

Editorials

It's Too Late to Send the Working Woman Back to the Kitchen

With one woman out of three in the United States working full or part time outside the home, you'd think the public would accept this as a necessary part of our modern, superproductive life. A lot of people don't accept it, however, including some men who run our industries, schools, labor organizations and other social units directly involved.

During the recent recession, objections have been made to married women working, especially those with children, and in this gloomy chorus single women are prone to join. About a year ago an Inquiring Reporter of The New York Daily News asked four people on Third Avenue, "What would happen if all working wives gave up their jobs tomorrow?" All four, two women and two men, agreed it would be a good thing.

"With the wives at home, children would get more attention and would be brought up better," a Manhattan secretary said. "As a result there would be less delinquency." Working mothers themselves, it seems, often suffer from a sort of national guilt complex on this score. The odd thing is that, if we are to trust authoritative surveys and studies on the subject, there appears to be no real basis for most of these fears and resentments.

Secretary of Labor James P. Mitchell is strong for the working woman and doesn't believe she is driving men out of our expanding economy. "Our economy would suffer severely if women left the labor force," he told a panel conducted by the Ladies' Home Journal recently.

And where the juvenile-delinquency bugaboo is concerned, it appears that nobody yet has been able to prove a case for or against the working mother. At the National Manpower Council's conference held at Arden House, Columbia University, in October, 1957, some facts on the subject of maternal employment and children were presented by Katherine Brownell Oettinger, Chief of the Children's Bureau of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. "Our research peo-

ple tell me," she said, "that no study within their knowledge has established a causal relation between maternal employment and either juvenile delinquency or the maladjustment of children." However, doctors, sociologists and mothers agree on the need for full-time mothering for very young children.

There are a lot of things we could be doing to improve the situation. For instance, we expend a great deal of effort on vocational guidance for high-school and college girls who hope to get married and begin raising families as soon as they leave school, and probably won't be looking for jobs until they have to, which may not be long after the wedding. It's after they emerge from this domestic "tunnel of love" that they need more vocational help, one woman researcher, Esther Lloyd-Jones, told the Manpower Council.

We need to remove some of the mid-Victorian legal roadblocks that stand in the way of working women in many states. Roger Stuart, of The New York World-Telegram and Sun, points out, for example, that in Utah a female jobholder isn't permitted to lift any load heavier than fifteen pounds. (They don't say anything about lifting three-year-old youngsters at home.)