

# Women Workers and Unemployment Insurance Since VJ-Day

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THE SURRENDER OF JAPAN and the sudden and widespread cancellation of war contracts had an immediate impact on claims for unemployment benefits. For the country as a whole, the monthly number of initial claims jumped from 267,600 in July to 1,230,000 in August. The increase was naturally greatest in the States where large numbers of workers had been employed in the major war industries—States such as California, Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania.

Concern was expressed that in many places disproportionate numbers of initial claims were filed by women. Complete data are not available on the respective numbers of initial claims filed by men and by women during this period, since the program of the Bureau of Employment Security for complete reporting of claimants by sex was not then in effect. Information is available, however, for six industrial States—Connecticut, Indiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, and Ohio—that were extensively engaged in war production (charts 1 and 2).

## Claims Filed After the Surrender of Japan

In all these States the number of initial claims filed by both men and women was higher in August than in July; the proportion of all claims filed by women was lower, however. This drop is probably explained by the fact that the August lay-offs involved a larger proportion of men than earlier cut-backs, which frequently were met by laying off the workers most recently hired—often women—or by encouraging all who wanted to leave—frequently women—to quit. The most significant fact in these charts is the extremely high proportion of initial claims filed by women in September, the first month after the Japanese surrender.

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## Initial Claims Load

The second significant fact is that the number of initial claims filed during subsequent months by both men and women followed the same general trend: a peak in August or September, followed by a decline and a rise in January or February. In three of the six States—Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Ohio—the peak in initial claims filed by women exceeded that for men. Beginning in the fall or early winter and continuing through March, men's initial claims exceeded those filed by women in all six States. The proportion of initial claims from women generally decreased through December; in Connecticut, Michigan, New Jersey, and Ohio the proportion increased in January (table 1), however, because of the relatively greater increase in women's claims. In all six States the proportion of women's claims rose in March because of the relatively greater drop in men's claims. In all six States, however, the drop in number of initial claims from women between the peak month and March 1946 was proportionately greater than in claims from men.

## Compensable Claims Load

The disproportionate number of ini-

tial claims filed by women in the first 2 months after the Japanese surrender had an immediate effect on the compensable claims load in these same six industrial States.

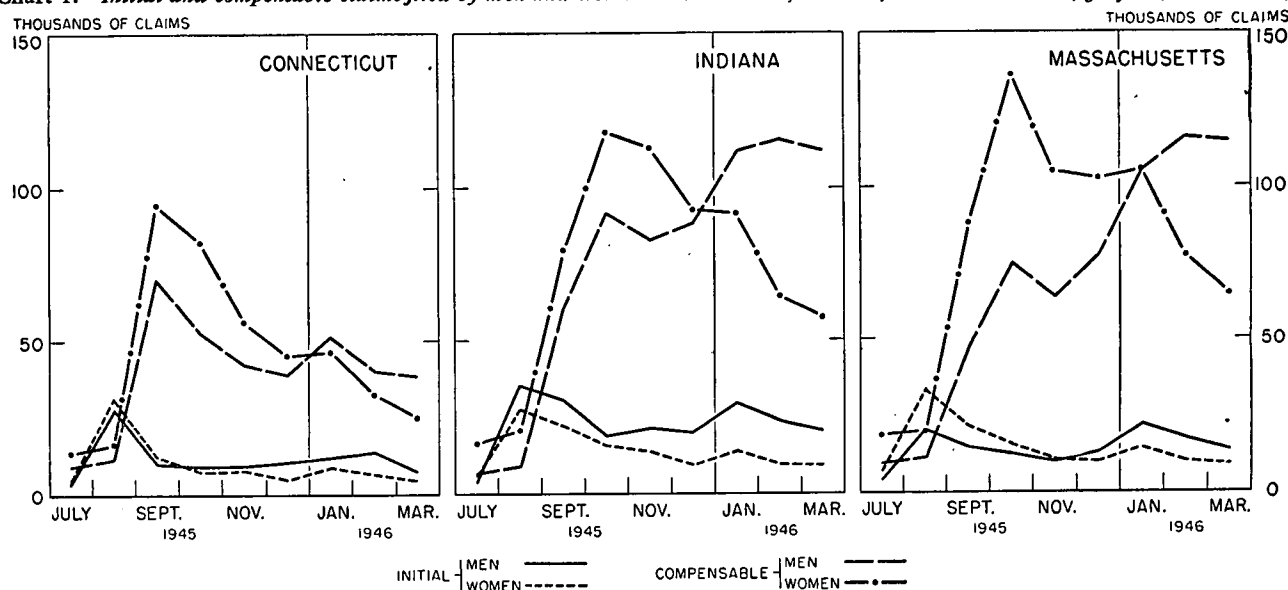
In all six, the compensable claims of women reached a high point in September or October, outnumbering those filed by men in all but Michigan (charts 1 and 2). Thereafter, claims from women in Connecticut, Indiana, Massachusetts, and Michigan dropped steadily through March 1946 except for a slight rise in January in Connecticut and Massachusetts, when a much greater rise in men's compensable claims occurred. Men's compensable claims followed a less consistent pattern in those four States. In Connecticut and Michigan the peak occurred in September and October, respectively, followed in November and December by a smaller decline than for women and by a disproportionately greater rise in January (Connecticut) or March (Michigan). In Indiana and Massachusetts, on the other hand, men's compensable claims rose to a high point in October and then dropped, only to increase again regularly to a peak in February.

