce to make a miniature garden', (28 October, 1941). Joyce had her 17th birthday on 20 October, 1941.

Typing at the BAC from 1 p.m. Mrs. B. does not wish me to leave on Wednesday, but I pointed out I only promised to help for the week, and as Joyce is still young I will not leave her alone in the afternoons. She will be leaving for college shortly, I want to be with her as much as possible before she goes.

1

It is not clear if she really thought that it was her responsibility to be with her 17 years old daughter, or if she used her daughter as an excuse for refusing regular work. Finally, not long after writing the above diary, she received a letter asking her to go to the Labour Exchange to have an interview. Her diary entry on this incident is worth quoting in full.

Wed. 9 Sept. 1942.

Received a letter from Ministry of Labour asking me to go for an interview on Monday at 1.30 p.m. What an awkward time for a housewife busy with mid-day meal. ...

Mon. 14 Sept. 1942.

1.30 p.m. to the Labour Exchange Interviewing Department in Clare Street. They asked me what war work I was doing. I attempted to tell them that I undertook any voluntary work I was asked to, also that I had a large house with no daily help now and that both my daughter and hubby came home to a mid-day meal. The woman interviewer was nice but said that when I obtained another help in the house, I must go down and report for half-time employment. Surely, there are women less employed than I am, and if poor old England is depending on women of my age to keep the Germans from walking the streets of Bristol, we must be in a very bad way. I seem to be England's last hope. ...

1. M.V.A., op.cit., 17 August, 1942. p.143

Wed. 16 Sep.1942.

There is an advertisement in the paper for a shorthand-typist in the Housing Department. This is my old work which I did when the Department first started at the Council House before my marriage. I would rather go there than to any place the Labour Exchange may send me.

1

From her first reaction when she received the letter from the Ministry of Labour to starting to think about the possibility of employment, her attitudes were completely different from those of working-class women, who either from financial need, boredom, or even patriotism, took war work as inevitable. The author of this diary does not seem to have realised that many women of her age had been employed in full-time work while they had a house to run at the same time. The propaganda campaign aimed at women did not apparently reach her at all. The problem here, of course, is how representative was the author of this diary? Even if she was among the minority, she still provides evidence that some middle class women put the emphasis upon household responsibility above all and that the lack of expectation and experience of paid work (especially after marriage) was a strong obstacle to the mobilisation of women. Her diary was an example that official and unofficial propaganda failed to change the image of women among at least some parts of the middle class.

1. M.V.A. op.cit., pp.145-146.

In Britain it was not able to change the public image of women to a great extent, although this does not mean that the mobilisation of women in Britain, as Table 4-1 shows, was not successfully achieved. In fact, Britain did better in this respect than the United States and Germany. Nevertheless, there were some women, like the author of the diary, who did not even realise that many women did both paid work as well as running a house. It was a failure of propaganda and publicity that they did not get through to such women.

It is a well known fact that the War brought the working class and the middle class into closer proximity through evacuation. It also seems that it made working class women, in general, more sensitive to the way in which middle class women were living.¹ During the War, both working class and middle class women were supposed to be on the same level. There is some evidence, as we have seen, that working women were irritated by the unpreparedness of middle class women to make sacrifices for the War. The idea behind this irritation and resentment seemed to be one of fairness, that is, if working class women were to sacrifice some comfort in their life for the nation's war effort, others

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1. Holden described the embarrassment of a woman who met the difference within the class.

If Mabs did not look out of her green eyes, she looked with them: they flickered for a moment. The shadow of the class within class had fallen between the two workers - the good living, the high school, the piano in the Kilburn house, but Mabs only went on singing 'Oh, roll on one o'clock, roll on supper-time.'

Holden, op.cit., p.20.

TABLE 4-1

INDEX OF THE NUMBER OF OCCUPIED WOMEN IN THE
UNITED KINGDOM, THE UNITED STATES AND GERMANY
1939-1946

UK and German 1939 = 100
 USA 1940 = 100

	U.K.	U.S.A.	GERMANY
1939	100	-	100
1940	109	100	98.4
1941	120	103	96.9
1942	136	114	98.7
1943	142	133	101
1944	140	137	101
1945	133	136	-
1946	110	119	-

Sources: The UK = Ministry of Labour and National Service
 Report for the years 1939-1946 (Cmd.7225)

The USA and Germany, Rupp, op.cit., pp.187-188.

should make a similar sacrifice. The feeling sometimes took a negative form, such as 'I shan't go to it, while Mrs. So-and-So can stay at home comfortably.' But, this expression was not, in fact, as negative as it sounded.

Although working class women were quite prepared to take up war work, in general, many of them were also willing to make sacrifices in order to do it. However, they were usually conscious of the need to maintain their standard of domestic life. Above all they wanted fairness. Everyone should do their share. When they encountered that which they thought unfair, they were frustrated, irritated and sometimes it caused rather unpatriotic sounding statements. Although propaganda urged women to take up war work it was not aimed at revising their ideas about their domestic role. It was natural that women without working experience were more reserved about taking up war work. We cannot, of course, go on to say that such women were less patriotic. Obviously, the lack of working experience, especially after marriage, was a major obstacle to volunteering for war work. And here, neither official nor unofficial propaganda was very helpful. Therefore, when work outside the home appeared to damage the standard of domestic life, they were left without any practical guidance or help.

The final question which needs to be discussed about the recruitment of women propaganda is how far it was meant to have or had, permanent effects on the conventional view of women's role in society?

What women were expected to do during the War was apparently different from the traditional women's role. Was this mirroring the emergence of a different image of women or just reflecting the nation's needs for the duration? If the case was the latter, how did the tone of propaganda change towards the end of the War,

One way of entering this area is to look at the war work articles and the women's magazines to see how, if at all, the image of the 'ideal' woman changed over time. Woman is chosen as a case study because of its large readership, roughly 1,000,000 and because it covered the whole of our period.

During the first stage, the war work articles, grouped under the heading 'Women War Work Bureau', were very straightforward. They were simply encouraging women to take war work. Nothing, not even marriage was an obstacle to work of national importance:

Marriage is no longer a bar to a career, and in most professions the woman who married may carry on with her normal work if she wishes. In many instances she is urged to continue to give her services to national effort. ... So the married woman can play her part in war service as fully as single people.

1

1. Woman, 23 August, 1941.

The same idea was shown in the 'Letter-from-Readers' column in March 1942. A letter from a 'reader' said that the married women should retire from the labour market after the war to give place to men, single women and widows, and to run a comfortable home for 'men back from the miseries of a war.' The editor replied: 'May we say here that in our opinion peace is just as much a full-time job for any nation as war? This means that there will be as much work to be done in our country after the war as there is now and it follows that married women will be needed to do their bit as much as single ones or widows. The best way to get the work done is to try to fit the right people into the right jobs.'

Woman, 28 March, 1942.

It seldom turned its eyes to the other side of the story, that is, the need to provide nursery arrangements for young children and other domestic difficulties. As the War went on, articles began to deal with those subjects, especially nurseries, but not until the beginning of 1943. For example, Woman in January 1943, wrote about the opening hours of nurseries and clothing coupons for children's overalls. In March of the same year, they had an article with the purpose of promoting the 'child-minder' scheme.

Many of the best nannies looking after small children in family nurseries are 'unqualified' - If by qualified one means college trained - but all of them have another quality as valuable, that is, a genuine love of children and long experience with them.

1

In October of the same year, there was a further piece on children in the nurseries. This time they put a picture of Bevin playing with children, 'Bevin Babies', in a war nursery.²

At the same time, part-time work, including the out-working system, was described as a kind of 'magic' combining domestic work and war work.³ The out-working system, that is, to put out simple assembly jobs which did not need any complicated machinery or skills to women at home

1. Woman, 27 March, 1943.

2. Women, 23 October, 1943.

A woman in Coventry remembered that women munition workers were called 'Bevin's Beauties' (Letter from Joyce Hampson, dated 3 September, 1981)

3. For example, Woman introduced part-time work under the title 'She does 2 jobs a day. The article started by saying that 'Half a million housewives are already doing part-time work. It is hoped that by the end of this year a million women, somehow or other, will combine their job of house keeping - house work, cooking, shopping and queueing, and mending - with about thirty hours of additional work a week.'

Woman, 20 March, 1943.

to be completed in their spare time was praised for enabling most women to participate in war work. It was partly introduced for women in the rural areas where there was no munition factory with part-time shifts. This system could be very exploitive, especially if those women who were in need of money, and could find no other job. The women were paid by the piece and were not under the protection of the factory acts. In the women's magazines, part-time work was a means to enable those with domestic responsibilities to contribute to the national effort. However, the fact that earnings were not even mentioned suggests that part-time work was thought of as an easy way to participate in the war effort, for women with no real economic pressures. Moreover, such work would do little damage to the domestic routine. The reward was satisfaction that they were contributing to the cause, neither 'career' nor financial gains entered into it. Not surprisingly, women's magazines were not after widening the horizon for women through war work, but merely acting as a means of unofficial propaganda to drive women into munitions work.

But the real change in 'Women's War Work Bureau', happened around the beginning of 1944, which paralleled the changes in woman-power policy of the Ministry of Labour. Since the beginning of 1944, the articles had concentrated on two main subjects: one was on the women who achieved a high standard through war service, like women pilots in the WAAF or tool-setters in the engineering industry. The other pieces had the purpose of persuading women to take up domestic work, such as cooking, laundry work, as war work. It was the latter which reflected the changes in Government policy. Domestic work was described as work equally skilled important . and worthwhile as the munitions work or service in the forces

Domestic work at home and nursing in a hospital are both skilled jobs - these girls are getting the training and experience they need to make them expert in the field. 1

Certainly, domestic work required skills if it was to be done properly, but this sudden reversal on a hitherto neglected job must have been confusing to women's eyes.

While this change was reflecting Government policy, the magazines' editorial policy itself started to change slightly at the same time. It put more emphasis on the traditional values of femininity. Here is an example of how the women's magazines mixed traditional femininity into the image of 'manly' women in the WAAF.

However manly the jobs the girls in the WAAF do in the working day, when they knock off it's feminine interest that goes to their heart. Just look at seven WAAFs in the photograph, all bathing one baby! ... Child welfare is not the only domestic job they can learn. The WAAF progress training scheme includes many such subjects. Here are some topics which have been discussed recently: catering for a family of five; home-making as a career; interior decoration; the choice of a house and what to look for as well as mothercraft. The old bogey that girls in uniform lose interest in such feminine subjects is blown sky-high - by the girls themselves. 2

1. Women, 11 March, 1944.

2. Women, 22 April, 1944.

The 'Woman War Work Bureau' itself was getting more fragmented and intermittent towards the end of 1944, and few issues contained this column in 1945. This fact itself shows that women's magazines were less interested in demobilisation than they had been in mobilisation. One of the last issues of this column contained a letter from a woman who was made redundant in a factory at the end of 1944 and was worried that she would be forced into domestic service instead. The answer read:

... If you live in an industrial district it is unlikely that you will not find another factory job. But just suppose for a moment you are offered domestic work, don't forget that it is one of the most helpful jobs any woman can do.... 1

The magazine never attempted to suggest that women should keep the highly skilled jobs which they had obtained during the War and which they themselves had praised only a year before.

After looking at the changes in subject matter and emphasis, which had taken place in Woman, one can agree with this argument, on the role of the magazine just after the War that so far as women's employment was concerned,

.... the women's magazines acquiesced in a regressive tendency and later used their influence positively to discourage women from trying to combine work and marriage. In this they were doing no more than reinforcing the traditional view of a woman's role, but as a result of the war, and women's part

1. Woman, 9 December, 1944.

in it, the time was propitious for a radical redefinition of that role to encompass fuller citizenship and wider social participation. ... But the traditionalist camp was strong, and it found a sympathetic mouthpiece in the women's press particularly popular weeklies. ... While it was now considered desirable that women should have interests outside home. The war having widened horizons which would never again be entirely lost, this did not extend to the cultivation and use of abilities other than those required to fit a girl to be a wife and mother, except for a minority of women. Married women were able to work as long as the emergency lasted, but when the men came home pressures to conform to the pre-war pattern of family life were so strong that few women could resist them.

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Certainly, it must be borne in mind that women's magazines were usually conservative about the role of women, and would be among the last to change their ideas. However, as we have seen, official recruitment propaganda during the War was also based on the assumption that women were first and foremost wives and mothers. One of the aims was to change the image of women, although any such change was only intended to be short-lived.² It seems that both official and unofficial propaganda was successful in presenting women as war workers; but the intention was not to change the basic idea of women's role. Although one cannot deny that some propaganda appealed to women to act as members of society and to do their duty

1. C.White, op.cit., p.135.

2. There was some confusion in the Ministry of Information itself. In 1940, it produced a film called They Also Serve which was a tribute to housewives who looked after their home only. The film chose a middle-aged working-class wife who looked after her husband working on the night shift and a working daughter. Her son was in the Forces. She also helped the lady next door, whose husband was in the Army, and who herself worked in a factory. The film contained all the responsibilities which a housewife might be expected to shoulder, except war work. As the title suggests, it was, in a sense, a glorification of housewives as such and not about women in production.

as citizens might suggest a new approach, the main emphasis of the propaganda, especially the unofficial, was on the glory of working for the menfolk. They were expected to do different kinds of jobs, i.e. war work during the War, in the same way that men were expected to perform an entirely different role from their normal life. Nevertheless, the underlying assumption remained unchallenged. Family life still had the ultimate value, and once the emergency was over, women were supposed to return to be good wives and mothers. In fact, as we noticed earlier, some British propaganda condemned the Nazi regime for destroying family life.¹ Facilities for collective domestic work, such as nurseries and British Restaurants, were means to enable more women to take up war work; they had no other purpose. The changes in women's magazines discussed by C.White were not 'retreats' but a natural reversal once the emergency had gone. It cannot be denied that women were expected to perform a different role and one which had been often thought of as

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1. For example, the Ministry of Information issued a leaflet on Nazi education in 1941:

Yet home life ... scarcely exists now in Nazi Germany. Father must be constantly attending Party meetings and Mother going to the Nationalist Socialist Women's Union. Let either of them show any laxity in this respect, and the dreaded Gestapo will be after them. Disappearance into concentration camp may follow. Meanwhile the sons must give up practically all their spare time to Hitler Youth activities, and the daughters their leisure to the League of German Girls. It is rarely indeed that all members of the family can be at home.

'Children into Ruffians' INF 2/11. (1941), 'quoted by Marion Yagg, This is your War, HMSO, 1983, pp.43-45.

unsuitable for women, and of the change of image of women as a consequence.¹ During the War and immediately after, women were expected and most of them were expecting to return to act as wives and mothers. In the next chapter we will examine how male workers in the munitions factories reacted to the coming of the women. We shall especially look for any differences in the reaction of the workers in Bolton and Coventry.

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1. M.Yaas suggested that the image of women in official propaganda changed considerably during the War. At the beginning of the War, women were thought to be 'vulnerable, needing cups of tea during raids.' However, when the Ministry of Information produced a pamphlet entitled 'Fifty Facts about Women' in 1944, women appeared to be strong and brave and taking over all of men's work.' The contrast was fairly clear, although we have to bear in mind that the former was a document *within* the Ministry and never to be published, while the latter was a published piece.

CHAPTER 5 : MANAGERS AND TRADE UNIONS : MALE ATTITUDES TOWARDS WOMEN WAR
WORKERS

Until now our imported labour has been of the working class type, drawn from districts and industries not on essential war work. ... A trio of Sunderland girls have done well. A Yorkshire girl was a hopeless case, and had to be sent back home - pregnant. She was a nightmare to the people she was billeted on. Two Irish girls came on night shift, smoked, idled and swore at the foreman, refused to work. We sacked them and later had police enquiries about them.

Mass Observation, People in Production, 1942, p.140.

We have now examined the Government's policy on the recruitment of women and women's attitudes to industrial mobilisation. We have also looked at the local experience in Coventry and Bolton. We have also examined the propaganda appeals to women to take up war work. To recapitulate, the Government's plan was to introduce women as unskilled workers at the bottom of the industrial structure so that the unskilled and semi-skilled men could be called up or graded up. The assumption was that the women in engineering were a temporary war-time phenomenon and it was not sensible to spend money and time to train them above a basic level, since at the end of the War they were to be got rid of. The ideology behind the recruitment propaganda was based on the old idea of women's role as wives and mothers; it was in a different dress only because of the emergency. What we have been examining was outside the production process which is the main field of this research. In this chapter, however, we will turn our attention to the shop-floor. How were women treated there and how did the men, both management and trade unions, respond to the introduction of women? We will not deal with the actual labour process and dilution, but will concentrate on male-female relationships within industry, which had been regarded as the men's place. How did women find men on the shop-floor reacting to their entrance? Was there any difference between Coventry and Bolton?

First we will examine the attitudes of the employers towards the introduction of women. The prejudice of the engineering employers against women was on two main counts, both closely combined with each other. One was against women as women, the other was against women's capacity as wage earners in engineering. The first kind of prejudice was shown by the fact that dilution and the introduction of women did not take place as quickly

as expected at the start of the War. Employers often put forward the union's objections as a reason for that. But some employers themselves, also objected to the introduction of women. Sometimes it was genuinely because of fear of trouble with the unions concerned. Before the agreement on the introduction of women was reached between the EEF and the unions, the Coventry and District Engineering Employers' Association noted in connection with the request from an official of the Coventry Employment Exchange to consider the increased introduction of female workers;

It was agreed, however, that in view of the attitude taken by the Trade Unions it was not possible to do much in the way of dilution with female labour at the present.

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The same employers, however, were themselves reluctant to employ women for various reasons. One was the additional burdens involved. Another was their doubt about women's capacity as engineering workers and as wage earners. Both were continuously repeated even after most engineering firms had begun to take women on owing to the pressure of manpower shortages. Mass Observation Archive has a diary kept by a personnel manager of a war factory in Birmingham in 1941 and 1942. Although by the time he started writing large numbers of women had been introduced into the factory, his diary vividly shows the confusion and embarrassment of the management. The first problem posed by the introduction of women was that the firm must

1. EEA Coventry, 27 November, 1939.

provide special cloakroom and sanitary facilities, with the extra costs involved, and some anxiety. At the beginning of 1942, when two young genteel London women were directed into the Birmingham munitions factory, the personnel manager wrote:

... Conditions are so different from anything they have experienced before ... Our canteen is not good, and we're trying hard to get a new manager in. Lavatory accommodation ... will revolt these girls. But with staff and men and building material and floor space all at a premium we don't know how we can put it right fast enough... 1

Although this kind of problem was long lasting it could be improved. The idea that women were inferior to men as wage earners and engineering workers was strongly held and more difficult to eradicate. Even after women had entered the engineering industry in some numbers this alleged

1. Mass Observation, H.5100 (Hereafter H.5100) 18 January, 1942.

However, this comment shows sympathy with women from a middle-class background rather than with women in general. In fact, for the first couple of days after those women arrived, his comments were concentrated on them.

'January 16: See two more girls sent down from London. A striking blonde from a beauty parlour and a brunette from a gown shop, both in the West End. Capstan shop foreman afraid to put them on his machines, said they were too good a type. ... They were very disappointed at our shabby factory. They had been told stories of nice clean new factories with everything up to date and all the modern amenities ... This place is full of old fashioned shabby factories, built years ago, and an enormous amount of war production is done in them. Local factory class girls are used to them. But to keep these things dark from the good type, comfortably brought-up girls who are now being conscripted and tell them stories ... their employers can't ever make come true is cruel ...

January 17: Started blonde and brunette on the job. ... Mid-morning, the blonde came to my office in tears almost and near breaking-point. The noise, the smell of oil, coupled with the nervous and emotional strain of the past day or two, had got her down. Spent another half-hour getting her calmed down, sent her home for the afternoon, told her to come in tomorrow when I'd try and wangle her a staff job.'

inferiority seemed borne out by their different response to the problems of female workers. Often it was because of the mixture of unpreparedness of the management side and women's domestic routines which did not fit workshop custom.

Interview four young women sent by Labour Exchange as voluntary war workers. ... Said wanted part-time work only, some mornings, some afternoons, wanted to feel that time off now and then for their family's sake would be allowed. Didn't fancy working until 6.30 p.m. or until 4.0 p.m. on Saturdays. Had to point out that factory isn't a place where you can drop in for a spot of work just when you feel like it.

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Those women's demands were not unnatural, for they had to look after the family and if they worked until 6.30 p.m. on weekdays or 4.00 on Saturdays, it would be difficult for them to do proper shopping. On the other hand, the resentment of the personnel manager was also understandable. Soon after this interview, he noted the difficulties in organising production to suit the women's demands.²

1. H.5100, 15 September, 1941.

2. '... Thus the Labour Dept., Works Manager and Foremen of a factory have to figure out how to deal with women either:
- (a) can't (or won't) work in the mornings,
 - (b) can't (or won't) work in the afternoons,
 - (c) want light work only.

How to organise shop with more women on the morning than afternoon or vice versa, bearing in mind the problem of 'breaking down' on machines between morning and afternoon operator. Moreover, one mustn't send a women away too easily or M. of L. will drop on us for rejecting the labour they sent up.'

Ibid., 30 September, 1941.

High rates of absenteeism among women was obviously one of the reasons why the managers thought that women were unreliable labour.

Dec.24, 1941: We were due to knock off at 4 p.m. today. In the afternoon 25% of the workers did not turn up. Of the women nearly 50% were out. What did losing Hong Kong matter to them.

Dec.31, 1941: Phone call to Manager of Local Labour Exchange about Christmas absenteeism, found him very depressed and unable to offer any solution or hope of help. ...

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Although this personnel manager appeared to be helpful with the welfare problems of women, he seemed to doubt the women's ability to adapt to the discipline of the workshop.

The girls will be sent us for training this week and will hang around doing nothing if we're not careful. People who write to the press about idle time in factories ought to try the job for themselves. The old 'hire and fire' system in days of unemployment was bad certainly but now with our need as bad as it is and our danger as great, the safeguarding of the workers' interest has put managements in an almost impossible position...

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It is true that many women who were either volunteers or drafted into war factories were not accustomed to factory work or even paid work at all, and this caused problems both in the work itself and even the actual

1. Ibid., 24 December and 30 December, 1941.

2. H.5100 18 February 1942.

employment engagement.¹ The personnel manager had not much sympathy with those women and he thought that strong disciplinary action and conditioning of them before the transfer into the firm was a responsibility of others rather than himself.²

Some personnel managers went much further, and thought of women in their firms as a nuisance and at best a necessary evil. Anabel Williams-Ellis who visited many factories to examine the situation of women war workers, was struck by the hostile opinion of one welfare officer, who was actually nicknamed 'Illfare':

If you ask my candid opinion, girls and women are a very expensive form of labour and a darned nuisance! ... We put an order to the Employment Exchange for so many girls and women every Saturday. They send them along and the Exchange don't seem to have the smallest idea of the sort of work they're wanted for. ... The women are poor stuff, and girls are worse! They don't want the work at all - all they care about is the pay. They don't come here because they're patriotic. They don't want the war to finish, not they, while they're earning good money!

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1. 'Two women engaged yesterday as office cleaners not having turned up. ... The other came to see me. She had objected strongly to going to the Labour Exchange for a green card (without which we are not supposed to engage anyone) as she was not used at all to 'the Labour.' I discovered the old dear was over 60 so she needn't do so, so that settled that and she started work.'
Ibid., 18, February 1942.
 2. Ibid., 31 January 1942.
 3. Anabel Williams-Ellis, op.cit., 1943, p.34.

This opinion might be an exceptionally hostile one, and this manner which gave him the nickname 'Illfare' may have provoked the women's inefficiency. But, as the diary of the personnel manager showed, many management staff shared similar doubts.

The second kind of prejudice was particularly directed against women in the engineering industry. This was strongly connected with the first prejudice, and was also shared by male workers who were not pleased to see women in their workplace. This opinion was heard from the foremen class most frequently for they were supervising women on a day-to-day basis. Nevertheless, managers, foremen and some male workers alike thought that women were no good as engineering workers because they were neither mechanically-minded nor used to shopfloor customs. A setter at Vickers Armstrong, in Newcastle-upon-Tyne who was setting machines for women workers had a strong distaste for them; he thought women selfish, avaricious and unreliable. 'He complained that women would not participate in workshop practice, like sharing out bonuses, they tried to earn more by including scrap in finished work, they speeded up their machines causing tool breakage, they offered the setters cigarettes (and more) for the 'cream' of the work.'¹ Although contemporary writers on women war workers noted the employers' praise of women's capacities, they might also have seen the other side of the coin which

1. Summerfield, op.cit. (1982). p. 315

was that the employers in engineering had not expected much.¹ Moreover, when women were praised, it was often because of the advantages which were considered to be 'typical' of women. A foreman's opinion.

We find the women are better on some of these inspection jobs than the men. They seem to be more delicate-handed, and they're more conscientious: some of them are inclined to worry a bit too much really: but they're keen and they picked it up quickly and they can be left to work on their own, see that woman over there? She's in charge of this section now - knows as much about all the jobs here as I do.

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On the other hand, the notion that women were only suitable for repetitive work without any skill lingered on throughout the War. In September 1941, Caroline Haslett, in her address to the Royal Society of Arts, condemned the Government's training scheme as being meant only for men. Women were supposed to enter the industry with 'the minimum of ability' Even in 1944 some foremen were heard saying:

No, we have no women setters; it would take too long to train them, and then they couldn't do it ... The men we're getting in now are bad enough, women are all right on routine jobs: in fact they seem to like routine work...

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1. For example, Williams-Ellis wrote: 'I know that the product of this war factory, though necessary, was undramatic and that the work was heavy and dirty. I could see from the office window that the buildings were old-fashioned or makeshift, and that they were, almost inevitably grimy ... 'Do you know eleven of my women broke our production record on the night-shift last night? ... Yes, really! see for yourself, now this minute! Come and see the very machines!' No man has ever worked so well, and it's work we hardly thought women could do ...' Williams-Ellis, op.cit., p.30.
 2. International Women's News, Vol.38, No.6, March 1944.
 3. Ibid.

In the eyes of the management who had accepted women workers in their firms, women were almost always inferior workers who were good at certain processes of production which required no skill, knowledge or imagination. Alfred Herbert of Coventry, who was one of the employers keenest to introduce women, wrote in 1940

Government training centres ... are too ambitious, too elaborate, and take too much time to serve our present need, which is for the rapid and wholesale training of unskilled men and women, not to be engineers for that cannot be done in the time available but to carry out simple repetition work with speed and efficiency ... and if we are to get this labour it must be trained by each employer in his own factory. ... Instructors are already available in the factories. There is no better way than to attach a learner to an operator who is already doing the job. After watching for a short time and hearing a brief explanation as the work goes on, the learner is encouraged to try, and, if keen and reasonably intelligent, progress is rapidly made and the learner can be put on to a machine. ... Those who have had experience in this type of training know that women learn just as quickly and make just as good an operator as the opposite sex, limited only by their physical capacity, which should never be overstrained. They are, moreover, more tolerant of monotonous tasks and realising as they do that they are helping to save their menfolk, they not only work diligently but with a smile.

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Therefore, whether women proved themselves as efficient or not as efficient as men it was always put down to their characteristics as women, such as delicate fingers, carefulness or patience with routine work. The tendency was to define women as a different type of worker from men and even if not inferior to the male. It was a well-known fact that the employers often mentioned the break-down of the work process or the introduction of new machinery as excuses for not paying women the man's rate when women were fully entitled to it. But Williams-Ellis came across a more

1. Engineer, 5 July, 1940.

striking case in a Scottish casting factory, where although the managers accepted that women could produce much more than men could without any break-down of the job, simply said 'Oh, we don't pay them as much as we used to pay the men.'¹ She also heard a woman welfare officer saying: 'Why will they pay someone just for wearing trousers?' It's the work that should be paid for no matter if its trousers or skirts!' ²

It is certainly true that women's entrance into the engineering factories provided additional burdens for the management, and that some of the problems had previously never been thought of. A tragi-comic case of this for example, was the struggle which the personnel manager of the Birmingham factory undertook to help a young Irish woman worker who had been sent to his factory with her illegitimate baby.³ Moral issues often caused difficulties. Summerfield quoted the diary kept by the wife of an engineering worker in Bedford who complained that her husband was harassed on the shopfloor by new women workers

Since women have come into the factories the moral tone leaves much to be desired. Wives of serving soldiers, women with little self-control and fewer scruples, act as magnets to silly young men and to silly older ones too.

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1. Williams-Ellis, *op.cit.*, p.45.
 2. Ibid
 3. H.5100 Jan.1-Feb.9, 1942, passim
 4. Summerfield, op.cit. (1982) p. 83

It is interesting to see that women outside factories had some strong prejudices against women factory workers. However such evidence has to be treated with care. This housewife also wrote that the pay packet of her husband contained only £3, because he had to work with an inefficient and irresponsible woman worker. Was his wage so low because of the women worker, or himself, or due to factors beyond the individual workers' control, or had he handed his pay packet to his wife intact? However, from her description, one could understand that this housewife stood unconditionally on her husband's side and had no sympathy with women war workers.

Were there any differences in the attitudes of the engineering employers in Coventry and Bolton? Certainly, the minutes of the local Engineering Employers' Association suggests that there were different responses in the two towns to the entrance of women.

Firstly, it is clear that the engineering employers in Coventry discussed the 'women problem' much more frequently than their counterparts in Bolton. This might be due to the greater numbers of women workers in the Coventry industry, but the discussions suggest that this was not the only reason. The Bolton Engineering Employers Association was indifferent towards women, in spite of the fact that women engineering workers were a new phenomenon in the town which the War had brought in. Moreover, women in the engineering industry were supposed to be temporary. The relative absence of works conferences, or local conferences, in Bolton on the coming of the women, and their wage rates is striking. This was reinforced by the union's attitude towards women, which we will see later.

At the same time the employers' interest in the welfare of women workers outside the factory was significantly lower in Bolton than in Coventry.¹ Again, this could be merely a matter of numbers. But whatever the reason, while in Coventry shopping difficulties were serious enough to draw the attention of all parties, in Bolton the engineering employers never discussed shopping problems or any other welfare arrangements

1. It seems that the only time that Bolton engineering employers mentioned the relationship between paid work and married women's domestic responsibilities was when the question of part-time work came up. But, it was the Employment Exchange that raised this matter, and the reactions of the employers were not recorded.
EEA Bolton, 1 October, 1942.

for women outside the factories. This suggests that the effects of those difficulties on production were not felt so strongly in Bolton. Another factor which might have influenced the attitudes of the employers in Coventry was the fact that there was a strong local leader, Alfred Herbert, whose attempts to promote welfare arrangements outside the factory was a high priority. The management of Alfred Herbert Machine Tools was known for its paternalistic attitudes towards their employees, male and female alike.¹ Moreover, Alfred Herbert was one of the first engineering employers to introduce women during the Second World War. His paternalism obviously influenced the Engineering Employers' Association, and was instrumental in the Association's strong advocacy of the Sunday opening of shops in Coventry.

Again, towards the end of the War, while the Coventry employers were trying to keep women on the jobs that had been performed by youths before the War, there is no evidence that the Bolton Engineering Employers' Association seriously discussed the position of female dilutees. This fact also suggests that there was no conflict between the employers and trade unions about women's status.

There were then differences in the response to women workers among engineering employers in Bolton and Coventry. But in spite of these the impression remains strong that most management staff had little sympathy with women and their problems. They seldom tried to change their production patterns to accommodate their new workforce, unless under strong pressure of manpower shortages. If engineering employers showed little regard for the

1. For details see John M. Davies, 'Social Relations in an Engineering Factory : Alfred Herbert Ltd. 1887-1922', M.A. University of Warwick, (1983)

women workers how did the trade unions react? We have already seen that at the national level the AEU were cautious if not hostile to women's entrance into the engineering industry. They wished to exercise some control over it and to prevent the women becoming a threat to male workers. In the following chapters we will see how the AEU dealt with the issue of industrial demobilisation. By that time, they had accepted women as members. In this section, however, we will examine the reaction of the Coventry and Bolton branches of the AEU towards women workers in their respective districts.

Bolton differed from Coventry by virtue of the fact that many women were already members of some textile unions. There were three main textile unions in each section of the cotton industry; carding, spinning and weaving. In May 1940, the Weavers Amalgamation reached an agreement with the T. & G.W.U. that the weavers' union membership card would be recognised by the T. & G.W.U. in munitions and filling firms.¹ A similar agreement was reached with the AEU in September of the same year.² Under this agreement, members of the Weavers' Amalgamation would be recognised as 'union members' in the munitions firms to which they were transferred, and neither the AEU nor the T. & G. could force them to join their unions. However, this agreement did not remove all conflict between the textile unions and the AEU.

