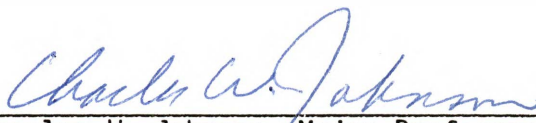


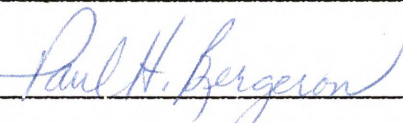
To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Patricia Brake Howard entitled "Knoxville's Rosies: The Impact of World War II on Women Production Workers of Knoxville, Tennessee." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in History.

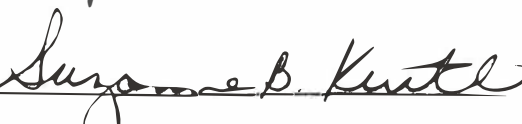

Charles W. Johnson, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:









Accepted for the Council:



Vice Provost
and Dean of the Graduate School

KNOXVILLE'S ROSIES: THE IMPACT OF WORLD WAR II ON WOMEN
PRODUCTION WORKERS OF KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Patricia Brake Howard

June 1988

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To my parents, Joe and Marie Brake,
To my husband and children, G. Turner Howard III,
Hannah, and Jennifer
and
To my mentor, Dr. Charles W. Johnson

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ABSTRACT

During World War II, unprecedented numbers of American women entered nontraditional occupations as they assumed production jobs in the nation's war plants. The purpose of this dissertation is to determine the impact of the war on women production workers using Knoxville, Tennessee as a test case.

Information concerning the numerical and percentage increase of women in nontraditional production occupations in Knoxville area war plants was collected. Further, interviews, questionnaires, and local newspaper sources were utilized to determine the attitudes of male and female production workers and the public at large regarding the large scale employment of women in these new jobs.

The war produced a dynamic tension for Knoxville female war workers in that it offered increased opportunities for occupational diversity. At the same time, existing prejudices and traditional values regarding women's place in employment and society remained unchallenged in many quarters. Further, postwar employment patterns of women reflected prewar gender-specific occupational trends. The war, nonetheless, proved to be a strong catalyst for conceptual change in women's employment in stimulating an increased awareness that women could successfully perform a "man's job," and perhaps have the right to ask for a man's wages.

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Rosie's got a boyfriend named Charlie.
Charlie is a Marine. Rose is protecting
Charlie, working overtime on the rivet machine.¹

INTRODUCTION

Rosie the Riveter became an instant overnight superheroine of American governmental propagandists during World War II. She and eighteen million sisters of the "hidden army" rushed to the aid of their country by supplying the necessary additional labor to maintain defense and civilian plants, whose manpower had been drained by the armed forces.² To a large degree, women of Knoxville, Tennessee, experienced the nationwide trends of participation in the war effort as thousands of Knoxville women became engaged in war-related employment.

With the exception of Fulton Sylphon, which began to use women in its production aspects as early as 1941, and the textile and garment industries, Knoxville did not utilize women war production workers on a large scale until 1943. Area war manufacturers clearly indicated that they would not hire women in their production departments until the male labor supply had been diminished. The armed services, the conversion of local plants to war production, and particularly, in 1943, expansion of the Clinton Engineer Works in nearby Oak Ridge, precipitated the war manpower shortage which

¹Rosie the Riveter, Connie Field, dir. and prod. (Clarity Productions, 1981).

²Ibid.

opened the way for Knoxville women to assume nontraditional occupations in manufacturing.

In all probability, World War II would have impacted the Knoxville area labor supply only moderately if the Clinton Engineer Works had not skewed the picture. As this large, secretive government project drained so many workers--male for construction and male and female for production--other area war manufacturers felt the crunch of a vastly diminished labor supply. A full consideration of the development of the Manhattan Project at Oak Ridge is not within the scope of this paper. It is impossible, however, to discuss the impact of the war on women production workers in the Knoxville area without at least a cursory understanding of the neighboring war facility.

For the purposes of this paper, consequently, an examination of the war's impact on Knoxville women will be limited to females who lived within the Knoxville Labor Market Area as defined by the Bureau of Employment Security. This geographical area included Knox County and portions of Anderson, Grainger, Jefferson, Loudon, Roane, Sevier, and Union counties. Because workers often commuted from the Knoxville area to the Aluminum Company of America (hereafter referred to as ALCOA), located in adjoining Blount County, employment data for ALCOA will also be included in this study, even though the facilities are located outside the Knoxville Labor Market Area.

Non-census data utilized for this study do not always differentiate between employment statistics for black and white women. While some reports identify specific employment information concerning

white and black men and women, other records do not distinguish employment requisitions other than by sex. Because the black population was relatively small in Knoxville during the war, the impact of the war on black women was not as numerically significant as the impact of the war on white females. Although black women did enter war production in the Knoxville area, for the purposes of this paper, consideration will be given primarily to the war's impact on the white female population.