In the other two States—New Jersey and Ohio—the course of the compensable claims from men and women was somewhat similar. Claims of both men and women reached a high point in October, declined in November, rose to a new high point in January, and then declined again; the

Table 1.—Proportion of initial and compensable claims filed by women, six States, July 1945–March 1946

State and type of claim	1945						1946		
	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March
Connecticut:									
Initial claims.....	56	52	54	45	46	32	42	33	37
Compensable claims.....	60	60	57	61	57	54	48	44	39
Indiana:									
Initial claims.....	61	44	42	45	39	32	32	29	30
Compensable claims.....	73	70	57	56	58	51	45	36	34
Massachusetts:									
Initial claims.....	64	62	60	56	51	43	39	36	40
Compensable claims.....	67	65	65	64	62	57	50	40	36
Michigan:									
Initial claims.....	52	43	30	41	35	29	32	23	35
Compensable claims.....	78	71	51	48	51	46	44	32	28
New Jersey:									
Initial claims.....	52	49	45	43	35	30	33	35	39
Compensable claims.....	55	55	56	55	56	53	48	43	40
Ohio:									
Initial claims.....	60	59	56	47	46	33	34	28	32
Compensable claims.....	74	78	69	66	66	65	58	51	45

Chart 1.—Initial and compensable claims filed by men and women in Connecticut, Indiana, and Massachusetts, July 1945–March 1946



January rise was greater for men than for women, and the succeeding decline was relatively greater for women.

Because of the differences in the movements of men's and women's compensable claims, the proportion filed by women fell fairly regularly throughout this period (table 1).

Comparison of the general downward trend in the proportion of initial and compensable claims filed by women shows that in general they filed a larger proportion of compensable than initial claims. In other words, women in general remained unemployed longer than men.

The general decrease in the proportion of compensable claims filed by women in the six States furnishes background against which to review information available for all States on women claimants during the early months of 1946 (table 2).

Three facts are outstanding in the developments shown by the table. The first is that the proportion of compensable claims filed by women declined generally between January and February and frequently between February and March. This movement is probably part of the same trend shown in the data for the six industrial States. This downward trend reflects a smaller decrease in men's compensable claims as unemployment was affected by causes other than lay-offs following the Japanese surrender; the decline in the number

of compensable claims filed by women; the placement of some women and withdrawal of others from the labor force; and the exhaustion of benefit rights of women who had been continuously unemployed since their lay-off.

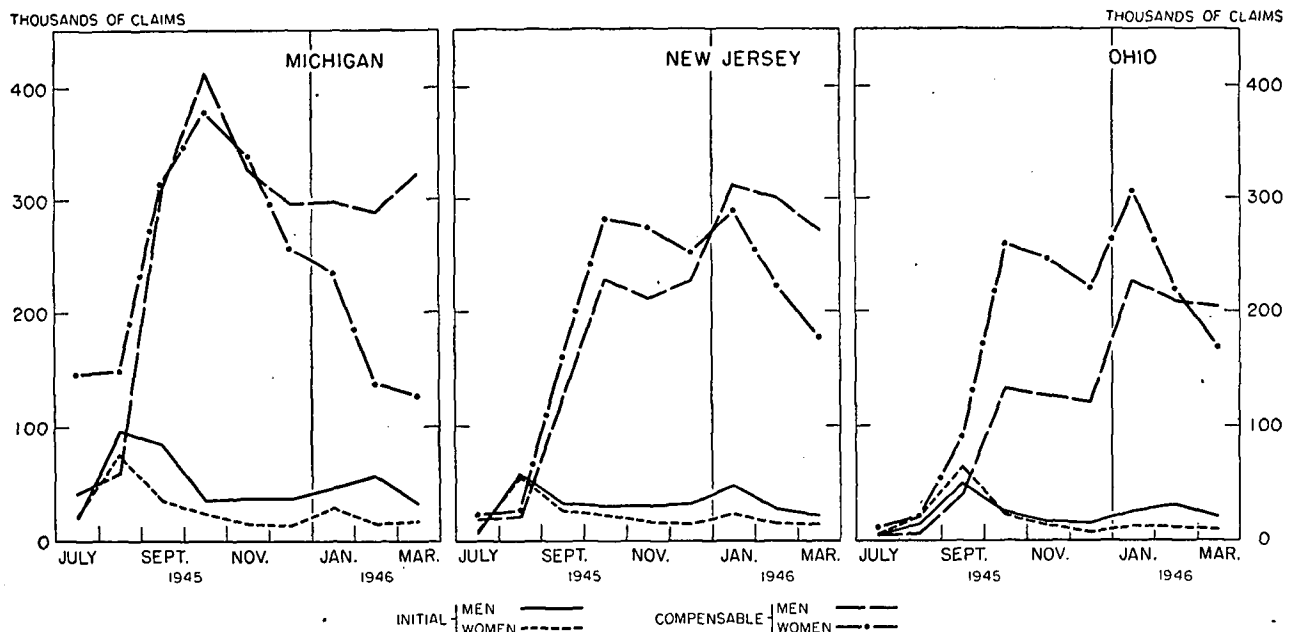
The second significant fact is that in many States women filed a larger proportion of compensable than of initial claims in January and February. This was the situation in California, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. There were exceptions, however, chiefly among the less industrialized States where relatively few persons were employed in war production or where the proportion of women employed in war industries was low, as in Arkansas, Mississippi, Nevada, and Oregon, for example. The generally higher representation of women in compensable than in initial claims during January and February had its origin in the disproportionate number of initial claims filed by women after the Japanese surrender and the consequent composition of the compensable-claims load because of the longer unemployment of many women war workers. In March, however, this relative difference in compensable and initial claims filed by women was generally less because of the frequent decrease in the proportion of compensable claims from women and the increase in many

States in the proportion of initial claims.