1. Bolton & District Weavers' and Winders' Association Executive Committee Minutes, 12 May, 1941.

2. Ibid., 8 September, 1941.

In March 1943, soon after the AEU began accepting women as members, of the Bolton branch received a letter of protest from the local branch of the National Union of Tailors that some women members of the latter union at Hicks had been forced to join the AEU. The secretary of the AEU denied the charge, and said that they were following the agreement with the Weavers' Amalgamation. At least it showed that the Bolton branch was not reluctant to take in women workers as members. In fact they were very anxious to organise women in the engineering and metal industries. They disliked the agreement reached with the T. & G.W.U. and the General and Municipal Workers Union on the organisation of women, because they doubted its fairness and felt that it might restrict their own efforts at recruitment.¹

From the beginning of the War, they had realised that the introduction of women into engineering was inevitable. One way of controlling it was to persuade the employers that the union should have access to a register of all the women employed. This was agreed in November 1940. They also came to realise the necessity of allowing women to become members of the union. The divisional committee decided:

In view of the great influx of women in the engineering industry and the consequent need for control of this class of labour, E.C. (Executive Council of the Headquarters - N.N.) be recommended to call out the Rules Revision Committee to make an alteration to Rules which will enable the Union to organise women.

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1. AEU Bolton District Committee Minutes (Hereafter AEU Bolton), 11 August, 1943.
 2. AEU Bolton, 24 March, 1942.

Nonetheless, the fact that they were ready to accept women as members and indeed anxious to organise them does not mean that they were prepared for equality between male and female members, nor to act as energetically on behalf of women members as for the men. In Bolton it was particularly clear that the local leaders of the AEU had little intention of accepting women as members with equal rights. In this respect, the Bolton branch was well behind the policy laid down by the Union's headquarters. In February 1943 the Executive Council sent a circular letter to each district committee on the principle of choosing women shop stewards.¹ The Bolton branch merely noted that they had received it. They took no steps to appoint any.

Soon after the first circular letter, the Executive Council sent off another on the First Annual National Women Delegates Conference in Blackpool which was held on May 20 and 21, 1943. The Bolton District Committee thought that such a meeting was 'premature'. Women workers in Bolton were not able to meet the standards which the Executive Council set. They also pointed out that there were no women shop stewards in Bolton and that therefore they would not take any action for 1943, though they hoped to be more prepared on a later occasion.²

1. According to the letter from the Executive Council, a woman shop steward should be over 21 years of age, and in cases where all women members were under this age a woman over 19 years of age could be chosen. AEU Bolton, 25 February 1943.

2. AEU Bolton, 18 March, 1943.

The District Committee itself admitted that they were not particularly enthusiastic about the appointment of women shop stewards.¹ Certainly there is evidence that some women workers were willing to serve as shop stewards. The District Committee twice received requests from women members at De Havilland, in 1944.² L.B.Davies' trade union experiences before the War seemed to be long and active enough to entitle her to serve as a shop steward.

I was a member of the Communist Party from my 24th birthday (she was born either in 1909 or 1910 - N.N.) and worked at several factories, using all my spare time to help the fight for a better future for all, before the War I had trade union medals for union recruitment and carried this on wherever I worked. I was shop steward at three places and made factories I worked in 100% membership. 3

In July 1944, L.Davies wrote to the District Committee about the appointment of a woman shop steward at De Havillands. At the same time the Works Committee there suggested to the AEU District Committee that, there was no need for a woman shop steward because women's rates were tied to the men's rate and that any other matters affecting women were dealt with by the welfare officers at the firm.⁴ The District Committee suggested that the De Havilland's stewards should reconsider but they did not, and so in October, L.Davies wrote another letter, again with no result.

1. AEU Bolton, 25 November, 1943.

2. L.B.Davies is almost certainly the Louise Bramwell Davies who was interviewed by the Oral History Project, Bolton Reference Library. Louise Davies worked at De Havilland during the War and during the interview she mentioned that the Bolton AEU objected to women shop stewards.

3. Answer to my questionnaires from Louise Davies, April 1982.

4. AEU Bolton, 11 July, 1944.

The local leaders of the AEU reflected the views of the National Executive so far as organising women was concerned. Women came in at the bottom.

... We must not forget that the AEU is no longer a craft union catering exclusively for skilled workers, but an Industrial Union whose ranks are open to all workers in industry - skilled, semi-skilled, unskilled and women workers also.

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One of the most important functions of the union should have been to give assistance with member's problems. This was particularly important during the War when many women without work experience in engineering had come into the industry, often in difficult circumstances. The AEU seem to have handled their task rather better than the issue of female shop stewards. For example, they nominated two of their women members to the Local Appeals Board as assessprs.²

The District Committee minutes contain a few references to its women members appeals to the Local Appeal Board. Two of them were, appeals for release from engineering firms. One woman worker asked for her release on the grounds that obscene words were being used in the workplace, which the management made no effort to check. As she was the only woman in that department, she felt it very embarrassing.³ The other woman who had been bombed

1. AEU Bolton, Shop Stewards Quarterly Report, 9 July, 1946.

2. A local Appeals Board was made up from representatives from both employers and trade unions. An employer or worker who was dissatisfied with the decision made by a national service officer on dismissal or release of a worker from a firm under the EWO could appeal his case to the Board.

3. AEU Bolton, 25 February, 1943.

out from London, asked for release for health reasons.¹ Both were reasonable cases for the union to support and the former woman in fact was transferred to De Havilland. Again, in August, 1943, the secretary of the District Committee offered help to some women who had been laid off for a week. He negotiated with the management to pay them £2 each, although the women themselves would have been satisfied with 'the dole money'.² It is not hard to imagine that the unions were anxious to avoid unpaid lay-offs.

The only case recorded in which the AEU fought the dismissal of a woman worker happened in October 1945. A woman member of the AEU was sacked after a period of absence. The District Secretary tried to have her reinstated without success. The employer insisted that she had not provided medical certificates for her absence and showed no intention of going back to work. The matter was brought to the Local Appeals Board which found in favour of the firm.³

In fact, the number of the cases in which women sought assistance from the union was very small. There is no record of AEU activity, on behalf of those women workers who were made redundant from engineering during the demobilisation period, whereas the textile unions were much more active during both the mobilisation and demobilisation periods in Bolton. This

1. AEU Bolton, 18 March, 1943.

2. AEU Bolton, 5 August, 1943.

3. AEU Bolton, 16 October, 1945.

reflects the tradition of women's trade unionism in cotton. In each section of the cotton industry, carding, spinning and weaving, the workers were organised into different unions. The Weavers' and Winders' Association had some female officers in the district and they regularly attended to their members' complaints and problems, as the union minutes book and the complaints investigation book both show. The union was particularly keen to both help and maintain contact with those members who had been transferred into munitions or other sections of the cotton industry. As the agreement had suggested, members of the Weavers' and Winders' Association remained as members even after being transferred into the munitions industry.¹

The complaints investigation book throws up several examples. A women worker who had started to work at the Chorley ROF on July 29, 1941,² had to leave her job from August 19 to September 8 owing to illness. She could not receive sickness benefit from the insurance company and was informed that it was a case for the Workmen's Compensation Act. The Weavers' and Winders' Association asked the management of the ROF to apply the Act to her case.³ An elderly woman worker who wanted to take up war work had some health problem and did not want to travel far to the job. The union suggested that she should go to an engineering firm where a new canteen was about to be opened and ask for a job there, before applying to the Employment Exchange.

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1. This, nevertheless, is not crystal clear from the official minutes. The union did not record the official decision on membership in connection with transferred workers. The fact that a worker who was transferred to the munitions industry did not resign from the Weavers' union and that the complaints investigation book contained many incidents outside the cotton industry seemed to imply that those who were transferred, at least in practice remained as members of the textile union. In fact, the majority of the problems happened during the period of transfer or just after it, when the worker had no time to contact the new union concerned.
 2. On the first day her attache case, which contained several important documents including her identity card and birth certificate was stolen. The union's complaint book recorded the details of the incident and the response of the ROF.
 3. Bolton Weavers' and Winders' Association Complaints Book, 13 September, 1941.

This evidence shows that the Weavers' and Winders' Association was anxious to give support to their members, even after they left or when they were about to leave the cotton industry. Together with the fact that the union officers who appeared in the Complaints Investigation Book were all women, this shows that the union in the weaving and winding sections of the industry where traditionally many women had been engaged, were much more woman-orientated than the AEU. The first and foremost concern of the AEU was to maintain the status of its male skilled workers and to keep the introduction of women as dilutees under their control. If it was necessary, in order to do that to enrol women into the AEU, they did so. But it is clear that they had little interest in supporting women members in the industry.

Like the AEU in general, the Coventry branch of the AEU had not taken much interest in women workers in the city up to the Second World War. In 1907, for example, the Women's Trade Union League had approached the Coventry branch of the Amalgamated Society of Engineerings, to ask if they would help organise women workers in the town. The district committee resolved that the secretary should write to the WTUL that the ASE 'would be glad to assist them in organising the women workers in this district if some indication of the Union's (the WTUL's - N.N.) ideas can be ascertained.'¹ Nothing seems to have followed this cautious reply.

During the inter-war period, the number of women workers in the engineering industry increased as the motor industry expanded. Some of them appear to have been quite privileged.

1. Amalgamated Society of Engineering District Committee minutes, 13 August, 1907.

It seems that in the case of Standard sewing machinists, the rather flamboyant paternalism of Captain Black, the Managing Director, may have had a lot to do with it. The rest of the factory used to call the sewing machinists 'Captain Black's pets', and every year in the summer he'd have the 'girls' taken up in buses to his home at Mallory Court for afternoon tea and a garden party. At Christmas they got a special dance and drinks. Black, it seems, was ready to tolerate behaviour from them that he would not tolerate from others. 1

The sewing machinists sewed seats for vehicles, a job which was highly skilled and any bottleneck in this part of the production process stopped the whole flow of cars. In such circumstances it is not surprising that some managers were paternalistic to women and took a 'soft' line in an attempt to secure good industrial relations. It was another version of the double standard!

Tolliday also analysed the characteristics of women workers in the motor industry and showed how they affected women workers' militancy. They were mostly young, and living at home. Moreover, the practice of a marriage bar made it impossible for women to work beyond marriage. Tolliday suggests that such workers might be either militant or passive. Since they were living at home, many of them were not in need of day-to-day money for living unlike the immigrant workers. On the other hand, many young women working in the Birmingham area, for example, came from the Black Country where unemployment was so high that they were often 'the bread winner' while their fathers and brothers were out of work. In those cases the pressure from

1. Steven Tolliday, 'Militancy and Organisation : Women Workers and Trade Unions in the Motor Trade in the 1930s', in Oral History, Vol.11, No.2, Autumn 1983.

the family made it almost impossible for them to go on strike. Even when young women were not the bread winners their income might still be crucial to the standard of living of the family as a whole. Again, this might inhibit them from taking part in strike action. The fact that they worked for only a short period before marriage probably reduced their commitment to the work. But even this could both provoke or reduce their militancy for they did not have to think about the long-term prospects of their employment. But one clear characteristic of women workers' collective actions was that they were outside the institutional structure, i.e. union activities. The AEU did not organise women before 1943, and it was only the T & G.W.U. that made any efforts to get them into unions. The T & G.W.U. accepted that 'all and any' strengthened the union, but their supreme object was to maximise the membership, rather than to act on behalf of women:

... at the Rover and at the GEC in 1935, and at Courtaulds in 1937, the TGWU came into the factories on the basis of existing strikes by organised women, recruited heavily out of the strikes and then settled the strikes over the heads of the strikers...

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Tolliday concluded that women's collective actions were outside the union 'on an ad hoc basis utilising other forms of bargaining at the point of production, capitalising on paternalistic managers, friendly foremen or work fiddles.'²

1. Tolliday, op.cit.

2. Ibid.

Therefore, when the war broke out, women workers in the motor industry were almost certain to be non-union. The situation was similar in other branches of the engineering industry. However, the peculiarity of Coventry here was that although they were not organised into unions, women workers in engineering were not unknown. But so far as trade union activities among women were concerned, there was even no union to speak of at Courtaulds, the single biggest employer of women in the city.

During the first stage of the War, the AEU kept a very cautious eye on the introduction of women. Alfred Herbert Machine Tools was one of the first firms to introduce them.¹ In October 1939, the AEU Coventry District Committee instructed the shop stewards concerned to organise a work's conference on the subject. At the same time, the AEU was against the employers' attempts to introduce women into Rootes No.2 Shadow Factory.²

After the agreement on the introduction of women between the EEF and unions in May 1941, the emphasis of the AEU shifted towards the attempt to control those women who did come in. The Union demanded that their shop stewards should be consulted before there was any introduction of women.³

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1. As early as September 12, 1939, shop stewards at Alfred Herbert wrote a letter referring to the employment of women. 'AEU Coventry District Committee Minutes (Hereafter AEU Coventry) 12 September, 1939.
 2. AEU Coventry 19 December, 1939..
 3. Although the Employer's Association rejected the idea of previous consultation individual firms promised to do so. However, this promise was not always kept. 'Letter from the convenor of stewards at Armstrong Whitworth regarding the proposal of Divisional Inspector of Labour to withdraw nearly 200 men and substitute women at the Baginton Works. The Divisional Organiser also with the District Secretary that evening when the same question had been made that the shop stewards would be fully consulted before any changes were effected, but in spite of this promise men had been dismissed and women substituted without any consultation whatever. The shop stewards had decided to take the question up with management and failing satisfaction to meet again to decide course of action' AEU Coventry, 22 July 1941.

They were anxious about the fact that employers were not paying the men's rate to those women who had replaced male workers and required no additional supervision or assistance.

In 1941 and 1942, the AEU was most concerned about two points in relation to the control of the women coming into engineering. One was to define 'the work commonly performed by women' as narrowly as possible so that the end of the War the men could resume the job. The other was to refuse to allow certain work to be done by women. The former was complicated by the vague expression 'commonly performed' as well as by the fact that war work was often 'no man's land' with jobs broken-down for mass production, and the introduction of many new machines. Managers often insisted that a certain job not 'commonly performed by women' in the Coventry district was done by women in other districts. The union wanted to adhere to local practice. The second issue is nicely illustrated by the union's strong stand against the introduction of women in the machine tool room.¹ The management of Alfred Herberts was determined to introduce women to the machine tool room. In September 1942, they decided to place eight more women there. AEU members refused to set up machines for them, nor would they give them any help. The union insisted that no women should be introduced

1. When the manager of the Motor Panel mistakenly told the AEU Coventry branch of his intention to introduce women into the machine tool room (which they never intended) the AEU district committee reminded all their shop stewards that any attempt must be opposed. By this time, of course, it was well known that at least three federated firms employed women in their machine tool rooms.
AEU Coventry, 30 June, 1942.

to the machine tool room while there were still vacancies on production. A work's conference was held, but no agreement was reached. Apart from this incident there is no evidence to show that AEU members were directly opposed to women workers in engineering.

By 1942, the flow of women into engineering had become too large to ignore. AEU shop stewards demanded the right to negotiate with the employers on the women's behalf. This meant that AEU shop stewards and convenors were proposing to settle the working conditions and wages on behalf of workers who were not in their union. At least this was a recognition of the women's existence. In January 1942, the shop stewards at British Thomson-Houston agreed to the introduction of women provided AEU convenors could negotiate for them. The management refused.¹ The Coventry branch of the AEU wrote to the T & G.W.U. asking if their convenor at British Thomson-Houston could negotiate for those women who were members of the T. & G.W.U. Not surprisingly the T & G.W.U. rejected the idea and pointed out that the AEU had been similarly refusing T & G.W.U. offers to negotiate for certain classes of AEU members.² As we have already seen, the Bolton branch of the AEU resolved that their union should recruit women members in March 1942. In Coventry, however, the union lagged behind.

1. AEU Coventry, 6 & 13 January 1942.

2. AEU Coventry, 28 April, 19 May, 1942.

In January 1943, less than two weeks after the AEU started to enroll women, the Coventry branch appointed its first woman shop steward at the Armstrong Whitworth Aircraft Company. Within a further month, there were four more women shop stewards and by the end of 1943, 44 in Coventry. Having said that the number of women workers in the engineering industry in Coventry were far larger than in Bolton, the attitude of the local AEU was significantly different. In Bolton, even after Davies wrote to the District Committee demanding the appointment of women shop stewards, the Bolton AEU was very reluctant, and did little. In Coventry, on the other hand, the AEU was at least prepared to appoint women as shop stewards when necessary. The difference might be put down to one of two reasons, although from a study of the district committee minutes of both branches it is difficult to decide which. First, it was partly a matter of the number of women actually employed in the industry. The number of female engineering workers in Coventry was so big that without integrating women into the union, it was difficult to have any control over them. In Bolton, the number was relatively small so that the AEU's cautious attitude seemed more appropriate. There was no attempt in Bolton to negotiate for women before the union actually began to enrol them. Secondly, women had been little known in the engineering industry in Bolton up to the War and appeared, therefore, to have a more temporary character than they had in Coventry. As we have seen, the motor industry in Coventry had employed a good many women before the War. The AEU there had to admit that at least some women workers were a permanent feature of the industry. That fact probably pushed them into accepting the idea of women shop stewards.

As a matter of fact, the Coventry Branch was soon conferring further union responsibilities on the women. For example, on February 16, 1943, the District Committee in Coventry agreed to accept a woman aged 18 as a shop steward.¹ From March 30, 1943, the District Committee had a woman delegate attending every meeting, although the minutes show that she did not take an active part in the discussions, even on women's problems. The first women shop stewards' meeting in the district was held on March 26, 1943. Six women attended to select the delegate for the First Annual National Women Delegates Conference in May. In those early days, the AEU was helpful towards its female members, although there is evidence which suggests that the union did not have much confidence in women as trade unionists!² This kind of helpfulness, however, did not mean that the AEU had changed their principles. The ultimate object of organising women was to keep them under the union's control so that male skilled workers could maintain as much of their privileged position as possible. As early as May 1943, when redundancies in the tool room at Alfred Herberts was discussed, the shop stewards wrote to the District Committee asking 'advice as to whether they should substitute women labour for male labour suggested by the firm as redundant.'³ The District Committee agreed that they should. The union remained very concerned about the

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1. Though this was rejected by the Headquarters, they could accept a woman as a shop steward only when one was 21 years of age and over. If there was no suitable woman over 21 available, women aged 19 and over could be accepted.
 2. For example, in June 1943, there is a note of surprise in the minutes of the District Committee that the report from the delegates who had attended the first National Women's Conference should be so 'comprehensive and excellent.' AEU Coventry, 22 June, 1943.
 3. AEU Coventry, 4 May, 1943.

definition of the work women were doing and about the wage rates which they received for doing it. A number of work's conferences and local conferences took place on these subjects.

Sexual segregation remained strong on both the management and the workers' side. Moreover, the appointment of women shop stewards created a clear division between men's and women's responsibility in the union. Women shop stewards dealt with women's problems only. Male shop stewards did not deal with women's problems, nor were women stewards to concern themselves with men's problems. In May 1943, a works manager at British Thomson-Houston wrote to the District Committee stating that the company could not accept that a woman shop steward could represent the whole of a works. In January 1945, the Executive Council of the AEU decided that women shop stewards had no right to vote in the election of male shop stewards' representatives. In both cases, the Coventry District Committee accepted the rulings without protest.

Although as a branch, AEU in Coventry was willing to support women members in fairly paternal ways, on the shop floor itself, there were several confrontations between male and female workers which the District Committee had to sort out. 'Sexual harrassment' was not unknown. A woman shop steward accused a charge-hand of acting 'in a manner towards the woman shop steward causing her to apply for her release from the firm.'¹ She explained to the District Committee that her activities as a shop steward

1. AEU Coventry, 24 October, 1944

and as a member of two social committees 'had constantly been criticised for the amount of time she devoted to these activities.'¹ Although some male workers came to the charge-hands defence, the District Committee agreed that he had acted contrary to the interests of the union and should there be any further complaints of this kind, he would be severely penalised.²

How active were the new female members in the AEU? Not surprisingly there was only a limited number of women activists. One woman shop steward, for instance, attended the First and Second National Women's Conferences and was also a delegate to the District Committee for more than two years until she resigned due to ill-health. The majority of women members do not seem to have taken much interest in trade unionism. In fact, in the summer of 1944 even a women's shop stewards' meeting could not be held because of too few attendees. The advisability of separate women's shop stewards meetings had been doubted. As we will see later by the end of 1944, the redundancy problem in the munitions factories had become serious, yet the union records suggest that women shop stewards, far from fighting against redundancy, were losing their interest in union activities in this period. At the same time the Coventry branch was losing its women members. Since the records of female membership are so inadequate, it is impossible to give a precise account of the changes. The fact that the District Committee was concerned about it, however, indicates that the decline was serious.

1. AEU, Coventry, 24 October, 1944.

2. AEU Coventry, 22 August, 1944.

... a question was as to whether the fall in membership was particularly due to the loss of women members. It was Resolved to ask the District Secretary to submit particulars of membership to the District Committee of Male and Female Members, and to indicate the fall in membership in each section over the past six months.

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The District Committee was well aware that women were leaving the union, and appointed a woman as a member of the Organising Sub-Committee. In March 1946, women shop stewards suggested the calling of meetings of women workers on a factory basis. A woman speaker would address them and union officials would be present.² Also in June 1946, one branch invited a woman shop steward, the only woman member of the District Committee, to speak to women workers in their area. The District Committee was obviously encouraging such activities, but the decline of women members was not arrested. Since the majority of women shop stewards were not very enthusiastic themselves,³ it is not surprising that little was achieved.

To sum up, the Coventry branch of the AEU was more concerned with the problems of women workers than Bolton was. While the attitudes of the Bolton branch were described as 'cautious about the introduction of women and

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1. Obviously, the number of women members in Coventry dropped considerably during the demobilisation period. In July 1943, there was 2,003 women out of 22,101 members of the branch or 9.1%. By September 1943, the numbers of women members had dropped to 1,256 (6.9%), while the total membership had only fallen to 18,066. The decline in female membership was greater than the fall in the numbers of male members.
 2. The Organising Sub-Committee passed on the idea to the Convenors at the GEC, Renold & Coventry Chain, Dunlop Rim & Wheel, and British Thomson-Houston.
AEU Coventry, 30 April 1946.
 3. In January 1946, when the women shop stewards meeting was due to be held to nominate a woman delegate for the Annual National Women's Conference, only three women turned up.
AEU Coventry, 26 January 1946.

indifferent towards women workers', those of the Coventry branch 'were wary of the employers' intention and paternalistic towards the women themselves.' The difference in attitudes in the two branches can probably be explained from the different characteristics of women workers in the two towns, both qualitatively and quantitatively. Coventry had known women workers in the engineering industry before the War and some of them would be there after it. Coventry had gone through the stage when women came into engineering for the first time. The problem for the union there was how to make sure that the position of male workers was not worsened by the female influx. This was also expressed in the difference between the two branches' attitudes towards the principle of 'equal pay for equal work.' Whilst the Bolton branch wrote to the National Executive Council that they knew nothing of wage differentials in their district, Coventry requested the National Committee to instruct the Executive Council to open negotiations immediately for the purpose of raising the basic rates of female workers in the Engineering Industry - our ultimate object being equal pay for equal work.'¹

Nevertheless, however different the attitudes of the branches might be, the AEU's basic idea about women workers was the same. The AEU must control women's entrance. As inferior workers they might undermine the position of the male workers. The activities of the AEU showed that they were willing to assist women if it was beneficial for male workers. At the same time, the AEU was strongly opposed to the entrance of women into certain kinds of jobs, and during the period of industrial demobilisation, they demanded

1. AEU Coventry, 25 January 1944.

that all women should be removed from the hitherto 'men's jobs.'

Despite the fact that some historians have emphasised the AEU's recognition of women as members as an important achievement,¹ women remained 'second-class' members. In such circumstances, it was hardly surprising that women members were not participating much in union activities. The AEU remained a male-dominated institution throughout the War.

Although the intentions of employers and trade unions so far as women workers were concerned was contradictory, they had at least one common characteristic. Both of them refused to recognise the women workers as equivalent to a man. Both often saw women as a nuisance, a necessary evil under the emergency of War. Even when they decided to be helpful it was a paternalistic hand that they offered. In spite of the great influx of women into the industry, it remained a male preserve. As we have seen in the previous chapter, both official and unofficial propaganda seldom challenged the traditional role of women. Women munition workers were seen as a temporary phenomenon, who were not supposed to be staying beyond the War years. Those who had ambitions to do so must have been discouraged by the attitudes of both management and unions. The mobilisation of women for War was made without changing the traditional image of women, nor the sexual discrimination within industry.

In the next three chapters we will see how the policy of industrial demobilisation was planned and carried through. We will also see how women react to it. One of the most important questions here will be to see how far women's experience in war factories had changed their outlook.

1. For example, Norbert Seldon, Women in British Trade Unions 1874-1974, (1978), p.148.

CHAPTER 6 : THE GOVERNMENT AND INDUSTRIAL DEMOBILISATION POLICY
NOVEMBER 1943 - DECEMBER 1946

Firstly, those who want to get out of work. They are concerned with 'when' and 'how'. They want to know precisely what their position is.

LAB 8/1236 memorandum of the
Women's Consultative Committee, n.d.
(May 1945?)

The study of women in the past sometimes leads us to examine conventional issues, periods or events, which were previously overlooked by some historians. Anyone who takes the trouble to read a few books on the Second World War will notice that they seldom go beyond the end of the War. On the other hand, books on post-war British Society start from 1945 with little attempt to compare pre and immediately post-war Britain.¹ If we are to discuss the War and social changes, we should make a clear-out comparison between the society before the War and that after it. Many changes which took place during the War were supposed to be temporary. We need to make a careful survey to see how far the effects of these changes spilled over into the post-war years. Did the changes produced by the emergency of War have a permanent effect on society?

When examining the relationship between women's work and the War, therefore, the industrial demobilisation of women at the end of the War is an important subject. Moreover, it is one which has not been fully discussed by any historian of the Second World War. For example, Richard Croucher in his book on the engineers during the War period devotes a chapter to women engineers. Although he focuses on the problem of dilution, on the attitudes of the trade unions concerned, on the disputes it produced and its impact on women's domestic circumstances, he dismisses demobilisation briefly.

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1. For example, for the Second World War:
 A.Calder, op.cit.
 A.Marwick, War and Social Change in the Twentieth Century (1974)
 for post-war Britain.
 H.Hopkins, The New Look : A social History of the Forties and Fifties in Britain, (1963)
 A.Marwick, British society since 1945, (1982)

The industrial demobilisation of women was in general achieved with very little disturbance or objection from the women involved ... The ease with which the demobilisation of women was achieved related partly to the wishes of women themselves.... The majority of women took a different attitude, tending to regard wartime work as a necessary evil, a temporary interlude. ... It is difficult, on the basis of the data available from the none-too sophisticated surveys of women's views on these matters, to make very definite assertions, but it does seem that women were very far from united in their desire to work after the war.

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It is doubtful if the industrial demobilisation of women was done so easily. Nor was there as complete a return to the pre-war occupational situation as the word 'demobilisation' might suggest. Moreover, it is essential to give an account of how demobilisation proceeded and try to explain why women were not keen on retaining their war work. It seems that there was a contrast between the attitudes of women at the time and the fact that much contemporary literature on women's war work or surveys from the 'feminist' point of view, which argued that the war widened the job opportunities of women, enabled them to take up jobs which had been supposed to be men's, that women enjoyed doing them, and that the war was a 'liberating' experience. We have to examine the actual process of the industrial demobilisation of women, the results of it, and the comments made by women workers themselves before we can make any assessment of the effects of the war upon women's attitudes to work. First, we will explore general manpower policy during the 'Reconstruction' period with special reference to the industrial

1. Richard Croucher, op.cit., (1982), pp. 297-298

demobilisation of women. Unlike mobilisation, demobilisation did not have a single purpose, but was a series of policies aimed at getting the country's economy back to normal, while the economy itself had to adjust to a new situation. For post-war Britain, one of the most important economic imperatives was the need for exports to pay the debt built-up during the War. It is not so easy to define the 'Reconstruction' period exactly. For one thing, preparation for post-war Britain had started long before the War was actually over, or even before the actual prospect of the end coming in sight.

In this survey, 'Reconstruction' will be related to two specific moments in Government policy. First the appointment of Lord Woolton, who was popular as the Minister of Food, as the Minister of Reconstruction in November, 1943. The other end of the 'Reconstruction' period was punctuated by the withdrawal of the Essential Work Order. The Order was removed industry by industry, and it was a lengthy process. But by the end of 1946, the EWO had been withdrawn from most of the industries. The cancellation of the EWO was an important milestone in the process from war to peace. It meant that the power of the Government to direct labour disappeared and that one of the key principles of Western capitalism, so-called freedom of contract, was resumed. It was the most important single event in reconstruction manpower policy.

According to Bullock, Britain reached the peak of mobilisation in the Autumn of 1943. The Times reported that among 33,000,000 people

(both men and women) aged between 14 and 64, 22,750,000, or roughly 70 per cent., were in the Services, the Civil Service, the munitions industries or other important civilian work. In addition, another million women were engaged in one kind of voluntary work or another. As for women's economic participation rate, 91 per cent. of single women aged between 18 and 48 were in the Forces or in paid work, as were 80 per cent. of married women without dependent children. This was at the end of September 1943.¹ This meant that almost all women who had no specific reason for being unable to work were engaged in the war effort. Manpower Distribution in June 1943 is shown in Tables 6-1 and 6-2. By comparing these tables with the previous one in Chapter 1, manpower distribution in June 1942, it will be seen that the changes which took place in the male figures between 1942 and 1943 were quite different from those in the female group. Male economic participation rates decreased slightly between 1942 and 1943. (Britain had already experienced a slight decrease in the male population engaged in economic activities between 1941 and 1942.) The number of men in the Armed Forces increased from 3,784,000 to 4,300,000 between 1942 and 1943, while the Civil Defence decreased from 304,000 to 253,000, changes in keeping with the changed character of the War. As for the male population in industry, Groups II and III industries had experienced a loss in their workforce, and the number of male workers in Group I stayed more or less the same. At the same time,

1. The Times Review of the Year (supplement) 3 January, 1944.

TABLE 6-1INDUSTRIAL DISTRIBUTION OF MALE WORKERS AGED 14-64 (thousands)

	1943	1944	1945
Armed Forces	4,300	4,500	4,653
Civil Defence etc.*	253	225	122
<u>Industry</u>			
Group I	3,305	3,180	2,891
Metal	3,025	2,916	2,643
Chemical	280	264	248
Group II	3,686	3,710	3,762
Agriculture	879	878	883
Mining	804	799	785
Transport	979	1,028	1,038
Gas, Water, Electricity	167	161	165
National & Local Government	857	844	891
Group III	3,431	3,232	3,468
Textiles	233	221	222
Cloth, Boots, Shoes	136	129	136
Food, Drink, Tobacco	274	269	276
Other Manufactures **	496	483	498
Building, Civil Engineering	700	600	698
Distributive	1,016	971	978
Miscellaneous Services ***	576	559	560
Industrial Total	10,422	10,122	10,021
Unemployed	44	40	68
Ex-member of the Forces not employed, yet	13	14	27
Grand Total	15,032	14,901	14,881

Source: Parker, op.cit., pp.481-482.

TABLE 6-2

INDUSTRIAL DISTRIBUTION OF FEMALE WORKERS AGED 14-59 (thousands)

	1943	1944	1945
Armed Forces	461	467	437
Civil Defence etc. *	470	57	15
<u>Industry</u>			
Group I	1,928	1,831	1,455
Metal	1,635	1,530	1,257
Chemical	293	251	198
Group II	1,341	1,390	1,367
Agriculture	160	170	158
Mining	14	14	14
Transport	197	209	214
Gas, Water, Electricity	33	32	31
National & Local Government	929	965	1,012
Group III	3,430	3,342	3,446
Textiles	436	414	412
Cloth, Boots, Shoes	357	326	345
Food, Drink, Tobacco	245	239	242
Other Manufactures **	369	341	343
Building, Civil Engineering	26	23	24
Distributive	993	956	980
Miscellaneous Services ***	1,037	1,043	1,038
Industrial Total	6,699	6,563	6,268
Unemployed	16	14	35
Ex-member of the Forces not employed yet	7	6	13
Grand Total	7,253	7,107	6,768

Source: Parker, op.cit., pp.481-482.

* Civil Defence, National Fire Service, Police.

** Leather, wood, paper, tiles, pottery, glass and miscellaneous manufactures.

*** Commerce, banking, insurance and finance, professional services, entertainment, hotel and restaurants, etc., laundries and cleaning, etc.

the grand total of women working increased by about 5 per cent. and the number of women in the Armed Forces by 37.2 per cent. In Groups I and III industries, the number of female workers rose by 8.8 per cent. and 3.7 per cent. respectively. The mobilisation of the male population had reached its peak in 1941 but that of the female population did not do so until two years later.

