

The Working Woman

WOMEN IN
STEEL AND
COAL

By
Margaret Cowl

A TRUE
LIFE STORY

By
Dorothy Calhoun

THE AMERICAN
SCENE

By
William Gropper



INTO THE STREETS MAY 1, 1935!

THE Working Woman

MARGARET COWL, Editor

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Into the Streets May First

WORKERS' International Day of Demonstration; Working Women in All Trades and Industries; Unemployed Women—Organized and Unorganized.

Wives of steel workers, wives of coal miners, wives of all workers, wives of dirt farmers, wives of small store keepers, women of the professions—join the ranks of the marching workers on May First.

Take part in the workers' parades on May First. Come to the workers' meetings on May First. Proclaim in an organized way your determination to fight for the right to work and live.

For higher wages, equal pay for equal work; adequate and equal relief; the right to work; against evictions; for lower prices, no sales taxation; for free lunch for school children, free transportation for school children. Against military training in schools; free birth control clinics, free day nurseries. For H. R. 2827, the Workers' Unemployment Insurance and Old Age Pension Bill; for maternity insurance; against the anti-birth control laws—Section 211. For jobs and relief for the youth. For freedom in the schools. For the right to strike, picket and organize. Com-

Birthday Greetings to

ERNST THAELMANN

Our warmest international greetings to you on the occasion of your forty-ninth birthday on April 16.

We extend our hand to you in a pledge worthy of the courageous and unflinching stand you have taken for freedom and against fascism and imperialist war.

Organizations and individuals send greetings to:

ERNST THAELMANN
Moabit Prison
Berlin, Germany.

plete equality for Negro women. Fight war and fascism. Demand the freedom of the Scottsboro boys. Demand complete equality with men in social, economic, political and cultural life. Support the movement against the shipment of munitions to Cuba. Send international solidarity greetings to our sisters in Cuba. Demand the freedom of anti-fascists in Hitler Germany—Else Steinfurth, Lene Overlach, Thaelmann and all others.

Send birthday greetings to the staunch heroic anti-fascist fighter Thaelmann. Send greetings to the women in the Soviet Union. Rally to support the Soviet Union against the threatening war attacks.

Organize into trade-unions. Organize Mothers' Rights Clubs. Work to have your trade union, your organization, join the united front movement against high prices, sales tax, against war and fascism. Organize neighborhood and factory groups of women and join these to this fighting united front of the workers.

Prepare the way for the only true democracy—the democracy of the workers! Against the horrors of fascism; for a Soviet America.

\$20,000 Needed Immediately in the Fight to Free Scottsboro Boys.

Send contribution to the International Labor Defense, 80 East 11th Street, New York, N. Y.

A True Life Story

By Dorothy Calhoun

PART I

THIRTY years ago my mother and her five younger sisters were transplanted from a poverty-stricken farm to a South Carolina cotton mill. Her father was starved off his land and forced to take his little family and move into town to the dreaded factory.

Mama's youngest sister was only seven years old. The others were nine, ten, twelve and fifteen respectively. Though none had been to school they all had to go into the factory. The youngest made nine cents a day, cleaning guides in the spinning room. Mama, who was fifteen, was put to learning how to spin.

The frames were twice as tall as Mama and three times as tall as her seven-year old sister. Mama made 18 cents a day and 25 cents later, when she became a skilled spinner. When she began earning \$3 a week she was very glad as her sisters hardly made that all together. Grandpa McAllister was a lover of the soil and each year he spent the spring evenings after a hard day's work in the mill, trying to coax vegetables to grow in the little plot back of their factory shack.

From Six to Six

Mama and her sisters worked from six to six. Sometimes when they came home from the day's work their young bodies were so tired they could barely sit up and eat the supper of boiled bacon and beans. Mama often fell asleep over her sorgum and fried bacon at the breakfast table in the mornings.

Two years later, at the age of nine years the youngest of Mama's sisters died. The doctor called it some latin name that caused her death. But Mama knew it was working in the hot, unclean factory when she should have been in school eating good wholesome meals. But a worker's kid hasn't got a chance. And they stayed away from work only one day and this tiny sister of my mother's was buried on Sunday and they went back to work next day and couldn't collect any insurance, because they were behind in payments.

It seems that working these terrible long hours they would have no desire to go out to socials. But mama was young and she and her sisters longed for life. So they went to church and prayer meetings. (The only means of meeting their fellow workers, except in the factory). And they went up to be prayed for at the altar and went to the all-day singings on Sundays; and went to the annual picnic that was held each June by the Baptist Emanuel Church and they were all baptised and became members of the church. There was nothing to do except to work and give your soul to Jesus for safekeeping.

Work Hard and Pray

Mama never heard of the class struggle in those far-away days. She was told from the time that she entered the mill that she must work and pray and she'd become an angel when she died and could then sit on the right hand of God's shining throne. The Boss Spinner was a deacon of the church and passed the collection plate every Sunday. His daughters went to grammar school and wore pretty dresses. Mama went on living on fried bacon and corn bread and occasionally some boiled potatoes for a change. Mama often thought of how happy she would be when she could go to heaven and see Christ. But if she complained about too much work the Boss Spinner told her the company was losing money and everybody must work hard and nobody could loaf on their job.

Mama's thirteen-year-old sister Collie often rebelled. Little Colleen McAllister often tried to get mama and her other sisters not to go into the factory on the blue, cold mornings. "Let's doan go to that ole mill today. I'm dog-tired and can't work. If you-all won't go I won't." But mama told her not to be silly, they had to work so they could eat.

Once when Collie threw a bobbin in the Boss Spinner's face, Grandpa McAllister had to make her go in and beg to be taken back on in the factory. But one day Collie refused to go on day after day slaving. And

when the boss ordered her to do some extra cleaning of her sides she told him to go to hell and went home and got her other dress and wrapped it up and left home. From that morning till this my mother never saw this rebellious sister. No one knew what ever became of her. Years later it was rumored she dressed in fine silks and painted her face and was seen on a disreputable street in Columbia, S.C.

Marriage—Freedom?

My mother went on working. When the young loomfixer, with a thin hollow face and a mustache walked home from church every Sunday night with her for a few months, she was thrilled when he asked her to marry him. She looked upon marriage as a delivery out of bondage.

The loomfixer was making \$12 a week. Mama was then making \$6. Under the South Carolina moon they planned their life to come. He would work hard and try to please the boss and maybe become a super, some day, and mama could stay at home and wear white linen shirtwaists and a bustle and they'd be happy and well-fed. So they were married.