The third fact is that the proportion of compensable claims filed by women during January, February, and March varied significantly among the States. Women accounted for a high proportion of compensable claims in Connecticut, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Massachusetts, Nebraska, New Jersey, Ohio, and Wisconsin—States in which substantial numbers were employed in the production of aircraft, ordnance, or machinery. The proportion was also high in California and New Jersey, where, although shipbuilding was the largest single war industry, other war industries, such as aircraft in California, also employed substantial numbers. By contrast, the proportion was low in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, Oregon, and Washington—States where shipbuilding was the dominant war industry and where other major war industries employed relatively few workers. The proportion was also low in Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Nevada, North Dakota, and Wyoming. In these States the major war industries had a relatively insignificant development. Moreover, interstate claims accounted for a large proportion of claims in these States, and men, rather than women, undoubtedly predominate among the migrant war workers.

Thus, the proportion of compensable claims filed by women during the first quarter of 1946 varied among the

Chart 2.—Initial and compensable claims filed by men and women in Michigan, New Jersey, and Ohio, July 1945–March 1946



States according to the extent to which the major war industries developed, the character of these industries, and the proportion of women they employed. The effect of these factors was often complicated by the fact that, in States where aircraft, ordnance, and the machine industries employed many workers, total employment in the major war industries in November 1944 often approximated and sometimes exceeded the average number of wage earners employed in all manufacturing in 1939; this was the situation in California, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Nebraska, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. In such States the normal peacetime manufacturing industries may be unable to absorb the large number of women laid off by the major war industries.

### Why Women Filed Relatively More Claims

The high proportion of claims filed by women, whether measured by initial claims filed immediately after the capitulation of Japan or the large, although gradually diminishing, proportion of compensable claims, had its roots in the abnormal wartime developments in the employment of women and the special factors which affect their postwar employment.

These two phenomena help to explain the disproportionate effects of the reconversion lay-offs on women and the immediate impact of these lay-offs on the claims load.

### Wartime Employment of Women

The expansion of the major war industries—metal, rubber, and chemical—to meet war needs was made possible by the wartime increase in the number of women in the civilian labor force. That number, including women who were employed, self-employed, and seeking work, rose from 13 million in March 1940 to nearly 18 million in March 1945, a rise of 38 percent. The increase in those actually at work during the same period was even greater—from 11 million to 18 million, a rise of nearly 57 percent. This record-breaking rise was the result of the increase in employment of women not merely in the major war industries but throughout all manufacturing industries; in wholesale and retail trade; in an industry group comprising transportation, communication, and public utilities; and in a group composed of finance, business, repair, and professional work. The only net decline during the war years occurred in the service industries—domestic, personal, and recreation services.

This wartime increase was unequally distributed among industries.

Thus, of the estimated increase of 5.2 million women employed between March 1940 and March 1944, the additional women employed in all manufacturing accounted for 61 percent of the total increase; the major war industries alone accounted for 41 percent. Within the major war industries, the increase also varied. The greatest numerical and percentage increase in women wage earners occurred in transportation equipment, other than automobiles, in which the number jumped from 1,800 in October 1939 to 463,000 in December 1944. In these industries the proportion which women formed of all employees (not merely wage earners) ranged, as of November 1944, from 40 percent in the manufacture of airframes for aircraft to 15 percent in ship and boatbuilding and repairing. The iron and steel industries, including ordnance, showed the next greatest increase—from 68,000 women wage earners in October 1939 to 366,500 in December 1944. Within the ordnance group in November 1944, women accounted for 47 percent of all employees in the manufacture of small-arms ammunition and, at the other extreme, 20 percent in the manufacture of tanks. The third largest numerical increase occurred in the manufacture of electrical machinery, where women wage earners rise from 100,300 in October 1939 to

341,900 in December 1944, when women represented 49 percent of all wage earners in that industry. Within the explosives industry, 33 percent of all employees in December 1944 were women.

The effects of the concentration of the increased employment of women in the major war industries are intensified by the geographic concentration of these industries. In November 1944, for example, almost three-fifths of all employees in all the major war industries were in seven States. Within a State there may be further concentration. Thus, in California, where women accounted for about 41 percent of the

aircraft industry's factory force in October 1944, that industry was largely concentrated in the Los Angeles area. In some smaller cities where war production mushroomed, women formed still higher percentages of total employment in establishments reporting the employment of women to the War Manpower Commission; in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Parsons, Kansas, and Lincoln, Nebraska, for example, women accounted for 43, 46, and 55 percent, respectively, of all employment on July 1, 1945.

The increase in employment of women was made possible by drawing into the labor force former housewives

and young girls who left school earlier than they would have normally. The major war industries had recruited nearly half the women employees they had in March 1944 from outside the labor force and slightly more than one-fourth from other industry groups—larger proportions than any other manufacturing industry drew from these sources. As a result, nearly half the women employed in the major war industries had no other recent skill or even no skill other than that acquired in their war jobs and hence, where wartime skills have ceased to be in demand, are handicapped in placement.

The recruitment of housewives and

Table 2.—All initial and compensable claims filed and proportion filed by women, by State and month, January-March 1946

