

U.S. Foreign Policy

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Set #3:

11. "The Women's Bureau Recommends Improved Conditions for Female Shipyard Workers, 1944."
12. "The Women's Bureau's Assessment of Women's Progress the Work Place, 1944."
13. "Dellie Hahne Recalls the War's Impact on Women's Attitudes, ca. 1945."
14. "Memories of War as Opportunity, Ca. 1942-45."

4. The Women's Bureau Recommends Improved Conditions for Female Shipyard Workers, 1944

---

... Times have changed with lightning speed. By late 1943, thousands of women along both coasts and on the Gulf, Great Lakes, and inland waterways were actively engaged in almost every phase of ship building and repair work, and it is anticipated that it will be necessary to recruit thousands more before the war is over. Though the introduction of women into the

in which women have made extensive gains and comprised in September nearly one-fourth of the women wage earners in the industry. . . .

It is clear, then, that the shipyards are charting new seas in the utilization of the woman labor force, and the mistakes or successes that result may have a profound effect not only on the production and repair of ships, but on the cost and efficiency of such production and the health, work, and life histories of thousands of women. It is important to take stock now. Misconceptions should be dispelled, well-founded facts pooled, and the fund of information available from industries with longer histories in the employment of women disseminated. It is with these objects in view that the present report is submitted. It is the aim of the Women's Bureau through the recommendations and suggestions made here to promote conditions for the woman shipyard worker conducive to her most efficient and productive employment and her well-being as a member of society and the labor force. . . .

1. Secure the cooperation of men supervisors and workers.

shipyards did not begin in earnest until the fall of 1942, by January 1943 as many as 4 per cent of all the production wage earners in the industry were women. The proportion had risen to a little over 5 per cent by March, and by September to 9.5 per cent. In January 1944 it was 10 per cent. These figures include the 8 navy yards engaged in ship construction and repair,

2. Select and place women carefully.
3. Employ women only in jobs found to be suitable.
4. Pay women and upgrade them on the same basis as men.
5. Schedule an 8-hour day and a 48-hour 6-day week; allow a lunch period of at least 30 minutes, and rest periods of 10 to 15 minutes in each work spell of as much as 4 hours. Rotate shifts no more frequently than every two months.
6. Set up an effective woman employee counselor system.
7. Give new women workers preliminary induction into the work and environment of the shipyard before putting them on the job.
8. Provide personal-service, food, and medical facilities that meet approved standards of adequacy and quality.
9. Study and expand the safety program to adapt it to women workers, and instruct women thoroughly in safe work practice.

5. The Women's Bureau's Assessment of Women's Progress in the Work Place, 1944

---

In the past the opportunity given women workers to learn and to exercise skills has been narrower in range than men's has been. In consequence, very large numbers of women were little thought of in connection with other types of work, and so they continued to be given little opportunity to develop additional skills. The war situation has changed that considerably. With shortages of men workers, women have been employed in a greater variety of occupations than before. . . .

Unfortunately, there are many cases where women still have been given far too little chance to be upgraded to their highest skills. In 1943, the National Industrial Conference Board analyzed reports from some 130 plants, chiefly in heavier metal industries, plants that had employed relatively few women or none. In nearly 60 percent of these plants there were no plans for advancing women from the top production jobs they held at the time of reporting to more highly skilled jobs. Moreover, numerous instances are reported of the placement of women in jobs that are not in the usual line for the job progression; in

such blind-alley jobs neither proficiency nor length of service can bring these women beyond a limited early stage of work. If this situation continues, it will be a great disadvantage to women after the war, and in fact government agencies are finding promotional discrimination against them as one of the major reasons why women quit jobs in war plants. . . .

Plant seniority practices under the clauses of many union agreements give women workers very inadequate protection. For example, some agreements definitely provide that women's occupation of jobs formerly held by men shall be for the duration only. Some agreements give women employed at time of signing the agreement full seniority rights with men, but for women employed after that time set up a list for women separate from that for men. Some agreements provide for the seniority of women as "separate and distinct from the seniority of men." Agreements fixing seniority by department only may affect women and men quite differently. Other agreements are so vaguely worded as to permit interpretations that are of disadvantage to women. . . .

## 6. Dellie Hahne Recalls the War's Impact on Women's Attitudes, ca. 1945

---

There was *one* good thing came out of it. I had friends whose mothers went to work in factories. For the first time in their lives, they worked outside the home. They realized that they were capable of doing something more than cook a meal. I remember going to Sunday dinner one of the older women invited me to. She and her sister at the dinner table were talking about the best way to keep their drill sharp in the factory. I had never heard anything like this in my life. It was just marvelous. I was tickled.

