Mem. for Allentown

How Women can Contribute to National Life

What is it that is being asked of us? What are the world's demands of women? What activities are expected of them, outside of the traditional duties, which, it should be noted, it is not suggested that they lay down.

In our own country today, I think that we would all agree that there are two general concerns of paramount importance; and the help of women is needed in handling them.

First, there is our national house-keeping, which no one will deny is bringing unrest instead of content to great numbers of people, is hampering instead of freeing many, is full of waste and disorder and disquiet - the kind of mismanagement that in a private home brings for the head of the house the reputation of being a bad manager, a poor provider.

The house-keepers of this nation today - for that is all a government exists for, to keep house for the nation - have earned a bad reputation for management and providing. A government expects to make, first of all, a nation safe for its citizens. After that, it must protect the citizens from one another, not allowing the strong to exploit the weak. It must encourage the development of the resources of the country by wise laws, and

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and sometimes by material aid if the majority of the citizens shall so decide. It must provide schemes for education. It must look after national health and sanitation. It must provide for those that have fallen out of the ranks of active life - the insane, the sub-normal, the sick, when they have no personal friends to look after them. And it must provide just ways of raising the money for all these activities. This, roundly speaking, is what we elect governments for - to keep our national house.

Now, in this work in which the analogy is very close to that of the work of a woman in her private house, how can a woman, with these new duties and the new power of which we have already spoken, how can she be of the most effective help?

My judgment is that there are two ways in which she can be of the most practical and direct assistance. One is on insisting that we have a re-organization of our national activities, cutting out the overlapping and duplication which exist everywhere; and then, for the carrying on of this re-organized system, insisting that federal, state and local units of the government submit a budget, complete in its last detail.

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As our government exists today, it is a collection of great bureaus, each excessively jealous of its prerogatives,--many of them carrying on side lines of work quite unrelated to their principal activities, and many of them duplicating work in a most irritating and wasteful fashion. A thorough overhauling which would properly relate all functions and make each responsible for its own efficiency and progress is the first imperative thing in this country. And along with this, as I have said, should go the most careful estimate of cost.

This is a kind of thing that a woman admirably understands. No family could exist for a year in happiness and comfort, managed the way the national government of the United States is managed. No family income could stand the strain for a year without bankruptcy if run as the finances of this country are run. The woman coming fresh to this problem, if she will study it as a non-partisan, quite as disinterestedly as she would her own personal housekeeping problem, can bring tremendous force towards the re-organization that is necessary.

But she must go one step further. Nothing will do more to defeat the power for good that woman can exercise in public life in this country than for her to fall into the practice that is so general now, in choosing people for

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positions, and that is their acceptability as political factors. There is one reason for giving a man a governmental position and that is that he can do the service there required better than any other available person. If women will consider as of first importance this matter of fitness in the people that they will help choose, they will go a long step towards justifying the new power that has been given them.

But it is just in this particular that there is a danger of woman being weak. Her experience has not been long enough in professional, business and political life for her as a sex to realize the length of time and of services that it requires for the average person to be really fitted for responsibility. This shows glaringly in the attitude of young women in seeking positions in professional and industrial life.

Take it in my own profession of journalism. We have coming into New York every year a body of fine, charming young college women, here to make their way in journalism; and, as my experience goes, probably not one in a hundred of these young women realizes that a long, slow, hard apprenticeship is necessary in order to reach any kind of desirable position in the profession. They have merely imbibed the idea that journalism is interesting

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and well paid. They think it will be exciting to be on a newspaper; and their idea is beginning at the top with a good salary and sharing from the day they come in the confidence and admiration of the editorial and contributing force. But they do not realize at all that the members of this force, almost without exception, have come to their positions by years of painful and often very discouraging work. There probably is no profession in which more hard knocks must be uncomplainingly received than that of journalism. Their unwillingness to do the uninteresting things, the hard drudgery, and sticking to each department until they have mastered it in the way that a man must do, explains why so many girls - sometimes of real talent - drop out, and why so many others that stay never get very far in journalism. As a matter of fact, although journalism has been open for sixty years freely in New York City to women, the number of really superior journalists developed is surprisingly few.

And this is more or less true in everything that women go into. You know how, for the last five years, there has been an influx of college women, very highly trained in social work, into industry. They have desired to go into the positions of welfare workers, employment managers, industrial educators; but nine out of ten of the women seeking these positions, I should say, expect to begin at the top. They all want something interesting. They are not willing to

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sit down at the machine for a few months, to eat their meals in the factory lunch room - or on the machine if there is no lunch room - to come and go at the hours that the girls they are to direct, come and go. How can a woman expect to be of substantial assistance in industry unless she knows from actual contact something of the life of the worker? Wherever you find a woman who has risen to an assured superior position, you will find that she has spent years dragging herself up the ladder.

