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**WELFARE WORK**

# WELFARE WORK

EMPLOYERS' EXPERIMENTS FOR IMPROVING  
WORKING CONDITIONS IN FACTORIES

BY

E. DOROTHEA PROUD  
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FIRST CATHERINE HELEN SPENCE SCHOLAR

WITH A FOREWORD BY

DAVID LLOYD-GEORGE, P.C., M.P.  
PRIME MINISTER  
(FIRST MINISTER OF MUNITIONS)



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TO  
THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA  
IN MEMORY OF  
CATHERINE HELEN SPENCE

## FOREWORD

By DAVID LLOYD-GEORGE, P.C., M.P.

HIS MAJESTY'S SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR

AMONG all the changes which the great war has brought in its train, none is more significant, and none more likely to have lasting effect than the revolution in the structure of British industry. For the first time in our history many firms have submitted to a general control by the State; many workers have desisted from the endeavour to regulate the supply and restrict the output of labour. The factories are alive with new workers; the State assumes new responsibilities; fresh needs and opportunities arise; industrial conditions are in solution.

In no respect has the change in our factories been more marked than in the character of the labour employed. Men of all descriptions, drawn from every walk in life, half-skilled and unskilled, have poured into munition works. Even more remarkable has been the advent of the women. From the shop, from the work-room, from domestic service—many of them utterly unaccustomed to factory or even manual work—they have come in their thousands and hundreds of thousands. There has been no readier patriotism. And these women, these young girls, submit cheerfully to long hours, to hard work, to monotonous work, so that they may “beat the Germans.” Many of the firms that engage them

have never employed women before; many, that employed tens, now employ hundreds or thousands. The change has been sudden. When last summer the demand arose for shells, and still more shells, to save the liberties of Europe, and from one end of the country to the other engineering and other shops and factories were converted to the making of munitions, the response of the women and of other workers was overwhelming. Before the problems of the change could be solved, the new hands were already at work at the machines.

The conditions of their work soon engaged my attention. If a maximum output was to be reached—still more, if it was to be maintained for a protracted period—it was all-important that the health and well-being of the workers should be carefully safeguarded. This was specially the case with women and young people. The workers of to-day are the mothers of to-morrow. In a war of workshops the women of Britain were needed to save Britain; it was for Britain to protect them. Steps were taken immediately to improve the conditions under which both men and women were working.

A strong Departmental Committee was appointed to consider the question of the Health of Munition Workers, under the chairmanship of that eminent civil servant, Sir George Newman. It has issued a valuable series of reports on hours of labour, industrial fatigue, canteens, the employment of women, welfare supervision, and the like. Further reports are to follow. A Canteen Committee was set up by the Central Control Board (Liquor Traffic) to assist firms in the construction of canteens and to afford financial assistance in conjunction with the Ministry

of Munitions. A Committee was formed, in association with the Home Office, to secure a weekly rest to the workers and to regulate the hours of their labour. These have been greatly reduced, especially in the case of women. At the Ministry itself a new Department was created, charged with the general responsibility of securing a high standard of conditions for all workers in munition factories. At my request Mr. B. S. Rowntree accepted its direction. No man could have been found better qualified by sympathy and experience for the task.

It would be impossible to exaggerate the importance of the work which this Department has undertaken. Elaborate inquiries are being made into the conditions under which women and young persons are working; and wherever necessary, immediate steps are being taken to set them right. Employers are being afforded reasonable financial encouragement to provide proper accommodation; not only canteens, but cloak-rooms, rest-rooms, lavatories, are being built. Steps are being taken to turn to account a sum generously placed at the disposal of the Ministry of Munitions by an Indian Prince, the Maharajah Scindia of Gwalior, by using it to enable men and women workers to obtain the healthful and invigorating recreation they so sorely need. Even more important provision is being made to secure adequate supervision, in the factories themselves, of the conditions under which women and young persons are working.

Welfare Supervision is no new thing, either in this country, in the Dominions, or in America. Beginning with a view mainly to the well-being of the employed, it gradually became evident that Welfare Supervision was equally beneficial to the employer, particularly



in works employing women. If chosen with due regard to personality, experience, and character, it was found that a Lady Welfare Supervisor could relieve the management of a mass of minor but important detail. She heard complaints and investigated dismissals. She supervised the canteen and other accommodation. She helped to engage new labour. The character and tone of the works depended largely upon her. The foreman referred to her in matters of discipline, slack work, or bad time-keeping. The workers brought their troubles to her. The management found that her presence conduced to smooth working and increased output. She became not only the friend of the workers, but an essential part of the business organisation. Employers and workers alike wondered how they had done without her.