Notwithstanding the entrance of a significant portion of Knoxville women into the production areas of local war plants and their assumption of nontraditional occupations there, the impact of the war on these women was not necessarily always a forward progression toward job equality between the sexes. Instead, the war created a dynamic tension for women in that it both challenged and perpetuated established employment patterns and role expectations for women. From one aspect, the war opened up unprecedented opportunities for women to engage in non-sex-stereotyped occupations. In addition, popular literature as well as government directives portrayed novel images of women who openly defied traditional female virtues. At the same time, the war engendered and preserved prevailing concepts of femininity and the role of women in the home.

Consequently, the war did not create an overnight alteration in the status of women. Rather, it created a dichotomous situation-- in terms of images and realities--for both women and the public at large. The government realized that the war could not be won without the enlistment of large numbers of women to build up its

war arsenals. Yet, throughout the war, women were generally locked into nonsupervisory jobs, and despite equal pay rhetoric, usually worked at lower paying jobs than men. Further, long before the end of the war, the same propagandists who had encouraged women to enter the factories attempted to persuade the women to return home after the war was won, give their jobs to veterans, and thus stave off a possible recession. The war did not produce a revolutionary change in the status of women; rather, it provided a historical backdrop for conceptual changes in women's employment status. ✓

The impact of World War II on the status of American women has long been a subject of historical debate. In a pivotal work, The American Woman, William Chafe in 1972 claimed that World War II

marked a watershed in the history of women at work, and temporarily at least, caused a greater change in women's economic status than half a century of feminist rhetoric and agitation had been able to achieve.³

Yet despite Chafe's belief that the war was a "turning point in the history of American women" and a "milestone for women [particularly married and middle aged women] in America," he notes that the period created a "strange paradox" for women.⁴ Despite the significant increase of women in the labor force during the war

³William Henry Chafe, The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920-1970 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 136.

⁴Ibid., pp. 188, 195.

years, however, he notes that child care centers, wage equality, and professional employment of women remained basically unchanged.⁵

Historians Leila Rupp, Karen Anderson, Susan Hartmann, Alice Kessler-Harris, and D'Ann Campbell later challenged Chafe's "watershed" thesis, and generally concur that World War II failed to redefine gender roles and expectations in the lives of American women. Leila Rupp, in her work Mobilizing Women for War: German and American Propaganda, 1939-1945, compares the prewar and wartime popular images of women and the mobilization propaganda which both countries utilized to encourage women to engage in war work. She concludes that "mobilization propaganda, in both countries, made use of prewar images when possible, created new images when necessary, but intended no permanent change in ideas about 'women's place.'"⁶

Karen Anderson in Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women During World War II, surveys the impact of the war on women in the Baltimore, Detroit, and Seattle areas. While Anderson posits the assumption that the "liberative potential of wartime changes is undeniable," she nonetheless argues that the war only effected a temporary advancement in the status of American women. She notes that although women's absolute position was improved during the war, their relative position in the economic structure

⁵Ibid.

⁶Leila J. Rupp, Mobilizing Women for War: German and American Propaganda, 1939-1945 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 166.

and in society at large was unchanged by the war's experience.⁷

Susan Hartmann, in The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s, focuses on the continuity of gender roles despite the ephemeral alteration of traditional social norms which the war caused. She emphasizes that the public established limits on war-induced social change: that women were replacing men in the factories only for the duration; that women should retain their femininity even if they were assuming masculine roles; and that patriotic motives should be the impetus for women taking on war jobs. Yet, notwithstanding her themes of continuity in gender patterns during the postwar period, she argues that because women's behavior had endured significant change during the war years, it would develop thereafter in "altered patterns."⁸

Alice Kessler-Harris, in Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States, argues that World War II was not a milestone for women. Rather, she claimed that women responded to the events of World War II "out of the continuity of their own experience."⁹ She visualizes that women's participation in war work was therefore a response to opportunity. For Kessler-Harris, the "milestone" came later when women realized that wage earning could more effectively

⁷ Karen Anderson, Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women During World War II (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1981), pp. 3, 65.

⁸ Susan Hartmann, The Homefront and Beyond (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), p. 27.

⁹ Alice Kessler-Harris, Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 274.

improve the family financial status rather than household economics.¹⁰

D'Ann Campbell, in her work Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era, claims that the war obviated certain traditional norms and created interruptions in women's traditional care-taking roles. Yet, Campbell maintains that the war "set the stage" for the 1950s and 1960s suburban wife-companion image of women, which deemphasized the role of women in the labor force.¹¹

Lynda De La Vina and Ruth Milkman emphasize the continuity of occupational segregation by sex which remained strongly evident during the postwar years. De La Vina, in "An Assessment of World War II's Impact on Female Employment: A Study of the Decade 1940-1950," argues that despite the entrance of women into the war manufacturing firms, the major occupational shifts in women's employment were found in the new entrants into the work force. She also notes the stability of occupational structure in the fact that over 50 percent of women who worked before the war retained the same occupation during the war as they did prior to the war. De La Vina concludes that the occupational structure was very stable by 1950 as evidenced by industries' continuation of prewar biases toward male operatives.¹²

Ruth Milkman, in Gender at Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex during World War II, presents a feminist-Marxist perspective

¹⁰Ibid., p. 299.