The priority of manpower policy shifted towards the Armed Forces from the end of 1943 in an attempt to bring the European War to an early end. Since the available manpower resources in the less essential industries had already been exhausted by then, the additional forces had to come from the munitions industries. This might mean a setback to production and required careful organisation, according to the expected date of the end of the War in Europe. First that was thought to be the end of 1944, and on this assumption it was decided that 346,000 people could be withdrawn from the munitions industries. Although estimates of the date of the end of the War in Europe went to and fro between the end of 1944 and the middle of 1945 in the course of 1944, the general trend of manpower policy remained the same. In the case of the male population, priority was given to the Armed Forces, and the number of men in the Forces went on increasing. On the home front, while the male workforce in Groups II and III industries remained more or less on the same level, that in Group I steadily decreased. So far as women were concerned, the peak of their membership in the Forces was in 1944, and the number of female workers in Group I industries decreased more quickly than those of male workers.

The emphasis of the policy was gradually shifted towards the civilian industries after 1944. The more foreseeable the date of the end of the War became, the more urgent was the need for a clear-cut plan for demobilisation. It was also necessary to plan post-war employment policy in connection with the resettlement of demobilised people.

Among several documents on post-war employment policy and re-allocation, the most important was the White Paper entitled "Employment Policy" published in May 1944 (Cmd. 6527). This was recognised as the starting point of the full employment policy which was to be one of the main pillars of all post-war British Governments until very recent times. The White Paper began with a clear statement that it was "concerned with the course of policy which the Government propose to follow internally to maintain the highest possible level of employment."¹ It dealt with two areas: one covering demobilisation, especially during the period between the surrender of Germany and of Japan; the other the more long-term employment policy. The Government, on the assumption that the transitional period would last a reasonably long time, put the emphasis on the production of civilian goods of high priority apart from maintaining the necessary military standard and the production of munitions for the war against Japan. The release of premises, labour and materials for civilian industry was to be planned in order to reduce local or temporary unemployment. The importance of exports was stressed. Although this was a policy for the transitional period, the major points of the post-war employment policy were clearly established.

1. Employment Policy (Cmd.6527), May 1944.

The arguments for a long-term employment policy was based on Keynesian notions of interventionism, such as the maintenance of the total expenditure of the Government to prevent, or to minimize the danger of a slump. The Government recognised its responsibilities to keep prices and wages stable. Nevertheless, the paper's emphasis was on the way to check "the development of localised unemployment in particular industries and areas."¹ It discussed the danger of over-dependence upon a single industry using the example of Scotland on the shipbuilding and other heavy industries, South Wales on the coal and iron, and Lancashire on the cotton industry.²

Let us examine the Government's power to control industrial labour and note its change over the period between 1943 and 1946. During those years the Government's ability to control manpower remained strong. The flow of labour was strictly controlled by several orders during the War. In December 1941, the Government issued the Undertaking (Restriction on Engagement) Order which prohibited men of all ages in the building, civil

1. Employment Policy (cmd 6527).

2. 'Dependence on a single industry and the subsidiary industries which grow up round it is a natural form of industrial development which has in the past enabled certain areas to reach the highest peak of temporary prosperity while circumstances were favourable. ... But the price to be paid for such temporary prosperity is high when the period of depression comes. ... Conversely, regions with a wide range of industrial skills, like Birmingham, have been able to see many of their old industries die away during the past half century without losing their general prosperity, because they have had the resilience to develop new activities to replace those which became obsolete.'

Ibid

engineering, electrical installation and engineering industries to take jobs except through the Labour Exchanges and other institutions approved by the Ministry of Labour. In January 1942 the Employment of Women (Control of Engagement) Order came into force, which restricted the engagement of women aged 18 to 40¹ in all industries through the same institutions, with the exception of married women with children aged under 14.

By May 1945 most essential industries, not only for the war effort but also some civilian industries, were covered with various Essential Work Orders having the same purpose, with about 8½ million workers involved.² The Control of Engagement Order and the EWO together gave the Government the power to direct the flow of labour.

The White Paper on demobilisation (Cmd.6548) in September 1944, suggested that direction of labour would be restricted to the purpose of filling the vacancies in essential industries after the European ceasefire. The Government also decided that direction would not apply to certain kinds of people, for example, ex-servicemen and servicewomen released without any conditions, women with household responsibilities, women who wanted to join their husbands on release from the Armed Forces, the disabled and juveniles.

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1. The first order in 1942 covered women aged between 20 and 30. When the competition to obtain women outside of this age range became serious, the Government finally decided to apply it to women aged between 18-40 in January 1943. For details, see LAB 8/609.
 2. Ministry of Labour and National Service Report for years 1939-1946 (cmd. 7225) 1947. (Hereafter Ministry of Labour Report for 1939-1946). About 16.2 million people were engaged in industry in June 1945 (excluding the registered unemployed). So, roughly half of them were covered by the EWO.

But on the other hand the Government had to accept that certain industries were in need of directed labour, e.g. agriculture, cotton (carding, spinning and doubling), coal-mining, several food processing industries, nurses and domestic help etc. As we will see later, the Government redirected ex-cotton workers back to the cotton mills, sometimes against their will.¹

The Government publicised some relaxation of the Essential Work Orders on 8 May, 1945, which enabled men aged 65 and over and women aged 60 and over to leave their jobs without the permission of the National Service Officer, similarly women with household duties, and women who wished to join their husbands on release from the Forces were to be permitted to leave irrespective of the industry concerned.²

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1. Oldham Chronicle, 12 May, 1945, also quoted by Croucher, op.cit., (1982)p.29' Croucher used the fact that about 400 women workers in the Ferranti's Moston factory protested strongly against their re-direction to cotton mills on the grounds of low wages, bad working conditions and absence of welfare facilities as the only counter-evidence against an otherwise smoothly achieved industrial demobilisation of women. He explained the reason for this protest as the peculiar situation of Lancashire. Although his argument holds an important truth, that is, that women's attitudes could vary according to their employment situation and therefore generalisations are difficult, he was too quick to define positive protests as the only sign of women's dissatisfaction with the redirection policy and to explain it by the peculiarity of the Lancashire cotton area. But we must bear in mind that such redirection was not always against the workers will. Sometimes, workers with a certain experience and skill in textiles could be better-off in their own industry than in munitions, to which they were not used and where they had not had any opportunities to be graded as skilled workers.
 2. For the full details of the amendments, see Ministry of Labour Report for 1939-1946, pp.173-174.

When Japan surrendered only three months after the defeat of Germany, it was decided to continue to release people according to the White Paper without modification. Two days after Japan's defeat, the Government announced that their power of labour control would be unchanged for the present. They also announced that "Men and women who are in course of transfer from one job to another should carry on with their instructions. Anyone in reasonable doubt (for example, a person directed to go to a war job away from home) should ask for confirmation at the Employment Exchange."¹

The real beginning of the relaxation of control on labour was the Ministry of Labour's announcement in December 1945. First, it was decided that from December 20, the Control of Engagement Order would be lifted from women of all ages except nurses and midwives aged between 18 and 40. It was stated that the Orders would be withdrawn from industries where they were no longer necessary from the point of view of production and manpower. Actual removal from the engineering industry began in May 1946. Another one hundred industries including cotton weaving were removed from the scope of the EWO from mid-May 1946. This affected about 5,000,000 workers. In July, the Government announced its withdrawal from cotton spinning from the end of September 1946.

At the end of 1946, the only industries under the Orders were building and civil engineering; dock labour, and agriculture. The

1. The Times, 16 August, 1945.

estimated number of workers in those industries was 235,000, which was less than 3 per cent. of the workers who were covered by the Orders at the end of the War in Europe.

All of the above industries could be regarded as men's jobs. So, the control of women's labour had completely ended by the end of 1946. It must be remembered, however, that although a partial relaxation had been made after V-E day, the Government could still direct women workers up to the end of 1945, and some women had to stay on in their jobs, even if they did not like it, until the EWO was lifted from almost all industries. As far as the Government control of labour was concerned, war-time remained till mid-1946, and there was some possibility that the Government could achieve the restoration of the pre-war labour situation via those statutes which were originally meant for war-time emergencies. Therefore, we have to widen our period until 1946 if we are to examine the relationship between the Second World War and women's labour.

In order to look more closely at the demobilisation process as it affected women workers it is useful at this point to examine developments in three industries : domestic service, cotton and engineering. Cotton was central to the industrial structure of Bolton, and engineering to that of Coventry. On the other hand, domestic service, the largest employer of female labour throughout most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, up until 1939, provides an interesting contrast. The important point here is not that Ernest Bevin wanted women workers to go back into service in

private households; but the language used to urge women into domestic jobs with the welfare services says much about both contemporary views of women and women's work.

Let us start with domestic service both in the private household and in hospitals and other public places. Bullock wrote that:

Domestic service was bound to suffer from the increased demand for women in industry and ... the Minister of Labour came in for harsh words. A flood of letters to the press and questions in Parliament recounted the difficulties to which his policy was subjecting overworked housewives and mothers, and arousing middle-class resentment.

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The whole argument about domestic service suggested that the country was dependent on this kind of work in ways which had not been recognised before.

Though it seemed that during the last few months of 1943 and the first half of 1944 the whole nation was preparing for D-Day and the earliest possible end of the European War, there was an undercurrent which was to be important for women's post-war employment, especially those who were engaged in domestic service. Discussion on this problem had already begun by early 1944. Bevin appealed for women to take up domestic service, in hospitals and allied institutions, school meal services, and private households authorised by the maternity and children's welfare committees. He was expecting to recruit 20,000 or 30,000 women and, if necessary, he was prepared to direct them.

1. Bullock, op.cit., pp.297-298.

One can find many letters in The Times at the beginning of 1944 stating the seriousness of the shortages of domestic staff in hospitals in various places. Some hospitals were even threatened with closure.¹ By April of that year the point of the problem had expanded into that of 'overworked mothers' who had to organise and do all their housework without husbands or domestic servants and as a result damaged their health.

On 21 April, 1944, Bevin reported that "during February and March of this year 2,818 women were placed in certain private households as 'home helps' and at the end of March 6,563 vacancies were still outstanding."² The Government announced that women will be allowed to leave even munition work to take up full-time work as home helps." But those vacancies were never filled and the possibility of the introduction of female labour from abroad, for example from Eire or

1. For example:

St. Mark's hospital ... is in grave danger of having its doors closed before the end of this month. The reason for this impending tragedy is shortage of domestic staff. No hospital can continue without a cook. No cook will stay without kitchen assistants. Every effort has been made to obtain these. Appeals for help have been made to the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Health. Help, however, has not come...

The Times, 21 February 1944.

On the following day a similar letter appeared in The Times, but this letter also criticised the Government offices nearby which had several young men-as porters who were not doing very much.

The Times, 22 February, 1944.

2. The Times, 21 April, 1944.

Belgium was considered.¹ After the War, even the introduction of German women as domestic staff in hospitals was considered, though it was decided that it would be inappropriate.

In order to persuade women to accept this hitherto unpopular job it was necessary to emphasise the improvement in working conditions which had taken place in it since before the War and to combat the widespread view that domestic work was work of low status. A woman, an assistant school medical officer in Worcestershire, wrote:

Again and again girls have said to me that they liked cooking or less often housework best: but "teacher tells me every one will look down on me if I undertake menial work" - they advise typewriting as being better class. 2

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1. The introduction of women from Belgium and Eire actually did take place. Apart from the wages from the hospital a Belgium women received 70s. as settling-in allowance, and clothing coupons on arrival, and the Women's Voluntary Service issued some supplementary clothes. If the first contract had finished (usually half a year or a year) and a woman wanted to continue her job in Britain, she was entitled to have a cheap two weeks' holiday in Belgium. In March 1946, the Government cut those facilities when pay for hospital workers was increased. The settling-in allowance was reduced to 24s.6d. and the clothing coupons would only be issued after some service. The WVS's clothes issue was stopped on the grounds that Belgian women were fairly well-equipped. Also, the cheap holiday facilities were stopped in order to bring the scheme for Belgian domestic servants into line with those for other foreign workers. (LAB 26/201, 20 & 28 March, 1946. "We clearly could not pay fares for workers going home after six months' service for a week's holiday to Switzerland or Czechoslovakia.")
 2. The Times, 23 June, 1945.

In March 1943 Bevin appointed Violet Markham and Florence Hancock to investigate the problem of domestic service and to suggest a method of re-establishing it after the War. Though they completed the report in July 1944, it was not published until June 1945 (Report on Post-War Organisation of Private Domestic Employment, Cmd.6650). They recommended the setting up of a corporation for domestic workers, which they called "The National Institute of Houseworkers". Its functions were training (both basic and advanced level) for would-be domestic workers. It would also issue certificates to workers and provide welfare facilities for them. In the short-term they were prepared to train some of the demobilised women.

They urged the necessity of publicity once the 'Institute' had been set up, especially in women's magazines. In fact by then, women's magazines had already given a lot of publicity to the idea that domestic work was important work for women. Even before the publication of the White Paper, the magazines had taken a similar line, that is, emphasising the fact that domestic work was skilled work and an important part of the war effort. "The war is being won by specialists and not it is the turn of the domesticated women to have her skill mobilised to the best advantage."¹ "Domestic work at home and nursing in hospitals are both skilled jobs and these girls are getting the training and experience they need to make them experts in the field."² Nevertheless, this type of propaganda did not appeal to women. They knew that, although domestic work might require a lot of knowledge and skill, it was never recognised as 'skilled' work as such.

1. Women, 26 February, 1944.

2. Women, 11 March, 1944.

The other industry which was in need of women workers during the "Reconstruction" years was the cotton industry. It had actually suffered from a labour shortage almost throughout the whole of the War. It was more complicated than domestic service by the fact that cotton goods were one of Britain's most important exports. After the failure of recruitment of volunteers to go back to the mills, the Government decided to use its power to re-direct them. It decided to apply the Registration for Employment Order to women aged between 18 and 55 formerly engaged in the cotton industry in the Autumn of 1943. This arrangement naturally caused some anxiety among former cotton operatives.

I was working in the cotton industry in the early days of the war, and was then transferred to other war work. Now that I have registered with the other ex-cotton operatives, what was going to happen to me? I love my new work. 1

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1. Women, 16 October, 1943. The column where this letter was published was a series called "Women War Service Bureau" which, as we saw in Chapter 4 began in May 1942 to 'introduce' various kinds of war services to women. This particular issue was in the form of an 'agony column.' The answer which Jean Lambert, who was responsible for the series, gave to this letter surely reflected Government policy.

Your case is influenced by what can be called the fortunes of war. In 1941 the cotton industry was concentrated and thousands of first-class workers were transferred to other - at that time - more vital work. Now the demand for cotton goods has increased again, and some of the transferred workers are wanted back. But every case will be examined on its merits. There will be no automatic transfer back, so all you can do is to carry on until you hear something definite. If you are one of the girls selected to go back, remember it is the R.A.F. who are needing you in particular to make parachutes and other life-saving apparatus.

But this legislative effort was not sufficient to retain workers. The more visible the end of the war, the more serious the problem of how to reconstruct the cotton industry. A number of efforts were made to recruit women and school-leavers in the Northwestern area. The Cotton Board set up a Recruitment and Training Department in the Spring of 1944. It organised recruitment campaigns for school-leavers in various cotton towns. The results, however, were poor though of wide interest. Certainly both The Times and The Economist frequently reported their progress and the improvements in working conditions, especially wages and urged further improvements.

From the beginning of 1944, there were three main issues surrounding the reconstruction of the cotton industry: first, the practical improvement of working conditions, secondly, efforts to get a better understanding among the operatives of the whole business of the industry. This included efforts to impress upon the workers the fact that management attitudes had changed since pre-war days. Thirdly, was the re-organisation of the industry itself. On 19 September, 1944, Hugh Dalton, President of the Board of Trade, announced the Government's plan to re-establish cotton to meet post-war competition. He proposed a five-point plan to modernise the industry: further amalgamation, especially in the spinning section; overhaul of the merchandising section; mechanical modernisation; simplification of the wages structure; and double shift working.¹

The Economist wrote that 'the most important of all these may be mechanical modernisation...'² The most important changes from labour's point of view

1. The Times, 20 September, 1944.

2. The Economist, 23 September, 1944.

were, of course, practical improvements in working conditions and changes in the management's attitudes towards their workers.¹ One illustration of the latter grew out of the wartime need to inform workers about the wider context of their efforts. The Cotton Board set up an Exhibition Centre in Manchester, the original motive for which being;

... the stimulation of war-time output. But the operatives have shown so much interest and keenness that it is now generally agreed that similar efforts would have a high value in peace. Indeed it seems strange that it has never before been thought of importance to inform, say, the operatives in the spinning mill of the full story of the growing of cotton or the way in which the spun yarn is later transformed into cloth of great usefulness or remarkable beauty. 2

Bevin went to Manchester to open the Exhibition Centre. He also addressed a meeting of workers' representatives at which he emphasised fairness in the process of re-establishing the industry.³ The significance of industrial relations and good working conditions was also stressed.⁴ As the members of the Government had got used to doing during the War, he

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1. Some managers also emphasised the importance of welfare arrangements. A manager at an Oldham spinning factory who was also a member of the employers' association, wrote in Labour Management, stressing the importance of welfare facilities and the welfare and/or personnel officer, as well as better training and Government intervention. Labour Management, October/November, 1945.
 2. The Times, 10 February, 1944.
 3. "I appeal to everybody in the country not to tolerate the man or woman who gets obsessed with the get-rich-quickly business at the end of this struggle. I beg of industry to take the long-term view. Better re-establish with less profit but made secure for future generations than with quick profits and disaster to follow."
Ibid.
 4. "He (Bevin - N.N.) believed in having a good minimum weekly standard and where that was maintained a little pressure on the pocket is a wonderful inducement to the head to work."
Manchester Guardian, 8 January 1944.

tried to appeal to the patriotism of the workers by linking them with the soldiers overseas.

... And one of the tests that will have to be applied is whether the public has played straight in the war. The boys who fought at Alamein, and in Italy, and in Burma, and in the air, and on the sea, and in the Merchant Navy, have played straight, and they are entitled to ask those who manufacture things for the homes to which they will be returning that they will play straight in return.

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As for the wages, the Cotton conciliation committee agreed a minimum wage scheme for winders, reelers and beamers in the spinning section in September 1944. After the War, a series of articles dealt with the negotiations and proposals concerning the wages structure and wage increases. But simplification of the wage structure was not an easy job owing to the complicated previous system and the wage differentials from place to place.² The minimum wage rate scheme became more important from mid-1946, for the Essential Work Order was to be lifted in September of that year.

The shortening of working hours also took place in Accrington in August 1946. The experiment of a five-day week began in a weaving mill.

1. Ibid.

2. For example, Justice Evershed, who made an enquiry into the situation of cotton spinning in 1946, proposed a wage system for mule spinning workers, after examining six separate wage lists from Oldham and Bolton. He made a single universal list based on mainly Bolton wages which were higher.

It lasted for a month with the operatives going to work for 45 hours a week instead of 48. Output was supposed to be the same as for a five and a half day week, and therefore no change in piece rate was made. Though The Times praised the experiment, it was not accepted by the Employers' Association.

Despite all those efforts, the labour situation in the cotton industry did not improve much. In January 1945, Bevin met the members of the Cotton Board Recruitment and Training Department to discuss labour problems in the Manchester area and agreed that the industry needed 17,000 more workers.¹ The Times reported in March 1946 that the intake of workers for the cotton industry was smaller during the first two months in 1946 than December 1945 and gave as a reason that the flow of the people who came back from the Forces and the munitions industries had passed its peak by the end of 1945.²

The Ministry of Labour's own figures (Table 6-3 on the next page), showed that both spinning and weaving lost about half of their male workers and a third of their female workers during the War. After

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1. The Economist took a rather pessimistic view of the possibility of achieving this target.

Cotton, like mining and agriculture, which also suffered severely in the depression years failed to keep up recruitment during the inter-war period and like these industries, the cotton industry will itself have to take steps to offer such conditions of work and prospects of advancement as will attract new entrants in a highly competitive labour market.

The Economist, 13 January 1945.

2. The Times, 10 March, 1946. The Economist, 14 July, 1945.

TABLE 6-3THE NUMBER OF OPERATIVES IN THE COTTONINDUSTRY

	Males (14-64)	Females (14-59)	Total
<u>Cotton Spinning</u>			
Mid-1939	65,500 (100)	119,400 (100)	184,900 (100)
Mid-1945	35,300 (53.0)	78,300 (65.6)	113,600 (61.4)
Dec.1946	52,100 (79.0)	88,600 (74.2)	140,700 (76.1)
<u>Cotton Weaving</u>			
Mid-1939	53,700 (100)	101,300 (100)	155,00 (100)
Mid-1945	27,400 (51.0)	71,900 (71.0)	99,300 (51.2)
Dec.1946	35,900 (66.9)	75,00 (74.0)	110,900 (71.5)

Source: Ministry of Labour Report for 1939-1946.

a year and a half's intensive recruitment campaign from the end of the War, the number of male workers in the spinning section was restored to about 80 per cent. of the pre-war level. As for women workers, both sections had about three-quarters of their ex-workers. It is notable that male workers in the spinning section who were recognised as skilled, appeared to have returned to their old jobs in the greatest numbers. It suggests that, being a skilled worker, whatever the industry was, it was something to stick to. The Government report admitted that despite improved wages and working conditions and amenities, which were introduced at many of the mills, and the intensive efforts to recruit labour, the total labour force of the industry remained far short of immediate requirements. While the Government accepted that those ex-cotton operatives in munitions and the Forces were reluctant to go back to their former industry, it also realised that some newly introduced industries into the Lancashire area offered opportunities of employment to women and juveniles for whom the cotton industry had been almost the sole source of employment in pre-war days.

What about the labour situation in the engineering industry which was supposed to be in better working order and to which the cotton industry claimed to be losing workers? The Government, naturally, was very interested in the post-war manpower situation of the engineering industry. But it was not until the War was over that a practical estimation of the numbers of workers required could be made. By that time, the number of work people in the industry had decreased to a great extent. Nonetheless, those estimates and the assumptions on which the Government based them are important in any consideration of their manpower policy.

The Government were aided by the Engineering Industry Panel, made up of representatives of employers (the EEF), of trade unions (the AEU) and the Ministry of Labour. As Table 6-4 shows, the peak of employment in engineering was reached in Autumn 1943. That expansion was mainly owing to the huge in-flow of women.

The engineering industry had attracted during the war about 55 per cent. of the increase in the total number of women in industrial employment although before the War it included only 10 per cent of such women ...

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However, by the end of 1945, the number of women in engineering had decreased to a large extent.

TABLE 6-4

TOTAL NUMBERS EMPLOYED IN ENGINEERING * (Number in bracket Index 1939=100)

Date	Male	Female	Total
Mid-1939	1,305,200 (100)	142,500 (100)	1,447,700 (100)
Mid-1943	1,920,900 (147)	1,050,900 (737)	2,971,800 (205)
Mid-1944	1,852,00 (142)	999,400 (701)	2,851,400 (197)
Mid-1945	1,628,100 (124)	732,900 (514)	2,371,000 (163)
Nov. 1945	1,422,700 (909)	473,900 (333)	1,896,600 (131)

* Engineering industry here includes: General, Electrical, Marine, Constructional Engineering, Construction and Repair of Motor Vehicles, Cycles, Aircraft, Railway Carriages, Wagons, Trains and Trolley bus, Building and Repairing.

Source: LAB 8/1117 n.d. (Winter 1945-1946?)

1. LAB 8/1117 Circular 45(4) n.d. (Autumn 1945?)

The biggest drop in the number of women workers was in engineering and occurred between mid-1944 and mid-1945, which means that a number of women left the industry before the ceasefire or immediately after it.

TABLE 6-5

AGE COMPOSITION OF FEMALE WORKERS IN ENGINEERING

Age	July 1939	July 1945
14-15	15,000 (10.2%)	18,460 (2.6%)
16-17	23,400 (15.8)	35,230 (4.9)
18-20	25,800 (17.5)	103,090 (14.5)
21-40 married & widowed	16,300 (11.0)	198,190 (27.8)
others	55,800 (37.8)	252,040 (25.4)
41-50 'married & widowed'	4,800 (3.2)	68,070 (9.6)
others	6,000 (4.5)	36,020 (5.1)
Total	147,700	712,000

Source: LAB 8/1117 n.d. (Winter 1945-1946?)

Table 6-5 shows that the mobilisation of women for the engineering industry was, above all, a mobilisation of adult and married women. In 1939, 43.5 per cent. of female workers in engineering were under 21. This group occupied only 22 per cent. of the total in 1945. The proportion of married women over 21 increased from 14.2 per cent. in 1939 to 37.4 per cent. in 1945.

The Government's plans for the post-war engineering industry were built on the basis of this distribution.

During the War, a great number of women who would not normally be working for wages - mainly women with household responsibilities - came into, or re-entered industry. Although some of these workers may be willing to remain, especially if provision can be made for combining industrial work with household and family responsibility, it is expected that the majority of them will have left the industry by mid-1946.

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In March, April and May 1945, the Ministry of Labour carried out a survey on the probable labour requirements for post-war engineering and allied industries.² This work demonstrated that when the War came to an end, the firms investigated were hoping to dismiss 17 per cent. of male workers and 36 per cent of the women.³ The survey also made a rough estimate for post-war engineering in the longer-term. At the time of the survey there were 800,000 women working of which 290,000 were to be immediately dismissed. 45,000 women were needed immediately for civilian production, and a further 145,000 for full peace-time production. Altogether

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1. LAB 8/117, 18 January 1946.
For women's willingness to stay in industry, especially in engineering, see below, The War-time Social Survey.
 2. The survey covered firms employing 250 or more employees, which altogether included about half of the total number of workers in the industry. The majority of the branches of the industry were covered, though, for unknown reasons, the aircraft and motor industries were not included!
 3. LAB 8/117. Circular 45(2) n.d. (Summer/Autumn 1945).

TABLE 6-6

REGIONAL BREAKDOWN OF THE FEMALE WORKERS REQUIRED FOR
CIVILIAN PRODUCTION

	No. in Spring 1945	No. Required for civilian production	Change
London and S.E.	85,000	78,000	- 7,000
Eastern	29,000	26,000	- 3,000
Southern	13,000	11,000	- 2,000
Southwestern	7,000	4,000	- 3,000
Midlands	87,000	94,000	+ 7,000
N.Midlands	40,000	33,000	- 7,000
Northeastern	41,000	29,000	- 12,000
Northwestern	64,000	51,000	- 13,000
Northern	19,000	8,000	- 11,000
Scotland	27,000	23,000	- 4,000
Wales	14,000	6,000	- 8,000
Total	426,000	363,000	- 63,000

Source: LAB 8/1117, Circular 45(2) n.d.

it made up 700,000 women to be required for industry eventually, that is 87.5 per cent. of the level of the employment of women at the time of the survey.¹ Although we must be careful about the figures, not least because they did not include the number of employees in aircraft and motors in which many women were working, it seems that after a period of readjustment and transformation, the number of women required for peace-time production in engineering was roughly 90 per cent. of those working there at the time of the ceasefire. If we accept that at least some portion of them would leave the industry altogether to go back to their old jobs voluntarily, the gap in the numbers of women employed between war-production and peace-production would be quite small. The Government's forecast was that there might 'be severe competition for women's labour between the metal trades and other important civilian industry.'²

The Government also made a regional breakdown of the labour requirements from the firms surveyed which shows that in the Midlands an expansion of employment of female workers in the engineering industry was expected. Again, we must remember that the survey did not include aircraft and motors, of which the Midlands had been a centre and ~~were~~ there was expected to be a large demobilisation of women workers.

1. Those numbers were calculated to show the number of workers required in all engineering except aircraft and the motor industry on the assumption that the firms asked were representative.
LAB 8/1117, Circular 45(2) n.d.

2. Ibid.

These women workers would cancel out the expansion of the other sectors. Having said that it was expected to be a temporary unemployment between two points, the survey showed that a massive discharge of women workers - an 'all-out' model - was not expected at the end of the War except in a few areas, notably the North and Wales.

The survey also took into account job divisions in the trade. It concluded that the expansion required in the workforce would almost entirely be made up of skilled workers, while semi- and unskilled workers, foreman, etc., were supposed to remain more or less at the same number. Draughtsmen, who were expected to increase by about 22 per cent., were 'the only occupational group in which an expansion in the employment of women was expected.'¹ As for miscellaneous jobs, such as warehousemen, transport workers, canteen staff, the number of male workers would stay unchanged and a drop of about 10,000 female workers was expected, though those workers were never recognised as engineering workers. So although it is true that a large number of women in engineering were expected to leave, after taking account of those women who were going to leave voluntarily

1. LAB 8/1117 Circular 45(2)

Though it was not so easy to increase the number of women draughtsmen for many male members of the Association of Engineering and Shipbuilding Draughtsmen were strongly against the entry of women. (See Draughtsman, volumes in 1941 passim.) Not being able to use the male workers' normal excuse that women's inadequacies in physical strength made the work impossible, they gave full voice to their sexual prejudices. 'Theoretically, I should welcome the introduction of women of the right type into drawing... But is there more than a handful of women of the right type available? Women were not generally mechanically minded... Hundreds of thousands of boys have built their own wireless sets, but the number of girls who have done so would probably be comparable to the number of boys who have knitted their own cardigans. There appears to be a mental difference between the sexes that makes the male more adaptable to mechanical pursuits than the female. In the old days of tracing, the draughtsman could usually rely on the tracer trying to understand and make sense of what he is tracing, but the female tracer traces 'what she can see' whether it makes sense or not'.

Draughtsman, August 1942.

the statistics suggested that there would be no mass redundancy of women war workers in the long term. On the contrary, the Government foresaw the possibility of shortages of female labour in the engineering industry in certain areas. Not surprisingly, Government publicity on the post-war employment of women was roughly along these lines. For example, the Women's Consultative Committee drafted a circular 'Publicity to overcome the doubt and fear of civilian women war workers as to their future employment position' in which they explained the post-war employment situation in terms of the assumptions of the Government survey. It was clear that the Government had little intention to promote a campaign to get women out of industry. They were attempting to point out that there would be enough jobs for all those who wanted to remain in the labour market, though they did not deny the possibility of temporary unemployment.¹

What was the trade union response to all this? It is usually recognised that when the AEU first accepted women as members from January 1,

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1. In fact, the general public opinion seems to have accepted that women would be needed for several branches of the engineering industry owing to the technical changes precipitated by the war.

The last war made lasting changes in industrial practices. It was impossible to go back on technical adaptations that had proved their worth: and there will be similar consequences for the changes established during this war. Women are permanently established in the aircraft industry and in other branches of engineering: ... Moreover, the country will need them and cannot afford to let them go.

The Times, 18 March, 1944.

1943, it was an epoch-making moment both for the labour movement in general and women's trade unionism in particular. In May 1943, the first Annual Women Shop Stewards' Meeting was held. In the presidential address, Jack Tanner emphasised the importance of the semi-skilled worker to the technical developments of the war years.

... it is for this reason that the influx of women into the industry has been seen as a fitting move appropriate to the actual trend in the methods of production. Of course, the first and foremost reason for the presence of women in engineering at present is to release men for the fighting forces and increase our production of war weapons at the same time. 1

This comment suggests that male leaders of the AEU had no intention of trying to push out the women from engineering at the end of the war. On the contrary, the workforce saw them as part of the semi-skilled made inevitable by technical change.

However, Tanner also showed the AEU's anger that the Government might be intending to introduce women as cheap labour. Nor was he enthusiastic about the principle of equal pay for equal work.²

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1. Jack Tanner's presidential address to the AEU First Annual Women's Conference 20 and 21 May 1943.
 2. Tanner continued that: 'I doubt very much if the reward which Mr. Churchill's Government considers good enough for those efforts excite anything but contempt among our Allies. And is it, then, very likely that employers with their ingrained self-interest will make the first move if the Government pays no more than lip service to women? Cheap tribute to cheap labour, that is Government woman-power policy.

AEU 2nd Women's Conference Minutes: 4 and 5 May, 1944.

While the male leaders of the AEU were prepared to offer some assistance to women who remained as unskilled workers, in general the unions were still not too keen on women. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that women were not much captivated by the union. Women's interest in union activities was generally lukewarm and their lack of enthusiasm is illustrated by women's membership. The number of women in the AEU was 64,000 when the first women's conference took place in May 1943. It went up to 141,298 a year later, and reached its wartime peak in the middle of 1944. From that moment it started to decline as the war industries wound down and as the women left engineering altogether. By the end of 1945 the female membership was less than half what it had been in 1944.¹

Among the women shop stewards themselves there seemed to be differences of opinion on women's place and role. At the Third Women's Conference for example, women delegates expressed their opinion that women's place was at home.²

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1. The leaders of the AEU did not ignore the fact that the union was losing its women members. In 1944, Tanner emphasised the importance and merits of trade union organisation. In the same speech, he honestly admitted that the male members of the union were not always free from sexual prejudices.