State	Initial claims									Compensable claims								
	January			February			March			January			February			March		
	Total	Women		Total	Women		Total	Women		Total	Women		Total	Women		Total	Women	
		Number	Percent of total		Number	Percent of total		Number	Percent of total		Number	Percent of total		Number	Percent of total		Number	Percent of total
Alabama	19,000	3,900	21	11,700	3,200	27	9,800	3,400	35	124,200	44,300	31	114,100	31,600	28	109,100	27,600	25
Arizona	3,400	1,600	39	2,700	1,000	35	3,400	1,000	28	19,000	8,200	43	19,700	7,900	40	19,700	7,700	39
Arkansas	10,400	3,400	33	7,900	2,600	33	6,800	2,200	33	77,700	22,400	29	80,500	24,100	30	81,500	25,000	31
California	133,800	59,700	45	109,700	45,200	41	104,800	42,600	41	944,800	461,700	49	909,000	424,700	47	916,400	407,100	44
Colorado	4,100	1,000	24	3,200	800	25	2,900	900	32	11,800	4,900	42	14,700	4,700	32	16,300	5,400	33
Connecticut	20,600	8,600	42	20,200	6,600	33	11,200	4,100	37	97,800	46,700	48	72,700	32,200	44	63,400	24,900	39
Delaware	2,800	900	32	1,900	700	36	1,400	600	44	19,200	8,200	43	17,400	7,000	40	15,300	5,400	35
District of Columbia	1,600	300	18	1,300	300	23	1,000	300	31	6,700	1,400	20	7,000	1,400	20	8,400	1,900	22
Florida	9,400	3,400	36	6,300	2,000	33	5,800	1,800	31	59,300	21,400	36	51,700	18,400	36	48,300	16,400	34
Georgia	9,400	3,300	36	6,600	2,500	38	7,300	3,000	41	81,400	33,700	41	57,100	21,000	37	61,300	22,800	37
Idaho	2,600	700	26	2,000	600	32	1,400	500	33	10,500	2,500	24	17,900	3,300	25	16,000	4,500	28
Illinois	67,200	25,700	38	55,600	19,600	35	41,800	14,800	35	554,600	282,100	51	463,900	209,900	45	414,800	175,900	42
Indiana	43,500	13,800	32	33,300	9,700	29	30,600	9,200	30	203,200	91,500	45	179,500	64,200	36	168,900	51,300	34
Iowa	8,300	3,300	39	5,600	2,100	38	4,100	1,600	40	45,600	26,300	58	43,200	20,300	47	43,800	19,000	43
Kansas	9,500	3,700	39	8,200	3,100	37	7,300	2,900	40	80,200	44,500	55	74,200	36,400	49	77,700	36,500	47
Kentucky	13,600	4,400	32	11,500	3,200	28	10,100	2,800	28	135,700	59,800	44	96,500	36,300	38	104,400	35,800	34
Louisiana	15,600	3,800	24	14,600	3,300	23	11,500	2,800	25	123,000	34,900	29	115,800	28,400	25	110,800	27,300	25
Maine	4,900	1,600	33	3,600	1,100	30	5,500	1,700	30	40,600	16,000	39	37,300	12,000	32	41,300	14,400	35
Maryland	14,600	4,300	29	11,500	3,800	33	7,900	3,100	39	122,400	53,900	44	114,900	43,200	38	106,700	38,700	36
Massachusetts	36,100	14,200	39	27,300	9,900	36	22,600	9,000	40	210,600	105,400	50	193,400	77,500	40	179,600	64,800	36
Michigan	66,900	20,900	31	65,700	15,000	23	49,100	17,000	35	532,700	234,400	44	426,500	137,700	32	450,400	127,600	28
Minnesota	14,200	4,900	35	14,700	3,100	21	8,700	2,600	30	57,800	22,100	38	51,500	18,100	35	50,700	20,300	34
Mississippi	5,300	1,300	25	3,900	1,200	31	3,300	1,100	32	32,500	8,300	25	31,800	7,100	22	32,800	7,700	24
Missouri	47,500	23,000	48	28,700	11,700	41	25,400	9,300	37	223,900	110,400	49	197,700	81,100	41	202,100	68,500	34
Montana	2,800	800	29	2,600	700	27	2,100	600	28	14,200	4,200	29	18,700	5,500	29	22,100	6,900	31
Nebraska	3,900	1,500	40	2,500	900	38	2,000	900	44	14,800	7,900	53	16,700	7,500	45	18,800	8,200	43
Nevada	1,100	400	36	1,000	400	38	1,000	500	45	4,000	1,300	33	4,700	1,700	36	5,400	2,100	38
New Hampshire	2,300	700	30	1,700	700	39	1,200	500	37	7,100	3,200	45	9,800	3,100	32	9,900	3,300	33
New Jersey	71,800	23,700	33	43,100	15,100	35	36,100	14,100	39	601,600	289,600	48	523,800	223,000	43	449,000	177,700	40
New Mexico	1,200	300	23	1,000	200	23	1,100	300	26	5,400	1,300	26	6,600	1,600	25	8,400	2,300	27
New York	155,700	(1)	-----	119,800	(1)	-----	144,500	(1)	-----	963,400	(1)	-----	888,200	(1)	-----	883,200	(1)	-----
North Carolina	6,800	3,400	50	6,400	3,200	51	8,000	5,000	62	35,700	21,100	59	33,200	17,900	54	38,800	22,100	57
North Dakota	1,200	400	30	600	200	30	600	200	35	5,200	1,700	33	6,000	1,900	32	6,900	2,200	32
Ohio	37,900	12,700	33	41,900	11,700	28	29,400	9,400	32	532,800	306,500	58	478,400	219,700	51	372,600	169,000	45
Oklahoma	12,800	4,400	34	9,900	3,300	33	9,600	3,100	32	80,500	38,700	48	70,800	29,300	41	78,500	29,500	38
Oregon	23,400	7,800	33	13,200	4,500	34	10,900	3,800	35	127,400	39,500	31	137,400	44,700	33	144,200	54,300	38
Pennsylvania	227,100	37,200	16	142,100	24,300	17	55,800	17,000	31	535,900	237,300	44	479,300	170,500	36	736,400	202,600	28
Rhode Island	10,700	(1)	-----	7,900	(1)	-----	(1)	(1)	-----	78,800	(1)	-----	67,000	(1)	-----	(1)	(1)	-----
South Carolina	3,500	1,300	37	3,800	1,300	34	2,900	1,200	42	18,300	8,300	45	17,000	7,000	41	19,500	8,100	42
South Dakota	800	400	49	400	200	39	400	200	40	4,200	2,100	50	4,300	2,100	48	5,000	2,300	47
Tennessee	14,300	4,900	34	13,200	4,100	31	11,900	5,000	42	132,600	57,600	43	106,900	38,700	36	122,200	46,800	38
Texas	24,700	7,300	29	19,900	6,000	30	16,400	5,300	32	155,100	58,100	37	109,300	37,800	35	94,300	31,900	34
Utah	6,100	(1)	-----	3,500	(1)	-----	2,500	500	24	17,200	(1)	-----	27,200	(1)	-----	31,900	5,300	17
Vermont	1,200	400	32	800	300	38	800	300	43	8,300	5,100	61	6,600	3,400	52	6,400	3,100	48
Virginia	6,100	2,100	34	6,300	2,900	45	5,700	2,800	50	38,100	15,800	42	32,800	12,700	39	39,900	17,700	44
Washington	28,100	8,500	30	23,000	6,700	29	20,100	6,600	33	202,600	69,000	34	207,700	69,400	33	231,700	82,400	36
West Virginia	15,600	4,500	29	13,200	3,200	24	10,200	2,100	21	87,200	34,300	39	86,400	29,500	34	88,700	26,800	30
Wisconsin	9,300	3,300	36	10,300	3,000	29	7,900	2,600	32	80,000	34,500	43	67,900	28,600	42	68,400	25,100	37
Wyoming	700	200	32	600	200	32	400	100	30	1,600	500	32	2,300	700	32	3,000	900	29