¹¹D'Ann Campbell, Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 6.

¹²Linda Yvonne De La Vina, "An Assessment of World War II's

in her analysis of the sexual division of labor in the electrical and automobile industries. Although she claims the war "swept aside the traditional sexual division of labor, and women entered 'men's jobs' on a massive scale," she notes that women were forced to leave the higher paying war jobs and to return to traditional women's work or no work at all following the war.¹³ Milkman stresses that because there was not a strong feminist movement during the 1940s, female union members failed to fight work place sexual discrimination during the war.¹⁴

In Knoxville, despite the fact that a large percentage of female war workers remained in the traditionally feminized garment and textile industries, the war provided an opportunity for a significant minority of women to enter nontraditional occupations as production workers at Fulton Sylphon, Clinton Engineer Works, Rohm and Haas, and ALCOA, as well as in a number of smaller war plants. Although these women experienced the war-imposed dynamic tension of assuming a man's job and retaining feminine qualities, their entrance into the production areas of local war plants provided a strong challenge to traditional women's employment patterns.

Impact on Female Employment: A Story of the Decade 1940-1950" (Ph.D. dissertation, Rice University, 1982), pp. 114-115.

¹³Ruth Milkman, Gender at Work: the Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex during World War II (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), p. 1.

¹⁴Ibid, p. 153.

CHAPTER I

UNTYING THE APRON STRINGS: 1939-1942

A slender attractive girl swung to a stool at the counter of a Berkeley quick lunch tavern; gave her order for breakfast:

"Scrambled eggs, four strips of bacon, toast, coffee . . . and, oh, yes, a big slice of that melon . . ."

She then settled back with satisfaction. Her dark eyes darted here and there around the tavern, taking in the half-dozen steel hatted young men who were busy over their man sized breakfasts. The steel-hatters were just off the graveyard shift at nearby Richmond. The girl's eyes came alive with excitement. She wanted to talk; we listened.

Ada Lou Hamilton just in from Salinas. She was going to take her welder's test that very night at Shipyard No. 2. she told us . . .

Women welders, we learned from Ada Lou, are always given the easiest jobs at the yard, and they don't let women in the "closed bottoms."

But wasn't it hard on a girl? We looked at the feminine, long fingered hands, noted the brown spots.

"Oh, the burns!" she acknowledged, holding out her hands. "You're bound to get a few. See that one, on my wrist--that was my worst, a spark got into a crease of my glove." Eyes twinkled as though she'd made a slip in some holy rite, much as a bride boasts her first cooking wounds.

The first three days were the hardest we were told. There's so much banging and noise. You think you'll quit but you don't. And then you begin to like it.

"And now I love it. I wouldn't want to do anything else," said Ada Lou. "After I pass my test tonight they'll put me on the swing shift, or the graveyard. I don't care as long as they let me weld. I can hardly wait."¹

Ada Lou and many of her sisters from Bangor to Knoxville, Biloxi, and Portland, discovered during World War II that they liked working a "man's job" as they assumed novel, nontraditional, non-sex-

¹Elizabeth Field, "Boom Town Girls," Independent Woman, October 1942, p. 296.

stereotyped occupations. At the same time, women and the public at large were reluctant to deny the femininity and the traditional caretaking roles of women.

Consequently, World War II produced a dynamic tension for women throughout the country. The increased labor requirements of the war created a strong catalyst for conceptual change in women's employment patterns. At the same time it both challenged and perpetuated traditional values regarding "woman's proper place." ✓ The war introduced a variety of opportunities for diversity in women's occupations, many of which were opened to women for the first time. Despite the entrance of women into nontraditional areas of employment, traditional values remained strong--if often challenged. Furthermore, notwithstanding the media's infatuation with Rosie the Riveter, the majority of working women remained in traditional, sex-stereotyped occupations throughout the war.

In addition, women's femininity remained both a distinct image and reality, even though women were breaking new ground by wearing slacks, riveting and welding, and openly advertising cigarettes. Such novel images of women blatantly defied the traditional stereotyped woman who either remained in the home or held a job in conventional occupations in the service and retail sales sectors of the garment and textile industries. Alongside the novelty of women in slacks, however, remained an unequivocal glorification of the traditional caretaking roles of women.

