Outline of Talk - Women in Industry

Education

Like exploring a forest - don't know how to get in and when you are in, not sure where you are coming out. However, subject far better plotted than formerly, beginning to understand what we mean by Women in Industry - how many there are of her - something of her problems - also perhaps, understanding that she is not a group that can be taken out of society - that more there is no reason why she should be isolated than there is of the woman in professions or the women in agriculture.

Certain tendencies fairly clear. The woman in industry is no longer merely cheap labor. She has capacities for production in a variety of fields where it has been supposed she had none. She has capacity for executive and organizing work in industry which have been denied her. She also has demonstrated the capacity for standing on her own feet, looking after her own interests, which have surprised, most of all, the organized man in industry.

Her right to work, her right to protection in the work, her right to equal wage for equal work, to training and opportunity to advance - these are recognitions that have come in the last fifteen or twenty years, and which came out with peculiar distinctness in the War, because in the War she had the opportunity to demonstrate her capacity as never before. She came out with a demonstrated ability and a recognition not to be lost. The question how she is to keep this is a serious one.

I speak here only of one side of the problem, and that is of the education of the woman in industry, her need for it, and how she is to get it. How is this woman on the job, which, almost invariably, she must keep in order to support herself, and probably in 60 to 70% of the cases, to support others - a job which she cannot leave - how is she to be educated?
And yet, if these women are to keep the gains that have been made and are to realize the possibilities in industry which have been opened to them, she must have more education. She needs education in order to stimulate her imagination to see what is before her, she needs it in order to prepare herself, she needs it in order to handle herself in the various situations that will come up. The employer needs that she be educated. The employer is facing the necessity - competitive reasons to put his work on a more scientific basis. No plant can long keep its position in this country in the old fashioned, slip-shod systems of management. Foreign competition will drive us eventually to it if domestic competition does not. Now, scientific management means a higher degree of operative, an operative that is flexible enough to change his way of doing things, intelligent enough to grasp new ideas, sufficiently trained to cooperate; that is, the original obstinacy and setness which comes from ignorance, narrow understanding, and which education alone breaks down - the cooperative spirit, this operative of the future must have.

Then, too, it is more and more apparent that if we are to realize our democratic ideal, the whole body of people must understand what citizenship means. If we are going back to the aristocratic system and divide ourselves into distinct classes, animated by what we call class consciousness, class loyalty, it is not necessary to be citizens in the democratic sense; but if we are to keep a flexible system, where men progress according to inherent talent, then we have got to have the education to recognize opportunity, to take training and to develop the cooperative spirit. Now, how is the girl going to get this after she gets on to her job? That is, how are we going what we call to educate the adult worker? It is the greatest problem
of our time, this education of the adult industrial worker, professional worker, political worker, what not?

In the first place we must consider the education that the job itself gives. And this, rightly managed, is very great, impressed by the training in certain fundamental things like promptness, attention, thoroughness, power to carry on, given by any job to which an operative sticks. In many cases the education in fundamentals which a girl gets is after she gets on a machine, even though the whole place is abominably managed. She has never had training either in school or at home which really cultivated these essential characteristics. Now, take an intelligent, scientifically managed plant, in which operations are classified and in which proper instruction is provided, to open the possibilities of the girl, you have a chance to carry on very superior education, stimulating imagination and ambition, increasing skill, interest in awakening any latent executive ability, testing it out, giving it vent. That is, the girl in the scientifically managed factory is in a school of great value.

My known interest in scientific management has been from the conviction that it was capable of being developed in such a way as to be a great educational institution for masses of people who, under the old system, were getting little or no education.

Another educational opportunity open to the girl now which I am convinced, properly handled, is very great, is the women's trade union. The best proof of this lies in the type of women that have been developed in the last 15 or 20 years by trade unions. 20 years ago, with the rise of the trade union among women in this country there was a distinctly militant
attitude prevailing. That is, the idea seemed to be that the
only way to get at anything was to fight, to make a fight and to
keep the industry on a fighting basis. The spirit of coopera-
tion that has grown up under more intelligent leadership in a
trade union is pronounced and interesting and has lead to an
increasing interest. The women in the trade unions have had a
double task - triple, we may say. It has been difficult to per-
suade women in large numbers, such are the conditions under
which women work, so changeful and short-lived is the working
life of many of them, to feel that they needed the union. The
employer has been an enemy, and the men's trade unions have
also been unsympathetic. They feared the competition of women
and they have been frequently quite as loath to give them a
fair chance as the employer. They made their way to the present
standing they have by their usually reasonable dealings and in
carrying on, as they have, have educated some really superior
types, - Agnes Nestor, Mary Anderson. On the basis of education
alone of the operative, the trade union has a right to be regard-
ed as an admirable school.

Outside of the shop and the union there are of course
many attempts to give opportunities to those that want them.
There are schools, classes in vocational training, and there are
evening schools in most of our cities. The Y.W.C.A. is doing
admirable work for women in industry in many, many points in the
country. You find the Institutional Church furnishing opportunities.
But there are not enough of any of these things to cover the case.
They reach only a small percent., and that percent. which has some
kind of contacts which has stimulated its ambition and imagination
sufficiently to take advantage of the opening.

One of the most stimulating, and I am inclined to think,
far reaching attempts to bring education to the girl in industry, 
that has been made in the country, was the school held last 
summer at Bryn Mawr College.

Analyse material in Hearn's narrative

List one bibliography