1 Not available.

young girls changed the personal characteristics of women in the 1944 civilian labor force. By February 1944, nearly 2.9 million more married women were in the labor force than in March 1940, as a result of both the recruitment of married women and the higher wartime marriage rates. Among the married women in the civilian labor force in February 1944 were a million wives of servicemen absent in the armed services and nearly 1.5 million wives who had children under 10 years of age. The civilian labor force in February 1944 also included 734,000 more girls in the ages 14-19 and 1 million more women aged 45 and over than in March 1940.

The addition of 5 million women to the wartime labor force between March 1940 and March 1945, their concentration in the major war industries, and especially in some that have been subjected to the most drastic curtailment, and the geographic concentration of the war industries themselves all spell unemployment unless the laid-off workers can be absorbed by local peacetime industries or move to places with better employment opportunities or withdraw from the labor force.

### *Factors Affecting the Postwar Employment of Women*

The extent to which the increased numbers of women in the labor force will be employed depends, of course, on the relation between the supply of women workers and the demand for them.

On the *supply* side, the problem resulting from the increase in the number of women in the labor force is aggravated by their concentration in the major war industries and by the large numbers who were laid off soon after the surrender of Japan. The problem is further complicated by the large number of men who also were laid off, although sometimes more gradually, and by the steadily increasing volume of returning veterans. The net result is that former "tight" labor-market areas have become "loose."

It has been expected that the withdrawal of most of the emergency women workers from the labor force will correct the imbalance between the wartime additions to the labor force and industry's normal demand for women workers.

The altered composition of the 1944 female civilian labor force has an important bearing on the probable withdrawal of many women with reconversion and the release of husbands from the armed forces. Some of the increased number of young girls who entered the labor force prematurely may return to school; others will leave to marry. Gradually, this increase will be liquidated. Many of the older women will withdraw because they find it increasingly difficult to get jobs as employers raise their hiring specifications. Doubtless many of the wives with young children and the wives of absent servicemen may choose, if they can, to stop work in order to devote themselves to home responsibilities. But among all groups, some women will wish to continue at work for the same economic motives as prompted their entry into the labor force, especially if they can get a job with comparable earnings and with hours that dovetail with household duties.

On the basis of these factors and others, such as the resistance of many war workers to changing jobs or taking lower pay, war weariness, neglected household duties, or the difference in the geographic distribution of wartime and peacetime industries, it has been generally predicted that within 2 years after VJ-day, or at latest by 1950, most of the wartime increase of women in the labor force will have been liquidated. A net increase in the number of women workers will remain, however, because of the increase in population and the long-time trend for the increased employment of women.

The ultimate restoration of the female labor force to its more normal size does not, however, mean that this may be accomplished without a period of unemployment for many. Since nearly half the women employed in the major war industries in March 1944 had been in the labor force in 1940, either in the same or another group of industries, many or most of them may be expected to wish to continue to work. Many young girls who left school prematurely will also want jobs. Among the married women and older women, many will want paid work. Their difficulties, however, in obtaining a job such as they wish, or the disappearance of the only work for which they are qualified or which

is within easy reach of home, may lead many to give up the search. Some older women also may withdraw ultimately from the labor force because of the greater difficulty in getting a job as employers return to prewar age standards. Thus, unemployment is the winnowing process by which many ultimate withdrawals from the labor force will be accomplished.

Both the desire to work and the wish to withdraw from the labor force have been manifested since the surrender of Japan. The large number of women who have registered for work and filed claims for unemployment benefits indicates the desire of many to continue in the labor force if they can get a suitable job. Many of those who find they cannot get the type of work they want or for which they are qualified by their wartime experience, at wages which compare favorably with wartime earnings, will give up the effort sooner or later. Even those who abandon their wartime standards of pay and hours may retire as they find it increasingly difficult to get any job because of employers' sex and age specifications. In some States the decrease in the compensable claims filed by women is attributed to their withdrawal from the labor force. As the length of unemployment increases, more marginal workers will withdraw.

Withdrawal of women from the labor force is indicated in the monthly samples of the labor force made by the Bureau of the Census. The estimates show that the number of women in the labor force declined by almost 3.5 million from the week ended July 14, 1945, to that ended April 13, 1946. Since the "normal" seasonal contraction during this period would have been approximately 800,000, a decrease of some 2.9 million is nonseasonal, due essentially to the withdrawal of emergency war workers. These figures also indicate that approximately three-fourths of the women in excess of the "normal" number in the labor force during the week ended July 14, 1945, have already left the labor force. This movement may be expected to continue as husbands are released from the services and as many women find it difficult to get the kind of job they wish or even to get any job as employers

indicate their preference for younger workers and for men, particularly returning veterans.

