

With the compliments of the
Amalgamated Engineering Union,
126 Chalmers Street, Sydney.

ARE WOMEN PAID MEN'S RATES

WOMEN IN THE ARMED FORCES OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Resolution Carried by A.C.T.U. Conferences, 1941.

"That in the event of women being required for any section of work in the Army, Navy, or Air Force units, in training or Fighting Services, that the equivalent male rates shall automatically apply, together with all the privileges and status of the men enlisted for service in the same group, and that no sex differential of any kind be permitted to be introduced into the pay, conditions and privileges of defence force ranks where the rate for the job prevails at present and should continue to operate."

ISSUED BY
THE COUNCIL OF ACTION
FOR EQUAL PAY.

ARE WOMEN PAID MEN'S RATES?

Are women paid men's rates for the same or similar work in war production and essential services?

To this vexed question there is no simple answer of "AYE" or "NAY," so to meet an obvious need for definite information on women's work in wartime the Council of Action for Equal Pay made a rapid survey of the present situation to ascertain to what extent sex differentials still exist, particularly where women have replaced men in industry. This pamphlet now sets out the salient features of the data acquired in the course of the survey, and is circulated in the hope that fuller knowledge of the facts will strengthen popular support for our policy of **THE RATE FOR THE JOB**, and conduce to wider comprehension of the national welfare services that require to be built up and maintained to equalise the efficiency of men and women in our war effort.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Curtin), in a letter this year to Trade Unions involved, defined the Government's policy in these terms:

"The Government accepts in principle the claim that where it was customary, before the war, for certain operations in industry to be carried out exclusively by male labor, that female labor employed upon such operations must be paid for at the rates prescribed by competent industrial tribunals for male labor."

Legal limitations on the employment of women, married and unmarried, have been removed by Federal regulations to facilitate the transference of women to work previously performed by men, and to similar jobs new to our industries.

Towards the end of 1941 when the tempo of transfer was accelerated, crises developed over the replacement of men by women on lower rates of pay in various industries; then in January, 1942, a climax was reached when women members of the N.S.W. Branch of the Federated Rubber Workers' Union went on strike in Sydney and refused to do the work required of them unless they got the male rate for the job. This strike was settled by the women being taken off the job pending settlement of the issue by the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration. About the same time a similar dispute arose in the leather trade in Melbourne in occupations covered by the Australian Saddlery and Leather Trades Employees' Federation.

As the issues involved in these two disputes threatened to become general, the matter was referred to the Full Bench of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court and set down for hearing on February 23rd, 1942. In the meantime the Australasian Council of Trade Unions called a conference of all Unions interested in the problems of men and women in the same wartime occupations. The Conference decided that the A.C.T.U. should intervene in the Rubber Workers' and Leather Workers cases before the Full Bench on February 23rd, and seek an adjournment so that the issue of women replacing men might be discussed with the Federal Government; the Federal Attorney-General also intervened to support the adjournment of the two cases listed; the Court granted the adjournment, and after subsequent consultation between the A.C.T.U. and the Commonwealth Government further regulations were issued which resulted in the removal of such issues from the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court, and the creation of the Women's Employment Board to deal specifically with the wages and conditions of women transferred to work normally performed by males in any industry or service.

When this Board was established there was general expectation that the male rate for the job established by collective bargaining over a long period would be paid to women satisfactorily replacing men in wartime industry. That these hopes were not fulfilled is evident from the facts recorded in this pamphlet. The elimination of sex differentials in industrial standards remains an ideal still to be striven for in Australia, whilst in the war effort of Great Britain, China, Soviet Russia and the United States of America equality of reward as well as equality of service and sacrifice is much more realistic.

The Council of Action for Equal Pay is 100 per cent. behind the Government in its policy for the fullest use of man-power, and it is ready to assist the Government in every way, nevertheless, it feels that the Government should give definite instructions, backed by legislation or regulation, compelling all the instrumentalities of Government to award and enforce the male rate for the job wherever women replace men in industry or services. Action should also be taken to equalise the women's base rate to the male base rate. All work is of national importance. A total war effort demands the equalisation of base rates so that women could be used effectively. The Council is of the opinion that better methods of selection and placement, as well as more efficient management, would result in greater efficiency. Social services, too, need to be augmented to insure that the health of the worker is kept up to standard; absenteeism and other factors reducing full efforts can only be cured if we face realistically the job of gearing all services to the maximum effort.