There was no room in mama's home for them. They had no furniture to set up housekeeping so they went to live at his boarding place. But instead of \$5 a week board as before, he now had to pay the landlady \$9 a week for the two of them.

It was clear enough that mama would have to work. For a while at least. But papa never got to be superintendent of the mill. Six months after they were married he got fired for sassing the boss-man. Mama was heartbroken.

Leaves Machine to Give Birth

Papa went away to another mill town, got a job and sent for mama. There began the restless migration from mill to mill that went on for 20 years. During which time mama stopped work at her machines only long enough to give birth to us five kids. During that time we never had

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A MAGAZINE FOR WORKING WOMEN, FARM WOMEN AND WORKING CLASS HOUSEWIVES

Women in Coal and Steel

By Margaret Cowl

IN March, 1935, the writer made a trip to the steel and coal districts around Pittsburgh. The answers given by the wives of the steel and coal mining workers to the questions of the writer, are the story of the struggle of the steel and mine workers for the right to existence, the fight to organize into trade unions and to control these unions by rank and file. The wives of these workers in these basic industries are partners in the struggle. The workers who made possible the Empire State and Woolworth buildings, whose strength and youth are moulded into the steel structures holding up these buildings, are now forced into a condition of slow starvation. These workers who made possible the subways of the country, the railroad systems, must look upon hungry faces of their little ones; must watch the youth drift into a life of idiocy without the opportunity of creative activities.

Twelve Children Per Family

The families are large. From six to twelve children per family. No funds with which to secure the information to space or limit the number of children. "Let's organize the women," say coal miners, maybe there will not be so many hungry mouths to feed." The legal restriction on birth control information in the State of Pennsylvania is very severe.

Mrs. of Pike Patch (coal mining) in So. Brownsville, Pa., volunteered the following answers:

Q. How old are you? A. 39 years old.

Q. How many children have you? A. 12 living children.

Q. Does your husband work in the coal mines? Not at present. But sometimes he work two and three days a week.

Q. What does he earn for these two or three days? He earns about \$5 to \$5 a day. But we do not get all the money he earns, because back rent and what we owe the grocer is deducted. Sometimes he finds \$1 or 50 cents in the pay envelope.

Q. Are you assisted by getting some relief? A. The first day my

husband starts work, the company has the relief stopped. When he gets no work at all, we get cash relief—\$9.75 for the 14 of us.

Q. Do your babies get milk? A. I bought a cow. Not all the money is paid for the cow yet. But now I must give up the cow because I owe \$150 for hay. The babies will not get any more milk.

Q. What do the children eat? A. The same as what everyone else eats, oatmeal in the morning, bread and coffee in the daytime and beans for supper.

Q. What church do you go to? A. I do not go to church because I have no clothes to wear.

Mrs. same place:

Q. How many children have you? A. Ten.

Q. How many years do you live in this house? A. We bought it six years ago. But before that, we lived in this house for ten years.

Q. How much rent did you pay, and what is still owing on the house? A. We paid \$12 a month rent for ten years. We paid in \$1,100 and still owe \$600. Our interest and taxes have not been paid for the last two years.

(The house is just a shack. No accommodations, no bathroom, just electric wire and one water spigot.

Electric Washing Machines Useless

Mrs., Elyssia Patch, the Monessen Coal Co.:

Q. You have an electric washing machine, that makes work easier? A. It cannot be used. Water and electricity have been cut off. We must use kerosene lamps for light and travel down to the pump to get water.

Q. What pay does your husband get? A. It is the same as if he did not work, even worse. When he works the company takes the wages for back rent. When he does not work, we at least get some relief—\$9.50 for the eight of us.

Q. Is the relief sufficient to feed the family with? A. We owe the

grocer \$50 over the relief check. Prices are rising and we can buy less and less. We can't buy soap, kerosene, tubs, pans anymore. Often we sit in the dark.

Q. What do you feed your family? A. In the morning they get coffee; lunch, what is left over from supper. For supper they get fried potatoes or beans.

Q. Do all in the family go to church? A. No, not all, because we did not christen the baby. We did not have the \$2 needed to give to the priest.

Families Are Separated

Mrs. (steel workers wife):

Q. Does your husband work? A I do not know. He had to leave this town to see if he can find work elsewhere. It is one month now since I did not hear from him.

Q. How many children have you living with you? A. Ten. Nine now, because my boy was put in prison because he stole a piece of scrap from the company.

Mrs. (Negro wife of coal miner):

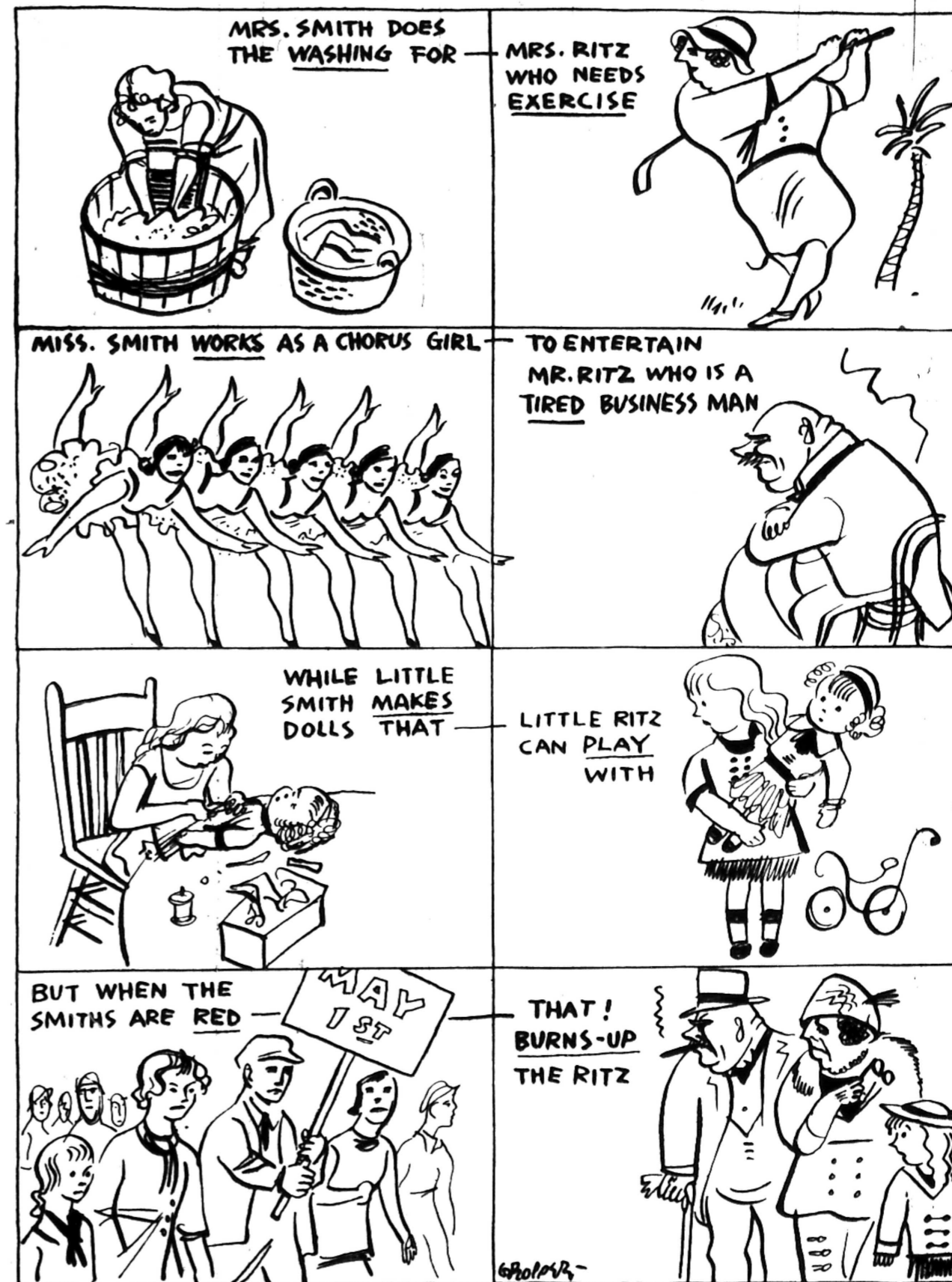
Q. Is your husband employed? A. My husband has not been working for two years. He left me and my three children.

