

ONE BEEKMAN PLACE

January 28, 1936

My Dear Miss Tarbell:-

It is indeed a long time since I have had the pleasure of seeing you, and I sincerely hope I am not asking too much of your time and patience to read the enclosed. I know your time is very precious, but I believe this matter is one of real interest to you.

Since you certainly are one of the women who take a broad and long range view of economic changes, I am asking for your judgment on this three page memorandum concerning the nation's need of the wealth producing power of its women. You will see the subject is not presented as a "Woman's Cause".

So clearly has the matter become one of national importance, that after consultation with Anne Morgan and one or two others, I am, in this mail, asking the judgment and interest of a few outstanding women as well as such men as Mr. Daniel Willard, Mr. Owen D. Young, and Mr. Howard Coffin.

Again, let me repeat, I would not call on your over-burdened self if the proposal in the attached memorandum involved work of any sort beyond attendance at the suggested conference. Your presence would mean so much in coming to a wise decision on this matter of national importance.

I do so hope you will be able to join us here at my house on Tuesday, February 18th, at five o'clock. Not only will it be a great pleasure to see you again, but it would mean personally so much to me to have you here.

Affectionately yours,

Miss Ida Tarbell,

(Miss) Maud K. Eastmore

New Outlets For An Old And Indispensable Wealth Producing Power
(Certain Facts Bearing Upon The Better Use Of The Nation's Woman Power)

Prepared by Marie L. Obenauer, December 20, 1935.

1.

Researches by agencies of authoritative reputation have established the fact that the nation needs the creative activity and wealth producing power of all its able-bodied citizens if the standards of living of its 32 million families are to be maintained and raised.

Basic conditions upon which these facts rest are now matters of common knowledge. A fifth of the nation's practical operating equipment was inactive when substantially all of the nation's wage and salary earners were employed in 1929, yet millions of families were lacking the goods and services regarded as essential to healthful and comfortable home life. Millions of homes were without running water or any sanitary facilities. Hundreds of thousands of families were without adequate lighting systems. Millions were beyond the reach of proper medical and nursery services. More millions were without the recreation and education needed to keep humans moving forward on an even keel. Food and clothing for millions were below American standards in quantity, quality, or both.

This is not in conflict with the fact that these goods and services were, and are, possessed by more millions in this country than any country in the world. But there are still millions who have not, and who had not, an adequate measure of goods and services when employment was at its height and general prosperity, as reflected in wages and salaries, was at its peak.

These facts are stated with full recognition that invention is progressively increasing the commodity output per human hour of labor and that this increased rate of material wealth production doubtless will be reflected in lengthened leisure for all as the nation's needs for goods and services are met by reemployment and industrial advancement.

There are other facts quite as generally known and whose vital bearing on these recent researches are overlooked, yet they are facts which must be reckoned with in making adjustments essential to permanent recovery and sustained progress.

An obvious but fundamental fact is that the goods and services which must be furnished in larger measure to sustain and advance American standards of family life are now paid for less and less in kind, i. e. by home labor. More and more they must be paid for in cash. What is more, the creature comforts and health conservers produced in the new way for the family are more effective than when produced by home labor. For example: the hot and cold water; the light, heat, the cleaned rugs, floors, carpets; the instant and laborless cooking fuel, and all the family comforts and necessities that were paid for not so many decades ago by hand labor of the women of the family, are better than they used to be, but must still be paid for in part by women. In other words, the help of the women is just as essential now when the water is power into the homes; when the waste is forced away from the homes through drains; when the light and labor saving currents are drawn from power stations, water works, and gas works by the mere pushing of a button as when these services were the result of human drudgery.

Now, as in earlier days, women must contribute their share of the comforts and necessities of family life because now, no more than in earlier days, is the money income of the head of the average American family sufficient to supply the necessities and comforts while the wife and daughters consume but do not produce. The only difference is that in earlier days when women paid their share by hand labor, the contribution was considered as logical and wholesome, both for women and for the family morale. In these days when women must continue to contribute, if the families are to have the essentials of health and comfort, there is a strong tendency to look with disfavor upon their presence in industry, commerce, and the professions where alone they can earn cash with which to make their age-old contribution to family comfort. It is true that there is a general recognition that the industrial developments which took sewing and scores of hand fabrications out of the home into the factory, necessarily drew out millions of unmarried daughters who could not be supported in idleness. But there is inadequate recognition of the effect of more recent industrial developments that drive into the homes more and more millions of horse power to lift from the shoulders of the mother the drudgery of housekeeping that once kept her in a treadmill from daylight to dark. The increasing measure of mechanical labor-saving power coming into the homes is reducing the need for, and, therefore, the value of her horse power as a housewife; but not her obligation as a home maker or the need of her contribution to the family wealth. Her problem, but not her obligation as mother and housekeeper has changed with changing industrial conditions. In the degree that household drudgery is declining, in just that degree rises the value of managerial skill as a home maker and as a cash contributor to the family necessities and comforts. Particularly is this true where there are no other adults to supplement the earnings of the average chief wage earner or salaried man.

It is urgent that thoughtful men and women face these facts. Failure to do so will not change such facts. The goods and services that go to make a home healthful and livable will continue to be made in increasing measure outside the home. As a consequence, four million home

makers - nearly 40% of all employed women - are now in industry, commerce, and the professions. They will stay there and will be joined by other millions as mass production, organized professions, and specialized services draw outside of the home more and more of its traditional activities. But the facts need to be faced because the home is still the lodestone of family life, the building center of child character, and the source of the nation's human replacement material. Failure to face the facts and to deal intelligently with them will put in needless jeopardy this vital unit of our national life.

Finally there is still another fact buried in the recent researches into wealth production which bears upon the relation of the nation's women power to recovery and economic progress. Using the same method of deduction exactly as that used to arrive at the wealth production of 48 million men and women wage and salary workers combined, the wealth produced by the 10½ million women wage and salary workers alone totaled approximately 10 billion dollars in 1929, or about 17% of that produced by men and women combined. The nation cannot afford to lose this power. There is no reason why it should lose it. It would be lost at the expense of family life. It could not be lost without radical dislocation in industry, commerce and the professions.

Some Obvious Steps.

These facts should be put before the public in a convincing manner. They will rivet widest attention and carry conviction further if they are presented under the sponsorship of men and women who are known to take a broad and long range view of economic changes.

In other words, it is particularly important that the presentation of facts be not sponsored either by feminist or woman labor leaders because both have had to stress in the very nature of things the rights or the personal need of woman to work, rather than the unchanged claim of the family and of the nation on woman's wealth producing power.

In these days of confusion and factless controversy over woman's place in our changing economic order, a clarion statement of fact, sponsored by men and women unassociated with purely womens' causes, would have an arresting and steadying effect.

To secure such a statement, I suggest that the idea of projecting a publication, which would vividly illustrate and adequately document the facts, be laid tentatively before a group of thoughtful men and women;

2. Wealth production as reflected in "National Income Paid Out And Produced."

that the group be invited to conference to discuss the validity of underlying data, the desirability and feasibility of the publication and - if the project is approved - the personnel of its sponsorship.³

I suggest further that, either in connection with the conference on the proposed publication, or with a special group of educators, there be discussed the need of adjustment in our educational courses to meet the conditions created in the home by the increasing millions of home makers who must earn their cash contribution to family support in the channels of industry, commerce, and the professions.

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3. The problem of its financial sponsorship may find solution in the expressed business interest of one outstanding publisher to whom the project was outlined tentatively and confidentially to get an indication of publication possibilities.