But even here we were sold a bill of goods. They were hammering away that the woman who went to work did it temporarily to help her man, and when he came back, he took her job and she cheerfully leaped back to the home.

There was a letter column in which some woman

wrote to her husband overseas: "This is an exact picture of our dashboard. Do we need a quart of oil?" Showing how dependent we were upon our men. Those of us who read it said, This is pure and simple bullshit. 'Cause if you don't know if you need a quart of oil, drive the damn thing to the station and have the man show you and you'll learn if you need a quart of oil. But they still wanted women to be dependent, helpless.

I think a lot of women said, Screw that noise. 'Cause they had a taste of freedom, they had a taste of making their own money, a taste of spending their own money, making their own decisions. I think the beginning of the women's movement had its seeds right there in World War Two. . . .

## 7. Memories of War as Opportunity, ca. 1942–1945

---

The war started and jobs kinda opened up for women that the men had. I took a job at a shoe-repair place on Wilshire Boulevard. Cleanin' shoes and dyin'

stick to the restaurants and hotels where black people were. It wasn't until the war that it really opened up. 'Cause when I come out here it was awful, just like

shoes, the same thing that men did. They started takin' applications at Douglas, to work in a defense plant. I was hired.

I didn't want a job on the production line. I heard so many things about accidents, that some girls got their fingers cut off or their hair caught in the machines. I was frightened. All I wanted to do was get in the factory, because they were payin' more than what I'd been makin'. Which was forty dollars a week, which was pretty good considering I'd been makin' about twenty dollars a week. When I left Tennessee I was only makin' two-fifty a week, so that was quite a jump. . . .

They [other women workers] weren't interested in the war. Most of them were only interested in the money. Most of us was young and we really didn't know. All we were after was that buck. I didn't care about the money. That was a big salary for me, I was satisfied with that. . . .

I do know one thing, this place was very segregated when I first come here. Oh, Los Angeles, you just couldn't go and sit down like you do now. You had certain places you went. You had to more or less they felt that we gone off and fought, we should be equal. Everything started openin' up for us. We got a chance to go places we had never been able to go before.

bein' in the South. . . .

I really didn't know what the war was about. I was in the house one day and all of a sudden they started yellin' about the war, war, war. Roosevelt had declared war. Well, they know that when there's a war, somebody's gonna get a job. This was during the Depression, so I think people were kinda glad the war had started. So right away they started hirin'. I think the war had kind of a pleasure. People didn't realize the seriousness of the war. All they were thinkin' about is they had lived in these Depression days. It was so hard to come by a dollar.

Those who had to go, that was the sad part. I had a brother that went to war, my youngest. He come back. The war helped some people because they come back, they took trades, learned to do things. My brother come back and now he is very successful. I think the army really made a man out of him. He works at Rockwell in the missile department and he's a supervisor. He wouldn't have known what to do if he hadn't gone in the army. . . .

They didn't mix the white and black in the war. But now it gives you a kind of independence because

In ways it was too bad that so many lives were lost. But I think it was for a worthy cause, because it did make a way for us. And we were able to really get out.

#### Chapter 28: Document Set 2 References

1. A. Philip Randolph States Black Goals, 1942  
A. Philip Randolph, "Why Should We March?" *Survey Graphic* (November, 1942).
2. Black Doubts About the War for Democracy, 1944  
Grant Reynolds, "What the Negro Thinks of this War," *The Crisis*, Vol. 51 (September, 1944).
3. Walter White Describes Racial Tension in Wartime Detroit, 1944  
Walter White, "What Caused the Detroit Riots?" Part I in *What Caused the Detroit Riots* by Walter White and Thurgood Marshall (New York: NAACP, 1943), pp. 5-16.
4. The Women's Bureau Recommends Improved Conditions for Female Shipyard Workers, 1944  
Dorothy K. Newman, "Employing Women in the Shipyards," *Bulletin of the Women's Bureau*, no. 192-196 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1944), pp. 1-6.
5. The Women's Bureau's Assessment of Women's Progress in the Work Place, 1944  
Mary Elizabeth Pidgeon, "A Preview as to Women Workers in Transition from War to Peace," Special Bulletin No. 18 of the Women's Bureau (Washington: Government Printing Office, March, 1944).
6. Dellie Hahne Recalls the War's Impact on Women's Attitudes, ca. 1945  
"Dellie Hahne," in Studs Terkel, *The Good War: An Oral History of World War II* (New York: Pantheon, 1984), p. 122.
7. Memories of War as Opportunity, ca. 1942-1945  
"Sarah Killingworth," in Terkel, pp. 113-116.