To make women 'organisation conscious' is still no easy task, but it is easier than it was. I do not deny that men, our own members among them, are sometimes unhelpful, in some cases, antagonistic. Nevertheless, general opinion is rapidly changing. Intelligent people no longer pretend that women are inferior to men...

AEU 4th Women's Conference Minutes, 14 and 15 May, 1946.

2. AEU, 3rd Women's Conference Minutes, 1 and 2 May, 1945.

On the other hand, in 1946 the women's delegation had an enthusiastic discussion on women in engineering, the main trend of which was to point out women's efforts during the War and to seek a fair place for women in engineering. One delegate put the matter very positively when she said that women wanted their rights as well as their rates, the same as the men.¹

It is probable that even among women members of the AEU those who wanted to keep their engineering jobs were a minority. There is no evidence that a large number of women were made redundant against their will. The union had to deal with few complaints of this kind from women. As for the male leaders of the AEU, they were in agreement with the Government's general policy on the workforce in engineering. That meant accepting women in the unskilled positions and to support them as such in order to strengthen the union.

What was the reaction of workers themselves towards these manpower policies and what were their results? By the end of the summer of 1944, redundancy in the war factories had become an obvious problem. The Ministry of Information report on morale and public opinion in the summer of 1944 noticed that redundancy and/or enforced idleness in war factories, reduced production; closing down of factories etc. were causing uneasiness and anxiety about the future employment situation. Those phenomena were regarded as the foretaste of post-war unemployment. This tendency was accelerated by the fact that the Government's manpower re-direction policy was not efficient enough, and appeared confusing in public eyes.

1. AE 14th Women's Conference Minutes, 14 and 15 May, 1946.

Redundancy in some factories, shortages of labour in others, such as Teeside Iron and Steel: workers tied or directed to factories where there is no work for them to do, or where other workers are being dismissed at the same time: skilled workers being directed to unskilled jobs. There is also irritation that unemployed people are not allowed to walk into jobs which they know are available, "greencards are necessary, and these are refused."

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There was also a certain amount of irritation about the fact that the Ministry of Labour kept on calling up women who were engaged, if not in war production, in other important civilian jobs while there was considerable slack in the war factories.²

People were not only annoyed by the delay in implementation of the Government's policy to absorb workers displaced from the munitions industry into essential civilian industries. In addition, there was the significant matter of living standards for those workers who were made redundant. A demonstration of workers discharged from aircraft factories in the London area took place on 1 November, 1944:

About a thousand young men and women aircraft workers assembled outside the Houses of Parliament yesterday and sent a deputation to the Central Hall of the House of Commons to complain to M.P.s that they

1. INF 1/292, 9 November, 1944.

2. INF 1/292, 14 September, 1944.

and other workers are threatened with unemployment through the progressive termination of contracts at a number of factories making aircraft. 1

Being aware of the importance of the matter, Bevin asked for patience on the workers' side and told them not to mix up political demonstrations and employment problems. 2 According to the report in The Times, he attributed one of the difficulties to the extended recruitment of women:

... there was going to be some gap in transference. Seven and a quarter million women had been called up for national service, of single women between the age of 18 and 41, 92 per cent. were working either in the Services or on national service of some kind. They faced now the unwinding of a nation which had been wound up for war purposes. 3

After the termination of hostilities, the problem of displaced workers from war factories became more urgent. On 19 August, 1945, just five days after the victory over Japan, Arthur Woodburn, the Joint

1. The Times, 2 November, 1944.

2. The Economist, 11 November, 1944.

The grievances seemed to have been deep-rooted and widespread in the Autumn of 1944. A month before this demonstration a Ministry of Information report noted people's cynicism on the occasion of the publication of the White Paper on Social Insurance (Cmd.6550).

During the past four weeks widespread and detailed discussion has continued. Despite very favourable reaction generally to the White Paper on Social Insurance, cynicism and anxiety continue widespread. - "We shall be let down again as after the last War". The Government is once more criticised for lack of clear statements and concrete plans; where promises or plans have been made it is generally thought "They won't mature anyway".

INF 1/292, 12 October, 1944.

3. The Times, 6 November, 1944.

Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministries of Supply and of Aircraft Production, said that some temporary unemployment owing to the turnover from war production to peacetime industry was inevitable, especially after such a sudden cease fire. He insisted that it was practically impossible for the Government to arrange post-war jobs for every individual concerned.

On the whole, however, the turnover from a war economy to peace seems to have proceeded smoothly, although the pace of demobilisation from the forces was slow. Nevertheless, the changeover was made without too much unemployment.

TABLE 6-7
QUARTERLY STATISTICS OF WHOLLY UNEMPLOYED PERSONS

	Men (18-)	Boys (14-17)	Women (18-)	Girls (14-17)
1943 October	46,106	9,063	18,604	8,853
1944 January	50,458	10,351	21,289	9,536
April	48,459	11,692	16,769	9,514
July	44,310	8,296	13,779	7,176
October	52,806	9,508	18,760	8,868
1945 January	53,981	5,588	22,799	5,610
April	56,935	5,387	18,020	4,701
July	63,474	4,995	30,851	4,043
October	120,980	7,734	93,829	7,665
1946 January	190,182	8,915	122,254	8,100
April	238,846	8,283	118,172	6,110
July	255,436	8,319	90,719	4,860
October	259,528	9,369	90,172	6,542

Source: Labour Gazette, 1944-1947

It is instructive to look more closely at women's demobilisation, and in particular to ask how they saw their post-war employment possibilities? This is an important point in any discussion of demobilisation, but it is not easy to find out women's real opinions. Towards the end of the War, several surveys had taken place on women's post-war job prospects.¹ Two of them were fairly comprehensive, and contained interesting results: they were the War-time Social Survey of 1943² and the Mass Observation Report in 1944.³ What do they tell us about women's views? First of all, did women war workers want to stay on in the factories, or change their job or go back home? While the Ministry of Information report and Mass Observation both stated that the majority of women, especially married women, did not want to stay in industry,⁴ the War-time Social Survey suspected that 60 per cent gave positive answers to the question, did they wish to go on working after the War? Of married women 39 per cent. said they wanted to go on working (29 per cent. wanted full-time; 10 per cent. part-time) 36 per cent did not want to work; 25 per cent. were not certain about their position. It seems to contradict the findings of the other two surveys.

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1. As for the reliability of these surveys, it is pointed out that it is dangerous to assume that the results always reflected precisely women's opinions, since there was a possibility that questions were biased and women were under pressure to give answers to suit their social image. It is, however, equally dangerous to assume that the answer women gave to those investigators would have been entirely different from their own thoughts. It is, therefore, helpful to use those surveys to see the general tendency of women's opinions, bearing in mind that there was a possibility of bias as some correspondents might have one eye on public opinion.
 2. Geoffrey Thomas, Women at Work, War-time Social Survey, 1944. It was researched in 1943 and published in 1944.
 3. Mass Observation Topic file 2059. 'Will the Factory Girls Want to Stay Put or Go Home?' (Hereafter MO.2059) 8 March, 1944.
 4. INF 1/292, 12 October, 1944. MO.2059.

It should be remembered that the War-time Social Survey was done in September and October 1943, when the prospect of a ceasefire was far away and women could hardly have a clear picture of their future.

The surveys make various suggestions about women's intentions concerning post-war employment. It suggests that those women who did *not* want to go on working after the War were young married women (under 35 years of age), rather than single or older married women. The proportion of those who both wanted to go on working and to stay in the same industry were surprisingly lower in engineering than in any other industry. This seems due to a combination of the fact that women were thinking that the engineering industry was not really for them and the fact that women who would have chosen other work or stayed at home in normal circumstances had been attracted to engineering by the better pay, or had been drafted into it. Naturally women who came into war work straight from home were more likely to want to return home than women who had been working.¹

The War-time Social Survey also asked women's opinion on the principle of married women's employment. The result was more in line with the Mass Observation report. 63 per cent. of single and widowed women disapproved of married women's employment, 14 per cent. conditionally approved and 9 per cent. gave unqualified approval. The corresponding proportion among married women was 44 per cent, 26 per cent. and 18 per cent. However, more married women (52 per cent.) thought that men should get

1. For details see Thomas (1944)

the jobs anyway than single and widowed (29 per cent.), while 53 per cent. of the latter thought that those who were best at it should have the job. As the survey itself explained, married women, especially the older ones, were more tolerant about married women's employment because of the reality of so many working-class households which needed two wage earners. Nevertheless, married women placed men's employment as their first priority because 'a man was usually married and had a family and more responsibilities than the women.'¹ The Social Survey also agreed with the Mass Observation report that 'both men and women agree, ... that men should be breadwinners and there is little sign of sex antagonism.'²

Having said that the answers might be guided by the way enquiries were conducted and by popular notions of what was expected, it remains hardly possible to conclude that women were determined to keep their jobs after the War. They were prepared to leave their war work for other jobs if available, or for a return to home life, even if this caused some disappointment. Therefore, although there was evidence that some women were anxiously seeking the opportunity of equality³ it is hard to believe that

1. Thomas, (1944), p.28.

A single women aged 25 was reported saying 'It's not so much what's going to happen to us, as what's going to happen to the men who come home. Will there be jobs for them?' (MO.2059).

2. MO.2059.

3. For example, on 30 July, 1945, the status of the Women's Campaign Committee called a meeting which was attended by more than a thousand, in Westminster to urge the Government to bring forward measures designed to improve the status of women. Women's nationality, equal pay for equal work, equality of job opportunity, the abolition of the marriage bar in all Government departments, and equal contributions and benefits under social insurance, were among the listed reforms. Leah Manning, the Labour M.P. for Epping, stated that "some kind of arrangement would have to be made to enable women to make their own contribution in the outside world and yet carry on their work in homes as wives and mothers." Lady Noel-Buxton, another Labour M.P. for Norwich, said that there should be no slipping back in women's status after the War.

The Times, 1 August, 1945.

the majority of working women were enthusiastically attempting to retain the gains of wartime.

The Women's Consultative Committee naturally showed a great interest in the way the demobilisation of women took place. They were more anxious to discover women's feelings and their views on prospects for post-war work, than the policy-makers of the Ministry of Labour. At the same time they had to face the fact that, they had to tell women against their wishes that there was almost no way to use the skills they had acquired during the War.

In February 1945, the Committee discussed the impact of demobilisation on women's attitudes towards work:

One of the difficulties encountered in connection with the transfer of women from war production to civilian production was the psychological effect on a women's outlook. Many women who had given their maximum effort to direct war production felt that the war situation had changed and that such effort was not required.

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Of course, it was not only a matter of women's views of the value of their work but the actual wages which, the Women's Consultative Committee thought, might discourage women in the post-war period. They felt it necessary to point out that women's earnings were only higher owing to the abnormal conditions, i.e. the War, and that women should not

1. LAB 8/1236, 38 February, 1945.

expect to earn as much as peace-time.¹ As for vocational training, the Committee was concerned that the training scheme for women in the Forces was not closely related to the actual demands for women workers in post-war society. Some of those women who had gone through the scheme would have unrealistic expectations as a result. They were especially worried about women's preference for clerical jobs.

Miss Elliot said that she had been asked for and would like information as to how the various training schemes for women in the Services related to the Ministry's proposals for re-absorbing women into their former employment in industry after the War. She was particularly concerned about the training of clerks and that the market should not be over-flooded with clerical workers. 2

Of course, some members of the Women's Consultative Committee hoped women could use the skills they had acquired during the War. In May 1945, Caroline Haslett made this point, to which the Ministry of Labour officer replied in a hopeless manner that 'although this was being done when the particular skill was needed, it was necessary to have regard to cases in which there was at present no demand for such skill.'³

1. LAB 8/1236, 30 May, 1945.

2. LAB 8/1236, 28 February, 1945.

... Miss Elliot pointed out 'members of the Women's Auxiliary Services who were employed in a clerical capacity, for instance women employed with the Pay Corps were under the impression that on release from the Services they would be able to secure good clerical posts without much further training.'

LAB 8/1236, 21 March, 1945.

3. LAB 8/1236, 30 May, 1945.

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Following this statement, discussion took place on the advisability of impressing upon the employers the fact that women could be employed for jobs that had been considered unsuitable before the War, but no particular conclusion was reached.

The Women's Consultative Committee drafted their own publicity document on the industrial demobilisation of women. They summarised in seven points what they thought ought to be told to women war workers: Nation-wide unemployment was unlikely and there was the possibility of shortages of women; details of jobs available; importance of the continuence of the war effort against Japan; necessity of labour control and the reasons why; the importance of civilian industry for the post-war British economy; that high war-time earnings were only a temporary phenomenon and lastly, that the Ministry of Labour was prepared to assist workers as much as possible. They were also careful not to let women have exaggerated expectations about post-war job prospects. Their basic attitudes were, more or less, similar to those of the Government that demobilisation would mean going back to the pre-war situation. This was shown clearly in their draft, though it was rephrased slightly later:

It will be necessary to say that many civilian jobs will not carry wages as high as those given in some of the war factories. They were temporary war-time conditions: We must go back to our civilian jobs, all of us, civilian and soldiers alike to where we left off. That doesn't mean that the Government is satisfied with conditions and wages in all industries. We should publicise what has and is being done to improve conditions in certain industries.

In short, although the Women's Consultative Committee had displayed considerable insight into women's feelings, hopes and fears as to their post-war employment situation, they were not, therefore, expecting an entirely new employment context for women in post-war Britain. The best they could do was to help women to realise the differences between war-time and peace-time conditions.

Although the Government accepted that there was a role for women in industry after the War, they were not prepared to keep open day nurseries which might have freed more women for full-time work. Protesting at the announcement of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Health that "there is no question of closing war-time nurseries where they are being attended." The Daily Worker wrote that the attitudes of the Ministry were lukewarm and unsatisfactory. It pointed out that, despite the statement, a number of nurseries had been closed down.¹ Quite ironically though, Lady Allen of Hurtwood, the Chairman of the Nursery School Association, had made a statement that;

... the need ... for continuing to use women in industry seemed to be imperative, but a reduction in the working hours of mothers with young children must be made if home life was to be rebuilt.

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Although she did not support the closing down of the war-time nurseries, the line she was taking clearly emphasised the idea that mothers should

1. Daily Worker, 14 March, 1945.

2. The Times, 11 February, 1945.

be looking after children as much as possible and that it was as important to reconstruct family life as it was to reconstruct the peace-time economy. The Government's policy shifted quickly to the closing down of war-time nurseries or transferring their administration to the local authorities.

After V-E day the nursery question aroused some controversy between the Ministries of Labour and Health. In June 1945, an officer in the Ministry of Labour underlined the necessity of the war-time nursery arrangements continuing during the interim period. The labour budget of the Ministry depended on the assumption that a substantial number of women with young children would be remaining in industry until the end of the Japanese War. Therefore, the Ministry was preparing to continue the nurseries where demand existed.¹ The biggest pressure for the closing down of war-time nurseries came from the Treasury. All nurseries were Government financed (after collecting roughly 1s. per child per day from mothers). According to a Ministry of Labour officer,

As a result of a recent special review undertaken at the behest of the Treasury of all Nurseries where the number of children on the register represented less than 60% of available places, 160 were brought under examination. As a result, 50 were closed down and a further number are on the danger list.

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1. LAB 26/168, 14 June, 1945.

2. Ibid

After the end of the Japanese War, the pressure from the Treasury was increased and it was decided that from 1 April, 1946, the nurseries were either to be continued by Local Welfare Authorities as a voluntary nursery, to be transferred to Local Education Authorities, to be continued without grants, or to be closed down. In the whole country 1,255 whole-time nurseries and 57 part-time nurseries were in operation on 31 March, 1946, of which 918 were to be continued by Welfare Authorities, 284 transferred to LEA's and 95 closed down from the following day.¹

Once actual demobilisation started, however, some industries could not obtain enough women workers and started to suffer from labour shortages. This was particularly noticeable in textiles and clothing.

The most alarming symptom of the June manpower statistics is the decline in the employment of women in the textile and clothing industries. With 30 per cent. fewer women than 1939, these industries have been lamentably unsuccessful in their efforts to rebuild their labour force and have made progress at the rate of only 1 per cent. per quarter. The textile industry, which used to give employment to 600,000 women has added only

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1. According to the Ministry of Labour Report, on 31 July, 1945, the eve of the Cease Fire, there were 1,238 whole-time, 81 part-time and 85 24-hour nurseries in the country, which were funded completely by the Government. The number of places were 59,523, 2,760 and 4,097 respectively. 56,942 children under 5, or roughly 96 per cent of the available places, were on the register for the whole-time, 2,333 for part of the time and 3,256 for the 24-hour nurseries. As for the number of mothers using those facilities, 54,601 were sending their children to the whole-time nurseries, 2,185 to the part-time and 2,991 to the 24-hour nurseries. Of those 59,777 mothers who were using the war-time nurseries, 52,638 were full-time workers (88.1%), 5,931 were part-time (9.9%) and 1,208 were evacuees (2.0%)
LAB 26/168, 31 July, 1945.

700 in seven months. This is very serious indeed; it means that there is no prospect either of increased exports or of the early removal of clothes rationing.

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This article in The Economist was entitled 'Where are the women?', and included an analysis of the industrial distribution of women workers. According to the article, there were nearly a million more women workers than in pre-war days, and even if two part-time workers were counted as one full-time worker, there were still 700,000 more women engaged in paid jobs. The Economist concluded that this increase of women workers was being retained by the Government (including the Armed Forces) or in the war-expanded industries, therefore, "No one can say that this failure to recruit women workers is due to the reluctance of women to accept paid work." 2

Why did these shortages of women workers happen? Did it imply an absolute shortage of women throughout industry or uneven distribution between industries? Where did the women go after they had left war work? If we compare the industrial distribution of workers (male and female) in June 1939, June 1943, the peak of the mobilisation, and December 1946, some interesting points emerge. Tables 6-8 and 6-9 show the industrial distribution of male workers aged between 14 and 64 and of female workers aged from 14 to 59.

1. The Economist, 7 September, 1946.

2. Ibid.

TABLE 6-8

INDUSTRIAL DISTRIBUTION OF MALE WORKERS AGED 14-64

(Number in brackets : Index 1939 = 100.)

(thousands)

	1939 (June)	1943 (June)	1946 (December)
Armed Forces	480 (100)	4,300 (896)	1,361 (283).
Civil Defence, etc.	80 (100)	253 (316)	85 (106)
<u>Industry</u>			
Group I	2,600 (100)	3,305 (127)	2,907 (112)
Metal	2,379 (100)	3,025 (127)	2,671 (112)
Chemical	221 (100)	280 (127)	236 (107)
Group II	4,096 (100)	3,791 (92.6)	4,403 (107)
Agriculture	884 (100)	879 (99.4)	959 (108)
Mining	868 (100)	804 (92.6)	790 (91.0)
Transport	1,183 (100)	1,084 (91.6)	1,249 (106)
Gas, Water, Electricity	224 (100)	167 (74.2)	234 (104)
National & Local Government	936 (100)	857 (91.6)	1,171 (125)
Group III	6,387 (100)	3,431 (53.7)	5,140 (80.3)
Textiles	401 (100)	233 (58.1)	317 (79.1)
Cloth, Boots, Shoes	246 (100)	136 (55.3)	199 (80.9)
Food, Drink, Tobacco	391 (100)	274 (70.1)	354 (90.5)
Other Manufactures	917 (100)	496 (54.1)	807 (88.0)
Building, Civil Engineering	1,294 (100)	700 (54.1)	1,235 (95.4)
Distributive	1,888 (100)	1,016 (53.8)	1,306 (69.2)
Miscellaneous Services	1,250 (100)	576 (46.1)	922 (93.8)
Industrial Total	13,083 (100)	10,422 (80.0)	12,450 (95.2)
Unemployed	1,013 (100)	44 (nil)	300 (29.6)
Ex-member of the Forces not employed yet	-	-	285
Grand Total	14,656 (100)	15,032 (102)	14,481 (98.8)

Source: Ministry of Labour Report for
1936-1946.

TABLE 6-9

INDUSTRIAL DISTRIBUTION OF FEMALE WORKERS AGED 14-59

(thousands)

	1939 (June)	1943 (June)	1946 (December)
Armed Forces		461	78
Civil Defence etc.		70	4
<u>Industry</u>			
Group I	506 (100)	1,928 (366)	895 (176)
Metal	433 (100)	1,635 (377)	778 (179)
Chemical	73 (100)	293 (401)	117 (160)
Group II	587 (100)	1,341 (228)	1,152 (196)
Agriculture	66 (100)	168 (254)	122 (184)
Mining	5 (100)	14 (280)	12 (240)
Transport	50 (100)	197 (394)	124 (248)
Gas, Water, Electricity	17 (100)	33 (194)	24 (141)
National & Local Government	449 (100)	929 (206)	870 (193)
Group III	3,744 (100)	3,430 (91.6)	3,546 (947)
Textiles	601 (100)	436 (72.5)	442 (73.5)
Cloth, Boots, Shoes	506 (100)	357 (70.6)	403 (79.6)
Food, Drink, Tobacco	236 (100)	245 (104)	243 (103)
Other Manufactures	384 (100)	197 (51.3)	391 (102)
Building, Civil Engineering	16 (100)	26 (163)	25 (156)
Distributive	999 (100)	993 (99.4)	998 (100)
Miscellaneous Services	975 (100)	1,037 (106)	1,044 (107)
Industrial Total	4,837 (100)	6,699 (138)	5,539 (115)
Unemployed	257 (100)	23 (nil)	98 (38.1)
Ex-member of the Forces not employed yet	-	- (nil)	15 -
Grand Total	5,094 (100)	7,253 (142)	5,588 (110)

Source: Ministry of Labour Report for
1936-1946.

By the end of 1944, the demobilisation from the Auxiliary Services had almost finished and the number of women in Civil Defence and other similar services was negligible. The peak year for the employment of women in industry was in 1943. By the end of 1946, 13 per cent. of women workers had left industry, but the total number of women employed was still 15 per cent. higher than in 1939.¹

The industrial distribution of women was very different in 1946 from that in 1939. The 15 per cent. increase in the number of women workers as a whole were either in Groups I or II. Certainly there was obvious decline in the number of women in those industries, especially munitions, which bore the brunt of industrial demobilisation, but all industries and services in Groups I and II had got more woman employees in 1946 than in pre-war days. As for industries and services in Group III, the total number of women employees was roughly the same, but the distribution within it had changed. The industry that was suffering most from the decrease of women was textiles, in spite of the intensive recruitment campaigns for this industry, of which more later. The

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1. It was difficult to assess to what extent this increase was due to the War. After the survey of 1944, Thomas concluded that: "It is possible, making full allowance for the number of women now in the services, that if women of 18-59 years are able to work or not as they wish, the total number of women seeking employment in these age groups will not be greater than it would have been if the normal process of increase had operated since 1931."

Thomas, 1944, p.29.

number of female workers in 1946 in textiles was the same as in 1943. What interests us here is the fact that the textile industry had got about 80 per cent. of its male workers of 1939 back in 1946, while it had only 73.5 per cent. of its female workers. It means that the 'restoration rate' was slightly better with male workers than with the female. It was probably because the type of work that each did was quite distinctive and the men had the more favourable jobs.

Therefore the reality of demobilisation was not an overall retreat to the pre-war level. When demobilisation settled down, some changes appeared in the female occupational structure; more women remained economically active, and more women worked in metal and chemical industries, in transport and in the national and local government services or miscellaneous services.¹ Women employees in the textile industry and the clothing industry were numerically less than before. The question to be asked here is, to what extent those changes were the direct result of the War. In other words, if the War had not occurred, how different would the female occupational structure in 1946 have been from that of 1939? We all know that we can never answer this kind of 'counter-factual question', but, by examining how those changes fitted into the long-term shifts in society, we might assess the effect of the War upon women's work.² We will return to these long-term changes in women's occupational structure in the concluding chapter.

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1. Note that this figure did not include private domestic servants. Services here mean banking, insurance, commerce, financial, professional, hotels, restaurants, laundries etc.
 2. The conclusion of Rupp's book is a good example of this method. See Rupp, op.cit., pp.166-180.

It seems that in spite of some anxiety among workers about redundancy in the war factories before the end of the War, the actual demobilisation of women from war production did not produce a serious social problem. We can agree with Croucher that the discharge of women from war factories generally went smoothly. However, the aim of the demobilisation policy was not only the closing down of war factories, but also the adjustment of Britain's economy to the post-war world economy. Essentially this meant making Britain an export-oriented country. Government policy here underestimated the female labour which would be needed soon after demobilisation was completed. The country had to face the fact of a shortage of women workers which, though projected had not been seriously thought of until it happened. In our case study in the next two chapters, we first examine Bolton where cotton had a dominant role in the town's economy. It quickly became apparent that the industry could not obtain enough women. We shall want to see how the manufacturers explained this phenomenon and to test the validity of their explanation.

CHAPTER 7 : INDUSTRIAL DEMOBILISATION : BACK TO THE MILLS?
BOLTON 1944-1946

... This little book, as you know, is about the cotton industry, and we hope that after reading it you will take an interest in this main industry in your district: but we have no wish to influence you into working in the cotton industry against your will.

The Cotton Board, Where are You Going?
n.d. (1945?)

This chapter will examine the labour position for women in Bolton during the years 1944 to 1946. In particular it will attempt to describe and account for their response to the ending of war work and to the campaign to recruit female labour for the cotton industry. It will also attempt to see if there is any evidence to suggest that wartime experiences might have changed women's attitudes towards paid work outside the home and traditional notions of 'women's role.'

These years might be more precisely described as years of the mobilisation of labour for the cotton industry rather than as ones featuring industrial demobilisation from the munitions industry. Local papers, for example, while containing several articles on the new methods of cotton production, better welfare facilities in the mills and the general needs of labour, hardly mentioned demobilisation from the munitions factories such as De Havilland or the filling factory in Chorley.

Towards the end of the War, the Government, being aware of the importance of exports in post-war Britain, had been trying to bring this home to the work people. The Cotton Board, for example, printed a pamphlet entitled 'Cotton on the March,' the purpose of which was to persuade parents to encourage their children to take jobs in the cotton industry when they left school. The pamphlet emphasised the importance of cotton goods for the British economy.

We, the ordinary folk of England, are beginning to realise now that 'lease-lend' never did mean we hadn't to pay for those ships and bombers! We have to pay alright, and we're going to. But how? By exporting more goods than ever before in our history. And *that* is precisely where cotton comes in.

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(Original italics)

In short, the main feature of the manpower problem in this period in Bolton was how to obtain enough workers for the cotton industry and to reconstruct the industry after the wartime concentration.

The importance of improved working conditions seems to have been widely appreciated. Both the Government and the industry made big efforts most notably in two areas: actual improvements in the trade and attempts to impress the people that the cotton mills were not how they had remembered them in pre-war days. Bolton naturally took a great interest in improvements in the industry which had been proceeding at national level. The report of the Cotton Board Committee in January 1944 was quite abstract in its suggestions for modernisation, stressing the necessity of government intervention, the need for new machinery, the better organisation of employment, etc.²

1. The Cotton Board, Cotton on the March, n.d. (1945?)

2. The report pointed out:

... there exist a number of practices and regulations which obstruct recruitment and efficient deployment of operatives. ... Examples quoted of difficulties of this character are: opposition to recruitment by adults of juveniles because of its effect on the prospects of promotion, and because of the practice of sharing absentees' wages: too much rigidity in the division of function, which prevents operatives from performing more than one type of work: and absence of any provision for absorbing on satisfactory terms any ex-junior workers who might return to the industry as adults.

Bolton Evening News, 25 January, 1944.

Bolton Evening News expressed that paper's dissatisfaction, without disguise:

Reading the report in the light of all that we cannot avoid a certain sense of disappointment. To say that it represents "an evolutionary rather than a revolutionary approach" is, if anything, to understate the impression it leaves on the mind. It might be erring in the opposite direction to suggest that it indicates a defeatist attitude on the part of the Committee, but certainly there is little evidence in it of the courage and enterprise that built up the industry to its position of pre-eminence. ... We do suggest that the report appears to attach too much reliance upon them (Government's role, - N.N.) and too little on the "energy, vision, courage, perseverance, and unity of hundreds of individuals in positions of responsibility in the industry." It is to these qualities that we should prefer to look for the rebuilding of the industry's future. 1

Apart from occasional reports on wages and shorter working hours most of the articles which appeared in the local paper were aimed at boosting the morale of the actual and potential workers in the industry. Some of them were merely painting rosy pictures of the future without any firm ground on which to stand, like the report on a meeting of the overlookers from Bolton and Oldham which was addressed by two members of the Cotton Board. 2 In August 1944, some members of the United States

1. Bolton Evening News, 25 January, 1944.

2. "I am more optimistic about the future of the trade than ever I have been this last 15 to 20 years. ... Compared even with four or five years ago there have been a considerable improvement in the employers, while the mills had improved almost beyond recognition. Air conditioning had advanced by leaps and bounds, and while he did not know whether perfection would ever be achieved, he thought the air of the average mill today was a good deal better than that of many other industries."

Bolton Evening News, 23 June, 1944.

Government's Textile Mission visited a Bolton mill which was 'the most modern fine-spinning mill in the country.' Although the paper claimed that the Americans were ignorant of the situation of the cotton mills in their own country, emphasis was put on their statement that they were impressed by the mill, that the machines were kept clean and that they showed a keen interest in both technical processes and the costs of the product as well as in working conditions.¹ However, only two months later, the British mission to the States, including a member from Bolton, reported the results of their comparison between the British and American industries and concluded that the British cotton industry was behind their American counterparts in mechanisation and productivity.²

In 1944, it was still supposed to be important to praise the cotton workers' efforts as vital in the country's whole war effort. For example, a workers' meeting was held in August, organised by the Cotton Board by special request of the Ministry of Aircraft Production.

1. Bolton Evening News, 31 August, 1944.

2. "With normal staffing, the report points out, British production per man per hour is less than the Americans by approximately 18 to 49 per cent. in spinning, 80 to 85 per cent. in winding, 79 to 89 per cent. in beaming, and 56 to 67 per cent. in weaving." The Bolton Evening News, on the other hand remained sceptical: '... the report was a mere comparison of the coarse spinning... and of weaving in the Blackburn district than of the trade in Bolton, Manchester or Preston.'

Bolton Evening News, 20 October, 1944.

An Air Force officer, who landed at Normandy on D-Day, attended to talk about the value of cotton as parachute material.¹

The actual reconstruction of the cotton industry began in the spring of 1945, when the closed mills started to re-open. This was a real test for the industry and would show if they could attract workers, both those who had been in the munitions industry and those who were new to industrial work.

From the beginning of 1945 the reconstruction arguments became more practical. In January, the quarterly report of the Cardroom Workers' Amalgamation estimated that well over 120,000 new workers (in addition to those expected to return to the mills) would be required to staff the spindles and looms.² In February, the labour requirement in Bolton in connection with the reopening of the concentrated mills was made clear.

1. 'It is safe to say that without the work done in Lancashire mills, the great successes we have had in Italy, Normandy and the south of France could not have been achieved. The swift advances and the slight casualty list of the invasion were due in a large measure to the use of airborne men and paratroops, who not only descend by parachutes but who depend on parachutes for supplies to keep them in action. Also General Tito's guerilla bands in Yugoslavia have depended on airborne supplies. From this it will be seen that every pound of yarn and every yard of cloth needed for parachutes is required for vital and urgent war requirements.'

Bolton Evening News, 30 August, 1944.

2. Bolton Evening News, 19 January, 1945.

15,000 workers were needed for cotton spinning in the town.

J.H.Heant, the Chairman of the Bolton Master Cotton Spinners' Association stressed:

We had them on the outbreak of war and we are entitled to press the Government to fulfil its promise that every assistance would be given to restore concentrated concerns to the position they occupied at the time of closure. The Government have a definite responsibility in this matter, and the industry is entitled to the opportunity afforded by a resumption of production before the proposal envisaged in the White Paper on Employment is put into effect in our part of the country. 1

While the coming of an acute labour shortage was being loudly discussed, preparation for the first re-opening of mills began in mid-March, 1945. Four mills in Bolton, Leigh, Oldham and Stockport were to be re-opened first. The one in Bolton was the Falcon Mill at Halliwell. The Falcon Mill contained modern machines, and at its full production, it employed 250 operatives. It was closed down in June 1941 and had kept on about 180 workers for maintenance.² The Ministry of Labour started to transfer workers from other industries from February 1945, but they were fully expecting that ex-cotton workers, who were not engaged in essential industries would volunteer to return to cotton. Meanwhile, the Falcon Mill welcomed the re-direction of ex-cotton operatives. As the managing director replied to his interviewers:

1. Bolton Evening News, 20 February, 1945.

2. Ibid. This number shows that surprisingly the concentration scheme released only 70 workers from this mill. One cannot help wondering what was the overall effect of concentration if this was the case. However, from the other descriptions in the local paper this mill seemed to have been kept in exceptionally good condition.