This admirable system is being introduced into the munition factories. Appointments are being made in all National factories in which women are employed. Many Controlled Establishments have followed suit. It is my desire that the remainder should fall into line, regard being had to the size and circumstances of each factory. I cannot insist too strongly on the importance of the movement. It helps to secure a larger and speedier output of munitions; it preserves the health and the happiness of the workers; it relieves the harassed employer of needless strain. The system is equally applicable to the many factories engaged in production for the export and other trades, in which women are taking the place of men who have joined the colours.

It is a strange irony, but no small compensation, that the making of weapons of destruction should

afford the occasion to humanise industry. Yet such is the case. Old prejudices have vanished, new ideas are abroad; employers and workers, the public and the State, are all favourable to new methods. The opportunity must not be allowed to slip. It may well be that, when the tumult of war is a distant echo, and the making of munitions a nightmare of the past, the effort now being made to soften asperities, to secure the welfare of the workers, and to build a bridge of sympathy and understanding between employer and employed, will have left behind results of permanent and enduring value, to the workers, to the nation, and to mankind at large.

This volume will be found very helpful to those who desire to do their part in the good work now. We owe it to the good sense, industry, and intelligence of an Australian, Miss E. D. Proud, who, after graduating at the University of Adelaide, has spent many years of patient inquiry and research into the conditions of welfare work as carried on in the factories of the Commonwealth and of Great Britain. She has further served in the Welfare Department at the Ministry of Munitions since its foundation. Her knowledge of Welfare Work is therefore unique, and her book bids fair to become the standard work on the subject. I warmly commend it to employers, to Lady Superintendents, and to all those members of the general public who care for the welfare of the workers in our factories.



June 1916.

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

HUNDREDS of visits to factories in Australia, New Zealand, England, and Scotland, as well as a little actual factory work, have provided material for this thesis, which was written primarily for the people of South Australia, who sent me to England as Spence Scholar in Sociology, leaving me free to select any branch of that science. My reason for choosing to study Welfare Work was that I had seen beneficial results from one or two attempts in this direction in Australia, and desired to find out what was being done in England and with what results. "Charity" is not tolerable to Australians, nor does "Efficiency" hold them with a magic spell. If one or other of these were its sole basis, Welfare Work would have a short shrift in Australia. But nothing appeals more strongly to the Australian people than a high standard of living, and a general improvement in factory conditions cannot but help in the desired direction.

Factory conditions in Australia differ from those in England, it seems to me, in that they are more nearly even; there are not the same extremes of excellence and evil which are to be found in England. Factory laws in Australia also differ from those in

England. But Australians are very ready to respond to what seems to be the keynote in English Welfare Work, namely, the recognition of individuality and individual responsibility. It is for that reason that I hope this book may prove of service to those who sent me to this country.

I speak of England rather than of Great Britain or the United Kingdom; for, though I have visited Scotland several times, I learnt much less of Welfare Work there than in England, and I have not visited Ireland at all, though there are one or two conspicuous examples of Welfare Work in that country.

I have as far as possible avoided naming employers, though I have necessarily made one or two exceptions in order to emphasise particular points.

I have not touched upon the work of the newly formed Welfare Department of the Ministry of Munitions, for my thesis was completed before that Department began its work. It is interesting to note, however, that here we have the largest employer in the land—the Ministry—recognising its responsibility for the Welfare of its workers. The number of Welfare Workers in this country is increasing every week; special courses of instruction and training in Welfare Work are now in progress at several of the Universities, and a new profession is growing rapidly into prominence. Rapid growth is not without its dangers, but this is no time for shrinking from danger in the path of progress. I shall be glad if this book serves in any way to help those who in these troublous times are attempting the untried.

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

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My thanks are due to many for assistance in gathering and arranging material for this thesis. Those to whom I owe most prefer to remain anonymous; for this reason I name no one, but my appreciation and gratitude are not the less sincere.

E. DOROTHEA PROUD.

LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS, 1916.

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