Q. Do you get relief? A. Every day I went and asked for relief. But they only promised, but did not give me relief. Then I found out about the unemployed council. I went to them. They helped me get relief. They can't scare me anymore.

Braddock and Duquesne are the oldest steel towns in the Pittsburgh district. Most of the workers there having been working in the steel mills up to 16 years. The majority of them, are married. Many own homes with taxes unpaid for two to three years. That amounts to \$200 to \$300. Most of the families are in debt to the grocer up to \$100 each.

The average wage paid by the Carnegie Steel Co., to the steel worker for

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THE AMERICAN SCENE

By WILLIAM GROPPER

"U-Don't-Need-A-Biscuit!"

By Ann Barton

THE strike of 6,000 National Biscuit Company workers is entering its fourth month. In New York City 1,500 of the 3,000 strikers are women.

The majority of these women have worked for the National Biscuit Company from ten to twenty years. The younger women tell you "I haven't worked there long—only five years!" Some of the older women have worked in the plant for forty years, even before 1898 when the National Biscuit Company was incorporated.

A survey of the Board of Directors reveals the name of Ogden Mills, of the National Committee of the Republican Party; Jackson Eli Reynolds, President also of the First National Bank, (Morgan controlled); and Franklin D'Olier, director of the Chase National Bank (Rockefeller-controlled).

It is these interests that have made a furious attack upon the continued existence of the union, arresting strikers, beating them, men and women alike, and, lately, obtaining an injunction, prohibiting strikers from picketing *within four blocks of the plant!*

The strike was called January 8th, when the company refused to live up to its agreement with the union, the Inside Bakery Workers Federal Union No. 19595. The union's demand was for "equalization" of wages, or more familiarly, "equal pay for equal work". It was in the Philadelphia plant that the company first began to contest the strength of the union. In answer 6,000 workers in plants in New York, Philadelphia, Newark, and York, Pennsylvania, and Atlanta, Georgia, came out on strike.

The women speak of the speed-up. In the icing department and the zwieback department, they relate, the speed-up was so intense that the skin of the girls was torn off as they worked madly at the conveyor that took the cakes or the cartons past them almost more quickly than they could get at them. They spoke of unventilated rooms, of the girls whose job it was to turn the cakes. For speed-up purposes the company in-

stalled a platform fifteen feet off the floor. Windows and doors were shut. Near the ceiling it was hot and breathless. One day a girl fell, injuring her back.

They spoke of "short" time.—"We never knew when they would send us home. Sometimes our week's time would come to no more than three days a 'week'!"

In May, 1934, all the workers in the New York plant stopped work at their machines for twenty minutes. Not all of the girls knew what was happening. But they found out that the stoppage had convinced the plant that the union represented the majority of the workers.

The girls began almost immediately to feel the difference between a non-union, and a union shop. Electric fans were put in unventilated rooms, the killing speed-up was slackened, and the company began paying equal pay for equal work.

"Why do you think the newspapers keep quiet about us?" asked the

young woman. "Because," she answered, "Ogden Mills owns half of our company. He's bought out the police and the newspapers. Why do you think one of our pickets was nearly killed by a cop, and the police protect the scabs?"

Before the injunction was served and before the president of the union, William Galvin was persuaded by the strikers and the strike committee that the union must call for mass picketing of strikers and sympathizers, the women were demanding more militant action.

"Maybe they don't want mass picketing because that's supposed to be Red," said one girl doubtfully, as a group of them talked together about mass picketing.

"What if it is," said another striker strongly, "it helped the Ohrbach people to win their strike."

"Those Ohrbach strikers put up a fight! We've got to have a mass picket line like they did!" said a matronly looking stout woman.

"Sure we picket in the rain," said one girl as she walked up and down



A Soviet Working Girl Mounting a Press

Foto from the magazine "Soviet Russia Today"

during a veritable blast of rain, we are strikers! We're not sugar"! Young and old alike during the bitter weather of January, during rain and snow, they've held their picket lines.

Wide support has been given this strike by workers all over the country. The slogan "*U-Don't-Need-A-Biscuit!*" improvised by the strikers themselves, has been carried all over the country. The Communist Party has issued leaflets to the strikers practically every day calling on them to strengthen their strike, and now, to smash the vicious injunction.

Now all sympathizers to the strike, have been invited by the union to help them—with picketing, with the boycott campaign of the National Biscuit Company products, with relief. The Communist Party, Women's Councils, workers' groups are mobilizing their forces to help the strike. Already Communists and Socialists have responded. They, together with

From a Coal Town

Dear Editor:

I've been a member of the Women's Auxiliary of the Progressive Miners of America ever since they started to organize in 1932. Many of our present troubles would have been corrected if we knew then what we know now. In the last year, our auxiliaries have fallen down in membership a great deal, partly because the reactionary officials have been stamping out every sign of militant activity and tell us to keep our noses out of men's business and not to go picketing, but to stay at home, make bed sheets, cook and hold parties, but our officers seem to forget there is hardly anything to cook and nothing to sew.