The war also generated a role conflict in the lives of working married women and mothers as a result of the concurring claims of

home and family versus full-time employment. Consequently, the war did not produce a revolutionary change in women's employment in Knoxville or the nation. However, it provided a strong, conceptual impetus in the evolutionary movement of women into the workplace. It created as well a tension in the public and private perception of women's place in both employment and society at large. ✓

Before the U.S. entrance into World War II, as Hitler's armies raged across Europe between 1939 and 1941, the American economy experienced a dramatic turnaround. Factories, which had been mired in the Depression of the 1930s, hired unprecedented numbers of workers to produce munitions and supplies both for ourselves and our allies. Despite the increased production of defense materials, however, female employment did not increase significantly until well after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941, and the subsequent entrance of the United States into World War II. The number of American women in the civilian labor force actually dropped from nearly thirteen million in March 1940, when the census was taken, to below eleven million in May 1941.²

Mary Robinson attributed the disparity between the upswing in the economy and the downturn in women's employment to the fact that there had been over six million unemployed men in July 1940, and four million unemployed men in June 1941. These men were absorbed into the heavy munitions labor pool until they left these and other

²Mary Robinson, "Women Workers in Two Wars," Monthly Labor Review, October 1943, pp. 650-51.

positions to join the rapidly expanding Armed Forces. Further, Robinson suggested that there remained a definite disinclination to use women as munitions workers, based on traditional prejudices and fear that they lacked mechanical ability, despite their proven skills along such lines in the manufacture of armaments in 1917-1918.³

During World War I, women had entered non-traditional industries producing iron, steel, chemicals, transportation equipment, metal products, automobiles, electrical machinery, rubber and optical goods, and professional and scientific instruments. Women had also contributed in the areas of telegraph and telephone service, railroads, farming, and service fields.⁴

Maurine Weiner Greenwold suggests that World War I had created opportunities for women to earn higher wages but brought women into non-traditional employment situations that caused conflict between male and female co-workers. Even though the majority of working women remained in traditional female jobs, a "significant minority" of women entered the male work arena and tried to take advantage of the war-induced--if temporary--opportunities.⁵ By November 1918, one-fifth of the war workers were female and, of the women war workers, 18 percent were engaged as aircraft workers, 37 percent worked in the optical goods industry, and 35 percent were employed in the rubber and photographic supplies industries. In 1920, over eight

³Ibid., p. 651

⁴Ibid., pp. 653-54.

⁵Maurine Weiner Greenwold, Women, War and Work: The Impact of World War I on Women Workers in the United States (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980), p. xx.

million women comprised 20 percent of the entire labor force.⁶

Alice Kessler-Harris suggests that women entered World War I following a "lengthy period of struggle for minimum wages and working conditions."⁷ The war also followed a period of increasing specialization and dilution of labor skills which enabled unskilled female workers to replace the male wage earners who were entering the Armed Services. Single and married women wage earners who had worked prior to World War I sought better paying jobs, and a "distinct minority of women wartime workers were new entrants into the labor force." Despite the entrance of women into nontraditional jobs during World War I, Greenwold emphasizes that these women did not remain in these jobs following the war.⁸

The fact remained, as the Women's Bureau pointed out in surveys conducted in late 1940 and all of 1941, "employers in defense plants were either ignorant of, or disregarded, the convincing facts concerning women as war workers a quarter of a century ago."⁹ Furthermore, despite the fact that the majority of American female workers in 1940 were engaged in the traditional areas of sales, nursing, teaching, clerical, and the textile industry, all of which

⁶Ibid., pp. xx, xvi.

⁷Kessler-Harris, Out to Work, A History of Wage Earning Women in the United States, p. 274.

⁸Greenwold, Women, War, and Work, pp. xx, 264.

⁹Robinson, "Women Workers in Two Wars," p. 655.

were labeled as "women's work," a special inventory conducted by the Women's Bureau in 1940 revealed that over 373,000 had registered a desire to participate in industrial jobs. Of this number, approximately 10 percent of the women surveyed had demonstrated experience in the production of goods deemed necessary for the war effort: 17,600 in electrical machinery; 6,700 in other machinery; 14,000 in metal and metal products; and 9,000 in chemicals.¹⁰ Clearly, before the entrance of the United States into World War II, even though women had proven both their capabilities and desires to work in non-traditional industrial jobs, employers were not willing to hire them as long as male workers could provide an adequate labor supply. ✓

Despite the obvious interest in industrial jobs among a significant minority of American women, the approximately thirteen million women who comprised over 24 percent of the total U.S. labor force were firmly entrenched in the traditionally female dominated employment areas in 1940.¹¹ The numerically top-ranked occupation of women was "servants, private family" with nearly 1.5 million women. Almost one million women were stenographers, typists, and secretaries, ✓ and over 750,000 women were teachers. Nearly 600,000 worked in other

¹⁰U.S. Employment Service, "Occupations Suitable for Women," February 1941, War Manpower Commission, Record Group 211, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. v.