Labour will be our biggest difficulty, of course, ... We can only hope that the Ministry of Labour will direct ex-operatives back from munitions. No doubt, many of our former minders who are now only assistant spinners in other mills will apply to return to us. I think those men may be able to apply for a full position at their former place of employment, but there will be a difficulty under the Essential Work Order, because their present employer can apply for retention. It will be difficult to avoid complications with employers whose mills are already running. It will be seen that before we can re-open we shall be set a thousand and one problems so that it may be several months before we are in production. ... We feel rather proud to be singled out for re-opening.

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From March the mill began to clean the machines. For this, 14 women who were not under the direction of the Ministry of Labour were employed at a wage of £2.10s. a week. Some of them were ex-operatives at the mill, and it was reported that some were asking for work in the cardroom when the mill re-started production. The Bolton Evening News was encouraging ex-workers to go back. The re-opening of the Falcon Mill took place on 16 April. The men who had returned by that day were mainly in their late forties and fifties, and had worked at the mill for more than 30 years until its closure. There were, however, noticeable changes in the working atmosphere in the firm from the pre-war days. Many of these workers were returning from munition work to cotton.

1. Ibid.

"I don't mind, while things are as they are."
 Mr. Hyde (the managing director of the mill - N.N.)
 told one of them, "but you'll have to break off
 your munition habits when we get going properly."
 He knew that the men were going for a smoke in the
 mill yard - a practice that at one time would have
 resulted in dismissal in most cotton mills. Yet
 one of the operatives told the "Evening News"
 after their return that the break of 10 to 15 minutes
 in mid-morning made all the difference to the
 monotony of the job." 1

The workers themselves underlined the changes in their
 outlook on the cotton industry. As a 50-year-old spinner, who was
 in the firm before the war and had been working in an aircraft factory
 after the Falcon's closure, stated:

We never gave it a thought other than that we
 had to come back. ... We helped to win the
 Battle of Britain, and we can win the battle of
 the Falcon. ... Things will have to alter if
 they want the trade to go on, and particularly if
 they want to attract juvenile labour. Conditions
 will have to be better, canteen facilities will have
 to be good, and welfare will have to be a top-liner.
 We shall expect too, that the 'gaffers' will become
 a little more human instead of adopting the sergeant-
 major attitude. We don't want 'shop meetings' every
 five minutes. If the management will play their part
 we shall play ours. 2

As for the returning of the ex-cotton operatives, at first it
 was thought that 'the reluctance of former cotton operatives to re-enter
 the mills is not as general as many feared.' 3 The same article also

1. Bolton Evening News, 16 April, 1945.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid, 9 April, 1945.

introduced a story from 'a trade union official' (neither the name of the official nor the name of the union was given) that a former union member who was then in the RAF and was stationed in the South of England, read the papers on re-direction of ex-cotton workers from the munition and other industries, and asked the union official if he could do anything to release him for his old job in cotton.¹

Soon after the news of the re-opening of the Falcon Mill was published, a reader wrote to the Bolton Evening News:

... I had three daughters working for the firm (the Falcon - N.N.) before they closed down, and believe me they jumped for joy when they knew the mill was opening again. They all expect to return. I can honestly say that the wages paid are the best paid in Bolton. It is just like at home: the working conditions are fine. If all the mills took an example from the Falcon, I feel sure that both women and girls would be keen on going into the mills. 2

(signed 'One of Many')

However, the ex-cotton operatives who wanted to go back turned out to be a minority. The re-direction of former workers by the Government, therefore, had to be implemented.

1. Bolton Evening News, 9 April, 1945.

Of course, at that time, the re-direction policy was not applied to the men in the Forces. It is difficult to find if this story was true or not, but it is not hard to imagine that this kind of 'information' was designed to persuade other ex-cotton workers to return to the mills after demob.

2. Bolton Evening News, 23 March, 1945.

This letter was provoked by another letter in the Bolton Evening News, which had condemned the low wages paid to girls at that firm.

In October 1945, the Northwestern Regional Controller of Labour reported the progress of labour replacement since February. His report also gave detailed information on the workers who had been transferred back to the cotton industry. The total number placed in the trade in Bolton since February was 1,184, of which 256 were experienced male workers and 779 experienced female workers. The speed of the replacement process was accelerated towards October. For example, in the second half of September, 175 persons entered or re-entered the industry, while the average replacement rate in February had been 42 per week. Of the latest 175, 43 men and 105 women were experienced workers. The average age of women replacees as learners in this period was reported as between 30 and 40 years old.¹ At this stage of reconstruction, the replacement scheme was mainly applied to women, which was natural, and the massive demobilisation of the male population was yet to take place. The male workers who transferred back to cotton were probably 'key-men' who were essential to production. The statistics show that the replacement meant largely the transfer of experienced workers back, rather than

1. Nevertheless, the average age of the women who entered as learners is interesting. The number is not big, so we cannot generalise, but this age group (30-40) of women were more likely to be married and probably with children. Therefore, they were not the most appropriate group to go into an industry which was new to them. However, we cannot argue definitely since the average age of the female ex-cotton operatives who had been transferees was not given.

a movement of workers who had entered the labour market through other industries.¹

While the actual improvements in working conditions and the replacement of labour using the Government's power had been progressing, a series of recruitment campaigns had started and lasted throughout the period with which we are dealing. One of them involved a visit by Sir Stafford Cripps, President of the Board of Trade, to Lancashire in mid-August, 1945. He arrived in Manchester, where he met representatives from both the employers' federations and trade unions. After the meeting, he went to Oldham where he spoke on the future of the cotton industry. He also visited Bolton and Blackburn. At the meeting in Bolton, which was attended by 1,000 people, Cripps said that the Government was determined to make the cotton industry flourish and was prepared to assist it in every possible way. After giving a more precise programme for cotton revival, he went on to appeal to the workers.

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1. The same article also reported about the training scheme, especially in terms of the allowances paid under the Government vocational training scheme, during the period of training. The allowances were:

Those who stayed at home during the training:

Men and Boys	27s. to 60s. a week.
Women and Girls	25s. to 47s. a week.

Those who left home for training:

Cost of lodging, not over 30s. a week, and

Men and Boys	15s. to 35s. a week.
Women and Girls	15s. to 25s. a week.

Those who were away from home and supporting a family were entitled to the additional allowances of 24s.6d. a week.

All the allowances mentioned are free from income tax and are not subject to deductions for health and unemployment insurance. This means they are equivalent to wages of just under £4 a week for adult men and 55s. for adult women.

Bolton Evening News, 4 October, 1945.

None of these plans could be of any use unless they gave their fullest support. The needs in the spinning section was very urgent - "urgent for the return of Servicemen and women, urgent indeed for our families and urgent for the suffering people of Europe and for those who will now be released from the brutal domination of Japan."

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It was generally understood that it was essential to attract juvenile workers, especially school-leavers, in order to obtain enough labour for the industry. Several attempts were made to persuade school-leavers to take up the cotton industry as their 'career'. Senior school children were given a tour of the cotton mills. This had been requested by the Cotton Board's Recruitment and Training Committee.²

The tour took place on 29 July, on the first day of the Cotton Board's recruitment campaign in the Bolton area. Three hundred school children from four schools went on the tour with their teachers.³ They were divided into groups of manageable size, taken round the mill and the production process of yarn cloth was explained to them. They were also shown canteens, rest-rooms and other amenities.

1. Journal and Guardian, 17 August, 1945.

2. The tour took place during school hours, and was authorised by the Director of Education. As well as the school children's tour, the Recruitment and Training Committee arranged for a film show of 'educational films depicting cotton and other subjects of topical interest to the children in the school.' Again it was arranged during school hours. In fact the film show was in the morning, and the conducted tour in the afternoon.

Journal and Guardian, 27 April, 1945.

3. It was not clear how those three hundred school children were selected to go for the tour. The large majority of them, 270, were boys.

While the Recruitment and Training Committee was trying to persuade school leavers, they also realised the importance of influencing parents. Arrangements were made to open twelve mills in and around Bolton ¹ on two Saturday afternoons, on 4 and 11 August, to give a chance to parents and other members of the public to see conditions in the cotton mills for themselves. Mills were open from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m., and some machines from each section were operated by workers. Refreshments were served and temporary nursery arrangements were made for those who had young children.² It is hard to know what the public thought of the experience,³ since both favourable and unfavourable comments appeared in the local paper.

The Cotton Board also prepared two kinds of pamphlets for recruiting purposes. One was for school-leavers and entitled 'Where Are

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1. The number of mills open on those Saturday afternoons were: Bolton 6, Westhaughton 2, Farnworth, Atherton and Tyldesley 1 each, Leigh 1, and Horwich 1.
 2. 'If you can't leave Kiddies, bring them along. Arrangements have been made to take care of them while you are inside the mill.'
An Invitation to Parents, n.d. (July 1945?)
 3. In March 1946, a similar attempt was made in Lancashire (the exact place was not known), on which Hodson commented:

A cotton-mill, in its endeavour to attract more workers threw the mill open to the public on a Saturday afternoon. The mill was crowded. But the visitors were the folk who worked there! They wandered all over the mill - something they had never been allowed to do. "Heh, I allus wondered what went on in 'ere!" they said.

J.L.Hodson, The Way Things Are, (1946), p.119.

There is good reason to believe that the above was not unrepresentative. A week before the opening day in Bolton, a manager suggested the opening of the mill for the operatives as a 'pre-view'. 'There was a surprisingly good response, particularly from some employees who had worked at the mill for years but had never been through certain departments. Their knowledge was increased by the visit and they now admit that 'there's more to it' than they realised.'

Bolton Evening News, 30 July, 1945.

You Going?' the other was for their parents, 'Cotton on the March', reference to which has already been made. The emphasis in both pamphlets was similar, that is, to impress both parents and children that the cotton industry, with welfare facilities, could offer good job opportunities for youngsters. The greatest stress was placed on the difference of the industry from pre-war days.

... remember when you hear gloomy people saying "Don't go into cotton", that *their* experience dates back to the years before the War. (original italics - N.N.). Things have changed. Cotton now offers ample opportunities for a well-paid job on reaching adult age, with a very good chance of rising to the higher executive grade. ...

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However, these ample opportunities were presented differently for boys and girls. While the pamphlet tried to persuade girls that the cotton industry would provide a good chance to earn some money before marriage, the appeals to boys were rather different. Boys were supposed to be more serious about choosing a job and it was pointed out to them

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1. Where Are You Going? The Cotton Board did not forget to impress this point to parents.

You, as a parent, may have a grievance against cotton, you may say "My child shall not go into a cotton mill!" And it may be a well-founded grievance - we do not minimise the effect of those depressed years, which burned deep in so many hearts. But remember, cotton was not the only depressed industry between the two wars. ... The war years, the shortage of 'manpower' have taught directors and managers in all industries the value of *contented* labour. (original italics - N.N.). And no industry has been quicker to learn this lesson than cotton.

Cotton on the March

that they could obtain high skills not only as spinners, but also as engineers making textile machines. The traditional image lingered on. Girls were supposed to have jobs only up to marriage. Of course, this ignored the fact that in the cotton towns women often had continued to have paid work beyond marriage. Moreover, wage rates for adult men were set, in some cases, on the assumption that both husband and wife would have a paid job.

Nevertheless, it was not easy to break the old image of the cotton industry. In August 1945, while the cotton recruitment campaign was on, the Bolton Evening News contained an article by Priscilla Dike, who regularly wrote signed articles, especially on women's subjects. As the solution to the labour shortages, she suggested the obvious ones of wage increases, improvement of the workers' status, shorter working hours. However, what interests us is the first half of the article, where she was discussing the strongly-held prejudice and distaste against the cotton industry.

"No m'lad, if you don't put your back into that 'ome work, 'you'll 'ave ter go in t' mill!"
How often this remark must have been made by Lancashire parents. What is the reason? Cotton mills today are seriously short of labour because of bad conditions in the past when mills were dark and ill-ventilated, and wages were low and hours long compared with other trades. And mills still suffer from the stigma of shawls and clogs. When a ballet company visited the north recently, an illustrated weekly published a photograph of a gallery queue wearing clogs and shawls... Unfortunately, many southerners still have this

conception of our work people's appearance - what a pity they couldn't have seen our Cotton Queen ... There are parents who refuse to allow their children into the mills because of long periods of unemployment in the past. ... Then there are certain diseases associated with the industry which might discourage workers who don't know of recent improvement. ...

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The Cotton Board also thought that this old image of cotton workers was one of the obstacles to recruitment, especially among young women. The Board produced an article especially for the potential young female operative in the 'Spotlight on Cotton' series, which was entitled 'Girls in Cotton.'

Girls in cotton mills have travelled a long way from the days when the phrase 'clogs and shawls' described the clothes their mothers wore. One is frequently struck by the many girls with pleasantly fresh skin and brightly gleaming hair. And what personal magic do such girls employ to keep their overalls and aprons looking like Monday morning, even on Friday afternoon? ... A pleasing appearance is not just a matter of a nice hair-do and the right shade of lipstick. A beauty specialist wrote recently in an article on 'Beauty in the Factory', "charm of face and personality is not to be achieved by skincare and hair grooming alone: it is the natural outcome of a tidy mind." Is that the secret then? A tidy mind ... Maybe it's the secret, too, of the exquisite skill for which Lancashire mill girls are famed. 2

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1. Bolton Evening News, 8 August, 1945.
 2. Bolton Evening News, 9 August, 1945.

This kind of approach, that is, to praise women in factories for their beauty, but also for their skills, pride in their work, devotion to the work, was quite similar to that in the recruitment campaigns for the munitions industries, a few years before. When the organisers of those campaigns were afraid that the dirty, heavy and unwomanly images of the munitions workers would not attract women, they emphasised how such workers could be beautiful and feminine, and with greater pride because they were also on work of national importance.

The real trial for the cotton industry, nevertheless, came in 1946,¹ when demobilisation was accelerated, several mills were being re-opened and the Essential Work Order was withdrawn. In January another big cotton recruitment campaign began in Bolton. It was held from Monday 14 to Saturday 19 and was organised by the local Textile Recruitment Campaign Committee backed up by the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Information and the Board of Trade. An exhibition was held in the centre of the town, which consisted 'exclusively of local products, illustrating the manufacture of yarn from the raw cotton through all the processes of spinning, doubling and manufacturing to the finished fabric.'²

1. Summing up 1945, the Journal and Guardian wrote as 'notable happenings', re-opening of closed mills, the selection of the cotton industry as one of the industries surveyed by the special working party, and the increased wage-rates. It also mentioned the recruitment drive for both former operates and new entrants. Then, it continued 'Our two largest munition works, De Havilland and Dobson & Barlow's will continue to play an important part in the district's industrial life even though the immense work of building fighting planes has virtually come to an end.'
Journal and Guardian, 28 December, 1945.

2. One attraction of the exhibition was a 'cotton quiz': 'This is a device about three yards square, in front of which will be a table displaying a series of typical questions about the cotton industry. The questioner will press a button and the answer will immediately appear in a lighted panel in front of him.'

Bolton Evening News, 8 January, 1946.

At the same time, it was decided to open mills to the public again. But this time, 45 mills were open for this purpose from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. from Monday to Friday. This was quite different from the attempt in July/August 1945 for now the mills were open to the public during normal working hours. Guided tours were organised. The Chief Education Officer had sent a circular to the headmasters of all the secondary schools in Bolton asking them to get in touch with the managers of the nearest mills so that they could arrange for a school tour. During the campaign, a loud-speaker van was touring around the town, 'so that no one will be unaware that the campaign is in progress.' ¹

In the opening ceremony, a speech was made aiming at impressing the audience that the international situation was favourable to the Lancashire cotton industry, and that it was at the beginning of a long period of prosperity with good wages and full employment. 'If we could keep 56,000,000 spindles going full-time after the first world war, surely we could keep 33,000,000 going today, when Japan had been knocked out.' ²

What were the results of the campaign? It is harder to assess

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1. Bolton Evening News, 8 January, 1946.
 2. Apart from Japan, which he recognised as the most significant competitor (though only potentially at that time), he denied the possibilities of either China or India becoming competitors with Lancashire. As for the United States, which had been supposed to be well ahead of England, he dismissed that idea. 'Why, if America is so efficient, does she need a tariff of 100 per cent. to keep out Lancashire yarn and cloth? And why does she export 5 per cent. of her production? I'm not afraid of America.'
- Journal and Guardian, 18 January, 1946.

the effectiveness of this kind of campaign, since, unlike the recruitment of women campaigns in 1940 and 1941, it was not asking people to register for work on the spot, nor did it have a clear object, like recruiting 500 women in a week. We can only note how popular the exhibition and other events were. Neither the Bolton Evening News nor the Journal and Guardian reported the campaign in detail. But the Guardian did note that;

The public have not rushed to see the industry operating in the mills that have been open all week for visitors, but the campaign exhibition has been a big attraction...

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It seems that the opening of the mills to the public was not popular, which must have been a disappointing result for the organisers. The public opening of the mills during working hours was a novel idea and it was thought it would provide a new image of working life in a cotton mill.

The Bolton Evening News played a big role in the campaign. On the opening day, a leading article was printed which placed some of the production problems firmly at the door of women workers.

1. Journal and Guardian, 18 January, 1946.

... The bottleneck in the cardroom is generally accepted as the origin of most of the trouble, and that bottleneck has been created by the reluctance of women of varying ages to remain in or to enter the cardroom. Some of the married workers prefer to stay at home to look after their recently-demobilised husbands. By others, also work in the cardroom was regarded as part of the war effort to be concluded just as soon as the war had been won. Girls leaving school are reluctant to enter a trade whose conditions had achieved an unfortunate kind of notoriety. 1

The paper also pointed out the slowness of improvement, the difficulties on the managements' side and Bolton's better position in the industry:

Only the most bigoted critic of the industry would deny that it has progressed in half a century. Even the few mills that are admittedly backward in welfare facilities etc. have improved, otherwise they would have been forced to close through lack of operatives long ago. ... On the whole the standard of management is fairly high in Bolton mills. The efficient manager requires not only technical knowledge but must be something of a psychologist, an engineer with a large power plant in his control and an administrator. The difficulties of mill management have increased four-fold in recent years and they are not lessened when, as sometimes happens, unreasonable pressure is placed upon the management by some sections of the workers. 2

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1. Bolton Evening News, 19 January, 1946.
 2. Ibid, 18 January 1946.

Some of the complaints cast an interesting light on local working conditions. A 'minder', who had worked at a local spinning mill for over 35 years until the beginning of the War, then left for the munitions industry where he worked five and a half years. When the work in munitions finished, he decided to return to his previous job. But the manager of the mill refused to take him on, though he was an experienced worker, of whom the industry was in desperate need. He also had heard that some of his fellow-workmen had met with similar refusals. To this confusion, the Bolton Evening News added the problem of promotion within the firm.

I understand that several operatives left the firm concerned to go on munitions before the Essential Work Order was applied to the cotton industry. Appeals for their return both to the workers personally and through the Employment Exchange were met with refusal. The firm was desperate for workers then, and now has side-piecers, who have worked throughout the war, waiting their turn for minding. If they took back in their old capacity people who deliberately left for munitions, and the side-piecers walked out in a body, where would they be?

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However strongly the Government, the management and the press together emphasised the improvement in working conditions, letters of complaint and criticism continued even after the campaign. On 23 January,

1. Bolton Evening News, 18 January, 1946.

the Bolton Evening News attempted to answer a critical reader.¹

Again the paper took the management's side, and blamed some workers for not using the welfare facilities even when they were provided.

It certainly ought not to be necessary for any one to have to eat his midday meal sitting on the oily floor of the mule gate, but there are cases where even when an up-to-date canteen is provided some of the operatives are reluctant to use it. Not many mill canteens are being used to capacity.

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It is a significant contradiction, after writing so many articles praising the new welfare facilities and pointing out their necessity in attracting workers into the cotton mills, to blame workers for not using those facilities without seeking any reason for this reluctance, such as food being too expensive or the location of the canteen being inconvenient from the work place.

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1. The reader said that he and his colleagues recently asked the management to find them a place where they could have their midday meal in reasonable comfort, instead of having to sit on the oily floor of the mulegate. They were told that it was impossible. He continued that the working conditions were, he thought, no better than 36 years ago when he started mill work, with special reference to the cloakroom washing facilities.

Bolton Evening News, 23 January, 1946.

2. Answering the above letter, 'Our correspondent certainly seems to have struck a mill that is not a good advertisement for the recruiting drive, but it ought to be pointed out that employers and managers of mills that have been closed for four or five years find it difficult with the best will in the world, to carry out much-needed improvements in these days.'

Bolton Evening News, 23 January, 1946.

The problem of recruitment was not only a problem of numbers, that is, how many workers the cotton industry could find, but also a question of quality. Sometimes a mill was held up just because a keyman was not available. In February 1946, it was reported that a cotton mill in Blackrod could not re-open even four months after the announcement, because the Ministry of Fuel and Power would not release a foreman of the mill who was working in a colliery. Without him, the firm could not prepare for re-opening. Since this was the only undertaking in the urban district of Blackrod, with 3,000 inhabitants, unemployment there was increasing.¹

Nevertheless, the quantitative side of the labour question was seldom satisfied. The annual report of the Master Cotton Spinners' Association stated in March 1946 that the scarcity of labour was the key problem of the industry at that time. It also pointed out that the 'number which have returned to the mills from munitions production and service with the Forces has been largely offset by withdrawal of older workers and married women who had returned to their home duties.'² In April, the Bolton Evening News summed up a year's progress of the mills' re-opening in the town. Since April 1945, 18 mills had re-opened, employing 1,484 workers altogether: 702 men, 739 women, 22 boys and 21 girls. It was reported that the outstanding vacancies were 378, of which 179 were for

1. Bolton Evening News, 28 February, 1946.

2. Journal and Guardian, 8 March, 1946.

women, 54 for men, 81 for girls and 64 for boys. The number of outstanding vacancies shows that the mills were suffering from shortages of women and juveniles rather than adult male workers. While there were a large number of outstanding vacancies, there were, on the other hand, 1,811 registered as unemployed in March, which was 29 more than in February. Of those unemployed, 1,324 were male workers (1,255 in February) and 446 were women (484 in the previous month). The Bolton Evening News commented:

What is disquieting is that 1,077 men and 225 women have been unemployed for more than a fortnight. There are, however, 343 married women among 446 registered as out of work, and it may be that many of them do not intend to remain in industry.

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The attempts to recruit workers were continued in every possible way. The efforts to boost the morale of the cotton workers had also been continued in 1946. There were also several small exhibitions and talks to remind the public of the necessity and importance of exports.² One of the most interesting attempts of this kind was the coach tours to London for the workers organised by several mills when an export exhibition 'Britain Can Make It' was held in the capital. One of them was organised in the Barlow and Jones' mill. 62 were chosen out of the 1,600 employees by a draw organised by the workers themselves. Two coaches

1. Bolton Evening News, 16 April, 1946.

2. For instance, see Bolton Evening News, 4 December, 1946.

were hired and they left Bolton on Friday night and arrived in London early Saturday morning. The morning was spent at the exhibition where Thomas Barlow, chairman of the company, met the party. Then they had a sightseeing coach tour around London. The evening was left free until 9.30 p.m. when they set out on the return journey. Thomas Barlow paid all the costs of transport and provided the party with breakfast, lunch and tea. Three women welfare officers accompanied them. ¹ The local paper praised the importance of this trip but it was also a symbol of the employers' concern with the leisure of their workers as a part of their welfare policy. By providing a chance to go to London cheaply workers' morale might be kept up and a good impression given to the people outside the cotton mills.

In spite of these organised and unorganised recruitment campaigns, labour shortages remained acute. The shortages of juvenile workers were especially serious, and there was no hope of an early solution. ² At the end of 1946, the outstanding vacancies in Bolton for juveniles were reported to be 2,000 when it was expected 500 boys and girls would leave school at Christmas. At that time, a quarter of girl school leavers entered the cotton industry. So did an eighth of the boys. But the cotton industry

1. Bolton Evening News, 12 December, 1946.

2. 'During the next few years juvenile labour is going to be difficult to obtain in Bolton, due to two factors. The first, that the birth-rate declined during the years 1922-32, and the second, that from next Easter, when the school-leaving age goes up, there will be practically no boys or girls leaving school for a year.'

Bolton Evening News, 8 November, 1946.

alone could absorb all the school leavers. It was reported that popular jobs among the boys were engineering and building, and among girls, book-binding, shop assistants and clerks.

Having said that cotton goods were one of the major exports immediately after the war, it is still striking that the local paper which gave so much publicity to the cotton recruitment campaigns, seldom reported the other side of the big transformation occurring in Bolton in those days, i.e. industrial demobilisation from the munitions factories. Of course the lack of newspaper articles does not mean that industrial demobilisation did not take place. It had been done in the shadows while the cotton recruitment was in the limelight.

The paper did publish two articles concerned with women's industrial demobilisation, the only ones to appear between 1944 and 1946. In September 1945, the Bolton Evening News had a small article with a picture. Women workers at Horwich Loco Works who had been released, made a presentation to the (male) examiner-in-charge of the department.¹ Of course, this was what had been expected to happen at the end of the War. In this sense, this was a kind of propaganda as well as a report. The message between the lines is: the women who had been doing their bit cheerfully during the War, were now leaving the factory happily with gratitude for the work of their supervisor. They knew their contribution

1. Bolton Evening News, 13 September, 1945.

was worthwhile, but they were at the same time, quite prepared to give up their place for the men who would come back from the Forces. The other article which stated that women were leaving the munitions industry appeared in November 1945.

The women seem to enjoy their work (war work - N.N.) and look happy and well on it. But at the moment they are giving the managers a few headaches, for the married ones want to leave and go back to their homes, while some of the unmarried ones are being reclaimed by the cotton trade to which they originally belonged...

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Although it is not easy to decide if this article was written as propaganda (e.g. married women should go back home), judging from other evidence, there is reason to believe that it was not merely propaganda. The memories of individual women clearly show that women were leaving munitions between 1944 and 1946 to a great extent. A woman worker at De Havilland, L.Davies, remembers that women working there had to leave after the War and that a lot of them accepted it without much bitterness.²

All the women who answered my questionnaires left their war-time employment (mainly in the munitions industry) between 1944 and 1946. They

1. Bolton Evening News, 7 November, 1945.

2. She left the factory in 1946, when the job was finished. She recalled that the job was not really meant for women after all and added; 'That was the attitude always.' (Recorded Interview in the Bolton Reference Library.)

tend to give personal reasons for their leaving. A woman, for example, who entered De Havilland in 1941 aged 21, said that 'I married in 1943 and later in 1945 I left my job when our first son was born.'¹ Being asked how she felt about this change, 'I was quite happy to accept a new responsibility, i.e. making a home for my husband and family and bringing up our son.'² Most women, as L.Davies pointed out before, left their work as a matter of course, and though some of them said that they enjoyed the work and preferred a man's job to their previous ones, there was no resentment in their recollection, and no mention of actual protest. Another woman, who had been a housewife before the War, took up her war work in transport for patriotic and financial reasons. 'I returned to being a mother, as there was no opportunity to continue the war work.'³ Another woman, who had been a shop assistant before the War and was drafted into the stores and then worked as a cost clerk in an engineering works, went as far as to think that it was her 'duty to move out and allow the men to return to their job.'⁴ Some of the married women had to leave their war work before their husbands were demobbed, which meant, at least for some of them, that they had to make

1. Answer to my questionnaire from : Margaret Turner, April 1982.

2. Ibid

3. Answer to my questionnaire from : Majorie Roberts, April 1982.

4. Answer to my questionnaire, name not given, April 1982.

Even a woman working in the grocery section of the Co-op during the War lost her job when the men came back. She said that she liked the work in the Co-op better than the cotton mill and added without much resentment that 'But, of course men came back, they wanted the job back, you see, ... so you lost the job.' (Recorded interview with Mrs.Thomason in the Bolton Reference Library.)

their own arrangements to earn some money until their husbands came out of the Forces. But even in these cases very little bitterness was recalled. A woman who had been a manageress at a grocery shop, gave up her shop work and, after some training at the Mechanics Institute, went to Dobson and Barlow, when her husband was called up. Her work there finished before the War was over. Then 'I went as cook at a nurses' home and I worked there until my husband returned in 1946. I retired then to look after him, he had been away since 1940.' ¹

'Redundancy' did not happen only in the engineering industry, but within the cotton industry too where women had taken up 'men's jobs'. The Weavers and Winders' Association reported in November 1945 that a young women weaver, who had been working on looms in the shed which had been regarded as 'men's' before the War, was transferred into the training shed because a former weaver who had left for the munitions industry came back. The minutes of the Association continued that 'the weaver had apparently accepted the position...' ² This might be exceptional. As we have already seen the major feature of the labour situation in cotton was the need to take in as many workers as possible. One of the ways of

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1. Answer to my questionnaire from Anne Melbourne, April 1982.
The recorded interview with her shows that she was proud of the skill which she achieved during the War and she liked the job. She said that she was still friendly with some women whom she was working with at Dobson and Barlows, and chatted about their memories from time to time.
 2. Weavers' Executive Minutes, 19 November, 1945.

doing this was, of course, by the redirection of ex-cotton workers.¹

Though there was no report on women's attitudes towards redirection into cotton in Bolton unlike Oldham (which probably shows that Bolton did not see any group protest against it), there is some evidence about individuals' attitudes. It cannot be denied that some women who had transferred into munitions preferred to go back to the cotton industry where they knew the job well and had some experience. In July 1943, the Bolton Weavers' and Winders' Association wrote to the Farnworth Employment Exchange protesting that two members of the Association, both of whom were cotton blanket weavers, had lost their job in the cotton industry in May 1943. They registered with the Farnworth Employment Exchange as cotton blanket weavers. The Employment Exchange first gave them other weaving work. After they refused, the Exchange directed them to the Metropolitan-Vickers' in Manchester, where they were given work on an electric arm drill. Not being used to the job, they could not manage, and were sent to the training shed.

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1. We have already seen the progress of redirection in Bolton. In July 1945 the Ministry of Labour reported for the whole Northwestern area:

... As regards experienced operatives, any worker experienced in Spinning and Doubling, Weaving or Finishing sections who becomes available through redundancy or on normal turnover is returned to the cotton industry if possible. In addition, since February we have under special arrangements transferred over 1,400 male and female ex-operatives from other work back to spinning and doubling. Directions are still being issued where appropriate to this class of ex-operative, provided that he or she left the industry since 3 September, 1939.

LAB 8/1107, 10 July, 1945.

My Committee (the Weavers' and Winders' Association Executive Committee - N.N.) are much concerned about this matter. They know that special efforts have been made to bring about the direction of former cotton operatives to the cotton mills and that some kind of understanding has been reached to the effect that Employment Exchanges officials would cooperate in this effort. Both our members desired and are still desirous of going back to their former occupation as cotton weavers...

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Replying to the letter, the Farnworth Employment Exchange assured the union that the two workers had obtained their release from the Metro-Vickers' and they were placed in a weaving firm in Farnworth.²

On the other hand, there was at least one case of a woman who failed to comply with the redirection order to a cotton firm, and as a result a sentence of one month's imprisonment was imposed. Bevin gave details of the case in answer to the Labour M.P. for West Haughton. The woman was aged 33 and living with her elderly parents. She first transferred into an aircraft factory when the textile mill where she was working until August 1941 was concentrated. In July 1943, she was re-directed into a cotton mill to which she failed to report. Strangely enough, neither Bevin nor the M.P. gave any reason why she objected to the

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1. Letter to the Farnworth Employment Exchange from the Bolton Weavers' and Winders' Association in the Association's Complaints Book dated 8 July, 1943.
 2. In addition it read: 'The importance of the return of skilled operatives to the cotton industry is fully recognised, and exhaustive efforts are made to persuade the operative to remain in and return to the industry. Direction being issued in suitable cases.'
Letter from the Farnworth Employment Exchange dated 9 July, 1943.

redirection. The only reason that can be guessed from the Minister's reply was that the cotton mill which she was redirected to was at thirty minutes' distance from her house, while the aircraft firm was only five minutes' away. While legal proceedings were on, the Employment Exchange put her into a plastics firm, which was fifteen minutes' distance on foot. At the end of his answer, Bevin stated that he would 'consider the case again in the light of further information.'¹ Although this is one of the few cases in which women objected to redirection into the cotton industry, it is clear that the reason for the objection was a domestic one.

The evidence suggests that, considering the huge transformation from the war-economy to peace-time production, the majority of women, far from protesting against redirection and redundancy *en masse*, accepted them smoothly and for a variety of reasons. Some felt happy to be able to start or re-start their home life. Some felt that they would be better off in the previous job. Some thought that although they would prefer munitions, it was clear that they had no opportunity to stay on, so they gave up almost from apathy. It seems that women had strongly-held ideas that men should be the first to get employed as the War-time Social Survey in 1943 shows. They thought that it was women's duty to retire from men's places to let male workers have them. They, therefore, gave their war work up without resentment. It seems that the bulk of women who worked in the munitions industry during the War, realised well in

1. Bolton Evening News, 19 January, 1944.

advance that they were in 'men's' jobs and therefore did not expect to stay after the War even if they liked it better. Instead of expecting in vain to keep their jobs, women whenever possible, made their own way according to their own expectations for the future.