While the emergency workers are in the process of withdrawing from the labor force, girls leaving school will be seeking jobs; the number in this group probably will be less than in normal years, however, because of the many who left school prematurely during the war.

Ultimate withdrawal from the labor force, however, will not wholly correct the imbalance between the wartime supply of women workers and normal peacetime demand, unless withdrawals in a locality are commensurate with the decline in its demand for women workers or unless the "surplus" move to places with better work opportunities. Consequently, local pools of unemployed women may be expected, especially in communities where woman-employing war industries, unrelated to the basic peacetime industries, have had a mushroom growth. On the other hand, unless war workers who have moved to war centers return home, some other communities may experience labor shortages.

In considering the *demand* for women workers, it is obvious that the capitulation of Germany and Japan ended the emergency need for aircraft, ships, and ordnance. Workers employed in these industries in plants built to supply war needs obviously must look for other jobs, unless the plants are converted to civilian uses. When plants close in these industries which were located in centers that had never had similar peacetime industries, the demand for wartime skills has vanished.

In places where established plants were converted to war production, as in the automobile industry, and have returned to their normal peacetime production, the postwar demand for women workers is conditioned by several factors. When lay-offs and rehiring were based on seniority, it is probable that many women had less seniority than men and were, therefore, the first laid off and the last rehired. Moreover, fragmentary studies indicate that, in about one-fifth of the plants or collective agreements under review, women did not have the same seniority rights as men; separate seniority lists were maintained for men

and for women, protecting the seniority of women only in relation to jobs which before the war were recognized as "woman's work"; in some instances, seniority rights of women hired for war work did not apply to postwar employment. In any case, because of the relatively brief experience of many women in the major war industries, women probably are more affected than men by the statutory seniority rights of returning veterans. Even when no distinction is made in seniority rights, some executives have predicted that women on jobs formerly held by men will have less security than women in other types of jobs.

In plants where ability is considered in connection with seniority or carries greater weight, management may be expected to review critically its wartime experience with women workers, especially when they took over men's jobs. If women have been found more efficient and more easily supervised, they may be kept. Such decisions, however, may be influenced by the greater absenteeism and higher turnover among women in war industries, by the desirability of retaining workers with more all-around skills than many women possess, by possible union opposition to peacetime employment of women on jobs usually held by men, and by technological considerations. Moreover, if there are not enough jobs for all, management may prefer men, on the theory that men usually have families to support and that it is therefore socially more important to employ a man than a woman.

Perhaps of even greater importance is the extent to which industry will retain the wartime dilution and reengineering of men's jobs which enabled women to handle many of them. It is suggestive that, among 352 firms reporting, two-thirds said they would advocate restoration of such jobs to men.

#### *Lay-Offs Following Japanese Surrender*

The lay-offs after the Japanese surrender which involved the separation of more than 2.5 million workers in the following month, of whom 2 million had been employed in the major war industries, bore more severely on women than on men. In the major war industries the number of men em-

ployees dropped 21 percent between July 15 and September 1; the number of women, 40 percent.

The lay-offs, moreover, occurred in precisely those industries in which the employment of women had increased most during the war. The greatest number of lay-offs occurred in aircraft production; by September 15, employees of this industry had been reduced by 800,000 and by mid-October by another 90,000, or to one-fourth the number before the surrender of Japan. Ordnance suffered the next greatest decline—a cut of about 750,000 workers between August 15 and September 15. In the closely related machinery industries, employment declined by some 275,000 between July 15 and September 15, but with prospects of early reconversion. The immediate impact of the Japanese capitulation on shipbuilding was less—a reduction of some 250,000 workers by mid-September. Employment in communications equipment dropped 160,000 between July 15 and September 15, with a disproportionate reduction in women employees because of management's desire to retain skilled male employees whom it would be hard to replace even in a loose labor market.

The impact of these cut-backs varied in different sections of the country. The largest reductions in aircraft employment were in the large Government-owned plants located principally in the Middle West and the West, where there are scant prospects for their peacetime use. Often fewer workers were actually laid off than were displaced by the cancellation of contracts, because—as in the automobile plants in Detroit, Flint, and Buffalo—reconversion was under way and plants reabsorbed many workers formerly engaged in aircraft production. Nevertheless, about three-fourths of the displaced aircraft workers were laid off or quit, with the most severe impacts in such cities as Akron, Chicago, Dallas, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and Wichita.

In ordnance, also, the impact of the lay-offs varied. About 180,000 workers engaged in small-arms ammunition, explosives, and loading production were laid off almost immediately, since these plants had no transfer possibilities. On the other hand, about two-thirds of the displaced ordnance workers had been employed in

plants with transfer possibilities and of these about 26 percent were able to effect early transfers within the same plant. The closing of plants engaged exclusively in small-arms ammunition, explosives, and loading production, that had employed a large proportion of women workers, and the concentration of the remaining work in establishments doing repair and job work that called for higher skills and heavy maintenance work, contributed to the unequal displacement of men and women. Between July 15 and September 15, employment of men in ordnance plants dropped 46 percent and that of women 64 percent, effecting a decline in the employment of women in this industry from 33 to 23 percent.

The magnitude of these cut-backs has had serious repercussions on the unemployment of women because of the large number and proportion of women formerly employed in the industries most affected. In July 1945, aircraft alone employed over 400,000 women; ordnance, more than 300,000; communications equipment, over 200,000; and shipbuilding, nearly 150,000. In a few of these industries or their subdivisions, women constituted more than 40 or even 50 percent of all employees.