¹¹U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, "Number and Percent of Women in the Labor Force in 1940, by State," November 1944, Women's Bureau, Record Group 86, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 1.

clerical occupations, and 500,000 were engaged in sales work. Women dominated the occupation of private family housekeeper, although their actual numbers were smaller, at approximately 350,000. Trained nurses and student nurses also numbered 350,000 and operatives of knit goods and cotton manufacturing firms numbered over 100,000.¹²

In summary, the majority of employed women in 1940 worked in five major areas: domestic/service, clerical, teaching, sales, and nursing. In each of these areas, women comprised well over 90 percent of all persons employed, with the exception of the apparel and textile operatives where women constituted approximately 70 percent of the total employment.¹³ At the same time, women had made relatively insignificant inroads into the male-dominated areas of heavy manufacturing, medicine (as medical doctors), law, college teaching, and managerial positions in corporations. Women in 1940 were locked into stereotypical employment and career tracks and would remain there until millions of young men were siphoned off into the Armed Services after the entrance of the United States into World War II. Women were hired en-masse after it became apparent that the male labor pool had been depleted. Even so, many manufacturers still were reluctant to break down the gender barriers. Karen Anderson argues persuasively that during 1939-1941, the employment of women

¹²U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, "Summary Data on Employment of Women," February 1948, Women's Bureau, Record Group 86, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹³U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, "Occupations of Women, 1940," Women's Bureau, Record Group 86, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

in defense plants was hampered by traditional sex-stereotyped roles. Furthermore, the greatest labor demand was in the area of skilled manufacturing positions which required training and experience and consequently were initially closed to women who often possessed neither requisite. Employers also argued that the prohibitive cost increases which would be necessary for redesigning facilities for women workers, contributed to their discriminatory hiring practices.¹⁴ A civil defense official summed up what appeared to be the prevailing attitude of 1940 when he jibed: "Give the women something to do to keep their hands busy as we did in the last war--then maybe they won't bother us."¹⁵

Not only were women locked into stereotypical job categories in 1940, they also reflected the Depression-exacerbated general opposition toward working women and particularly toward working married women. William Chafe has suggested that at the end of the 1930's. the prospects for the improvement of women's economic status remained bleak, and that the Depression had fostered a wave of reaction against changes in the traditional role of women.¹⁶ National legislation was biased against the employment of married women, and furthermore, the overwhelming majority of Americans held little interest in changing the status quo regarding gender roles.

¹⁴Karen Anderson, Wartime Women, pp. 24, 25.

¹⁵Kessler-Harris, Out to Work, p. 275.

¹⁶William Chafe, The American Woman, p. 135.

In addition, most government recovery programs of the New Deal had been designed for men. Ruth Milkman suggests, however, that the stereotypical "women's work" occupations had been less affected by the Depression than had male-dominated occupations.¹⁷

In 1930-1932, the National Education Association reported that 77 percent of the nation's 1,500 school systems refused to hire women teachers who were married; furthermore, 63 percent of these school systems dismissed female teachers when they married.¹⁸ In 1932, a "married persons" clause specified that whenever a cutback in personnel was necessary in federal civil service jobs, the first employees to lose their jobs were those whose spouses held other positions with the federal government. Over 75 percent of those dismissed under this act were women.¹⁹ During the winter session of 1939, bills discriminating against the employment of married women, particularly in the public sphere, were introduced in twenty-eight state legislatures. Many of these bills did not reach a vote before

¹⁷Hartman, The Home Front and Beyond, p. 16; Ruth Milkman, "Women's Work and the Economic Crisis," in A Heritage of Her Own: Toward a New Social History of American Women, ed. Nancy F. Cott and Elizabeth H. Pleck (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), p. 511.

¹⁸Carl N. Degler, At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 413-414.

¹⁹Sheila M. Rothman, Women's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices, 1870 to the Present (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1978), pp. 221-222.

adjournment, but the prevailing sentiment was unmistakable.²⁰

Not surprisingly, public opinion reflected the pervasive discrimination against married women workers. This was evidenced in several nationwide surveys conducted during the Depression. The American Institute of Public Opinion posed the following question in 1937: "Do you approve of married women earning money in business or industry if she has a husband capable of supporting her?" Of those polled, 18 percent approved, and 82 percent disapproved. Earlier, in 1936, a Fortune poll had questioned: "Do you believe that married women should have a full time job outside the home?" Of the respondents, 12 percent of the men approved and 54 percent disapproved, with 34 percent giving conditional responses. Of the women polled, only a slightly larger percentage approved, 41 percent disapproved and 40 percent gave conditional responses.²¹

Lois Scharf concludes that the Depression "exacerbated or reinforced existing attitudes and policies" in the discrimination against married women workers that were present before the crash of 1929. She further claims that the dramatic increase in women's employment during World War II would not have been as pronounced if "Depression-related discrimination had been less prevalent."²²

²⁰Kathleen McLaughlin, "Shall Wives Work?" New York Times, 23 July 1939.