Our members have shown very good fighting spirit when the strike was on and I was wondering what is the matter now. Some of our members are active among the unemployed but mostly our branches are devoted to holding dances, parties and affairs. Our Progressive Miner paper doesn't have hardly any educational articles for the womenfolk, but just announce-

the strikers have been herded into police wagons from the picket lines. But the fight is a strong one. The offer of the company to take back 50 per cent of the strikers was met with a voluminous "NO" at the meeting where the proposals was brought to the strikers. *All or none*" and "*Back only with the Union*" are slogans that every striker holds. The strike of the National Biscuit Company strikers shows the unswerving determination of the workers to build their unions and defend them. It shows also the increasing militancy of working class women. The strikers need all possible support. They need pickets to swell their ranks. They need help in the way of food, relief. Such assistance to the strike can be given in New York through the New York office of the union at 245 West 14th Street. Women should reach the local office of the union and offer their help and throughout the country make the slogan "*U-Don't-Need-A-Biscuit*" a powerful one.

ments. What I think we need is some sort of educational activity in our branches, because that will also help to activate our members and teach them about the miners' fight.

I have been reading a few copies of the *Working Woman* and I think if our Women's Auxiliary members were reading this magazine, they wouldn't be fighting about petty things or having personal and petty squabbles, but would stand together and struggle for better conditions.

Women's Auxiliary Member,
Progressive Miners of America

RECIPE FOR SOUP

(By a worker's wife from
Ambridge, Pa.)

First prepare the jars. Then wash the celery, leek, cabbage, parsley, parsnips and tomatoes.

Place the tomatoes in hot water. Then pour off the water and peel the tomatoes. Let the tomatoes stand in pan until you do the following:

Partly fill the jars with the celery, leek, cabbage, parsley and parsnips. Then put the tomatoes in. Also the tomato juice. Press the vegetables

(in the jars) with the handle of a wooden spoon so that you have the tomatoes in all spaces.

Place the rubbers and lids on the jars and cook the jars for a half hour. Turn jars over when done to see if the lids are tight.

This makes delicious vegetable soup. It can also be cooked with some water and a bone or some meat. It can be strained and some noodles or rice added, or eaten unstrained, as vegetable soup.

Mrs. Mary Firich.

From a Steel Town

Dear Sister Editor:

I am sending you this story of some true facts that has happened to us working women. Housewives of rich men apply to the relief offices for servants. We were sent out to be hired to work and then taken off relief. Our work was to do washing, ironing, all-house cleaning, cooking, scrub, paint and wash windows on outside for eight and nine in family for \$5 or \$2.50 a week if the relief agent would send them a colored woman. And if she would charge them \$5 a week they would keep the colored woman, until they could get a white girl.

They phone back to the offices to send them a white girl. When the white girl arrived, they would hire the poor girl and tell her all kind of things that they would give her a good home, as one in the family, and work the poor girl too death for only \$2.50 a week, and then she is laid off the relief roll. And sometimes with a child and old parents to support. This is why the *Working Woman* should help to organize a working women's union here. A poor mother here and there, children suffer for no attention.

With husbands not making enough to support them. We have in our city invalid children who have never walked or talked. With poor parents trying to care for them, with little means. I hope you will copy this and print it, I will thank you kindly.

A Steel Worker's Wife.

Our clothes are getting ragged
And our shoes are getting thin;
They hand us a new deal,
For no wages to come in.

Our feet are getting weary,
And our stomach shakes within;
And our hands used to work
To earn our bread and jam.

Our hands are getting weaker,
And our eyes are getting dim;
For we cannot see to sing,
The bourgeoisie latest hymn.

Now we are getting older,
And our hair is turning gray;
For our thrift, independence,
We see a different day.

Oh, the days of our childhood,
The time when we were young;
We would study to grow up,
With work, it would be more fun.

A Poem

Back in the time of school days,
We were taught the golden rule;
"Do unto others,
As they should do unto you."

To womanhood, we grew,
When we went to work each day;
We struggle hard from labor,
We would always get some pay.

We've worked from city to farms,
We have cut the new mown hay;
Kept warm from coal of the mines,
"You're dependent," boss, would say.

Oh, days of this depression,
From New York to Frisco Bay;
The days when we were younger,
Look for times be bright and gay.

But now we have no income,
Food, nor bed on which to lay;
We can't even have a home,
Streets we roam, we're in the way.

Workers' children are starving,
Many have starved and died;
Misery of this depression,
From hunger mothers have cried.

For workers have dole portions,
Hungry children cry for bread;
Workers' rations we exist on,
Are making us now turn red.

The bosses they have robbed us,
Cheat from left to right its sin;
We must organize and fight,
That's how we are going to win.

*Written by a Group of Twelve
Women in the Working Woman
Reading Circle, Utah, County,
Utah.*

World Program Against War and Fascism

Working women, and women of professions, gathered together at the World Congress of Women Against War and Fascism in Paris, on August 4, 5 and 6, 1934, adopted the following program:

For a complete equality with men in all life; social, economic, political, cultural for the protection of her children; in the creation of the necessary social institutions; by the refusal to allow their spirits to be poisoned by militaristic and chauvinistic education; by the refusal to allow the children's lives to be endangered by the rivalries of imperialistic interests; to refuse to submit to fascism; to refuse to submit to war; for social justice.

The women are aware that it is impossible to realize full satisfaction of their rights without a deep transformation of the present social order, but in this chart of rights, which constitutes the minimum program, they present these immediate demands: The extension of existing rights; the amelioration of the social laws.

The formation of new institutions—in particular those which will reconcile the work of women with the demands made on her by the home.

They wish to obtain: Civic and political freedom; equality with men before the law.

The right to work and in consequence all of the protections of social insurance both those existing and those to be created.

Equality of accession to these functions and professions; equality in wages for work; equality in political rights; equality in moral rights.

The free access to all education institutions and equality in admission to these institutions be they primary, secondary, higher schools, schools of the arts or technical schools.

The right of voluntary motherhood.

Winners of WORKING WOMAN subscription contest will be announced in the June issue of the WORKING WOMAN. In accordance with the postal regulations the subscription contest was closed as of April 1 and not as of May 1 as was announced in the April issue of the WORKING WOMAN. The results of the contest are as announced in the April issue of the WORKING WOMAN.—*Business Manager.*

The Women's Committee of the American League Against War and Fascism has sent out an appeal to women's organizations, to trade unions, to collect signatures on a petition for complete disarmament and against war. The WORKING WOMAN calls upon all women's organizations and trade unions, upon women's committees in the neighborhoods and in the factories, to secure this petition from the American League and to collect as many signatures as is possible among all who are opposed to war. When filled, the sheets of signatures will be taken to Washington, D.C., by a women's delegation. Petitions will be sent on request from the Women's Committee of the American League Against War and Fascism, 112 East 19th Street, Room 605, New York, N. Y.