A few nights ago I was a guest at a dinner given in honor of a woman who holds probably first rank among American women painters, Cecilia Beaux. She had just returned to New York after a year and a half in Europe where for the historical gallery that our government is preparing of the leading characters in the great war and the great Peace Conference that followed it, she has been painting portraits. She has painted Cardinal Mercier, Clemenceau, Admiral Beatty - the pictures are now on exhibition in New York and this was the first dinner given in her honor. One of the leading art critics rose at the dinner and among other things he said. "Not long ago I looked over a biographical dictionary of women painters. There were hundreds of them, and I could count on my fingers the names that I knew. If you come to analyze," he went on, "the

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reason that almost none of the names mentioned had really achieved anything, you will find that it was because, while they desired to be artists, they were not willing to do the work that makes an artist. Miss Beaux reached her place by work, constant work, running over years and years, every year aiming to do a little better than last. Her work is the success of honest, intelligent effort."

Now, what is true in the professions, the arts, the industries, - that is, the willingness to take the apprenticeship, to pass years of obscurity before recognition or returns begin to come, must be true in public life. If women are going into public life as they and society in general seems now to be determined, they must be willing to take their political apprenticeship, to rise step by step from their work in their own ward at home into town council or school board, into county office, state office, in the same way that a man progresses. And before she has any office she must have shown herself a good citizen in her conception of public needs.

Why did the one congresswoman of our present congress have so short and meteoric a career? I am very much inclined to think that Miss Rankin went no further than she has done because she was asking the suffrage of the women because she was a woman, not because she was a

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trained citizen prepared to render trained service as a public officer. She was elected on the strength of her sex. After one term of congress, instead of seeking a second term in order to get a more thorough knowledge of congressional procedure and of public questions and needs, she sought the senatorship. She had not had the experience of public affairs to make it wise that she be a senator. Women must lay it down, if they are to make any substantial contribution to public life, that they will support no woman for a position simply because she is a woman.Nothing will more surely discredit the woman in public life than this.

We hear now the demand that Mr. Harding put a woman into his cabinet. Hearsay tells us that he will do so. Well and good, if he can put his finger on a woman that will fill a cabinet position better than any man that he knows. To put a woman in simply because she is a woman with a vote will imperil

The vote is a sexless thing. You are not voting as a man or a woman, you are voting as a citizen, and you should be given office only because you are a more useful citizen than any other available.

That there are women capable of filling many positions there is no question. For instance, we have at the head of one of the most important of our bureaus in Washington - the

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Children's Bureau - a woman, Julia Lathrop, that could not be replaced by any man in the country. That is a position filled on merit and merit only. If women will standfor this principle in national housekeeping - the trained, fit person, regardless of sex and regardless of party - they will make the most substantial contribution to our present badly managed national household that they possibly could make.

Mary Anderson

The second great concern of the country today is doing our part towards permanent world peace. Until the country had adopted some practical and sufficiently inclusive scheme for making it possible to live on friendly terms with the other nations of the world with which we are bound in innumerable ways and on whom, it should benoted, our prosperity very largely depends, there can be no real freedom or spirit of hopefulness of mind in the country. If we must go on, harassed by the possibility of being dragged into wars in the future, if we must be ever forced to build a bigger and bigger navy and to keep up a larger and larger military establishment, there is little hope for the social, intellectual and moral development of this country upon which our future depends. A practical plan for world peace is the first need of the United States.

What this plan will be time alone can tell; but there are certain things which it does mean. It means

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coöperation with all the nations of the world in some form, and not merely with a few. It means many different kinds of effort and disarmament certainly. No world scheme which does not provide for greadual disarmament can succeed. It means open diplomatic relations, that is, open treaties. Any scheme which allows nations to form secret alliances, one with another, is defective because nothing so adds to the irritation of the world as the knowledge that such secret alliances exist. They are breeders of suspicion. It means also an international court of justice, to which all the questions which can be internationally adjudicated will be carried. Undoubtedly, until the suspicion of the world is allayed by reduction of armaments and by open treaties, the nations will not consent, as was shown at Geneva at the first session of the assembly of the League of Nations, to promise to commit all disputes to this League. But, with confidence in the court growing and other reasons for suspicion allayed, the inevitable final result would be the taking to the court of international disputes as we take to our courts disputes within a country. If we are to have any assurance of world peace, and internationalizing of transportation and trade, which will cut out a great deal of the irritation that now exists from impeded trawl and trade, we must have in all of our international communications

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something analogous to the international postal system which permits us to drop a letter into any post office in the country and send it to any post office in the world. This is only made possible to international regulations. The same thing exists in regard to the telegraph. It should exist in regard to all forms of international communication.