²¹Valerie Oppenheimer, The Female Labor Force in the United States (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), p. 44.

²²Lois Scharf, To Work and to Wed: Female Employment, Feminism, and the Great Depression (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980), pp. xi, 161.

Despite public resistance to the employment of women--particularly married women--during the Depression, they continued to move into the work force. Economic necessity often drove married women into some type of wage earning capacity to compensate for their husbands' fiscal instability due to layoffs or wage curtailments. Yet there was no impetus for women to seek nontraditional types of occupations ✓ during the Depression. In fact, the economic uncertainty of the times created an atmosphere in which all workers--both male and female--felt lucky if they could hang onto their jobs.

The January 1940 Monthly Labor Review reported that public interest in the employment of married women spurred a survey conducted by the National Industrial Conference Board regarding the practices of employers in hiring married women. The survey covered office and factory employees of banks, insurance companies, brokerage house public utilities, and mercantile establishments. The dismissal of female office employees after marriage appeared to be more frequent than that of factory workers. Of the companies surveyed, nearly 23 percent dismissed their office workers after marriage, whereas only 8 percent of the same companies had a policy to dismiss married female factory workers. Furthermore, although few manufacturing and mercantile establishments carried out this policy, banks, insurance companies, and public utilities followed this practice to a large degree.²³ The discriminatory dismissal practices of these employers

²³"Employment of Women After Marriage," Monthly Labor Review, January 1940, pp. 80-81.

toward white-collar and blue-collar married, female workers indicated an acceptance of married workers if economic necessity dictated employment for the wife.

Oppenheimer notes that, in 1940, if a woman worked, she usually did so before marriage. If she worked after marriage, she generally did so before the onset of children. In fact, the 1940 census demonstrated that over 70 percent of single women between the ages of twenty and twenty-four participated in the labor force, whereas there were never more than 20 percent of married women in the labor force at any age.²⁴

Nearly 60 percent of clerical and sales workers in the nation were single in 1940, and 29 percent were married (the remaining percentage of women were in the divorced/widowed category). Forty percent of women classified as operatives were single as opposed to 23 percent married. Service workers were fairly evenly divided between married and unmarried women. Sixty-seven percent of professional and semi-professional women were single, with 22 percent married. Of the total number of employed American women in 1940, nearly 48 percent were single and 32 percent were married.²⁵ Consequently, in 1940, working women were following the work-until-marriage pattern that had been set in the early years of the twentieth century, although the degree of labor force participation had risen. The percentage

²⁴Oppenheimer, Female Labor Force, p. 10.

²⁵U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, "Marital Status of Employed Women, 1940," Women's Bureau, Record Group 86, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

of women in the labor force peaked between the ages of twenty and twenty-four, dropped sharply, then gradually declined. In general, women in 1940 were entering the labor force, remaining there until marriage or the birth of children, and then leaving the work force en masse during the child-rearing years.

In Knoxville, the 1940 census reported that nearly 12,000 white women, or 33.5 percent of Knoxville's white female population, participated in the labor force. This large percentage of women in the labor force was due primarily to the substantial number of textile and garment industries throughout the city, which employed considerable numbers of women. At this time, Knoxville women were engaged in typical "women's work." In addition to the 4,600 white women who worked as operatives (mainly in the textile and garment industries), approximately 3,500 white women were listed in the professional category which included nurses, librarians, teachers, and secretaries. Approximately 750 white women were employed as domestic workers in addition to 1,000 nondomestic service workers.²⁶ There was virtually no female employment in heavy industry, and very scant entrance of women into the male-dominated fields of medicine, law, college teaching, and corporate management.²⁷

Of a total of 15,228 white and nonwhite women employed in Knoxville in 1940, nearly 6,000 were single and almost 7,000 were married.²⁸

²⁶This figure includes females age fourteen and above. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Population: The Labor Force, vol. 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1943), pp. 349-351.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid., p. 341.

These census figures were indicative of the fact that Knoxville's total married female population was larger in 1940 than its single female population. Between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four, approximately 7,000 Knoxville women were single and 4,000 were married. Between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-four, approximately 2,000 Knoxville women were single as compared to over 8,000 married in this age category.²⁹ The largest group of women workers, which claimed approximately 2,600, were single and between the ages of fourteen and twenty-four. Married women in this age group numbered only 900. Between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-four, approximately 1,800 single women were employed, as were 1,600 married women.³⁰ Knoxville women--if single--remained in the labor force to a large degree through their mid-thirties. Approximately 90 percent of all single Knoxville women between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-four worked. At the same time, about half of the married women in Knoxville remained in the labor force during early years of marriage, but left during the major childbearing/raising years. In 1940, Knoxville women paralleled national trends of working before marriage and leaving employment during the early parenting years, while single women remained in the labor force during the same period of life.