Mail Address of

WORKING WOMAN

P. O. Box 186, Station D

New York, N. Y.

Unconquered Spirit

The Negro Women's Battle Under "Freedom"

By Eugene Gordon

NEGRO women are held at the bottom of the economic structure in the United States both by the conditions which hold Negro men there and by the additional fact of their sex. As women they are restricted to certain fields of ill-paid labor, and as Negroes they are made to take the meanest and lowest paid jobs in these fields. Conditions which hold Negroes in general to a state of semi-slavery are, on the farms, share-cropping and contract labor, and, in the cities and towns (as well as on the farms), discrimination and jimcrow. Discrimination forces the working-class Negro family into an economic and social caste lower even than that of the poorest whites, and jimcrow customs and laws force this family to stay there.

Owing to this situation, the Negro working woman was long ago forced to take to farm labor, to domestic work, and to personal service. Farm labor in the South is looked upon by the ruling class as the "lowest" of all work for women, hence even the "poor whites" contemptuously refer to this labor as "working in the field like a nigger." But domestic and personal service is considered by the master class as ideal for Negroes, because it preserves the old relationship of master (or mistress) and slave. Since the Negro's inferior treatment lies in the fact that he is economically inferior, the old relationship of master and slave is maintained to keep him inferior and to justify inferior treatment.

For three hundred years Negro women have worked on the farms as labors and in upper-class households as domestics and personal servants. They went into these occupations almost completely up to 1910, but from that year, according to the Women's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor ("The Employment and Unemployment of Negro Women," July, 1934), Negro women workers have left the farm in large numbers. More than three-fifths of these deserters of the old slave life entered domestic and personal ser-

vice. Although it was looked upon as a low type of work, as a type of work that particularly suited the Negro woman, domestic and personal it was an upward move on the ladder of economic advancement more or less regular hours at comparatively easy tasks indoors were better than back-breaking labor from sunup to sundown, summer and winter, out of doors.

In 1930 there were considerably more than 600,000 Negro women in domestic and personal service. They were there because they could not get more desirable work. What does this mean except that a mass of Negro working women equal to the population of Rhode Island or South Dakota at the last census, and greater than the 1930 population of New Orleans by nearly 200,000, are still subjected to abuses they had to suffer during slavery is that as a "free" domestic or servant a Negro woman may sometimes quit when she wishes. As a slave she could not quit, because she was her boss's private property. Today she may sometimes quit if she doesn't mind running the risk of starving or becoming a prostitute. In some ways she is less secure than she was under slavery. In slavery days she was insured against starvation, nakedness, and lack of shelter, even if she got no wages. Today she may get food, shelter, and miserable wages, but there is always the spectre of unemployment, unless she is an "ideal" servant (hard-working, loyal, satisfied, uncomplaining).

Forced to Stay Illiterate

When she is an "ideal" servant, however, the Negro woman is most likely to be enslaved. And this statement leads to an explanation of the assertion that a Negro domestic or personal servant may sometimes quit her employer. I have in mind numerous cases of young Negro women, ignorant of their rights because forced to stay illiterate, who have worked

for years for white families in the South. Moving North, these families have taken their servants with them, giving them only board and keep while promising actual pay and threatening the girls with jail if they attempt to escape. Under such circumstances the woman or girl is no better off than she would be under slavery.

Negro Woman Advances

But step by step, in the face of an enemy that employs the most brutal methods, the Negro working woman advances along the road toward economic emancipation. Three hundred years of struggle have wrung one victory after another from the ruling class. "Negro women showed substantial gains in domestic and personal jobs of a more modern and better standardized nature than household employment, that is, in jobs more similar to those in the industrial field" in 1930, the Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor admits, and cites figures to prove it. These figures show that the 2,000,000 Negro women workers in the United States are divided into occupations as follows: more than 50,000 in power laundries and cleaning and dyeing establishments; 18,000 housekeepers and stewards; about 18,000 waitresses; some 16,000 untrained nurses and midwives; more than 12,000 barbers, hairdressers, and manicurists; nearly 12,000 charwomen and cleaners; more than 4,000 elevator tenders. These are significant figures when applied to a category of workers who, a few generations ago, could get nothing better to do than domestic or personal service.

These dry figures tell an important and significant story. It is a story that most of us are well acquainted with, but a story which will bear constant repetition. These women won such concessions as they got from the ruling class only through desperate struggle against odds. They won these concessions by fighting for them. Yet their fights were generally

(Continued on page 13)

Defeat the Sales Tax!

By Grace Hutchins

If you live in W. Va., you have to pay a tax of sixteen and two-thirds per cent on a six-cent can of beans!"

We were talking about the sales tax and I decided to find out just what it really is in the different states. So I went up to the Public Library and the librarian got out for me a huge volume on taxes in the United States, telling of the new laws entered in the last two years, "emergency taxes" to get money for "relief" or for the state school funds.

It shows that in 28 states new laws have been passed which in effect make the consumers pay for the relief, such as it is. Of course, the workers and working-class families make up the great mass of small consumers, so that by these new laws the workers are made to pay for their own unemployment "relief." The taxes come much more heavily on the small consumer than on the larger, richer buyers.

An Upside-Down Income Tax

A sales tax is sometimes called "an upside-down income tax" because it comes hardest on those least able to pay instead of on those with more money to spend. Take, for example, the two per cent sales tax in New York, which is really much more than two per cent on small purchases. The fact is that this tax in New York takes from the worker who make \$1,000 in a year \$5.48 of his spendings. But it takes from the multi-millionaire, who has an income of \$1,000,000, only sixteen cents per \$1,000.

This means that the worker is paying a sales tax in New York City that is 34 times heavier, in proportion to his income, than the millionaire is paying. Why? Because the worker in order to keep himself and his family alive has to spend a larger proportion of his income on the necessities of life.

The heavier tax on small purchases under a dollar—two, three and seven per cent on a package of cigarettes, all the way up to sixteen and two-thirds per cent on a six cent can of

beans in the State of W. Va., of course comes hardest on the worker whose purchases are less than a dollar. If food is included in the sales tax, as it is in at least eight states, the situation is much worse.

How the Rich Go Free

If you live in any one of the three rich states, Illinois, Michigan or California, you have to pay a tax on food, as well as on almost everything else. But in these three rich states, there is no state income tax on the incomes of the well-to-do.