This ideal of world peace is one to which the woman, above all, should contribute. If it is true, as she has always contended, that she hates war, considers it the natural enemy of herself, her child and her home, now that freedom of political expression, freedom of education, of professional and business life are all hers, she is placed, as she has never been before, to actively foster this idea in the world. Whatever undertaking will do more to drive in the need of world organization, she should foster. One thing in particular she should remember, that if we are to have this world peace, it means for all the nations sacrifices. We are all pat to think that war is the only thing that requires sacrifice. But peace has its sacrifices no less than war.

These are the large demands on us as women. The average woman is very apt to think that these are large, vague and distant duties, that they have nothing to do with the run of activities of her daily life. But this attitude

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of mind I want to take sharp issue. For, if we are ever to get this improved organization of our national housekeeping, along with fit servants to execute it; if we are ever to get international peace, it is going to come from the bottom up, not from the top. It is going to come through the understanding and determination of the individuals that make up the nation that it come about. Society, the nation, is built on that unit we speak of as the family - a unit which women very largely control. Your town, your state, your country is made by what comes out of the home. There is no such fearful responsibility in the nation as that which rests on the heads of homes. It is the integrity of mind and body and spirit that comes out of this foundation of society that determines the rest, and the woman who regards herself seriously as a citizen must begin in the small group where she exercises an extensive influence. And what she does there will determine the quality of what she does in what she is inclined to call larger spheres, that is, more public spheres if at any time she comes into them. I doubt very much the genuineness of the public influence of a woman or of a man who is or has been a father or mother, and has been a poor one.

Moreover, there is no training so superior for public life as what comes from the intelligent, responsible, understanding practice of family duties. You may call it plodding,

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if you will, but it is the greatest apprenticeship for public life that man or woman can get. It gives a fundamental knowledge of human needs and of human nature and of how to provide for human needs and to handle human nature - and these are the great needs in the public servant.

The meaning, the power and the essentiality of the family group was wonderfully and clearly demonstrated in the War. It became apparent in this country almost at once after we went into the War that the winning of it depended chiefly on what came out of the home. Food was our first great contribution in this world struggle; and we were not going to produce this food and save what was produced unless we could have the combined activity of the women of the country in their homes. Woman - and we have had many of them - that had been accustomed to complain that their field of action was narrow and unimportant, that in raising families and looking after little businesses or farms, they were doing things of no importance, suddenly saw themselves as the key to the whole situation. It was their work which was going to carry the thing through, so that we had one of the most surprising exhibits of the entire war period, the rallying of the millions of women in this country to a voluntary food campaign of unparalleled

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extent. Leaders, government, congress would have been nothing without the fact that there were the women knowing how, and willing to do the thing which the government had decreed was necessary.

This great food army was like the great army of privates. These young men one seeing in the towns you would pass by as unimportant, commonplace - they were the ones that put the work through, and it was they extraordinary who the country realized this, sensed their essential, fundamental importance, and how we honored them. It is absolutely true that Europe, seeing our armies, was thrilled by the man in the line. It was not the plans, which were on a stupendous scale; it was not the way they were carried out which, when we consider the time and the gigantic scale - was of amazing efficiency. It was not that, however, which thrilled Europe - it was these tens and hundreds of thousands of youth, of a vigor and size, a dash and courage and simplicity and gentleness that the Allies could not get over.

And it was that which impressed the American in Europe. Organization, quick building, gigantic planning, great generosity - all of that was American enough to us. But here was something that we did not realize we had, and which we said to ourselves with thanksgiving - this is America, this mass of valiant youth.

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That is, yhe great achievements of the War were made by the combination of what we consider everyday, commonplace things; but which, when we come to the pinch, we realize are the fundamental things and the only things that are really fundamental. Given these working homes, this mass of youth and all the rest can go. They will take care of themselves, provide their own leaders. As a matter of fact, of course, it was from them that the leaders come, from them that the plahs and schemes and demands come. All this government of which we boast is thrown off by this great fundamental mass. It is from that that all the rest comes. And this all the rest that we talk of, will rise high or sink low according to the integrity or the lack of integrity of the mass. It is here that the great education goes on, the preliminary training for what we call the larger sphere.

Taking our last five years again as a most revealing field of observation, you find, as a rule, that the staunch, reliable persons who, taking a job stuck to it and put it through - the girl who staid by her canteen and did not ask for something more interesting, the man who was willing to work his way up - these came out of some little family or community where training was sound. And these were the ones, when the great opportunity came, who could seize it.

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