Nevertheless, there was some resentment among women who had been directed back to the cotton industry against their will.¹ It sometimes took interesting forms. One of the typical reactions was absenteeism. During the winter of 1945-46, the Lancashire cotton industry was suffering from a high rate of absenteeism. For example, on December 31, 1945, 20 per cent. of the operatives had not turned up by ten o'clock in one big mill.² Absentees were reported to be mainly cardroom operatives, that

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1. In Oldham, where 400 women protested against their redirection into cotton, the cotton manufacturers themselves were against it. Incidentally (?), the same issue of the Oldham Chronicle which reported the women's protest also printed a letter from the President of the Master Cotton Spinners' Association:

... The compulsory direction of labour to specific work is not a procedure which commends itself to the employers. We want willing workers who will give a certain loyalty to the firm by which they were engaged, but as long as the Government consider the need for certain kinds of production must have precedence over freedom of the individual, so long must employers and employees make the best of a system which they equally dislike...

Oldham Chronicle, 12 May, 1945.

This view, which could be recognised as the official view of the Employers' Federation was quite different from that of the managing director of the Falcon Mill, Bolton, who was in favour of the Government redirection policy.

2. 'No doubt there is a big temptation to stay at home on a morning like this, when fog dislocates transport services and it is tempting to argue, "Oh, well, tomorrow's a holiday : they'll not miss me for one day." But when so many people think and act like that the effect on production is serious. It was so today.'

Bolton Evening News, 31 December, 1945.

is, women. Both employers and trade unions tried to explain the reason for the high rate of absenteeism. The unions were particularly anxious that such action would provide a good excuse to the employers for not raising wage rates.

The desire to escape payment of income tax or to have a day or two off because they can get a rebate of income tax payments in a poor excuse for not attending work regularly. Unfortunately there are a number of irresponsible - not always young people - who do not think enough about these matters. ... Nor do they realise that they are backing the employers' argument that they themselves do not desire higher wages.

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Naturally, at this time of year, sickness, such as colds and flu, prevented some people from going to work, and there was also some suggestion that the strains of the War were still having an impact. But apart from these causes, it is difficult to know what was contributing to the high rate of absenteeism. For instance, two unions concerned took opposite views on the problem of whether married women were more prone to be absent than non-married ones or males. The Bolton Weavers' and Winders' Association claimed that married women were more likely to be absent because of their domestic responsibilities and transport difficulties,² while the Cardroom Operatives' Association stated that 'the absentees

1. Bolton Evening News, 18 January, 1946.

In fact, the chairman of the Employers' Federation said that "When the operatives previously applied for a wage increase, their strongest argument was that higher wages would attract more labour into the mills. We regret to say up to now they have had no such effect." Bolton Evening News, 11 January 1946.

2. Bolton Evening News, 18 January 1946.

were more numerous among the single women and girls than the married ones,' because of the irresponsibility of young women.

Often the Essential Work Order was blamed:

Many excuses have been put forward regarding loss of production. ... Forced labour, in other words, the Essential Work Order is the very roots of practically the whole trouble. The genuine worker simply says "Well if he or she can do it, so can I." ...

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It was quite possible that the impact of the Essential Work Order was negative, not because it undermined the people's sense of duty by the fact that one could not be easily dismissed under the Order, or at least not only because of that, but because it enfeebled people's interests in the industry, for they had to stay in it regardless of whether they liked it or not. In this sense, the high rate of absenteeism was a symbol of (especially women's) frustration, caused by the fact that they had to stay in the cotton industry when they did not want to do so.

Some of the local leaders of opinion were somewhat ambivalent about women's position in the post-war days. For example, an address to a Bolton meeting on International Women's Day in 1944, by a Czech woman laid stress

1. Bolton Evening News, 15 March, 1946.

on women's role in society to prevent the rebirth of fascism.¹ A year later, the nuance of the address on the same occasion was slightly different. Women wanted the post-war world to 'treat them as mothers, workers, and citizens with the right to rear children free from fear and war and want, with equal pay and opportunities with men, and with equal rights and duties as citizens.'² The speaker, Miss Balfour, expressed her opinion that women should be represented at the San Francisco Peace Conference and that there should be more women M.P.s and women activists at the local level. She, however, added:

We want to see women getting equal rates of pay in all the professions. We are not unreasonable, and we recognise that there are certain jobs in every factory which a man can do much better than a women. We are not the ones to say that there should be equal rates of pay for these kind of jobs, but we do say that for the sake of women and the men - there must be equal pay for equal work where it is sound policy.

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1. She stated, that British women were lucky to be able to produce arms for their husbands and to nurse the wounded, and added, 'You do not know what Fascism means. You have not seen it, and you will not see if it rises to your duty. Let us do everything in our power to help the Allies, to do our duty better than we have ever done it.' Bolton Evening News, 9 March, 1944. At the meeting messages from Mrs. Chiang Kai-Shek, Mrs. Roosevelt, etc. were read. In 1944, this kind of moral support was still supposed to be effective and needed. In May of the same year, Bolton saw a Ministry of Information exhibition, entitled 'The evil we fight' which told the story of the Nazi movement and what it had done.
 2. Bolton Evening News, 13 March, 1945.
 3. Ibid.

Here we can see that although she acknowledged the principle of equal pay for equal work, she took for granted the sexual segregation within work. She did not question whether such segregation was avoidable. It almost seems that she failed to realise the fact that many men's jobs had been done by women as well as men during the War. It shows how difficult it was to break the old prejudice about women's role and capacity not only in men's minds but also in women's minds as well.

The general shortage of domestic workers and nurses in Britain was felt in Bolton too. In the shadow of the recruitment drives for cotton, the need for domestic workers was given less publicity than in other districts, but attempts were made to draw women's attention to those jobs. A Ministry of Labour advertisement pointed out that:

War has brought about an amazing increase in the numbers of day and residential nurseries which guard the welfare of Britain's babies. More and more women are called for to do this Nationally important job, which not only helps the war effort but helps to build sturdy happy youngsters. ...
This domestic work is a priority job. 1

The Bolton Evening News, as well gave the subject some publicity. Two articles in the paper in the spring/summer of 1945, aimed at attracting elderly women or ex-service women into domestic work and nursing.

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1. Bolton Evening News, 19 February, 1944.

Recently I have seen a good deal of a child recovering from a serious operation in a Bolton hospital. One day he said joyfully, "I like my nurse: She tells me stories when I'm being washed." ... she told me she had two sons in the Army and a daughter in the WRNS. She is well over 50 and has done no nursing since she married 25 years ago. She said she couldn't stay at home while her children were serving the country. 1

For ex-service women, the attempt was more direct and the expression even had a touch of the threat about it.

Hundreds of single women coming out of the Services are faced with the time limit of 56 days in which to find a job before reporting at the local office of the Ministry of Labour ... A WAAF officer in her middle 30's has been in the service for nearly five years. As she has had no previous training, she hopes to get a job as a working housekeeper on her release. It's not a bad idea, as she will be able to ensure a good home; and employers of domestic labour are elastic in the matter of free time these days. 2

Those kind of attempts to draw the attention of women : to domestic employment and nursing were, nonetheless, short-lived; they are a feature of the sources only between mid-1944 and mid-1945. The emphasis on the domestic responsibilities of married women is a feature of roughly the same period. Yet by the second half of 1945 the press started to argue even here that a married woman could take her part in the cotton industry and contribute to the nation's export drive. (One must bear in mind that even between mid-1944 and mid-1945, there was little propaganda

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1. Bolton Evening News, 30 May, 1945.
 2. Bolton Evening News, 5 September, 1945.

that married women *should* go back home. However, the press seemed to report women's matters on the comfortable assumption that domestic responsibilities were ultimately the priority of married women.)

But after the realisation that married women were the only possible reserve army of labour for cotton, the discussion shifted towards the importance of those arrangements which would ease the housewives' burdens, such as nurseries. Nurseries for the under fives in Bolton were entirely at the mercy of national and local government, and the cotton employers, who were often of different opinions.¹ There was no consistency from the viewpoint of the mothers, not to mention that of the welfare and educational needs of the children.

The War-time Nursery Committee had been set up in 1942 and it had its first meeting on January 14. The purpose was to deal with 'all matters with respect to the care of young children of *women war workers* (my italics - N.N.)'² The Committee's first and foremost concern was the children of women in munitions, and in 1943 when the pressure came from the central Government to provide for the children of women cotton workers, they were rather reluctant to make arrangements for them. For example, in June, 1943, when the Cotton Control, Ministry of Supply asked the War-time Nursery Committee to open a nursery for the children of cotton operatives, the

1. The engineering employers, on the other hand, though in no doubt that they had benefited from the war-time nursery scheme, were indifferent about the matter in general. A clothing manufacturer, Montague Burton Ltd., offered two premises of theirs as nurseries. It was decided that they would be for children of women in industry, not exclusively for those of women employed by the company.

War-time Nursery Committee Minutes, 9 March, 1942.

2. War-time Nursery Committee Minutes, 14 January, 1942.

Committee refused firmly saying that there was no room for the nursery catering especially for cotton operatives. Up to this point, those concerned at least agreed that nurseries were necessary for the local war effort. The difference was that, while the central Government was obsessed by the labour situation in the cotton industry, the Bolton War-time Nursery Committee was attempting to meet the local needs of each district.

Towards the end of the War, attitudes towards the war-time nursery scheme became different from one agent to another. We have already seen, in the previous chapter, that the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Health had completely opposite views but in general that central Government was in favour of closing nurseries down, especially under financial pressure from the Treasury. At first, this general attitude of central government was precisely reflected in Bolton. It was despite the fact that they realised that women workers were necessary not only for munitions but also for the cotton industry and after the War as well. In August 1944, when the sixth war-time nursery was opened in Bolton, the chairman of the War-time Nursery Committee stated:

This will probably be the last we shall be able to build ... because the last time we were making applications the Ministry (of Health - N.N.) seemed not quite as generous as they have been in the past. It may be they anticipate that the war will be over in a short time and there will be no need for war-time nurseries.

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1. Journal and Guardian, 18 August, 1944.

By December 1944, it was understood that staff for the War-time nurseries would be tightened from the beginning of 1945. The Education Committee decided that they would accept only those children whose mothers were engaged in full-time occupations.¹

From then until mid-1946, the general trend was to reduce nursery services. Two war-time nurseries were closed, and opening hours of '7 a.m. to 7 p.m.' during the war became '7.30 a.m. to 6 p.m.', in May 1946. Support for these actions came from the Bolton Mother and Child Welfare Association. At its annual meeting in May 1945, Mrs. M.C. Kembell, the Mayor of Eccles, stressed the importance of the parents' (especially mothers') responsibility to children.

In some directions ... many people were forgetting a child has parents and a home. ... Even the child psychologists were now admitting that a mother, even a not very good mother, is able to give to her child something no one else can give. ... While war-time conditions had made the separation of many mothers from their young children inevitable and good work had been done by day nurseries and such like services, it was utterly wrong to look at the future as an opportunity to develop these substitutes from home life. 2

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1. War-time Nursery Committee Minutes, 29 November, 1944.
Education Committee Minutes, 27 January, 1945.

During the discussion on the matter, the Director of Education pointed out that 'There were in town about 3,000 children not of compulsory school age, and about half of them were children of mothers who were not working.'

Bolton Evening News, 29 December, 1944.

2. Bolton Evening News, 24 May, 1945.

The Bolton Women's Citizen's Association, which once was fairly keen on the nursery scheme,¹ did notice in May 1946 that there was a waiting list for the nurseries. But they did not appear to be very concerned.²

However, the closing down of the nurseries and shortages of facilities caused some of the parents anxiety. In September, 1945, the War-time Nursery Committee received a letter asking for the continuation of a nursery on behalf of the mothers concerned. When the Ministry of Health decided to withdraw the grant for the war-time nursery, a letter strongly condemning the Ministry's decision appeared in the Bolton Evening News.

... I have always understood that it was part of Labour Party policy to extend the scope of nurseries.
... Whilst the Government still find it necessary to conscript men for the Forces, surely it is still equally necessary that they make provision for the children, as in a large number of cases the wives of these Servicemen will be forced to seek employment. 3

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1. For example, in 1943, they sent two members to Oldham to visit a nursery attached to a cotton mill. After the visit, the Executive Committee of the Association resolved that they should approach the owners of the cotton mills to seek the possibility of the provision of nurseries attached to the mills.
Bolton Women's Citizen's Association, Executive Committee Minutes (Hereafter Women's Citizen's Association Minutes), 14 April 1943.
 2. 'Mrs. Smetherst reported that there was a waiting list for the nurseries, but it was not viewed very seriously, as there always had been, and a good many mothers did not wish to pay the increased price...'
Women's Citizens' Association Minutes, 14 May, 1946.
 3. Bolton Evening News, 25 February, 1946.

By the beginning of 1946, both women themselves and the cotton manufacturers had noticed the contradiction in Government attitudes: appealing to married women to enter (or re-enter) the cotton mills on the one hand, and closing nurseries on the other. This time some portion of the women, cotton manufacturers and, later, the press were agreed that the authorities should keep a certain number of nurseries open to secure women workers. As one woman remarked;

I listened to the Prime Minister's broadcast on Sunday with something like a cynical attitude. ... We are told of the acute labour shortage, yet a source of available woman-power is now to be throttled by an action of Government in the closing of Day Nurseries that have been about the only comfort and assistance to mothers allowed up to now since 1939. 1

There is evidence that at least one cotton mill welfare superintendent wrote to the Medical Officer of Health asking for an increase of nursery accommodation in August, 1946.²

By November 1946, the Public Health Committee acknowledged a further letter from the Bolton Master Cotton Spinners' Association and

1. Bolton Evening News, 5 March, 1946.

With which the Bolton Master Cotton Spinners' Association entirely agreed:

... The decision to close several Bolton and Farnworth day nurseries seems to us to be inadvisable at the present time, and the Association has made representations on the subject to the Minister of Health, the local M.P.'s and directly to the Town Clerk. As your correspondent points out, it seems useless for the Government to appeal to married women workers if the facilities hitherto available are to be curtailed....

Bolton Evening News, 8 March, 1946.

2. Public Health Committee Minutes, 28 August, 1946.

another from the North Western Regional Board for Industry. Under this pressure, the Public Health Committee appealed for the sanction to borrow £7,400 towards the costs of two pre-fabricated day nurseries.¹ It was not, however, supposed to be enough, especially after the withdrawal of the extension of opening hours. The article which reported this was full of condemnation, which came from not only the employers' side but the trade union side as well.

... Many young Bolton mothers who wish to return to the cotton industry, and whose services are badly needed in production, would not be able to play their part if local nursery schools and classes reverted to normal hours ... the Cotton trade must look after its own young people. What trade in the country ... provided nursery school accommodation for children?

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There seemed to be no attempt to measure the actual damage caused by the shorter nursery hours to woman-power, not to mention its effect on young children's welfare and family life. The demand for nursery provision

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1. By mid-1946, the War-time Nursery Committee had been dissolved, and the Public Health Committee and the Education Committee, jointly took responsibility for the nurseries.
Public Health Committee Minutes, 27 November, 1946.
Education Committee Minutes, 9 December, 1946.
 2. Bolton Evening News, 18 December, 1946.
Though later in the article it was suggested that, instead of providing facilities to keep children for long hours, the working hours of mothers should be shortened, not much attention was paid to that statement. Neither was the remark of a member of the Education Committee, that the shortening of nurseries' opening hours did not do so much harm in terms of the labour supply of young mothers, given much credence. He gave as an example that in a nursery only one mother could not make any alternative arrangements to cover the shorter nursery hours and that mother said 'she thought that if she stayed off work, the rest and change would do her good.'

was not the result of careful thought for the needs of mothers and their children, but merely hysterical reflections of the female labour shortage in the cotton industry. In January 1947, the Master Cotton Spinners' Association offered to make an ex-gratia payment of 6d. per day per child whose mother was working in the industry. At the time of this offer, it was reported that there were 202 such children.

What should be emphasised here is the contrast between the enthusiasm of the cotton manufacturers and the relative absence of support for nurseries from young mothers. This probably reflects a certain fact which was often overlooked by contemporaries, that is, the assumption shared by the cotton manufacturers that if facilities to help young mothers were provided then they would be willing to work in the cotton mills. But many Bolton women did not want to work in cotton regardless of what nurseries were available.

It was true that the industrial demobilisation of women took place in 1945 and 1946 and many women had to leave their war-time jobs. But the cotton industry, which was the biggest source of employment for women before the war, was never able to obtain enough workers for post-war production. So, what was the difference in the female occupational structure of Bolton before and after the War? Where did those pre-war women cotton workers go?

The impact of the decline of cotton ¹ are clearly seen in Bolton's occupational structure in 1951 as set out in Table 7-1. By comparing the Table with Table 3-1, one can see that a big change had taken place in women's occupational structure during those 20 years. Textiles, which employed more than half of all occupied women in 1931, had just above a third of occupied women in 1951. The decrease in the weaving section was especially significant. However, the Census Reports also show that the same proportion of women above school leaving age were economically occupied in 1951 as in 1931 : 1931, 47.0%, 1951, 46.9%. The Table also shows that the metal and engineering industry was never an employer of women of any importance. The number of women in this industry was negligible in both years. Therefore, the shift of women's occupational structure was from cotton to commerce and finance, distribution and the service sectors generally.

From a woman's point of view, this meant she had a wider range of employment to choose from if she dared. While a woman who entered the labour market in 1930 found it difficult to get a job in any occupation other than cotton, a women in 1946 had a wider choice. At the same time, the memory of mass unemployment and bad working conditions in the cotton

1. Winnard showed the percentage of the work people in the textile industry made up 57.6 per cent. of the whole insured population in 1929. By 1939 this figure had declined to 49.0%, 1944 to 33.4%. In 1947 it had risen slightly to 35.6% and in 1950 to 36.4%. This suggests that the relative decline of the cotton industry was not entirely due to the War, since it had already begun in the 1930s. The war-time concentration obviously accelerated this decline, and it was unable to recover after the War. Winnard, op.cit., pp.147-148.

TABLE 7-1OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE IN BOLTON, 1951

	Male	Female
Total population over 15 years of age (1)	60,380	71,511
Occupied (2)	53,559	33,573
Per cent of occupied (2)/(1) x 100	88.7	46.9
Major occupations (number in brackets shows the proportion occupied by each industry among 'occupied persons')		
Metal/Engineering	10,012 (18.7)	330 (nil)
Textiles	6,920 (12.9)	12,409 (37.0)
Spinning	3,602 (6.7)	1,869 (5.6)
Winder	281 (nil)	3,945 (11.8)
Weaving	447 (nil)	1,455 (4.3)
Textile goods & dressmaking	443 (nil)	2,446 (7.3)
Commercial & Financial	4,729 (8.8)	3,480 (10.4)
Professional	2,341 (4.3)	1,722 (5.1)
Clerks	2,499 (4.7)	3,318 (9.9)
Personnel/Service	1,405 (2.6)	5,337 (15.9)

Source: The Occupational Table in the Census Report, 1951.

industry in the pre-war days, certainly played a part in discouraging women from re-entering it. Several years' propaganda was not enough to reverse that public image.

Another factor was the self-confidence gained by women through their war work. It might lead to women being prepared to try a new job.

A woman, who had been a winder in a cotton mill and took a job at De Havilland for patriotic reasons and to get away from cotton wrote:

It was a new experience working in a large factory with men, who of course had to accept women coming into an exclusively men's working world. Having worked only with women and just two men in the mill room who controlled our days, it was certainly awakening and I entered war work as an unsophisticated girl of 21 and left it with much more confidence in myself.

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No doubt many women liked their war work, its excitement, and the feeling of achievement, a consciousness of their own contribution to the nation's effort, the comradeship and sharing with their fellow-workers, as well as the good pay and feeling of security which a pay-packet gave them.

The attitudes of Bolton women can perhaps be summed up as follows: Most women workers in the munitions industry had to leave war work at the end of the War, and they did so without much resentment. Many of them left industry altogether and happily went back home. Those

1. Answer to my questionnaire from Margaret Turner, April 1982.

who were left in industry were trying to make the most of the post-war economic situation. Despite the intensive campaign many of them did not go back to the cotton industry. Many of those who had been directed to do so did not like it. In any case it was clear that women were not intending to take over 'men's jobs.' The War did not change their attitude to full-time work.

We turn next to the process of demobilisation in Coventry, whose economy, compared with that of Bolton, was more deeply involved with war production and had fewer employment alternatives.

CHAPTER 8 : FROM MUNITIONS BACK TO CARS - COVENTRY 1943-1946

I am always interested in the different types of people that I see in these queues. Always to be seen a hard-faced painted women with cigarettes dangling from their lips who wear trousers, and generally try to ape the actions of men. This type of woman I shall always believe, looks perfectly ridiculous, and I shall always have nothing but contempt for them.

- from composition by a thirteen-year old boy in a Coventry school.

Coventry Evening Telegraph, 16 March, 194

The years between the end of 1943 and 1946 can be divided into two periods in connection with women's work in Coventry, although it is not easy to draw a clear line between the two periods since changes took place gradually. The first period was from November 1943 to the middle of 1945, when the Coventry economy was still at the mercy of shrinking war production. The second was when the demand for women workers rose in light engineering, as in some sections of the General Electric Company. This was because of the Government's export drive which followed at the heel of the War and its impact overlapped those of war production.¹

In November 1943, Coventry was still asking women to take up war work at least as part-time workers, for war production at that time was aiming at maximum output for D-Day.² However, the recruitment of new women workers was to replace 'wastage' that is, women who had left industry for one reason or another. Women were still arriving from other parts of Britain to take up war work. For example, in January 1944, 51 women arrived in the town from Newcastle, destined for Coventry factories. They 'were typical of workers who enter the city practically every day.'³ The unemployment of women and girls had declined. In January 1944, only 688 women and girls registered as wholly unemployed, 49 less than three months before.

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1. For the Government's monetary policy and export drive see Pollard, op.cit. pp.356-364.
 2. The National Council of Women; for instance, suggested a 9.30 a.m.-4.30 p.m. shift for mothers who were working part-time, in November 1943, so that they could stay at home while children were not attending school. The reason for suggesting this shift was that juvenile delinquency was thought to be attributed to the lack of home influence and parental control.
 3. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 11 January, 1944.

D-Day meant much to the war workers as well as to soldiers.

Joyce Hampson at Morris Motors wrote in a very dramatic way about her and her fellow workers' feeling when they saw the RAF planes passing over their factory in the morning of June 6, 1944:

It was breaking day-light. ... I shall never forget that sight to my dying day. The sky was black with planes all merging into one solid block over us. We all went very quiet, and many shed tears. We knew it had started and that our husbands and boy friends were facing the most perilous task of the War.

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However impressive the sight was for those who had been working for that day, it also meant the beginning of the end of their work. Three months later, Coventry started to suffer from redundancy in the munitions industry. Unlike Bolton where, at least, it was supposed that there was an industry to go back to when the War was over, Coventry had to go through a period of transformation. This was well recognised by the local population, discussion on the future of the motor industry had begun at the end of 1943. It was almost certain that post-war Coventry's staple industry would be the motor industry, but it was not certain to what extent it could be expanded as a civilian industry. It was not until 1946, that the Government included the motor car among its leading export sectors, and as far as the domestic market was concerned the prospect of selling cars was not an optimistic one. Even in 1945;

1. Coventry Evening Telegraph Special 'We Went to War', 28 October, 1977.

It was questioned whether Britain would ever achieve the levels of car ownership of the United States, given Britain's density of population and comprehensive rail and bus network. ... It was reasonable to believe in 1945, that future economic growth would generate increasing car demand among middle and lower income groups. Nevertheless, the existence of large numbers of substitutes for new cars - second-hand cars, motor cycles, and public transport - meant that people could easily postpone new car purchases.

1

How did the employers and work people see the 'reconstruction' of the motor industry before the actual transformation had begun? Both employers and workers had only a hazy and abstract view of the future of the industry. Employers often expressed ambivalence about it and worried that they might lose their profitable position, while workers were more suspicious about the recurrence of the pre-war unemployment.

In December 1943, the chairman and managing director of Alvis expressed his over-sanguine view:

Coventry's resources in this direction are unique - it's workmen are highly efficient and skilful and have always had relatively high standards of wage earning as a consequence: employers must naturally depend upon peace in industry for efficiency and success, and I'm sure that Coventry employers are very much alive in organising to meet those problems which post-war industry may bring forward. ... So to sum up, I would say that the post-war demands for cars will be enormous....

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1. Peter J.S. Dunsett, The Decline of the British Motor Industry : The Effects of Government Policy 1945-1979, (1980), p.18.
 2. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 7 December, 1943.

On the other hand there were well-known Coventry industrialists who were quite gloomy.

The future of industry in general, and in particular of the automobile and aircraft industries is obscure. One thing is clear, unless drastic action is taken to control the disposal of surplus war products in both cases, the industries concerned will face a period of setback and stagnation. ... In any case, no surplus war-time production of these industries should be permitted to come into the open market.... Industrial capacity has increased enormously. There is a nation-wide urge for post-war exports, but the type of car produced in the past in this country has not found particular favour overseas.

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In December 1943, the Director of the Coventry EEA proposed the possibility of setting up a small committee to discuss the problems that were likely to be faced in the post-war period, especially the problem of labour.² But nothing came of it.

On the other hand, the workers, in general, were not optimistic about the post-war employment situation. In February 1944, when the Coventry munitions industry was still in full swing, the Coventry District Committee of the T. & G.W.U. publicised a statement which illustrated these fears.

The nightmare of returning to pre-war conditions of insecurity and unemployment today haunts the minds of so many, both in the Forces and factories. 3

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1. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 31 May, 1944.
 2. EEA Coventry, 6 December, 1943.
 3. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 11 February, 1944.

By May, this fear had become more serious,¹ although, the employees themselves had not got any concrete demand to ask of the employers.²

The idea that some shadow factories in Coventry should be taken over by the motor car companies had already been considered. Some of them were actually taken over, when the Government's contract expired in 1945. For example, the Standard started production of motor cars at their No.1 Shadow factory at Fletchamstead Highway.

Towards the end of the War, both manufacturers and workers agreed that they were in need of Government support, even though they might be asking for different types of support. At the same time, it was widely accepted, though unsaid, that the transformation of the war economy to a peace economy would need some time to be completed and at least temporary redundancy would be inevitable. The problem was how to minimise the problems.

Being a centre of the munitions industry without any major trade to fall back on at the termination of munitions production, Coventry had to face considerable unemployment and there was some hostility between skilled workers and dilutees. Workers began to be laid off in the aircraft factories soon after D-Day. Less than three months after that, the

1. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 22 May, 1944.

2. For example, see an article on a meeting of the T. & G.W.U. in Coventry in the Coventry Standard, 2 September, 1944.

Coventry Evening Telegraph reported that the Nottingham Headquarters of the Aircraft Workers Union sent a telegram to the Minister of Labour on behalf of dilutees asking him to protect their position in the industry regardless of the agreement between the EEF and the AEU.¹ This report provoked an argument in Coventry on the position of 'dilutees' in the engineering industry.²

Their (the dilutees' - N.N.) claim that they made possible the Battle of Britain with what little knowledge of engineering they possessed is far-fetched. More likely it was the Battle of Britain that made possible their £20 per week against the skilled man's £7. Again how many of these dilutees were trained by the skilled men? It is only fair that they should be the first to become redundant, and they should accept this without question. 3

Surprisingly enough there were few published opinions from unskilled workers. A 'trainee' wrote with much more resentment about the Ministry of Labour policy than about the selfishness of skilled workers.

I would also like to give the main reason why I and my kind object to being made redundant. It is not as he seems to think we do not covet his skill or his job or anything else he may possess useful in factory work. The vast majority of us are working away from home a very long way in some

1. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 1 September, 1944.

2. The first reaction came from 'Skilled Mechanic' :

... it seems to me, and a good many other skilled men in Coventry factories that now the time has arrived for dilutees to be made redundant. ... The time has arrived for skilled men to look after their own interests.

Coventry Evening Telegraph, 4 September, 1944.

3. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 7 September, 1944.

cases and we consider that if the job we were sent down here to do is done, we should be sent back home to work, or at least near to it, but having once been placed at the mercy of the Ministry of Labour we are more than a little apprehensive as to where we may finally arrive.

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In spite of the moderation of the 'dilutees', the skilled men were steadfastly against any opinion which supported the value of unskilled workers in the industry. When an 'Ex-manager' wrote that given a certain situation, an unskilled dilutee could be as good as a skilled man the anger of the skilled was well and truly roused. A week later 'Ex-Manager' ² wrote again and explained;

Foreign countries were leaving us behind in many branches of engineering owing to our idea that the skilled mechanics were necessarily the best in the world. ... A man with five years' modern experience is the one who is needed in modern industry, if we are to compete with America, Germany and Russia. Germany was producing jet propelled 'planes while we were telling the world about ours which hadn't started.

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1. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 7 September, 1944.
 2. It is impossible to determine if the writer of the two letters (which appeared on 7 and 15 September, 1944) was the same person, since he signed on both occasions 'Ex-manager.' But judging from the context and some expressions in the second letter, the same person wrote both. He said that he was 'well over 50, nearly all spent in factories in England, and Scotland, in Europe, China and Japan.'
Coventry Evening Telegraph, 15 September, 1944.
 3. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 15 September, 1944.

This did not impress the skilled workers.¹ Outbursts of resentment against the dilutees and the managers who wanted to keep them after the War, were certainly characteristic of Coventry. There was no doubt that the skilled engineers in Bolton were concerned about their post-war position, but there was no such hostility there against those semi- and un-skilled workers introduced during the War. The objection in Coventry seemed to be a sign that skilled workers, being uncertain about their industrial future were more anxious to maintain their self-interest. Moreover, the number of war-time entrants was much bigger in Coventry. In September, the Coventry District Committee of the AEU discussed the guidelines to shop stewards on redundancy in shadow factories. They decided that war-time entrants should be the first to be made redundant regardless of their skills. Up-graded dilutees, both men and women, should be relegated to their previous position, no non-unionists should be substituted for AEU members, and Coventry workers should have priority to keep their jobs before any immigrants into the city.² What should be borne in mind, especially in discussing women's position in the demobilisation process, is that although one cannot deny that numerous women were included in 'war-time entrants', the objections were

1. For example, 'Ex-manager's letter ... is sheer nonsense. One is led to wonder how a man who is capable of making such a foolish statement ever attained a management position. ... No reflection is intended against dilutees, who have filled a gap and materially helped the war effort but it should be borne in mind that these men have been taught and supervised by skilled workmen.'
Coventry Evening Telegraph, 9 September, 1944.

2. AEU Coventry, September, 1944. The Union's Executive Council rejected the last claim.

made to both male and female alike. A dilutee who tried to keep his/her war-time job was opposed. The skilled workers did not seem to make any distinction in this matter, and certainly the AEU was careful not to attack women only. Skilled male engineers were against dilutees regardless of their sex, because both men and women workers threatened their privileged position.

We next examine how redundancy was proceeding. It is instructive to examine in some detail the actual process of the 'shake-out' among munition workers in the city. On 9 September, 1944, the Coventry Evening Telegraph had the first report of redundancy in an aircraft factory in the Coventry and Midlands area. Officials from the Ministries of Labour and Aircraft Production met union officials about the future employment of workers who would be made redundant. The employment situation in Coventry was worse than in other Midlands towns. In Coventry:

... a first cut in personnel, estimated at about 25 per cent, is being dealt with and these people are either being directed to other factories or else into the Forces.

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The Coventry District Committee of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, which represented 14 organisations, set up a special meeting for shop stewards and other interested members to discuss the problem of redundancy. The meeting took place on 13 September, 1944. Jack Jones, from the T. & G.W.U. made a rather gloomy speech.

1. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 11 September, 1944.

The view expressed by Colonel Collier, of the Ministry of Aircraft Production recently in which he referred to a first out of 25 per cent in 'shadow factory' personnel in Coventry has been misunderstood. ... the workers in the factories concerned have already been advised of a much heavier cut than that mentioned. Very many thousands of men and women are affected and it is no use burking the issue that it is going to be a terrific job to place them all in suitable employment. ... This situation is a headache to all parties concerned, and it is up to us to try to get common agreement on constructive proposals rather to criticise everything that is being done.

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After this meeting, one of the most discussed subjects in Coventry was the change-over from war production to peace industry, and how to make it smoothly. The Coventry District Committee of the Ministry of Production which was made up of three representatives from employers, and three from the unions discussed this matter for a few weeks in September and October. Being uncertain about the Government's post-war industrial policy, they could not reach any practical conclusion.