In Ohio you have to pay a tax on everything you eat or drink except milk, bread, or liquor in state stores. When you buy something costing from nine to 14 cents, you get a green one-cent coupon. For things costing from 41 to 71 cents, you have to buy a red two-cent coupon. If the thing costs from 71 cents to \$1.08 you have to pay for a five-cent coupon in addition. And so on up.

In order to pay back the bankers and other capitalists who floated "relief bonds" in this State of Ohio, you have to buy little tickets in eleven different colors, besides the food and the other things you have to buy in order to live.

"Every state will be collecting a sales tax within a few years," said the New York State Tax Commissioner, Mark Graves, when he spoke in Washington and urged a high general sales tax for the whole country.

How to Fight Against the Tax

But we can defeat the sales tax if we organize our forces strong enough against it. Small businessmen will come into this struggle with us against the tax, for they find it much harder to pass on the tax to the consumer than the large companies find it. One neighborhood shopkeeper said he had collected only \$3.27 for the sales tax in the last month, but he had to pay himself a tax totalling \$7.49. Many small shopkeepers are already supporting the fight against the tax.

In New Jersey the sales tax was defeated because the opposition to it

was such that it could not be put over on the people.

Clara Bodian, Secretary of the United Councils of Working Women, who has just returned from Cleveland, tells me that the struggle against the tax in Ohio is already strong and well-developed. One newspaper is conducting a vote against the tax in its daily issue.

Other working-class organizations, the Unemployment Councils, the language organizations of workers, must support the fight against the spread of these taxes and against the laws already passed. Let us force the State Governors, the city Mayors, and other public officials to conduct open hearings on the sales tax, so that workers and small businessmen may make known their opposition to a tax that falls most heavily on those least able to pay. Let us make them tax the rich for unemployment insurance.

Write to the

UNITED COUNCIL OF
WORKING WOMEN

80 East 11th Street

New York, N. Y.

on what to do to fight

high prices and

sales taxes

"Blessings of N.R.A."

By Gussie Reed

THE working women of America are already tasting fascist methods in the form of wage-cuts, high prices, speed-up, mass dismissals of married women, and sales taxation. Take the N.R.A. codes: In the bedtime stories dished out in his fire-side talks, Roosevelt tells us that the N.R.A. codes are for our protection. Fine protection: 135 codes sanction lower wages for women. The Learner's and Subnormal Labor clauses are tricks to lower women's wages, since many women are incorrectly categorized as learner or subnormal, as in the white goods trades. In Southland Alabama, for example, a well known slave-driving textile plant pays the Negro women \$9 where the code calls for \$12. And this with the blessings of the N.R.A. Boards.

The Hitler method of mass dismissals of married women from factories, was seized upon by the federal government. In 1932, under the Economy Act, 4,000 married women were dismissed from government employ.

The twin sister of fascism is war.

In the last world war, women were drawn into industry to replace men sent to the front. Since then women have been increasingly drawn into basic industries, such as steel, electrical equipment, chemicals, munitions, radio and rayon (this last seems harmless, yet it can be converted into a war industry over night). In some of these industries women form more than one-half of the working force.

In the next war, women will not only form the backbone of industrial life, but according to the talk of mili-

tary experts, will even be sent to the front. Poland, has already drafted a law which calls for the conscription of women if necessary to amplify the thinning ranks of men-soldiers. It is these women from the factories, from the homes, that should be the backbone of the fight against war and fascism. Working women do not want war, nor do they want fascism which spells degradation. What is to be done to check the advance towards war and fascism in this country?

Firstly, women in the munitions plants, in the industries allied with war must be organized to fight for higher wages; for equal pay for equal work, and on the basis of this against the introduction of fascist methods. For fascism is felt keenly by the women in the factories, who, are directly subjected to fascist abuses. And a struggle for more wages, against mass dismissals, against speed-up, at this moment, becomes a struggle against fascistization, against war.

Secondly, women in the home can be swept into a fight against fascism, which to them signifies enslavement to the kitchen, the relinquishment of every small social right that has been won through the struggle of militant women. These housewives of the working class have already shown their eagerness to join in such a fight, and have been ably represented in the Paris Women's Congress Against War and Fascism, last summer. All these women who sincerely desire peace, and who are willing to throw their energies and devotion into a fight against war and fascism, can be lined up into a militant united front movement against high prices and sales taxation. Already scores of members of pacifist-controlled organizations have joined up with the united front to fight war and fascism. Masses of women throughout the length and breadth of the United States who want freedom and social equality, who are aroused into militant action by the very thought of a possible fascist regime in this country, and who see in the Soviet Union, the answer to their problems, are working for the defense of the Soviet Union. They know that in the Soviet Union women have attained real equality, real democracy and freedom; that the support of the peace policy of the Soviet Union is part of their fight against war and fascism.



CLARA
ZETKIN

Devoted 50
years of her
life to fight-
ing war and
for complete
equality for
women.

Lucy Parsons

Women Heroes of American Labor History

By Jane Benton

"IT'S a lucky thing it was raining so hard, or you wouldn't have found me home. I was going to a lecture," said Lucy Parsons. At her late age she is still young with the vigor of the awakening working class. When I said that I was a representative of the *Working Woman* magazine she welcomed me heartily into her humble house, which is located at the end of a long, typical workingclass street on Chicago's Northwest Side. We sat in large, worn but comfortable chairs, opposite a table full of green plants. She talked of the beginnings of working class organization in the last century, and of the Haymarket frame-up which caused the martyrdom of her husband.

An Organizer

"I was a dressmaker by trade," she said, "and organized the dress and cloakmakers. The women were hard to organize in those days—fifty years ago. It was a new idea, but we succeeded in building up a strong organization that has since then merged into the international union.

"My husband was a printer. For a time he was employed by the *Chicago Times*. He organized the printers, both men and women. He organized the first English-speaking central body in Chicago—the Chicago Central Labor Union. He was editor of one of the first labor papers in this country, the *Alarm*.

"I suppose you know that in 1886 the great battle for the eight-hour day was won. The Chicago Central Labor Union called a general strike of 80,000 people, a strike that paralyzed the city. On May 3 several strikers were shot and clubbed brutally by the police. On the next night, May 4, a protest meeting was called at the Haymarket, where the farmers used to market their hay. This meeting was well attended and was very orderly and peaceful. My husband was one of the speakers. We left early because we had our two little children with us and did not want to take them home in the crowd. We stopped for a chat and some refreshments. Suddenly we heard sounds of the riot a block away, and saw the

police wagons rushing by. Later we learned that the leaders of the union had been framed for throwing a bomb among the police.

"My husband came to the court of his own free will and said, 'I am Parsons. I am absolutely innocent of this bomb-throwing. I am an American and my forefathers helped to establish this republic. I have come to ask for a fair trial before a jury of my peers that I may prove my absolute innocence.'

"When the trial took place we could see that no justice was possible because the newspapers were simply



80,000 Chicago workers battled for and won the eight-hour day in 1886—Says Lucy Parsons.

wild with lies. Look up some of the Chicago papers of that date and you will see. They claimed that the city was going to be bombed and blown up by the workers. We arranged lecture tours, we raised money—we fought the case clear through to the United States Supreme Court but they claimed that they had no jurisdiction over it.

"Now I will tell of a fact that I do not think I have ever mentioned

before. It is an example of how the newspapers inflamed public opinion against the innocent defendants:

"A few days before November 11, the day of the execution, public opinion was changing very rapidly in Chicago in favor of the defendants. We went to Springfield and tried to get a commutation from the governor. We had a splendid defense committee and this committee got permission from the chief of police to allow tables to be put along the streets so that anyone who wished to petition for a commutation could sign his or her name. We had a great many tables placed on the streets in the Loop and people stood there by the hundreds signing the petitions. All classes of people—not only workers, but some wealthy, some middle-class—all believing in the innocence of the accused men. Everything was going along fine. We thought certainly we could get a commutation.

"On Tuesday morning it came out in the papers that Lingg had tried to blow up the jail and had blown his head off. Public opinion shifted like the wind. The papers said the anarchists were going to blow up the jail, and the police took the tables from the streets and no more petitions could be signed.

"It was for the purpose of changing public opinion that the explosives were deliberately planted in Lingg's cell by the police. This is how I know. On Monday morning the prisoners were taken from the upper tier of the jail to the lower tier and locked in cells. We, their wives and relatives, could only talk to them across a passageway barred off by iron bars, and they were ten feet away from us, and the police walked up and down and listened to every word we said. It was impossible for Lingg to get any explosives in there. Anybody would know that.

"Chicago capitalists, among them, Marshall Field, called on Mayor Harrison who had expressed the belief that the accused had nothing to do with the throwing of the bomb, and tried to get him to suppress the truth about the case. The innocent man died by hanging on November 11, 1887.

"Let the voice of the people be heard,' were the last words of my husband. One of his companions on

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Another Baby?

We are fighting for free Birth Control Clinics in America. Shall we open the doors for an American Hitler?

By Irene Rhinehardt

THE infamous abortion and anti-birth control paragraphs numbers 218 and 301 respectively, in Germany, reserved enlightenment and knowledge for the "ladies of society" only, while the women of the working class were kept in ignorance and were forced to seek information from all kinds of quacks.

Birth Control Leagues Set Up

Birth control and sex reform leagues were organized with the support of the workers. Closed membership meetings were held where physicians delivered lectures where birth control and sex hygiene questions were discussed. Thousands of women became members of these leagues. Consultation centers were set up. Under pressure of the membership, mutual aid and sick and death benefit organizations in 1930-32 opened official centers for consultation on

(Continued from page 9)

unorganized and individualist, because the occupations in which these Negro women are engaged are not organized worth talking about. The fact that they won so much while fighting individually and as Negroes should inspire us to greater enthusiasm in helping them become an or-

(Continued from page 12)

ganized corps in the ranks of the working class as a whole. Both the Negro women and the white women are thus becoming inspired. They are coming to see more clearly how the road to economic emancipation is blocked to both white and black women when, not realizing that their interests are the same, they advance separately instead of together.

Lucy Parsons spoke with calm strength. "It is up to us, the women, to fight side by side with the men. We are the losers when our men are killed. We must organize all the women."

Lucy Parsons walked slowly, on aging feet. She helped me on with my coat. Then she kissed me good-bye and said, "Be sure to come back again whenever I can be of help."

marriage and sex problems. This in Berlin and other larger cities in Germany. Here specially trained doctors gave advice without charge. Such consultation places were set up in the workers' districts in Berlin—in Wedding, Neu Kolln and Kreuzberg. Laws forbade the publicizing of these places of consultation. But the knowledge of their existence quickly spread to the masses of women who needed this assistance.

Cannot Feed Another Baby

As unemployment increased and relief was cut, masses of women of the working class came to the consultation centers with the same story: "Help me," they pleaded. "I would like to have another baby, but my husband has been unemployed for so long, that we cannot feed another baby." The same reply was given to all: "We give you the information. We do this

Negro and White Together

A complete economic emancipation, of course, is not going to be attained by either the white or the black working women under a system of society which makes one of its cornerstones the economic enslavement of all women. But struggling side by side day after day for economic improvement will show Negro women and white women that there is only one objective, in the end, worth fighting for. That objective, they will learn, is a society where women are in all respects the equals of the men.

because we believe that you should have the right over your own body. But desperation is not the way out. Organizing together with your sisters, other women of the working class to abolish the laws which bind you, which do not permit you to have babies when you desire them. Fight together with your men for improved conditions of life, for unemployment insurance, for more wages, for more relief, for maternity insurance, for birth control clinics set up at the expense of the government. Fight for freedom of all women and the liberation of the workers."

Each one of these women who had come for advice, went home a new woman, happy in the thought that not only did she receive the necessary information, but joyfully too, because she found the path that held out for her a way out of that horrible degradation that a capitalist society has forced her into.

Forced Births

On February 28, 1933, Hitler enacted a law for "the protection of the people and the government" which dissolved all the birth control leagues and declared the centers for consultation illegal and anyone who practiced or supported birth control was declared a Jew, Marxist and a traitor to the Nazi cause. Physicians who were connected with these centers were dragged to the concentration camps. Houses were searched for literature on birth control. Innocent women and girls were dragged to courts as witnesses in the attempt that they expose physicians and nurses. The policy is that the rebellious should be taught fascist policy of forced birth with blackjacks, whips, with concentration camps and jail tortures.

Hitler opened up new "consultation centers," for the perpetuation of the race. The policy of these centers is: most intensive increase in the birth rate, but without advice or help as to how to feed the mouths of additional hungry little newcomers. Behind the beautiful words that are dished out to the mothers of the working class by Hitler, there grins all too distinctly the war hungry face of fascism. For whoever has ears can hear the loud bellowing over all of Germany:

Soldiers, Soldiers, Soldiers at any price!

Women in the Soviet Union

THE program made by women in the U.S.S.R., both as to numbers employed in industry and as to their advance into positions of responsibility over a period of several years, is described in considerable detail in the International Labor Review of February, 1935.

Between 1928 and July, 1933, the number of women employed in all branches of economic activity increased by 5,000,000 and their proportion of all persons so engaged increased from 24 to 37 per cent. In industrial group A—means of production—the proportion of women increased from 11 to 24 per cent, while in Group B—articles of consumption—the increase was from 50 to 57 per cent.

Since 1931, the authorities have been systematically encouraging wom-

en to enter certain trades and occupations, obviously chosen because they require dexterity or intelligence rather than physical strength. Even in 1931 their employment in skilled trades was increasing rapidly. For example, there were two and one-half times as many women in printing trades as in 1926, five times as many skilled leather workers, and 18 times as many skilled metal workers.

"Women now hold a large number of managerial posts. According to statistics compiled by the Central Statistical Department and the Statistical Section of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, the number of women employed in positions of responsibility or as specialists in the various branches of economic activity was 84,600 in November 1,

1933, which means that 10.1 per cent of the positions of responsibility are held by women, while in industry 43,000 women hold managerial posts (9.2 per cent). It is to be noted that doctors and teachers are not included in these figures, although women form a fairly high percentage in both these branches. Moreover, from five to ten per cent of the responsible and specialist workers have not been registered. Incomplete as they are, these statistics show that the number of women in administrative and managerial posts reaches an imposing figure."

However, it is felt that even yet, women do not play a sufficiently important part in the economic system, and it is one of the duties of the trade unions to provide women with still greater opportunities for vocational instructions so as to enable more of them to hold managerial posts.

(Continued on page 15)



This striking picture appeared in the July, 1934, issue of *The Working Woman*.

Ibaelmann is still in jail. Free him!

From a Textile Striker

Chicago, Ill.

Dear Editor:

With great enthusiasm and militant spirit, the cotton goods workers, anxious to better their miserable conditions, answered the call of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union to come out and strike.

The conditions of the cotton workers, of whom 98 per cent are women and young girls, were always the worst in the needle trades. With the coming of the N.R.A. our conditions were to be improved with a minimum of \$13 and a 36-hour week (before it was as low as \$5 for 48 or 55 hours). We found, however, that this minimum became the maximum, and in some cases, even this minimum was not made. Those that could not meet the newly required speed found themselves out of the shops, unable to get another job.

With the coming of the N.R.A. many of the women were under the illusion that this will solve their problems, but now we have come to realize, together with the majority of the workers that, in order to better our conditions, we must have a union.

In order to organize into a strong union, it is necessary to carry on a consistent campaign among the workers so as to counteract the terror instituted by the bosses. These, mainly, are the reasons why out of 10,000 workers in the cotton industry, only about 900 responded to the call of the strike.

These 900 workers are today, three weeks after the strike was called, just as solid and as militant as they were the first day of the strike. We, however, have come to the realization that in order to have a successful strike, a consistent organizational campaign is necessary to start with.

We, the strikers, do not feel that the strike is lost. When we get back into the shop we will begin organizing into the union for the betterment of our conditions.

S. S.

Subscribe

TO THE
WORKING WOMAN

DEMAND CONGRESS ADOPT H.R. 2827

(Continued from page 14)

The training of women technicians and higher grade staff has already made great progress. In 1933 one-third of the students in higher schools were women, with proportions as high as half these in schools of pedagogy and over two-thirds those in schools of medicine. They formed nearly 30 per cent of the students in industrial schools and 42 per cent of those in technical schools.

U.S. Department of Labor,
Women's Bureau, Washington, D.C.

(Continued from page 3)

a real home. From one factory lot to another. The shacks were all pretty much alike. During that time we never had any furniture to speak of; only rough rickety beds and chairs. Most mill folks have to live in second-hand beds and cook on second-hand stoves. Also during this time my brothers and sisters and I were dragged from factory school to factory school. We never got to be friends with other kids for long. We no sooner made friends till we had to up and move. Giving up acquaintances was one of the small tragedies of my childhood.

Papa was always looking for something better. The elusive, happy land. A mill where the wages were good and houses and schools were decent. But he never found it. And he and mama were getting old.

When we moved to Atlanta they were up in their forties. After forty it is not easy to get a job in a new factory. A mill hand has generally reached his usefulness at thirty-five. After forty his energy is so burned out that he is usually like a husk. Dried up and useless to the bosses.

There is a city hospital here in Atlanta. Factory folks can go here and save hospital bills. They also furnish free school books here and that was another inducement to my parents to settle here.

This true story of the life of an American worker's family will be concluded in the June issue.

Women in Steel and Coal

(Continued from Page 4)

1934 was around \$422 for the 96 days he worked in that year. In Clairton about 40 per cent of the steel workers are Negroes. Their wages are lower than the white workers. In the past the steel workers went without sufficient food in order to save enough to buy their own home. Now these are being taken away for non-payment of interest and taxes. They bought furniture on the installment plan, at two and three times the regular price. Now the furniture is being taken away because the full amount has not been paid on it. Many steel workers have nothing in the home but wooden boxes. In many houses the water is shut off for non-payment. Thus many families of the steel workers are being smashed up.

Must Organize

"We must organize." "We must fight for the right to live." "We must establish rank and file control in our Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers," is the talk one hears in all towns in the steel districts.

"We must make strong rank and file control over our United Mine Workers of America in the fight for jobs and bread," say the coal miners.

"We must re-establish the women's auxiliaries that Lewis demolished," says the wives of coal miners.

Help Them Organize

The women's auxiliaries have no funds with which to help their husbands organize. They arrange bingo parties to get the funds. They need prizes for these parties. Working women's organizations and organizations of wives of workers, individuals and the WORKING WOMAN calls upon you to help the steel and coal miners organize. Contribute dried foods, packages of flour, coffee, etc., and new articles of clothing as prizes for these bingo parties. Send these to WORKING WOMAN. You will receive a reply from the auxiliary for every gift you make. This expression of solidarity on your part will encourage the workers in steel and coal to more persistently organize and fight for the right to live.

Women in the Soviet Union

T



From a Textile Worker

A. J. ...

...

WORKING WOMEN

DEMAND CONGRESS ...

WOMEN

In Every Town and City throughout the Land!

COLLECT A

MILLION *Signatures*

**Against War and Fascism
For Complete Disarmament**

By August 4th 1935

To Be Carried to Washington by a Women's Delegation

Get the petitions for your organization from the
National Women's Committee of the AMERICAN
LEAGUE AGAINST WAR AND FASCISM,
112 East 19th Street, Room 605, New York, N. Y.



The Students' Strike Against War, April 12, 1935