### *Current Demand for Women Workers*

Although the surrender of Japan found unfilled vacancies in many of the peacetime industries which normally employ large proportions of women workers, such as trade, service, apparel, textile, and tobacco, the absorptive possibilities of these industries may be restricted by the increased proportion of women generally employed in them during the war, the differences in the geographic distribution of the wartime and peacetime industries, and the return of servicemen and of other men from their war jobs. Local openings, moreover, may be limited in relation to the numbers of ex-war workers. In Portland, Oregon, for example, even the trade and service industries offered little absorptive capacity by November 1945. Unless the local demand for women approximates the numbers laid off and unless the skills in demand also correspond to those of the laid-off workers, especially the emer-

gency workers, it is difficult or impossible to avoid local pools of unemployed women in some localities, unless the surplus workers migrate or withdraw from the labor force.

In addition to differences in possibilities of local absorption, measured in terms of the number of workers or skills needed, the demand for women workers has shifted. In the automobile industry, for example, women now are used almost entirely on nonproduction jobs. Future labor requirements reported by employers to the U. S. Employment Service indicate that employers prefer men in the metal-working industries in which women's employment increased during the war, such as electrical and nonelectrical machinery, automobiles, and aircraft. In some large centers, openings are for men because the work is heavy. A few cities, on the other hand, report a larger proportion of openings for women than for men. A couple of northern cotton-textile centers report a shortage of women textile operatives, particularly for the second and third shifts. In general, women's employment opportunities appear to be limited increasingly to their traditional fields—textiles, apparel, tobacco, trade, and service industries, which are often low-paid.

The shrinking employment opportunities for women appear to be the result of often-reported employer preferences for younger workers<sup>1</sup> and for men, particularly veterans. This movement is accelerated by actual replacement of women by men, often veterans, as in steel, a few rub-

<sup>1</sup> Industry's demand for younger women is reflected in the age of women claimants in Seattle, Washington. In a sample study of 8.7 percent of all claimants who had filed a claim between August 20, 1945, and January 19, 1946, 42.3 percent of the active women claimants were 45 years of age or over, whereas at the peak of war production only 26.3 percent of the women workers were in this age group. At the time of the survey, however, the age level of the employed labor force had been reduced by the heavier lay-offs among the older workers and the return of young men and women from the armed services. Moreover, only 20 percent of the women claimants were under 30 years of age, as contrasted with 40.6 percent of the women in this age group in the wartime employed labor force. (Office of Unemployment Compensation and Placement, *Unemployment Compensation Claimants and Job Openings in Seattle*, Olympia, pp. 1, 4.)

ber plants, and aircraft. Occasionally, replacement of women by men has extended to the industries that traditionally employ women, such as the woolen and worsted industry and sometimes trade and service industries. The expressed preference for men is a natural result of the general increase in employment of women during the war; it may be viewed merely as a return to the former status quo.

The impact of these changes in the demand for women workers is reflected in the placements made by the USES before and after the Japanese surrender. Although the total number of placements fell, as was to be expected in a loose labor market, the placements of women dropped more than those of men. Between May-July and September-November 1945, placements in all industries dropped 42 percent for men and 46 percent for women; in all manufacturing, the drop was 44 percent for men and 59 percent for women. The disproportionate decline in placements of women reflects the decline in the ratio of placements of women to all placements: thus, in May-July nearly one-third of all placements in manufacturing were of women; in September-November, only one-fourth. Within manufacturing, the decline was greatest in the war industries. In ordnance and accessories, for example, women accounted for 38 percent of all placements in May-July and for 18 percent in September-November; in aircraft and parts, the proportion dropped from 38 to 23 percent; in electrical machinery, from 59 to 45 percent; and in rubber products, from 33 to 21 percent. Even in the textile industry, the proportion fell slightly, from 47 to 45 percent. The only exceptions to this general trend were the apparel, leather and leather-products industries, service trades, and private domestic service, in which women represented a slightly higher proportion of all placements in September-November than in May-July.

This general decrease in the demand for women workers reflects the difference in employment trends of men and of women since the Japanese surrender. The number of men employed, including those actually at work and those with a job but not at work, is estimated to have increased

from 34.7 million in the week ended July 14, 1945, to 38.4 million in the week ended April 13, 1946; over the same period the estimated number of women employed fell from 19.6 million to 16.1 million.

### Summary

The lay-offs within the month following the capitulation of Japan were concentrated in those major war industries in which large numbers of women had been employed and in which the employment of women had increased most during the war—production of aircraft, ordnance, machinery, electrical communications, and shipbuilding. Lay-offs of women, moreover, were disproportionately large. Lay-offs have been affected by seniority provisions, under which women probably had less seniority than men in prewar plants because of their more recent entrance or because some seniority provisions afforded women less security on men's jobs or "after the war." Moreover, because of the more recent employment of women in established prewar plants, women are probably more affected than men by the statutory seniority rights of returning veterans. Other factors have also played their part, such as the desirability of retaining workers with more all-around skills than many women possess; decisions regarding the continuation of dilution and reengineering of men's jobs that had made it possible for women to handle many such jobs; and the general appraisal of the efficiency of women, especially those who had taken over work usually performed by men, in the light of their generally greater absenteeism and higher turn-over in war plants.

Under these conditions, women formed a disproportionate number of the initial claimants in the month following the surrender of Japan, according to data from six industrial States where large numbers of workers had been employed in the major war industries. In these States the proportion of initial claims filed by women generally declined as other factors began to cause unemployment. In these same six States, women also accounted for a disproportionate, although gradually decreasing, proportion of compensable claims filed and for a greater propor-

tion of compensable than of initial claims. Throughout the country, in January and February 1946 women generally filed a higher proportion of compensable than of initial claims, reflecting the higher proportion of initial claims originally filed by women and the greater difficulty of women in getting jobs. In general, women filed a higher proportion of compensable claims in States where war industries employed large numbers of women than in States where shipbuilding was the principal war industry or where war industries did not develop to substantial proportions. In March 1946, as the representation of women in compensable claims continued to decline and that in initial claims rose, the disparity was less evident.