During the winter of 1944-45, plans for post-war industry in Coventry did not make much progress. The atmosphere was dark and pessimistic. Criticism centred on the slowness of the rebuilding of local industry.

1. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 14 September, 1944.

The man-power position needs drastic modification in the near future. Rumour says that there are hundreds of redundant workers who are being paid waiting time in shadow factories and the management get unnecessary fees on their wasted wages. ... Whilst the 'paid idleness' goes on, it is impossible to get a watch or vacuum cleaner repaired, plumbing or odd jobs done for which thousands of householders would be glad to pay. There must be thousands of people on the point of redundancy who could be immediately employed; Corporation employees, clerks, hairdressers and the like; no tooling up would be necessary and the jobs await them.

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In March 1945, a conference was held in Birmingham on post-war employment in the Midlands, which was presided over by the Midland Regional Controller of the Ministry of Labour. The correspondent of the Coventry Evening Telegraph who attended the conference reported that there was no indication of mass unemployment, especially in Coventry. Although he acknowledged the fact that there was a fundamental fear of unemployment among the people, he stressed that the actual unemployment was quite low,² and given the Government's intention of intervening in the economy, that there would be no huge redundancy as had occurred after the First World War. But the anxiety among workers had not diminished.

1. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 17 October, 1944.

2. 'The Conference was informed that unemployment in the Midlands is negligible, the latest figure being about 4,000; which includes those suffering disability and the young people from the schools not already placed. This is nothing more than a normal change over and therefore the very substantial programme changes coped with last year have caused no real increase in the register of unemployment. In fact, the Exchanges still have a number of urgent vacancies to fill.'

Coventry Evening Telegraph, 1 March, 1945.

On 27 March, 1945, there took place a mass demonstration in Coventry by work people from the Rootes, Daimler and Standard shadow factories. A number of young women workers joined in. Though none of the demonstrators was reported to be out of work yet. Their major demand was the effective use of shadow factories after the War.

Their banners explained their views adequately, they read: "We demand a plan for full employment for producing people's needs". "No redundancy, we demand work now for shadow factories" and "Shadow factories cost the tax payer £20,000,000: are they to become store sheds?" the latter referred to a Board of Trade suggestion that some factory space will be used for Government stores.

1

In April, the Coventry District Committee of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Union, issued a report which anticipated that six Coventry shadow factories were expected to be closed down by mid-1945, and that a large proportion of their 18,000 employees would be affected. The atmosphere of Coventry was not, unsurprisingly, gloomy and the rumour of mass unemployment was strong.² In such a situation, one could well imagine that there would be hostility against the 'new workers' who had not been engaged in engineering in the pre-war days.

1. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 28 March, 1945.

2. 'For some months past there have been rumours, usually wild ones of growing figures of unemployed in Coventry and this has invariably given impetus to fears of widespread redundancy.'
Coventry Evening Telegraph, 28 April, 1945.

We have already noted the principles of the AEU on the position of women workers on 'men's jobs'. What were the attitudes of male workers towards this problem? If male workers did not openly express hostility to women, it was not because they were prepared to accept women in the industry, but because the male workers took for granted that women would leave when the time came. Even Jack Jones, union organiser of the T. & G.W.U. took this line.

Though many women were quite ready to stay in the factories at present they would probably take a different point of view when the men came back from the Forces. 1

There was, however, some evidence of feeling against the most recent immigrants which was encouraged, to some extent, by the local paper.² Though there was sympathy with those people who, with a dark memory of mass unemployment in their own area, wanted to

1. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 18 November, 1944.

2. 'Coventry dialect is changing. More and more one hears Lancashire, Yorkshire and Scots being spoken - even during deliberations of the City Council. What it will eventually become it is difficult to say, but if those people from the north stick to their intention formed during a period of high wages to stay here or return when the opportunity offers, then the old "Coventry" tone will disappear from the voices of the citizens - for it is particularly noticeable that where a Lancashire man settles those around soon pick up the dialect. The Northerners never lose theirs.'
Coventry Evening Telegraph, 13 March, 1945.

settle down in a Coventry which seemed to have a better future,¹ the local paper's opinion was that Coventry people should have priority for Coventry jobs. The difficult problem of defining 'Coventry People' was never really faced.

Therefore, during the last eighteen months of the War, Coventry experienced a period of uncertainty and transition. The end of war production was in sight, while the programme of industrial changeover was somewhat vague and seemed unreliable. Redundancy hit male and female workers alike. The antagonism was felt against the transferred workers who were reluctant to go back to their home towns. The first concern of the AEU in those days was to protect the interests of the skilled adult males at almost any price. They were happy to organise and assist the other ranks of workers if they stayed in what the AEU thought to be a suitable place for them. Nevertheless, they thought that women, especially married women, should be the first to go. It seemed that this view was shared by the male members of the T. & G.W.U. They too thought that it was natural for married women to go back home when the war was over. We shall shortly examine more closely popular attitudes towards women's

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1. "Asked outright if they intended to take advantage of the offer to go back to their homes on Tyneside, they said 'What go back to grime and poverty? Not likely!' One added that whilst in the city she had been able to send home money to help to keep her mother."

Coventry Evening Telegraph, 13 March 1945.

In the demonstration which took place on 27 March, 1945, at least two speakers stood for the workers who were transferred. 'There was no dearth of speakers. Two at least came from the North, and they did not hesitate to tell their comrades what they thought about the Government. One plainly said he would not go back to the North. He hadn't a return ticket anyhow, for he walked to Coventry and Coventry was good enough for him.'

Coventry Evening Telegraph, 28 March, 1945.

employment in Coventry at the end of the war and try to explain them. But before that we need to chart more carefully what was actually happening to unemployment in Coventry in the eighteen months after the ceasefire in Europe.

The peak of post-war unemployment in Coventry was December, 1945, when 4,073 men and 1,058 women were out of work. Although this number was not big, considering the working population in Coventry was at that time well over 100,000, However, the atmosphere in Coventry was pessimistic and cynical about the promised post-war Britain. In a sense, they seemed to believe that the mass unemployment which they had feared actually had come to stay. Behind the scenes, however, the industrial outlook had started to change slowly, especially after the Government began to emphasise the importance of exports and to consider motor cars as one of the main export sectors. Nonetheless, the change *was* slow and there was a good deal of pessimism immediately after V-E day.

The first sign that cars might be an important export appeared in June 1945, when the Coventry Evening Telegraph reported the possibility as a practical matter.¹ But the next few months were confused so far as

1. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 11 June, 1945.

Though the possibility of cars as exports in the post-war economy had been alluded to before the end of the War, it was not until the Autumn of 1945 that the Government seriously started to support the car industry as an export industry. Once they began to do so, however, the pressure from the Government was very strong. "By the Autumn (1945-N.N.) it had been informally agreed only that the industry's export target should be 30 per cent. At the SMMT (the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders - N.N dinner in November, Cripps publicly suggested that the target should be at least 50 per cent: the country should be content to go without cars in the interests of the export effort. These remarks were greeted with boos and shouts of "No!" and "Tripe!". Cripps added, rather bitterly, "I have often wondered whether you thought Great Britain was here to support the motor industry, or the motor industry was here to support Great Britain. I gather from your cries you think it is the latter!" William Plowden, The Motor car and Politics, 1896-1970, (1971), p.312.

Coventry's employment situation was concerned, a confusion clearly reflected in the pronouncements of the local paper. In June optimism ruled:

While in some industrial centres redundancy is causing concern, in Coventry the full effect of the termination of war contracts has not yet been felt. Official figures are not available owing to a war-time restriction on the publication of figures for individual districts, but it is unofficially estimated that there are not more than 1,000 workers in this city without a job.

1

In September the 'upward trend in the number of unemployed in Coventry which was more noticeable a week ago has tailed off...' ² with an estimation of 2,000 people unemployed, the article continued:

The position therefore is much better than was anticipated: it was thought that with the order made by the Government a fortnight ago for war contracts to cease, in many cases forthwith, there would be a quick increase in the number signing on.

3

By November 1945, press reports seemed completely confused. On 12 November, it was reported that there had been no significant increase

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1. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 12 June, 1945.
 2. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 17 September, 1945.
 3. Ibid.

in unemployment. Only twelve days later, the Coventry Evening Telegraph published a long article full of pessimism. It quoted the opinion of trade unionists, such as Jack Jones, and reported that the number of unemployed had reached around 4,000. (It was actually more than 5,000).¹ It quoted Jones at length:

Alarm is being expressed by all the Engineering Unions in Coventry and district at the very sharp rise of unemployment which has taken place in Coventry in the last few months. We are asked not to reveal the precise figures but it can be said that the number of able-bodied men and women now out of a job is very substantial, and has shown a big increase in the last four weeks. ... There are few signs of improvement on this position at present.

2

As a matter of course, the Coventry Evening Telegraph had an article entitled 'Coventry's Brighter New Year Prospects' on the last day of 1945 to give hope to people for the coming year. This time, though, acknowledging that there were 5,000 to 6,000 unemployed in Coventry, they put the emphasis on the fact that there were outstanding vacancies for tool-room men.³

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1. 'In the north of England, Liverpool is considered to be the "Black Spot" with 10,000 unemployed, but the city is four times the size of Coventry. It may well be asked "Is Coventry to become the black spot of the Midlands?".
Coventry Evening Telegraph, 24 November, 1945.
 2. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 24 November, 1945.
 3. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 31 December, 1945.

Although the majority of these articles on the employment situation in Coventry insisted that the future of Coventry industry would be good, the indecisive attitudes of the local paper and the fact that it mentioned unemployment so frequently suggests that it was a serious matter among Coventry people. Some of the gloom and cynicism went so far as to criticise the Labour Government.

As a Labour supporter, I must express my feeling regarding the Government. ... The majority of working class people are very much worse off now than they were when the Conservative Government were in power. The Labour Government are carrying policy which is very little short of Nazism, and it is time the working class raise their voices. We were supposed to have fought the war for freedom but we are little more than slaves. What with unemployment and large reductions and prices and costs soaring higher and higher, life is getting unbearable. If the Labour Government is going to carry on like this, we must throw them out, and they are a disgrace to those who voted for them.

(signed: Regretful Labour Voter). 1

There was still certain resentments about the transfer of workers into Coventry during the War, though the voices against were fewer than the previous year and the anger was drawn to the Government rather than the transferred workers who decided to stay in Coventry.

The local position has been mainly created by making Coventry the dumping ground for surplus labour from everywhere. It is one thing to 'direct' labour here

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1. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 28 November, 1945. Such a letter provoked opposition itself. 'For example, He stated that the majority of the working class are very much worse off than when the Conservatives were in power. It would be interesting to know in what way, except for redundancy and unemployment (both temporary) and lower (than munition) wages...'
Coventry Evening Telegraph, 29 November, 1945.

and another to 'direct it back'. The consequence is a housing problem as well as an unemployment one. Moreover, the Labour Party's pledges to find jobs for all at high wages are falsified even at the beginning.

1

The gloom persisted into 1946. On 5 January, when Stafford Cripps, President of the Board of Trade, came to the Midlands to discuss the setting up of work parties for the carpet, glass and jewellery trades, the representatives of the engineering unions in Coventry, including W.Stokes and J.Jones, met him to give him their views on the reconversion and unemployment situation of the city. Though Cripps was reported to be sympathetic, there were other areas which had priority over Coventry and 'the Government has made a special appeal to motor manufacturers to get on with their reconversion and thus get the foreign market supplied. Anything likely to impede this would hardly get Government support.'

2

Popular anxiety seemed to peak when Maurice Edelman, M.P. for Coventry, mentioned that 10,000 workers were out of work during the debate on manpower in the House of Commons on 28 February 1946. In fact, the number of unemployed was about 5,000 (4,000 men and 1,000 women.) Edelman seemed to have added 4,500 Humber workers who were on strike over redundancy.

3

1. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 1 January, 1946.

2. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 17 January, 1946.

3. 'Labour released from the execution of war contracts is constantly flowing into peace production, and will do so at an accelerated rate. There is certainly nothing to suggest a seriously-prolonged labour slump in Coventry, and against Mr. Edelman's grim picture it is well to set the experience at the GEC Works ... There the production possibilities are limited by shortages of labour ...'
Coventry Evening Telegraph, 1 March, 1946.

In those circumstances, it would not have been surprising if antagonism against women were strongly felt among male workers. In fact, the AEU was voicing their opinion that all women on men's jobs should leave immediately. For example, in a local conference on three women workers in the measuring room of Alfred Herbert Ltd., in February 1946;

Mr. Stokes (of the AEU - N.N.) contended that there were no women in the Measuring Room before the War and therefore he felt the Company should honour the Dilution Agreement in reverse and remove the women who were at present in the room.

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The Company defended itself by stating that those jobs had seen drastic technical changes even if they had been done by adult male workers before the War, or the tool itself had been introduced during the War.² On the other hand, the employers in Coventry were determined to keep women, especially those who were on jobs normally done by boys and youths to ensure a sufficient supply of un-skilled and semi-skilled workers.

The Director of the EEA referred to the recent attitude of the Amalgamated Engineers' Union who were endeavouring to get rid of all women in the Engineering Industry and were claiming that this should be carried out by men even although the work the women were engaged upon may normally have been performed by boys and youths - in other words, the unions were claiming that where boys and youths were not available for such work then adult males should be employed. The Director emphasised to the Board (Managing Board - N.N.) that it was important that members of the Association should maintain the position that firms were entitled to continue to employ women on boys and youths work.

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1. MRC MSS 66/1/2/2/253, 7 February, 1945.
 2. Local conferences on similar subjects were held on 27 September, 1945, on 22 November, 1945, and on 27 April, 1946.
 3. EEA Coventry, 26 November, 1945.

552.

Although the employers were careful not to mention that they were intending to keep women on men's jobs, they often used new technology and the breaking-down of the work process as an excuse for not recognising certain jobs as 'normally performed by male workers before the War'. Although they had no intention of employing women as fully skilled engineers, as far as they could use women without much difficulty with the union, they were determined to keep them. The AEU demanded that women dilutees should be transferred to the jobs where there were labour shortages and which was, in fact, unskilled work such as coil winding. Nevertheless, the union was so anxious to maintain the position of male skilled workers, they seldom made any practical industrial proposals for women dilutees.

While the AEU was making the most crucial distinction between the sexes to maintain men's superior position in industry, the opinions which appeared in the local paper show that some people in Coventry were looking at the problem from a different point of view from that of the union. Not many letters claimed that it was women in paid jobs who caused male unemployment. But when they did, they condemned married women's employment above all.

May I voice an opinion through your valuable paper regarding the retention in office of married women whose husbands are at home and often in very good jobs? Only recently I felt sad to find a number of very young men applying at a local firm for office work, in response to an advertisement that appeared the same evening. I think young people of both sexes should have preference over married women in offices. 1

1. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 20 October, 1945.

The idea behind the opinion was a common one, that married women who had husbands to support them should retire and give their places to young people both men and women. Although the author of the letter was against married women's employment, he/she was not against the employment of single women, and accepted their right to obtain jobs to support themselves. It was the idea of the 'family wage' that made people adopt this position. It was not fair to the unemployed that married women with husbands to support them were taking jobs from those who had to support themselves, and family. Apart from opinions in this context, the local press remained indifferent about women's employment in general, perhaps reflecting local opinion as a whole.¹

The female labour situation in the second half of 1945 was complicated. The number of unemployed females increased towards November 1945 and stayed at more or less the same level, that is, just about 1,000, until March. However, during the early summer, the local paper kept on reporting the GEC's difficulties in obtaining female workers for their telephone works.² It was not clear what was the cause of this discrepancy.

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1. In connection with the problem of equal pay a communist candidate for Coventry East stated 'the gap between men's and women's weekly earnings had increased from 26s.6d. in 1938 to 59s.11d. in 1944. This was despite the operation of various dilution and relaxation agreements. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 3 July 1945. Even though the Royal Commission on Equal Pay was taking evidence at this time, this comment is the only one which appeared in the Coventry press.
 2. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 16 June, 20 July, 1945. The article in the above paper on 12 November, 1945, stating that although the GEC was taking between 50 and 60 new female workers per week there were still outstanding vacancies, seemed to be suggesting that the company was suffering from a high turnover of workers as well.

However, in 1946, it became clearer what kind of women were being demanded by the GEC and other employers of women.

Though 1946 started badly, it was not long before there appeared obvious signs of changes in the employment situation for women. As early as January, Dunlop advertised for women workers over 18 years of age. In March, GEC advertised for female inspectors and assemblers for radio equipment at the Radio and Television Works in the city. On the same day, the Coventry Evening Telegraph had an article on the GEC, which stressed the significant effects of the lack of experienced women workers.

Girls leave to get married; married women who have been doing their bit for the war effort ... are leaving as their husbands are demobilised, much potential labour is still in the women's units of the Forces - and all the vacant places are having to be taken by unskilled girls. ... Between 20 and 30 employees return from the Forces every week and there are still about 600 to come but the girls with nimble dexterous fingers, essential for many of the operations are not available.

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This article shows that the GEC was after a stereotyped woman with abilities, such as nimble and dexterous fingers. It was a typical 'woman's' job within the engineering industry which was suffering from a shortage of women.

1. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 1 March, 1946.

What is interesting though not surprising, about the article on 29 April was that it stated that there was a slight gap between work which needed women workers and the work which women themselves wanted. Jack Jones pointed out:

There is not the same shortages in the engineering industry. There are about 600 women signing on at the Employment Exchange. ... We want work particularly for women trimmers and assemblers. Outside certain jobs there is a steady and constant demand for women workers. There is still a far higher proportion of women retained in the engineering industry than there was pre-war, and this would tend to lead to shortages in other industries. 1

For example, Courtaulds, which was one of the main employers of women in the city, reported that 'whereas before the war every offer of a job was met by five or six times the number of applicants, today the jobs are still waiting to be filled.'²

The number of unemployed women, which had already decreased by 140 between March and April, dropped by a further 188 between April and May, the biggest decline of the year. Thereafter throughout 1946, the number declined by 90 per month on average, except between September and November when it stayed more or less the same. By the end of the year the number of unemployed women was 200, which was incredibly small by pre-war standards. At the same time the number

1. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 29 April, 1946.

2. Ibid.

of unemployed males was decreasing rapidly.

As for women workers, the emphasis had already been the shortages and how to recruit women by the end of Spring 1946. The GEC, which was in need of 1,500 women for telephone work, was most active in recruiting women. Being free to advertise for workers, they organised their own exhibition which was named 'The Jolly Sisters of the GEC', after the name of a film shown in Coventry at that time; 'The Dolly Sisters'.¹ Some women employees were demonstrating the jobs available at the exhibition. The result was reported to be satisfactory. Yet on May 29, the paper was reporting that the GEC was still in need of 1,000 women workers.²

The downward trend of female unemployment was clear up to the end of 1946. In November when just above 200 adult women were registered¹ as unemployed, the local paper wrote about the difficulties of recruiting women. Women on the dole were women with domestic responsibilities who could not work full-time. In other words, however serious the shortages of women, the firms had not organised part-time shifts to employ those women yet. Many companies seeking women from other districts, including some of those women who had left Coventry for their home towns in the course of munitions demobilisation, for example;

1. Advertisement by the company in the Coventry Evening Telegraph, on 24 May 1946. Report and picture, on 31 May, 1946.

2. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 29 May, 1946.

... one named Norah ... I think from Lincoln...
 After we finished at the Morris, Norah went home
 to Lincoln but couldn't settle at her old life
 and returned to Coventry to work at the GEC and
 live with her old landlady.

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It was not only GEC and such like new light engineering industries which were suffering from shortages of women. Courtaulds was also advertising for women workers, though they were either seeking girl school-leavers or young *single* women or their ex-operatives.² However, Courtaulds did not have to re-establish themselves from scratch since the rayon industry was protected by the Essential Work Order. The company had their former operatives who had left for the munitions industry directed back. Joyce Hampson was one of the workers who had been directed back to Courtaulds 'much against' her will, when her war work at Morris Motors had finished, and women workers there made redundant in June 1945. Back at Courtaulds, she found the working conditions had been improved and the attitudes of supervisors and foremen had changed.

My old foreman greeted me with almost open arms informing me that it would be 'quite like old times', to which I replied 'It won't you know. I'm not frightened of you any more.'

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1. Letter from Joyce Hampson, dated 15 September, 1981.
 Of course this did not help an already serious accommodation crisis. 'Coventry's population is increasing at the rate of 100 a week, and the accentuation of the housing shortage, already acute, is leading to the queue, largely made up of newly discharged Servicemen, at the Corporation's Lodging Bureau....'
Coventry Evening Telegraph, 2, September, 1946.
 2. For example, see advertisements by Courtaulds in the Coventry Evening Telegraph, 5 July, 1946, 1 October, 1946.
 3. Joyce Hampson, op.cit.

In July 1946, the Essential Work Order was lifted from the rayon industry and Joyce Hampson finally moved out of it. She remembers that she gave notice on the following day after she heard the news that the Essential Work Order was lifted. She went to GEC.¹ She had objected to demobilisation from Morris Motors to Courtaulds. But what she really did not like was the fact that she had to go back to Courtaulds whose work and discipline she had disliked before the war. It was this rather than the fact that she was made redundant from Morris which upset her. If it failed to attract women workers by its own wages and working conditions, Courtaulds, traditionally the largest employer of women in the city, sooner or later began to suffer from shortages of women workers.

What can be said about public opinion on the post-war employment of women in Coventry during the demobilisation period? Unlike Bolton, where there was no obsession with the demands of women for the cotton industry, Coventry had room to argue about women's role in post-war Coventry from different viewpoints, which gave more space to discuss the role of women as home-makers. During the first half of 1944 there were two kinds of argument on this subject; one was pointing out that women's supreme role was that of mothers and wives, the other, although it accepted that women's tasks would not be finished when the War was over, took for granted that they would go back to women's jobs. The emphasis on women as homemakers mainly came from outside industry. The Coventry Evening Telegraph, for example, gave even larger space to the anti-feminist opinion of the President of the National Association of Schoolmasters.

1. Joyce Hampson Interview, 1 December, 1981.

With only the responsibility of living her own life, she demands that your man shall receive no more than she does. That he has you and your children to maintain is not a matter of great interest to your feminist sister. ... Make no mistake, if the country accepts the position that a man shall receive only an individual wage rather than a family wage, then you are likely to be driven out of the home into the factory to make ends meet. ... 1

Unfortunately the paper itself did not comment on this opinion, nor did it provoke a clutch of letters to the editor.

The second position was taken mainly by trade unionists and other persons with a strong connection with industry. As Jack Jones stated in November, 1944.

... in peace time a certain number of women were employed in industry in Coventry though, generally speaking the number was not large. Hundreds of girls had been directed to work in the city from the hosiery, rayon, boots and shoe and other trades, and it was probable that many workers would go back to these industries when the change-over from war-time to peace-time production had been effected. 2

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1. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 13 April, 1944.
 2. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 18 November, 1944.

Before this, the Coventry Evening Telegraph interviewed Caroline Haslett on the post-war employment situation of women. Naturally, she stressed the new possibilities for women using the skills that they had acquired during the War. Nevertheless, in her opinion, 'thousands of women will want to return to the occupations they held before the War and which they exchanged for more essential work. For some this will mean back to their homes and children, while others will want to enter upon that life which the war has so far denied.'¹ After pointing out several new possibilities as well as the traditional one which would engage a number of women in the post-war economy, Haslett emphasised, and the paper printed in bold letters, that 'This is not to say that I consider that every women should work. The majority of women are happier and find their proper place in marriage, home and a family.'² Even when careers for girls were encouraged, they were always careers which had traditionally been open to women such as teaching and nursing. Therefore women were expected to act as wives and mothers or else to go back to traditional women's jobs. The war-time sentiment for peaceful home life underlined the former.'³ Neither position appears to have met any counter-attack from

1. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 21 February, 1944.

2. Ibid.

3. 'We are too apt, I am afraid, to think of demobilisation as a problem of jobs only. But ask the men and women of the Services what they are coming back for, and 19 out of 20 will not answer 'our jobs' but 'our home'. ... with fathers, sons and perhaps daughters in the Forces, mothers in the factory, children evacuated or running wild, the home life of countless families has been simply obliterated by the war... The foundation of society which is the family will have to be reconstructed. This will be partly the business of the Government, but in the main it will be the great task of the eternal home-maker, woman, and unless she shoulders it successfully we shall have lost the war, however resounding a victory we may win in the field.'

Coventry Evening Telegraph, 29 December, 1943.

women workers. One of the reasons was, as we have seen, that the idea of the family wage was widely supported by both men and women. It was an idea which occasionally turned into antagonism against married women with paid work.

Arguments about women's role were heard more frequently during the first half of 1944. Then after the actual demobilisation had started, the emphasis shifted towards the practical resolution of the male workers' redundancy problems. However, even in 1946, when the shortage of women workers had become acute, there appears to be no change in the popular ideas of women's proper role. One of the striking differences between Bolton and Coventry on this problem was that in Bolton, when it was clear that there was a shortage of women workers for the cotton industry, the manufacturers started to appeal to married women to go back to the mills even on a part-time basis. In Coventry, in 1946, when GEC and Courtaulds made big efforts to recruit women, they were appealing only to single women. No appeal was made to married women. The shortages of women workers in Coventry did not seem to be acute enough to break down the strongly-held idea of married women's role.

What was the impact of demobilisation on the facilities for married working women, for instance war-time nurseries? Though the demobilisation of women from the munitions industry rapidly progressed, nursery facilities were not so badly hit. In fact, the welfare officer of the Ministry of Labour for the Midlands region reported on 14 August, 1945:

Attendance at nurseries remains at a high level. Matrons of some of the nurseries have remarked on the number of mothers who wish to continue working, some of the women have to work to support illegitimate children. Some are war widows and find their pensions inadequate and others feel the money they earn will be necessary addition to the home finances.

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In the Midlands region, many nurseries were closed down mainly in smaller towns and in Birmingham. However, in Coventry all the nurseries were being fully used and none of them were closed. On the contrary, the City Council considered building a new nursery since the premises of the biggest one in the city was wanted by its owner immediately after the War.² The only nursery that was considered for closure was the Windmill Road Day Nursery and that was not until April 1947. However, the parents objected strongly and a month later, the decision was defeated and it was decided that attendance was good enough to keep it open.³

In 1947, the Coventry City Council gradually made arrangements to release some of the burden of child-care from parents. In May 1947, they arranged to enable all school children to have school meals during the holidays if requested by parents. In November of the same year, they agreed that the Day Nurseries should remain open until 12.45 p.m. on Saturdays. Coventry nurseries were well attended and some had waiting lists.

1. LAB 26/83, 14 August, 1945.

2. In connection with this nursery, Dr. Clarke, the owner of the house, paid a visit to the District Secretary of the AEU to air his concern for the fact that the union was objecting to his trying to regain his house. In fact, the Coventry Branch was not responsible.
AEU Coventry, 4 December, 1945.

3. LAB 26/83, 14 April, 1947, 14 May, 1947.

The nursery facilities in Coventry were not as badly hit as those in Bolton where two nurseries out of seven were immediately closed down. It seems contradictory. Bolton, where there were shortages of women workers had to close down two of their nurseries. Coventry, which had not suffered from a shortage of female labour to anything like the same extent, kept open. It seems the need for nursery facilities was dependent on the local tradition of child-care. It can be explained that in Bolton, young children had been often looked after by relatives and neighbours, while there had been no such tradition in Coventry. The Government seemed to think that there was no relation between women's employment and nursery needs. If there was enough attendance to justify the opening of a certain nursery, it could remain open as the responsibility of each Local Authority. When the female labour situation tightened, the Ministry of Labour, as a matter of course, saw the problem from the angle of woman-power policy only. The Welfare Officer of the Ministry for the Midlands region wrote in May 1947:

Reports from Birmingham, Redditch, Worcester and Kidderminster indicate a growing demand for Day Nursery Provision. To what extent this is due to the appeals of women to enter industry is difficult to assess, but it is possible that the appeals are being exploited by the women and others who believe in an extension of Day Nurseries as a Social Service.

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1. LAB 26/83, 4 May, 1947.

To sum up, the popular facilities for women workers outside the home saw a change between 1944 when people were most concerned with men's post-war employment situation and the end of 1946 when some Coventry manufacturers had started to suffer from a shortage of women workers. But such changes were much less than in Bolton. The demobilisation of women was in the shadow of the discussion on the future of the motor industry and its effects on the employment of male workers. Even after GEC and Courtaulds started to make special efforts to recruit women workers, the shortage of female workers never became an important issue in Coventry. Though there was not much antagonism shown against women's employment in the motor industry, apart from that of the AEU which tried to get rid of all women on 'men's jobs', there was no big recruitment campaign to push women into light industry, comparable to the attempts to recruit women for cotton in Bolton. Women's employment had always been of secondary importance in Coventry.

How, then did munitions demobilisation change the lives of Coventry women between 1944 and 1947? The following table shows the changes which took place in the industrial distribution of insured women in Coventry. Unfortunately, there are no statistics for 1946 and 1947 so we have substituted those for 1948.

According to the table, although the total number of insured women dropped by about 10,000 between 1943 and 1948, the number increased by one third from 1939 to 1948. The motor vehicle industry managed to

TABLE 8-1

INDUSTRIAL DISTRIBUTION OF INSURED WOMEN IN COVENTRY
1939-1948

	July 1939	July 1943	July 1948
General & Electrical Engineering	6,517 (22.4)	9,701 (19.9)	8,278 (21.2)
Motor Vehicle/Aircraft	5,002 (17.2)	22,318 (45.8)	7,883 (20.2)
Metal	2,038 (7.0)	4,275 (8.8)	2,248 (5.8)
Textiles *	2,208 (7.6)	710 (1.5)	2,943 (7.5)
Transport	83 (nil)	704 (1.4)	815 (2.1)
Distributive	3,567 (12.3)	3,041 (6.2)	3,990 (10.2)
Administrative	516 (1.8)	2,563 (5.3)	1,690 (4.3)
Catering & Laundry**	1,736 (6.0)	2,493 (5.1)	5,246 (13.4)
Professional	499 (1.7)	305 (nil)	3,263 (8.3)
Grand Total ***	29,060	48,866	39,005

Source: Approximate numbers of unemployment books exchanged at Coventry Employment Exchange, 1939, 1943 and 1948.

* The numbers for 1939 and 1943 were those who were in the rayon and nylon industry.

** The number for 1948 were those who were in miscellaneous services.

*** Grand total shows the number of all insured women in the city, and is therefore larger than the simple sum of those shown above, which were the main industries in Coventry.

increase their female employees by 57 per cent between 1939 and 1948, though they had discharged two-thirds of their women workers of 1943. Other engineering (general and electrical) and the metal industries, failed to keep pace with the increase in the total number of insured female workers. Textiles increased their female work force roughly at the same rate as the overall increase. Therefore apart from the motor industry, which was an important exception, the overall increase of women in industry was not due to the increase of women in the engineering industry but to an increase in the numbers of women in the service sector. In fact, the service sector only made up 22 per cent of all women insured in 1939, while the proportion had been raised to 38.5 per cent in 1948. From the table it is clear that a large scale demobilisation took place in the engineering and allied industries between 1943 and 1948. In the process of demobilisation, about half of the women who had been recruited between 1939 and 1948 left industry altogether and half stayed in; some remained in the engineering industry; some went back to textiles, and some went into the service sector.

How did these women react towards demobilisation? As we have already seen in the example of Joyce Hampson, some women were quite unhappy about being transferred from the munitions industry. In Coventry, however, there was no organised protest such as a strike against the transfer of women from the munitions industry to their previous work. As a matter of fact, the protest mentioned earlier in Oldham seems to have been exceptional even in the context of Lancashire where demobilisation often meant the return to less favoured work, that is, the cotton industry.