²⁹U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Population Characteristics by Age, vol. 4 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1943), p. 445.

³⁰Ibid.

Although employed women in Knoxville were concentrated in sales, nursing, and in the textile and garment industries as operatives, the city's economic situation was ripe for diversification of women's employment in 1940. Knoxville was the chief city and center of the East Tennessee Valley, which included the surrounding counties of Anderson, Blount, Campbell, Grainger, Hamblen, Jefferson, Loudon, Roane, and Sevier. It had a population of 112,000 within the city limits in 1940.³¹ Industries were diversified, with the largest being marble production and textiles, which encompassed clothing, cloth, and knit goods.³² Approximately 40 percent of the Knoxville area workers in the manufacturing division were employed in textiles, or the marble business which employed only men in its production aspects.³³

In 1939, Knoxville was the largest production center for heavy knit underwear in the United States. In addition, the Palm Beach suits firm had a large plant in Knoxville. A total of 9,000 men and women were employed in the textile industry in 1938 with a yearly payroll of \$7 million and products worth over \$25 million.³⁴

³¹Tennessee Unemployment Compensation Division, "Survey of the Employment Situation in the Knoxville Area, Tennessee," 9 May 1941, Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., Part I, p. 1.

³²Knoxville Chamber of Commerce, "Commercial and Industrial Survey of Knoxville, Tennessee," 1939, Part VI, p. 1.

³³Tennessee Unemployment Compensation Division, "Survey," Part I, p. 3.

³⁴Ibid., p. 4.

In the metal industries, most of the zinc produced in Tennessee was found in Knox and neighboring Jefferson counties. The value of zinc products in 1935 was \$1.25 million.³⁵ In Blount County, fifteen miles from Knoxville, The Aluminum Company of America (ALCOA) had erected a plant as well as a town on 3,000 acres. ALCOA reduced aluminum by hydroelectric power and produced aluminum sheets. In 1939, the Blount County facility employed over 4,000 persons.³⁶

The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), whose national headquarters had been located in Knoxville since August 1933, employed 1,570 men and women in 1939.³⁷ Fulton Sylphon produced temperature and pressure control instruments for industrial applications, and automobile thermostats for radiators. The University of Tennessee also provided a considerable amount of employment--both professional and non-professional--in the area. Other industries in the Knoxville area included cement production, meat packing, the second largest shops of the Southern Railway System, and the only iron rolling machine factory in the state. Knoxville also had the largest veneer plant in Tennessee and the world's largest plant which manufactured drop-bottom-mine cars and mucking machines for drilling tunnels.³⁸ With the exception of the textile and garment industries in Knoxville, however, area manufacturers did not utilize women in their production areas in the years preceding World War II.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., Part VIII, p. 2.

³⁸ Ibid.

The labor force of the Knoxville area in 1939/1940 was almost equally divided between agriculture and industry.³⁹ During the Depression, employment patterns experienced changes, primarily in governmental areas (including the Works Progress Administration which handled relief work) and the Tennessee Valley Authority.⁴⁰

Tennessee labor laws in 1939 limited the working hours of all females and children under the age of sixteen to fifty-seven hours per week and ten and one-half hours per day. Children under the age of fourteen were not permitted to work in factories. Children between the ages of fourteen and sixteen were not allowed to work night labor and, further, were required to obtain a special permit to work (for a maximum of forty-eight hours per week) from the State Department of Labor.⁴¹ There were no Tennessee statutes regarding minimum wages for female workers, nor were there any laws concerning the night employment of females over the age of sixteen.⁴²

Labor unions in Knoxville existed primarily among laborers in the building industries, railroads, textiles, and among skilled mechanical workers. Most of the Knoxville industrial firms operated on an open-shop arrangement, with two manufacturing firms having union contracts: one, a machinery factory with the Federal Labor Union of the American Federation of Labor and the other, a shirt factory with the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union (CIO). Estimated

³⁹Ibid., Part VII, p. 1.

⁴⁰Ibid., Part VIII, p. 2.

⁴¹Ibid., Part VII, p. 1.