ROBT. L. DAY,
LUCY G. WOODCOCK,

Joint Presidents, Council of Action for Equal Pay.

166 Phillip Street, Sydney.
16th November, 1942.

TRADE UNION POLICY OF EQUAL PAY FOR THE SEXES.

Three successful conferences on women and children in industry in wartime were organised by the Council of Action for Equal Pay in 1940, 1941 and 1942.

In December, 1940, the Labor Council of New South Wales carried the following resolution:

"That this Council reaffirms its official recognition and support of the Council of Action for Equal Pay and endorses its declared policy which conforms to Trade Union principle in relation to equal pay for the sexes, and therefore the Council instructs its officers to take the following action:

- (1) Forward to the A.C.T.U. a copy of this resolution with a request that formal recognition by the A.C.T.U. be given to the Council of Action for Equal Pay which covers all States.
- (2) Request the A.C.T.U. to inform all State Labor Councils in respect of this matter with a view to stimulating activity in support of equal pay for the sexes."

The Executives of the A.C.T.U. complied and notified all State Labor Councils accordingly.

The A.C.T.U. called three conferences in 1941 to deal with the problem of equal pay, with the result that a policy of equal occupational rates and the raising of the women's base rate (now 54 per cent. of the male base rate) to equality with the male base rate was accepted by the A.C.T.U. National Congress in June, 1941, and arrangements made by the third A.C.T.U. Conference in September, 1941, for the implementation of this policy. A fourth A.C.T.U. Conference in 1942 led to the creation of the Women's Employment Board.

The Australian Workers' Delegate to the International Labor Organisation Conference held at New York in 1941 carried forward this policy into the International field as described further on in this pamphlet.

EQUAL PAY, EQUAL STATUS AND EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY.

Problems of equal pay for the sexes cannot be separated from equal status and equality of opportunity. Every sex differential carries within it germs of injustice and seeds of destruction of personal potentiality.

Success achieved has been due to strong Unions standing firmly on the rate for the job in direct negotiation with employers. In munitions several hundreds of women are already receiving male rates, achieved through negotiation by the Amalgamated Engineering Union and the Arms, Explosives and Ammunition Workers' Union.

Another clear-cut instance of the rate for the job is that of the women tram conductors replacing men in the large tramway systems of Sydney, Melbourne and Perth. The Tramway Employees' Union in Melbourne, where there are now 700 or more conductresses, agreed to the employment of women only on condition that there should be no injection of sex differentials into the existing award of wages and conditions. This was agreed to and women starting at the male rate dropped into the existing time-tables as if they were new men starting on the job. Perth and Sydney followed suit, and now we have this fine body of tramway women working with men on wages free from sex differentials.

LEGAL IMPLEMENTATION OF EQUAL PAY POLICIES.

The Women's Employment Board began with a clean sheet upon which to write an entirely new page in Australian industrial history and with full authority to award women 100 per cent. of the male rates for equivalent work. With public opinion favorable and the efficiency of women, a "sine qua non," all concerned anticipated the preservation of the male rate for the job. The Board fixed equal pay rates in only thirteen cases, nine of which were by agreement between the parties. Why did the Board originate only four equal pay rates?

PRECEDENTS ARE THE BULWARK OF INDUSTRIAL LAW.

No legal precedents existed for the Women's Employment Board, so it drifted like a rudderless boat into the backwaters instead of rowing fearlessly into the uncharted sea of economic realism. This brings to mind another analogy to illustrate this point. In a small town of the "Wild West," when horse-riding was prevalent, hitching posts abounded, but with the "march of time" and new modes of transport they disappeared one by one; some old-timers, however, refusing to change habits of olden days, trained their horses to stand at the accustomed place by throwing their bridles over an imaginary hitching post in the old spots, where, the horses accepting the fictitious tethering, patiently awaited their masters' pleasure.

The Minister for National Services (Mr. Ward) has given no indication of his opinions on the problems of Equal Pay; he appears to be content to leave these vital issues to his Departmental officers. The Minister for Labor and National Services in Great Britain (Mr. Ernest Bevin) frequently expresses favorable comment on the rate for the job and has appointed Labor women and other representative women to consultative councils; the Secretary for Labor in U.S.A. (Miss Frances Perkins) has done likewise; and in U.S.S.R. and China women rank equally with men in the planning and implementation of industrial policies.

MURIEL HEAGNEY,
Honorary Secretary-Treasurer,
Council of Action for Equal Pay.