In fact, the majority of women did not even feel anger about their being discharged from munitions even if they were disappointed about it. One of my informants was directed to a munitions firm in Birmingham from her home town near Inverness near her eighteenth birthday. Although she married a Coventry man in 1944, her husband was in the Army and did not come back until the end of 1945. In June 1945, she was made redundant and sent back to her home town more or less straightaway. She remembers that she was expecting to work in Birmingham longer than that, and redundancy was a surprise to her. She was not keen to go back to her home town, but she does not recollect any objection to the decision.¹ It seems that, as an individual, she felt helpless and that it was hopeless to challenge the decision which had been taken. In fact, she worked with the NAAFI in Aberdeen for six months until her husband returned. Then she gave up work totally and did not return until 1960, when her three children had grown up. Another Coventry woman who worked in the post-room of the Alfred Herbert Machine Tool Co. left the job in 1946 when she heard that the man on the job before the War was coming back from the Forces. She explained that she thought she would not be able to stay on a man's job and in any case, she had had enough of it. Her husband was a skilled engineer at Daimler, so she had no economic necessity to have paid work, and anyway he was entirely against her working outside the house.²

Therefore, as we have already seen in Bolton, many married women were anxious to go back home as soon as possible, and most women, both single and married, did not take any action against redundancy. At the same time,

1. Betty Lewis interview, 13 April 1983.

2. Doris Preckett interview, 23 March, 1983.

those women who had stayed in industry were capable of very militant action. In June, 1946, about a thousand women workers in the engineering industry came from many parts of Britain to London to the National Arbitration Tribunal to protest against the extra bonus of 7s.6d. which was only given to male workers.¹ When a woman officer of the T. & G.W.U. came out from the Tribunal and told them to be sensible and go home, some women demonstrators shouted back 'We've come from Liverpool and we're not going home until something is settled.'² A communist in Bolton, who had worked in cotton mills before the War and went into De Havilland in 1941, registered the self-confidence and militancy among the women workers in the munitions industry and agreed that they had felt secure there, especially with such high earnings.³ She mentioned that women at De Havilland and enjoyed high earnings and were . . . reluctant to leave the job voluntarily. She nevertheless admitted that, when war work had finished in 1946, 'a lot of women accepted it.'⁴ Women could be militant about fairness between the sexes *within* an industry and about their wages, but those militant attitudes were seldom in evidence against redundancy. Women might have been

1. 'The women, who throughout the war took the place of men in factories, are protesting that men, now back from the Forces and doing the same work as themselves, are getting an extra bonus of 7s.6d., which the women are not getting.'

Coventry Evening Telegraph, 21 June, 1946.

2. Ibid.

3. 'Look here, cotton workers did not fight for wage raises.... They did not fight, they just sat back enjoying what they got ... They just accepted everything. There was not much militancy in cotton mills, you see... They (women workers at De Havilland - N.N.) felt secure, more secure than ever, they felt in the money.'

Recorded interview taped in the Bolton Reference Library.

4. Ibid

disappointed and felt bitter when they found themselves to be the first to be made redundant after pulling their weight throughout the War, but the majority of them accepted it without protest.

What conclusion may be drawn about women's attitudes towards demobilisation? Although the labour situation in Coventry was so much different from that in Bolton, there were a few striking similarities in women's attitudes. One of them was the fact that women seemed to be generally uninfluenced by the intensive propaganda drive. In Bolton particularly women *en masse* were unmoved by the claims of both cotton manufacturers and the Government that cotton offered a good career for women.

A second similarity was the relative absence of women's protest against redundancy from the War factories. Many of my informants told me that they enjoyed war work for a variety of reasons. High wage rates and the opportunity to try a different kind of job, or mixing with male workers which had sometimes been difficult in textile mills (both in cotton and at Courtaulds) were real benefits. However, it is striking that their memories seldom show resentment and bitterness about industrial demobilisation. Instead of protesting against redundancy, many women made their own arrangements for postwar life according to their, and their family's situation. For example, L. Davies herself left De Havilland without protesting and eventually opened a grocery shop with her husband whose

health had been damaged by the War. As we have seen, women could take militant action about their conditions and wages, while they were in industry. In this sense, L.Davies was right to suggest that women in the munitions industry could be militant since their higher wages made them more secure. But this militancy was seldom shown as far as demobilisation was concerned. This is suggestive in analysing women's ideas about the economic role of women and women within the family.

The third point is closely related to the second point, that is, in both towns, it was reported that married women were leaving their jobs quickly, especially if the husbands were at home, or they were keen to leave when the husbands came out of the Forces. Girls got married and stopped working immediately. This was not a phenomenon noticed only in Bolton and Coventry, but was observed nationally. For example, Doris White of D for Doris, V for Victory wrote in her memoirs;

No one asked us to leave work, and we dared not leave, so in awe were we of the Works. But, as the men filtered home there were weddings and homes to set up. There were weddings such as my own, where the man had to return afterwards, back to base to finish his service time. We had managed to find a house to rent, although in a run-down condition, and with my man away, it was left to me to get it in shape. Although I had not been given my cards, I asked for a week off - but I never did go back. I'd had enough in any case, but now I had my Navy wife's pay book, which gave me £2.5s.0d. a week. A lot of women were glad of the war work money, as they were buying their homes, and service allowances did not stretch far. 1

1. Doris White, D for Doris V for Victory, (Milton Keynes, 1981), p.81.

Some women had to leave war work before their husbands came back home. In those cases, they took up any job available while they were waiting for their husbands. It seemed that they did not care what kind of job they were doing so much for they knew it was only temporary. Despite the widespread distaste for domestic work, they often took it up. The woman from Inverness, for example. A woman in Bolton closed her grocery shop when her husband was called-up in 1940 to work in a munitions firm. When her work finished before the War was over, she started to work as a cook at a nurses' home until her husband returned in 1946 when she stopped work to look after him.¹

One of the reasons why married women especially were so keen to leave their war work was that they felt their welfare was dependent on their husbands' secure employment and income, rather than their own employment and earnings. Some women became antagonistic towards other women who had managed to keep their war work, while their own husbands had been made redundant.

In fact, there was only one letter which appeared in the Coventry papers, accusing the female dilutees of stealing jobs from male workers. This was published in September, 1944, and was written by the *wife* of a Coventry engineer who had been made redundant. This was a good example of the fact that for married women the employment of their husbands was their first and foremost concern.

1. Answer to my questionnaire from Ann Melbourne, April 1982.

With reference to redundant workers in Coventry, could anyone enlighten me as to why the Ministry of Labour which did such a wonderful job during strained war years cannot direct labour back again with the same success? Billeted on me is a single girl directed from domestic service in London to Coventry. Her wage averages £7 to £10 per week. Thousands of married men including my husband, are made redundant. She remains at work. Yet London hospitals are crying out for domestics which would give her lodging. I shall have to ask her to leave my home so that my husband can draw unemployment pay for me.

1

It was suggestive that this letter was written by a women: it shows that women's interests were divided by their marital condition. However, there was little evidence that single women determined to keep their jobs at the expense of men. But the experience of war work was not strong enough to alter the deeply-rooted idea of the segregation of men's and women's roles. Anyway, for married women, the secure home life seemed to depend almost entirely on their husbands' employment. They did not dare to undermine this security by stealing 'men's jobs.' Women in general did not have a sole object such as retaining their war-time job.

The idea of sexually segregated economic roles was seen commonly both in Coventry and Bolton and this idea was shared by both men and women. Moreover, it was not so much in the sexist prejudice against women, as in the people's idea of the family economy. Nevertheless, it seems that the idea was more strongly held in Coventry where more married women had

1. Coventry Evening Telegraph, 16 September, 1944.

traditionally stayed at home, than in Bolton. It was in Coventry that women were more concerned with the effects of their war work on their family life and domestic standards. Local differences showed. But more importantly the different traditions of married women's employment had affected strongly the popular idea of the family economy. As we have already seen, the working class family income was more likely solely earned by the adult male of the family in Coventry, usually the husband. Workers believed that, in principle, it should be enough to support the whole family without additional income from other members of the family. Once this family income pattern was fixed among the people, they started to think and behave accordingly. Married women were more concerned with the job prospects of their husbands than with employment of single women, not to mention that of married women themselves, although there had always been some portion of married women who had had to support themselves and their families. For adult male workers, it was not only important to have wives staying at home to claim the family wage for them, but it became a matter of pride to keep their wives at home. It seems, that in Coventry, with its uncertain economic outlook, both men and women had adopted the pattern of single-earner family economy with the assumption that the husband would earn for the whole family. Thus the employment of husbands must be secured.

We have examined the mobilisation and demobilisation processes in two towns with different traditions and structures of women's employment. The emphasis has been on describing popular attitudes towards these two

processes. Although it has been noticeable that local tradition of women's employment affected popular attitudes to women's war work, there were striking similarities between the two towns. One was women's family priorities, which meant taking account of the family wage above their individual independence. The advantages of taking up war work were carefully balanced against its negative effect on family life. Another similarity was the lack of sexual antagonism. A husband was a breadwinner and the wife should stay at home to look after home and family. This was the ideal view of working class marriage shared by both men and women. The recruitment propaganda for war work did not challenge this idea. Appeals to women were made along traditional lines. The ineffectiveness of propaganda occurred when the organisers failed to recognise the practical side of working-class married life. Not many married women accepted a lower domestic standard under the emergency of war and spent more time on war work; instead most tried to do two full-time jobs. This strongly held idea on the sexual division of labour was clearly shown during the demobilisation process. It seemed that experience of war work changed women's work neither in practice nor in theory. It must be registered, however, that war work probably gave many women self-confidence. But did not war work have long-term effects? The Epilogue will attempt a brief examination of the changes in the nature of women's paid work in the 1950's and 1960's and try to relate this to changes in women's ideas about their role in family and society.

EPILOGUE

And I think we'll have to give up
our jobs; since the War, more and
more married women are working.
Well, don't you think a man needs a
job? I think a married man needs a
job more than we do.

Anna Pollert, Girls, Wives, Factory Lives,
(1981), p.85.

The detailed examination in the previous chapters offer several suggestions about the ideology of women on their work and domestic responsibilities. Perhaps the most important similarity among women in Bolton and Coventry during the period studied was their emphasis on domestic routine. This was particularly clear in Coventry where married women had traditionally stayed at home, but even in Bolton, women did not neglect their domestic work. In fact, the recruitment campaigns themselves kept on stressing the traditional women's roles as wives and mothers, even while they were urging women to take up different tasks. This tendency contributed to a striking phenomenon which was common in both towns, that many women left their war-time employment without resentment. Some of them left to start or re-start families. Some left their war jobs because they agreed that those were 'men's jobs' and found 'women's jobs' for themselves. Some went back to their pre-war job, some took advantage of widened opportunities which economic change provided. It seems that only a small minority wanted 'men's jobs'. In general, a woman's self-image was of herself as a wife and a mother, not as a wage-earner. It was most usual for a single working-class woman to have a paid job before she got married. Nevertheless, most women were not expecting to work beyond marriage. It was almost always because of severe financial difficulties within the family that married women worked. To many women, as well as their husbands, married women's paid work was a necessary evil to make both ends meet. It was not a 'career' but a symbol of poverty and something to be ashamed of. As a matter of fact, the marriage bar was practiced in many industries. One of its consequences was that the better-paid jobs were not open to married women. What jobs were available for married women were more likely to be ill-paid and on an irregular basis such as charring. Jobs in the textile industry was the only important

exceptional case in which married and single women were both taken on. Nevertheless, the burden of two jobs was considerable, even with help from husbands, relatives and neighbours. This reality, together with the popular image of women discouraged them from trying to keep a paid job after marriage. Marriage became a supreme goal for a young single woman, and in a working-class marriage, which could not afford any domestic servant, a wife had to be a 'full-time' housewife to keep house and family life going.

The War changed these practices to some extent. The marriage bar was 'temporarily' lifted, and some facilities were set-up to ease the burden for married women war workers, even if they were far from enough. Although the image of women was not shaken by the War, the fact that married women had taken paid work to a much greater extent than before had its own importance. Moreover, the mobilisation of women for the Second World War was followed by shortages of women workers for the export industries. By 1947, the shortage of female labour had become acute nationally except in a few districts, where there had been traditionally few sources of employment for women, such as the North region, Scotland and Wales. The overall shortage was so severe that the Government had to mount another recruitment campaign for women workers in June 1947. The Women's Consultative Committee produced guidelines for the organisers of the campaign, on similar lines to that of 1941. Prior to the campaigns, the Social Survey was asked to investigate the position of women workers in 1947. The results contained several interesting pointers to the status of women's employment in post-war Britain. The survey showed that since the end of the War, single women had dropped out from the job market as frequently as married women, possibly to get married, and younger married women left the labour market more frequently than older ones. Hence, the

average age of women in industry was higher in 1947 than 1943. The conclusion which could be drawn is that, despite the reports that elderly married women were leaving war work quickly during the early period of demobilisation, the overall picture was that, while single women and younger married women were withdrawing from the labour market to start or to re-start a family, older married women over 35 years of age, especially over 45, were more likely to remain in industry. The survey showed that the most decisive factor in women's decision-making as to whether to go out to paid work, was a sentimental one rather than a practical one.¹ The most important element which drove women into paid work was financial. According to the Social Survey, 73 per cent. of women occupied in 1947 thought that money was the chief reason for them to be working, although 82 per cent. of all occupied women thought that employment gave them some advantages apart from the earnings, such as the company of other people, the pleasure of work itself, a broader outlook, and even helped keep them young! The biggest disadvantage was the domestic work which had to be done and was supposed to be a married woman's first and foremost priority.²

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1. 'It would appear that, on the whole, women are against the employment of women in general or are dubious about it because of the idea that a woman's place is in the home and her first duty is toward that home.' Geoffrey Thomas, Women in Industry, Social Survey, 1948, p.17.
 2. In connection with this point, a separate survey was made in Lancashire cotton towns (Bolton, Nelson, Oldham, Blackburn, Burnley and Accrington). It found that the tradition of married women's paid work in cotton mills still survived, i.e. more married women with domestic responsibilities went out to work than in the nation as a whole. This fact had also affected women's outlook to some extent. In cotton towns, the chief objection against women's employment was young children, not sentiment in married life.

Although the 1947 recruitment campaign did not result in a huge influx of women workers immediately,¹ the main features of women's employment did undergo a significant change in the late 'forties and 'fifties. By the late 'fifties, married women in industry, especially those on a part-time basis became so common that several sociological studies were undertaken to explain the change.² In fact, part-time work for married women was, probably one of the most significant changes that took place during the War. Manufacturers employed part-time shifts, when they could not find enough women for full-time work even though such shifts involved more complicated organisation in order to ensure smooth production. But for married women, part-time work provided a way to combine domestic responsibility and paid work. It was also a practical escape from the two extremes of ideology : extreme feminism seeking women's emancipation through full-time work, and the conservatism which insisted that married women should stay at home bringing up a family, this latter position reinforced by fear of declining birth rates.³

The Census reports show that the economic participation rate of married women had risen significantly between 1931 and 1951, which is shown

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1. According to the Ministry of Labour reports, the number of women in industry increased slightly from 5,593,000 in December 1946, to 5,635,000 in December 1947.
 2. For example, Viola Klein, Britain's Married Women Workers, 1965. Pearl Jephcott, Married Women Working, 1962.
 3. Women's work at the end of the War in relation to reinforced pro-natalism was fully discussed in Denise Riley, 'The Free Mothers : pro-natalism and working mothers in industry at the end of the last war in Britain', in History Workshop, No.11, Spring 1981.

clearly in Table 9-1 and Graph I. The upward tendency of married women's participation rate was consistent through the period 1921 to 1961. It was not only the absolute rate that changed between 1931 and 1951; the pattern of married women's employment by age-group also changed considerably during those 20 years.

TABLE 9-1

THE ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION RATE OF MARRIED WOMEN
(EXCLUDING WIDOWED, DIVORCED ETC.) 1921-1961 BY
AGE-GROUP

Age Grpup	1921	1931	1951	1961
	%	%	%	%
- 19*	15.2	19.4	39.2	42.6
20-24	13.2	19.3	37.4	42.8
25-29 **	9.9	15.4	26.6	30.3
30-34	9.3	12.5	23.9	30.2
35-44	9.3	10.1	26.6	37.3
45-54	8.8	8.8	24.6	36.2
55-59	8.0	7.2	16.3	26.7
60 +	5.6	4.2	4.7	7.5
Total	9.1	10.3	22.5	30.1

Sources: Census Report of Population for 1921, 1931, 1951 and 1961.

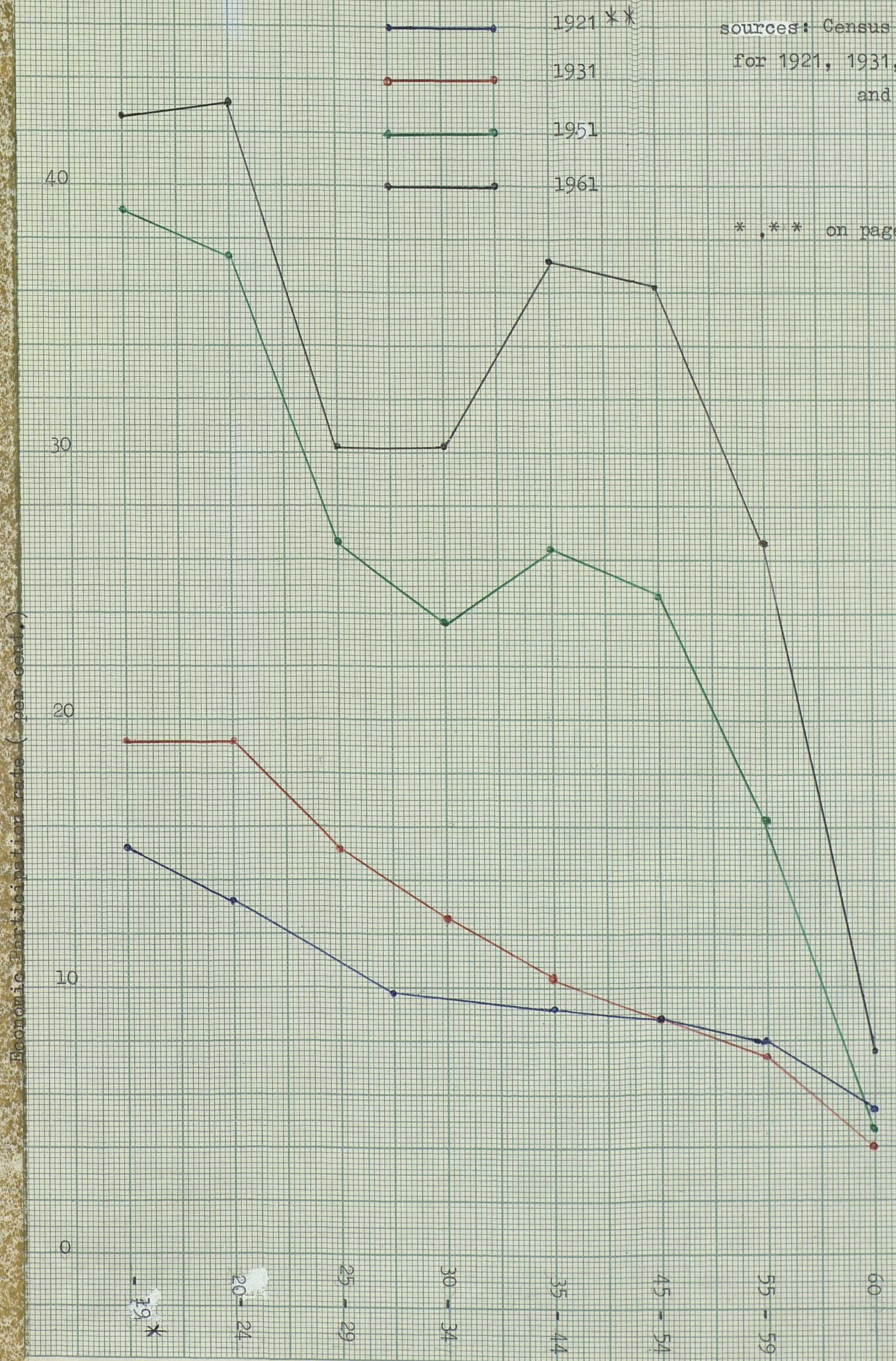
* * There was no breakdown within 25-24 year group in the 1921 Census.

* In 1931, this age group also included women aged 20.

Graph 1 Married women's Economic Participation rate
(excluding widowed, divorces etc.) 1921 - 1961

sources: Census reports
for 1921, 1931, 1951
and 1961

*, ** on page 380



Age group

In 1921 and 1931 among married women, it was young women (under 25 years) who were most likely to be employed. As women got older, which also meant as any children grew up, they gradually left employment. While there is a slightly wider gap in the participation rate between 20 - 24 age group and the following age-group, the downward trend among married women over 20 years of age was smooth and consistent. This means that married women with young children were more likely to work than women with older children. In post-war Britain the pattern has become an entirely different one. There was a considerable decline of the women's participation rate between 20-24 age group and 25-29 age group (in 1961, the rate dropped from 42.8 per cent. to 30.3 per cent. between these two age-groups), which is supposed to be due to the presence of young children. The participation rate remained more or less at this level in the two age-groups of 25-34, as it was women in this age group who were most likely to have had younger (under 10 years of age) children. Then the participation rate rises among women aged between 35 and 44. The youngest children of these women were old enough to allow their mother to come back into the labour market. While in 1951, the pattern was in the process of being established, in 1961, the participation rate was higher among middle-aged married women (aged 35-54) than younger ones (aged 25-34). Having said that, more than half of all married women never worked after marriage, and 30 per cent of them (in 1961) either continued to work regardless of children, or had no children to look after. By 1961 there was an established pattern that some married women were in the labour market until they had their first child. They stayed at home while they had young children to look after and returned to work when their youngest children began to be capable of looking after themselves.

This pattern also affected the overall participation rate of women, which is shown in Graph 11.¹ Surprisingly enough, the participation rate among women aged between 15 and 34 was approximately the same between 1921 and 1961. Women were most likely to have had a paid job in their high-teens, after they finished school. Then they dropped out of the labour market owing to marriage and children. The significant change happened among women aged over 35, while in pre-war days, women in this age group continued to leave their employment as their age increased, in post-war Britain, women started to go back into employment. In 1961, women's economic participation rate had two peaks, one was those aged between 15 and 19, the other among those aged between 45 and 54, although the second peak was significantly lower than the first one. Many factors contributed to this change; the shortages of female labour, the lifting of the marriage bar, the spread of part-time work, fewer children which meant a shorter period that women had to spend on child-bearing and child-rearing.

The survey, which took place in the late fifties, on the employment of married women, many of whom were part-timers, showed that the meaning of married women's earnings to the family economy had changed. For example, Pearl Jephcott wrote a report on married women workers in Bermondsey, Southeast London, with special reference to the biggest employer of women workers there, the Peak Frean Biscuit Company.²

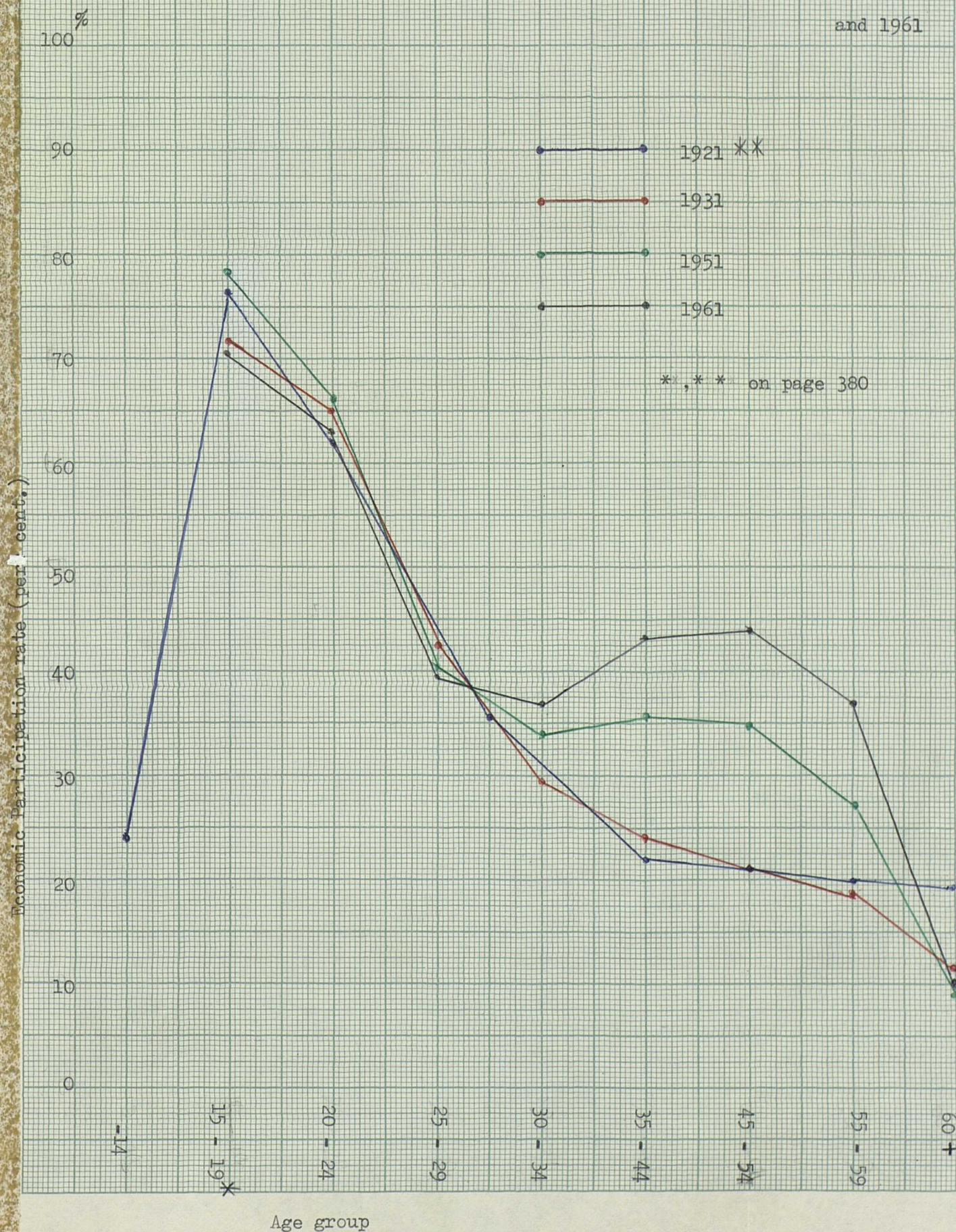
-
1. Local differences were still preserved in 1951. In Bolton, women's participation rate was 46.91% while in Coventry the rate was 37.2%. Moreover, married women made up 52.5% of all occupied women in Bolton. In Coventry, the corresponding rate was 48.8%. However, in both towns, about 2.2% of all occupied married women were engaged in part-time work. Occupational Tables in Census Report for 1951.
 2. In 1951, a group of London School of Economics students found that about 2,000 out of 3,000 women operatives at Peak Frean were married and working on a part-time basis. 'Furthermore, this was a firm which until the War, had set its face against married women employees, to the point of recruiting single girls and of dismissing them on marriage. Labour shortages in the war years, continuing into the 1950s had forced a drastic revision, not only of the firms recruiting policy, but also of its overall organisation of women-power.' Jephcott, op.cit., p.27.

Graph 11 Women's Economic Participation rate by age-group 1921 - 1961

sources : Census report of

1921, 1931, 1951

and 1961



In the majority of cases the wives studied were not driven out to work in order to keep the wolf from the door. ... The way in which her wages were spent showed that the woman worked neither to meet basic economic needs nor to provide personal pleasure for herself. Money was wanted as a means of raising the family's standard of living. 1

The money was spent to buy more and better furniture, electric al equipment such as refrigerators, washing machines, better clothes, second-hand cars, and family holidays. Those were not, strictly speaking, bare necessities, but 'extras' to add to the enjoyment of family life. At the same time, mothers sometimes went out to work to give their children a better education. A music teacher told Mass Observation in the late 'fifties:

It has enabled me to feel more secure and
to send one child to boarding school :
What I earn pays for one child to go there. 2

The widened possibilities of upward social mobility through higher education in this period presumably encouraged such mothers. Viola Klein noted that some working women said that it was difficult to keep a 'good standard' without their earnings. 'Good standard' then included a few extras, not merely the minimum necessities, but also some 'social status' which had started to become attainable for the working-class for the first time. Since those women were not working for the bare necessities, mothers of young children could withdraw from

1. Ibid., p.165.

2. Klein, op.cit., p.38

the labour market to look after children if the family was prepared to accept a lower standard of living for the time being. This all suggests that these women's priority was the home and that their earnings were seldom spent on themselves. They were still tied up with the idea of the family economy, but the family economy itself had entered the stage which Tilly and Scott have called 'Family Consumer Economy.'¹

It seems that the majority of those married women who worked in the 'fifties did not do so in the first place for financial independence within marriage or the pleasures of work, although some of them mentioned that they were in need of other people's company, and something to occupy their time after the children had grown up. Klein's investigation showed, at the same time, that more than half of the men who had said that they approved of married women's employment did so for financial reasons (60 per cent. of single men, 56 per cent. of married men). Typical opinions were:

'With one working in the house we wouldn't be able to get things we wanted and we wouldn't be able to go on a holiday.' 'I approve because it makes things easier in the home. My daughter had gone back to school and is now 17 and taking a special course which we couldn't afford otherwise.'²

1. In their book, Tilly and Scott argued that family consumer economy had started much earlier than the Second World War. However, the notions which women had before the War in Britain seems to suggest that those women were working for necessities, rather than 'extras'!
(For more detailed argument of their conception of the family consumer economy see Louise Tilly & Joan Scott, *op.cit.*, pp.147-226.

2. Klein, *op.cit.*, p.71.

However, the importance of advantages other than financial ones was understood by both women and married men.¹ Middle-class married men, especially saw that the experience which wives obtained by working outside the house improved their married life. A civil servant, whose wife restarted work after their children had grown up said;

It's given us a fresh interest, almost as though we were starting again. At one time, say, we went out once a week to the pictures, opera or anything, it used to be just chorey : but now we meet in town, have tea and then go somewhere. She seems freer and she has other things to talk about which she didn't have before.

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Nevertheless, although such views are clearly different from those insisting that women's place was at home,³ the fundamental structure of marriage remained unchanged, i.e. husbands were still bread-winners, and wives, at their best, were earning 'extras'. Experience gained by women in working outside the home might be considered to have improved the relationship between husbands and wives. But married women's employment was never viewed from the angle of sexual equality (both in rights and responsibilities), or financial independence within marriage. In fact, among those men who approved married women working, only 3 per cent (4 per cent of single men, 2 per cent of married men) gave such reasons for their approval. Although there was some sign among husbands, especially middle-class ones, that they had become aware of the benefits of married women's employment, apart from the money, by the late 'fifties, it

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1. While 23 per cent of married men who approved of married women's employment gave 'Gives wife other interest' as a reason, only 13 per cent of single men gave this as a reason. Ibid., p.70.
 2. Ibid., p.76.
 3. According to Klein's report 32 per cent of married men and 28 per cent of single men unconditionally disapproved of married women working. 'If the husband brings home a fairly good wage then the wife should be made to stay at home. The trouble is some women don't know how to handle money and in that way never have enough.' 'If I wanted just a housekeeper I would have got one without marrying her. Her place is at home with the kids. She gets plenty (presumably money) to keep her at home in any case.' Ibid., p.69.

took a long time for that consciousness to spread down into the majority of the working-class, both men and women.

In the 'seventies, when Anna Pollert did her research on women workers in a Bristol tobacco factory, she found that the stereotype of women workers had lingered on both as public image and self-image. Almost all young single women workers were considering marriage as their ultimate goal,¹ and were looking forward to as sheltered and cosy a life as wife and mother within the limits imposed by the earnings of their working-class husbands.

Get married ... Anything's better than working here. Well, most women gets (sic.) married, don't they? Not all of them works all their lives like a man ... I don't really believe in married women working. Well, 'cos, there's not much work anyway, and they ought to make room for people what have got to lead their own lives. 2

In those cases where married women had to work, it was often thought that part-time work was adequate. Pollert also found that even among married women who had continued to work through their child-rearing period, the illusion that their working life was temporary persisted strongly. She suggested that this illusion caused the lack of commitment to work and the lack of a feeling of a right to work, which, in turn, reinforced the male

1: Pollert described how women's expectations underlay even factory life:

... Romance permeated the factory. The glowingly lipsticked magazine cover, the love stories, the male pop heroes, the pictures of boyfriends, the circulation of wedding photographs, all were a bizarre contrast to the racket of the dark oil machine. I was frequently caught out by the conversation on rings; ... Femininity and attractiveness were endlessly discussed: fashion, hair, skin, bodies, diets, slimming.

Anna Pollert, *Girls, Wives, Factory Lives*, (1981), p.101.

2. Ibid., p.101.

image of women as unreliable workers.

The idea of the traditional role of women as housekeepers had lasted, not only through the War, but also throughout the period of the expansion of married women's employment in the 'fifties and 'sixties. Does it mean that not only war work itself, but also women's self-confidence gained through participation in war work, which we have registered in previous chapters, were both ineffective in altering women's self-image as wife and mother? In the short run, the answer seems to be 'yes'. However, it always takes longer to alter the image. It is usually the practice that changes first and the image which follows. In this sense, the War and shortages of female labour obviously changed the practice. The economic participation rate of married women increased slightly between 1921 and 1931, but the real, dramatic change took place between 1931 and 1951, when not only the level of participation, but the pattern by age-group changed. The tendency for middle-aged married women to return to the labour market after the children had grown up had become much more pronounced by 1961. This change could have occurred without the War, as industrialisation and urbanisation proceeded. It is probable that women's experiences in the war factory accelerated this tendency. Many women who re-entered the labour market at the age of 40 in 1960, for example, were those who had left war-time employment in 1945 at the age of 25 to start a family.

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