⁴²Ibid., p. 2.

figures of actual union participation in Knoxville were approximately 15,000 in 1940.⁴³

By May 1941, Knoxville had received major defense contracts totalling \$2,257,000.⁴⁴ The government orders were a major economic boon to Knoxville which was reeling from the effects of the Depression-induced bank failures, wage deflation, factory closings and resultant high unemployment, decreased standard of living, and a decline in the public revenue.⁴⁵ The defense contracts for Knoxville were larger than those received by most other sections of the state, but were relatively small compared to other areas of the nation. The primary defense contract to this date had been allotted to the Alcoa facility of the Aluminum Company of America for \$41,909,000 for expansion of its plant.⁴⁶ Fulton Sylphon Company was awarded \$373,000 in defense contracts.⁴⁷ The textile and apparel firms which received defense contracts between July 1, 1940 and February 28, 1941 were:

(1) Appalachian Mills Company, which received \$529,000 with an increase in employees from 1,759 to 1,882; (2) Brookside Mills, which was given \$217,000 and increased their payrolls by two hundred during

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Tennessee Unemployment Compensation Division, "Survey," Part I, p. 1.

⁴⁵Michael J. McDonald and William Bruce Wheeler, Knoxville, Tennessee: Continuity and Change in an Appalachian City (Knoxville, Tenn.: The University of Tennessee Press, 1983), pp. 61-62.

⁴⁶Tennessee Unemployment Compensation Division, "Survey," Part I, p. 5.

⁴⁷Ibid.

the same period; (3) Standard Knitting Mills, Inc., which received a \$646,000 defense contract; (4) Goodall Company, which was allotted \$244,000 in defense contracts; and (5) Southern Athletic Company, Inc., which received \$208,000 in defense contracts. During this period most of the area apparel and textile plants were operating on a three-shift basis. Knoxville firms which received small defense contracts were Knox Stove Works (\$34,000); Knoxville Awning, Tent and Tarpaulin Company, Inc. (\$28,000); W. J. Savage Company (\$5,000); Stetson Shirt Corporation (\$24,000); and Southeastern Shirt Corporation (\$49,000).⁴⁸

The new defense contracts greatly increased the demand for labor in the Knoxville area between July and December 1940. The primary areas of demand for labor were: (1) TVA for its central office and construction of neighboring dams; (2) ALCOA in its production areas; (3) apparel and textile firms for unskilled production workers; and (4) Fulton Sylphon and other employers primarily for unskilled or semiskilled production workers.⁴⁹

In August 1941, the Tennessee Department of Labor estimated that approximately 3,700 production workers and 3,700 construction laborers (unskilled men) would be needed in the Knoxville area between April 1941 and July 1942. With the exception of seventy female sewing machine operators and pressers, the estimated demand for 7,400 laborers in the Knoxville area was for men.⁵⁰ TVA estimated that

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 8.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Bureau of Employment Security, "Survey of the Employment

it would need to import 1,300 skilled and unskilled construction workers for Fort Loudoun Dam construction to fulfill its demand for 3,700 construction workers needed by March 1942. TVA during this period hired women only for office work.⁵¹

Fulton Sylphon, which converted to the manufacture of artillery components and automatic thermostat controls, increased its employment by 52 percent between July 1940 and August 1941.⁵² Union membership was not a prerequisite for employment at Fulton Sylphon as Tennessee was an open shop state, but anyone hired was requested to join a union after thirty days. All employees were required to be U.S. citizens. Women as well as men were employed in the plant, and as early as 1941, women were utilized as inspectors and operators of rolling machines in addition to performing clerical and stenographic jobs.⁵³

ALCOA increased its employment by 28 percent during 1940 to nearly 6,800 workers, and by April 1941 employed over 7,100 persons. ALCOA anticipated employing approximately 10,600 by July of 1942. The new employees would be unskilled and would primarily receive in-plant

Situation in the Knoxville-Alcoa, Tennessee Area," 7 August 1941, Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., pp. 1-2.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 3.

⁵²Bureau of Employment Security, "Survey of the Employment Situation in the Knoxville-Alcoa, Tennessee Area," 9 May 1941, Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 11.

⁵³Ibid.

training.⁵⁴ Union membership was not a prerequisite to employment at ALCOA, but the company had an agreement with the union to hire residents of Blount County as long as the county could supply the demand for qualified workers. Women's employment at ALCOA at this time was still limited to secretarial and clerical positions.⁵⁵

By September 1941, the Tennessee Department of Labor estimated that 6,300 production workers would be needed between April 1, 1941 and July 1, 1942. The largest demand was generated from ALCOA, but the Bureau of Employment Security estimated that at least 13,000 unemployed men lived within commuting distance of the ALCOA facility.⁵⁶ Further, the Tennessee Products Corporation, which manufactured ferro-manganese, remodeled the old facility of Roane Iron and Coal Company at Rockwood, and anticipated importing 250 skilled blast furnace operators from their other plants.⁵⁷ Southeastern Shirt Company at LaFollette was the only Knoxville area textile or apparel plant which anticipated hiring additional employees: 50 sewing machine operators, 50 pressers, and 5 laborers, many of whom would be women.⁵⁸

⁵⁴Bureau of Employment Security, "Survey," 7 August 1941, p. 2.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 3.

⁵⁶Bureau of Employment Security, "Survey of the Employment Situation in the Knoxville-Alcoa, