

women at war

...Safeguard
your
Health

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This pamphlet has been specially written by a well-known London woman doctor.

Her advice is: "a stitch in time saves nine."

She tells you what can be done in your factory to make sure that time lost owing to illness is cut down to next to nothing.

40,000,000 WEEKS OF WORK ARE LOST EVERY YEAR IN THE FACTORIES THROUGH ILLNESS

Think it over!



*40,000,000 weeks of work equals
11,500 fighter planes or their
equivalent.*

WE take a lot of trouble to see that our Forces are fighting fit.

We must take a good deal more trouble to keep ourselves fighting fit in industry as well.

The facts given on this page show you how serious it is. Do you know much of the illness in Britain to-day could be stopped if a few simple precautions were taken?

Good health is your own affair. So also is the prevention of accidents at work, which, in Birmingham alone, numbered 100,000 last year.

This pamphlet won't tell you what pills and tablets to take. It gives you some simple rules and precautions which will safeguard your health and that of the workers around you.

Illness, not Hitler, made us lose all these extra weapons.

We send our Navy to guard the convoys against the Nazi submarines on the ocean.

We must organise safeguards for our health in the factories, so that illness, which helps Hitler, will not sink our production at home.

Take the advice given. It will save you much discomfort. It will add to the country's fighting efficiency. It will increase the number of planes, tanks, guns, bombs and shells to beat Hitler.

The rules for health in the factory are not so very different from those in the home, and women especially should be as

conscious of the ill-effects of dust and dirt, of stuffiness and bad lighting at work as they are at home.

Ventilation and Lighting

Lack of fresh air and a good light to work in lead to headaches and over-tiredness—and an increased accident rate in the factory.

We all know the difficulties of the black-out, but the Home Office themselves have pointed out that “in many premises the ventilation has been so restricted as to have a serious effect on the health of the workers.”

Why shouldn't the women who've struggled with their own black-out at home take a special interest in the way it is done at their factory, study the various schemes put forward,* and make suggestions for improvements to their Trade Union or Production Committee?

The Factories Act, 1937, lays down certain standards of ventilation, lighting and temperature in the workshops—it is up to you to know these standards and see that they are observed.

Dermatitis

Every good housewife knows that dirt and dust are the means of spreading infection of all kinds, and especially skin infections. In the factories the dirt and dust may come from substances used in production which themselves

give rise to skin irritation—oils, powders (especially T.N.T. and C.E.), acids, alkalis, etc.

Irritation from any of these and many others can lead to inflammation of the skin which is known as dermatitis.

This irritation can to a very large extent be prevented by ordinary measures of cleanliness, such as freedom from dust, and good washing facilities.

T.N.T. Poisoning

In the case of T.N.T. the risks of absorbing the poisonous substance through the skin are more serious than the irritation of the skin itself. Many deaths from T.N.T. poisoning occurred during the last war, and where precautions have been relaxed or forgotten, serious cases of poisoning have again been reported in this war.

But when energetic measures are taken against these risks they can be completely overcome.

In one of the largest filling factories in Scotland during the last war, owing to the skill and devotion of the woman doctor in charge, not a single case of T.N.T. poisoning occurred during the last year of the factory's existence.

The preventive methods that must be taken are:
Freedom from dust in the workshop and personal cleanliness.

*By the Home Office (Factory Ventilation in the Blackout, Form 301, April, 1940. Get it by writing to H.M. Stationery Office, Kingsway, London).

The education of workers handling the dangerous substances. The selection of workers to avoid employing those who might be particularly susceptible.

A careful check-up of absence from illness, with early treatment of any suspected cases; and

The provision of substantial and appetising food in the factory canteens.

Food, cleanliness, common-sense—who should know better how to tackle these problems than the good housewife turned factory-worker? Who better qualified to suggest improvements in the preparation and serving of food? Who, for that matter, knows better the effects of good food—or the lack of it—on health and tempers?

Factory Inspection

Many valuable laws have been passed to help us in our quest for good health.

The Factories Act, 1937, makes certain regulations in regard to ventilation, lighting, temperature, the provision of sanitation and washing facilities, a reasonable standard of cleanliness, safety precautions, etc.

There are Government Factory Inspectors whose job it is to see that these regulations are carried out, but there are only 300 of them to 250,000 establishments, or roughly one to every thousand.

Since there are only 365 days in the year, including Sundays, it is obvious that additional

assistance is needed, especially at the present time with so many thousands of women and young people who are quite unused to factory conditions.

Workers' Health Inspectors

The women on the job must take a hand themselves. What can they do?

In all Joint Production Committees, Shop Stewards Committees or Works Committees, one or two members should be made responsible for knowing the Factory Acts and the rights of the workers under these Acts.

They should see that their Committees discuss health matters and become "health conscious," just as they are production conscious, for production can never be increased unless the workers are fit and healthy.

They could get other workers to help them; and there are plenty of people interested in health, first aid, and so on, who would be ready to do something when asked.

If the factory is unorganised don't let that stop you. Get together with some of the other women, call a meeting of the workers, and get them to elect two or three women who are prepared to tackle the job.

Working together with the Factory Doctor, Nurse or Welfare Departments, the Workers' Health Inspectors would ensure the best possible working conditions, and so reduce the amount of sickness and accidents.

They could supervise conditions in the workshops, rest rooms and cloakrooms, and in the factory canteens and kitchens. They could keep a check on all safety regulations, investigate the causes of every accident and case of industrial disease occurring in the factory, and work out ways and means of prevention, which could be used in other factories.

Such preventive measures can then become legally binding by means of special regulations extending the Factory Acts.

They could carry out a whole number of measures to interest the workers in their own health protection, by arranging discussions and study groups, posters and exhibits, and even films and lectures, to illustrate the campaign for health, and the fight against epidemics such as 'flu, and the common cold.

They could arrange classes in First Aid, and industrial welfare, or nutrition and child welfare, for the women. Everyone is interested in the question of their own health, and it is not difficult to secure the active co-operation of workers once their interest is aroused, and once they understand the need for the various measures of health protection.

When they begin to feel their feet they could, together with the Factory Doctor, campaign for improved Health Services, for the periodic examination of adolescents and workers in dan-

gerous trades, including, where necessary, X-Ray examination for the early detection and treatment of Tuberculosis.

At present in every factory employing over 150 people the Factories Act ensures the provision and maintenance of a First Aid box, which is usually in charge of someone trained in Red Cross or St. John's Ambulance. This is the absolute minimum, and many factories have well-equipped First Aid rooms or departments. But however small the beginning, wherever the workers themselves take up the problem, individually and through their trade unions, it can be developed along the lines suggested above, until we achieve in this country a first rate industrial medical service.

The Factories Act

The first step to immediate improvements must be a knowledge of the safeguards to health which industrial workers can already claim. The abstract of the Factories Act, 1937, must by law be displayed in every factory in a prominent place where it can be read by every worker. But there are thousands of workers employed in industries which do not come under the Factories Act.

In those concerns which come under the Essential Works Order, the Ministry of Labour is legally responsible for seeing that the necessary arrangements are made

for the welfare of workers, and the Trade Unions can insist that these should be at least up to the standard laid down in the Factories Act. The officer responsible is the Regional or Local Welfare Officer of the Ministry of Labour who can be approached through the National Service Officer.

But the Factories Act, abstracted or not, is long and tedious, and there are very few ordinary people sufficiently interested to read it from end to end. So it is up to the enthusiasts, the official or unofficial Health Inspectors, to study the Act, to master the sections which apply to their own factory, and then to see that they are generally known and observed.

If the provisions are not observed, look for the name or the Government Factory Inspector for the area, whose name and address should be displayed along with the Act.

He is legally bound to investigate any complaint he receives without revealing the source of the complaint to the management.

If the results of this step are not satisfactory get your T.U. branch to approach the District Welfare Officer, or your M.P. In short, the ordinary machinery for dealing with every-day problems on the job—the Trades Union machinery, the Shop Stewards Committee, or the Produc-

tion Committees can and should tackle the problems of health conditions too.

But working conditions can not only be maintained, they can be constantly improved, as every worker knows; and there are a hundred and one ways in which the men and women on the job can suggest improvements—in safety devices, in protective clothing, and in the training of women and young people new to the job, among whom the accident rate is appallingly high.

The Ministry of Labour can compel any firm under the Essential Works Order to introduce a training scheme for employees.

You should raise all these questions with your Shop Stewards, and your Production Committees. See that they become health conscious and start a real campaign for health and safety in the factories. Specialised knowledge is not the main requirement, though specialist advice may be useful, and is usually obtainable from your factory doctor.

What is wanted is a little sound common sense, an understanding of the Factory Acts, and a determination to see that they are observed and improved upon. The results will be not only improved health and fewer accidents in the factories, but a real contribution to the increased production we need for victory.

Reprinted from the "Daily Worker"
October 10th, 1942

MAKE WAY FOR WOMEN

AT this crucial moment of the war, with man-power urgently needed for offensive strategy, old-fashioned prejudice against employment of women keeps on bobbing up.

The obstructionists are not only to be found among reactionaries, but also among those who should know better.

Mr. Marchbank, General Secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen, in an interview yesterday on the shortage of man-power in transport, said that the employment of women was no solution in view of "the limited range of jobs they may be expected to do."

Why so limited? In the Soviet Union there are women engineers, women station-masters, women regional traffic superintendents. Are British women less capable than Russian women?

In *The Times*, the Conservative M.P., Professor A. V. Hill reveals that, out of step with other medical schools in this country and every other, the majority of the London medical schools refuse to accept any women students.

The current Ministry of Labour Engineering Bulletin shows the splendid success of women in heavy industrial jobs where there was formerly reluctance to allow them employment. Thirteen and a half per cent of the employees in the steel industry are now women.

The award of the George Medal and other awards to nurses for heroism when Exeter Hospital was set on fire by bombs is scarcely necessary to remind us that within and without the Services British women have proved themselves capable of coolness, courage, endurance and responsibility in the most arduous possible circumstances.

Give them the chance. The country needs them and they are willing.