Unemployment among women revealed by such data results not only from the present transition in industry but also from wartime changes in the employment of women and the postwar outlook for women workers.

During the war, some 5 million women were added to the civilian labor force; slightly more than two-fifths of the new entrants were absorbed by the major war industries, thus making it possible for these industries to recruit nearly half their wartime women employees from former housewives and young girls. While the major war industries drew another one-fourth of their women workers from other industries, the employment of women simultaneously increased throughout all industry except in the service trades, where there was an absolute decline.

The future supply of women workers is affected by the composition of the wartime female labor force, which contained more married women, more women aged 45 years or over, and more girls in their teens. Many married women who have a choice may wish to withdraw from the labor force to devote themselves to home responsibilities, particularly women with young children and the wives of returning servicemen. Older women may choose or be forced to withdraw because they find it increasingly difficult to get a job as employers return to prewar standards of employability. Among young girls, some may leave work to return to school or to marry. Other women may with-

draw as they find it increasingly difficult to get a job near home or to find work with wages and hours that make the double duties in the home and industry worth while or feasible. Among all groups, however, some will wish to continue paid work for economic reasons. These forces have been relied on ultimately to correct the imbalance between the abnormal wartime supply of women workers and the probable postwar demand for their services.

Ultimate shrinkage of the labor force, however, may not be accomplished without an initial period of unemployment, when many emergency workers are anxious to get work for which they are qualified by their war experience and at comparable wages. However, the obsolescence of wartime skills in many localities and the limited skills of many emergency workers make their placement difficult. Both forces have been at work: many former war workers wish work; some have found it; others remain unemployed; still others have withdrawn from the labor force. As the length of unemployment increases, it is probable that more marginal workers will give up the search for a job.

Although the surrender of Japan found unfilled vacancies in many industries which normally employ large proportions of women, their demand for women may be limited because of the increase in the number of women generally employed during the war, the return of servicemen with statutory seniority rights, and the return of men from war work to prewar jobs. Local absorption of laid-off women war workers, moreover, may be relatively limited in view of the large numbers laid off, especially in communities where war industries expanded employment of women far beyond the normal peacetime demand. Moreover, unless the local demand for women workers approximates the numbers laid off and requires the skills of the emergency workers, it will be impossible to avoid severe unemployment of women in some localities, unless the surplus workers move to places with better work opportunities or leave the labor force.

The problem of the surplus women war workers is complicated by the replacement of women by men, partic-

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Alphabetical list of registered hospitals for each State, giving type of hospital, ownership or control, number of beds and admissions, and average census.

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Considers the need for health insurance, including dental care, and explains methods of financing and paying the doctors in a health insurance system.

"For the Nation's Health." *Economic Outlook (CIO)*, Washington, Vol. 7, Apr. 1946, entire issue.

The need for a national health insurance program and a brief explanation of the Wagner-Murray-Dingell health bill.

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MAYO, SELZ C. *Distribution of Dentists in North Carolina*. Raleigh: North Carolina Agricultural Experiment Station, 1946. 19 pp. Processed.

MOTT, FREDERICK D. "A Public Health Program for Rural Areas." *Public Health Reports*, Washington, Vol. 61, Apr. 26, 1946, pp. 589-598. 10 cents.

Discusses present inadequacies in rural health care and urges the enactment of a compulsory health insurance program.

OPPICE, HAROLD W. "Past, Present, and Proposed Federal Health Legislation." *Journal of the American Dental Association*, Chicago, Vol. 33, May 1, 1946, pp. 609-619. 50 cents.

PINK, LOUIS H. *A Health Plan for the State of New York*. New York: Associated Hospital Service of New York, 1945. 19 pp.

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"The Press, the Minister, and the Bill." *British Medical Journal*, London, No. 4450, Apr. 20, 1946, pp. 612-613. 1s. 6d.

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QUATTLEBAUM, CHARLES A. *Medical and Surgical Activities of the Federal Government*. Washington: The Library of Congress, Legislative Reference Service, 1945. 77 pp. Processed. (Public Affairs Pamphlets No. 38.)

History, organization, functions, and personnel of the principal agencies.

RICHARDSON, J. T. *The Origin and Development of Group Hospitalization in the United States, 1890-1940*. Columbia: University of Missouri, 1945. 101 pp. (University of Missouri Studies No. 3.) \$1.25.

Traces the development of the Blue Cross group hospitalization plan, showing its origin, legal basis, and administration and touching on the attitude of professional groups toward the program.

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ularly by returning veterans, and by the often-reported preferences of employers for men and younger workers. Thus, the placements of women by the USES since the Japanese surrender generally have declined disproportionately to those of men, except in a few industries and the service trades

which normally employ large proportions of women. Moreover, while the total employment of men is estimated to have increased by nearly 3.8 million between mid-July 1945 and mid-April 1946, that of women is estimated to have declined by nearly 3.5 million.

Under these conditions, women may be expected to file relatively large

numbers of compensable claims, particularly in centers where woman-employed industries mushroomed and where wartime skills have become obsolete, until economic and other pressures induce more women to withdraw from the labor force or to move to places where other work opportunities exist.

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It is abundantly clear that whatever is to be done to rectify this growing social ill must be done by the community itself. First must come not only public realization of the number of persons affected, the extent and degree of their requirements, and the significant lack of resources to meet the increasing needs, but also knowl-

edge of what it means for the future of the country if a large segment of its population is to continue to be improperly cared for at the expense of their own usefulness and also of other persons whose restoration to a productive life they may be blocking through monopolizing common facilities.

Guided by this information and

knowledge, the community should be ready to take informed action. It should recognize that chronic illness may bring disaster to any family at any time. It must accept as a primary responsibility the need to minimize that disaster insofar as the creation and maintenance of facilities for adequate care may contribute toward that end.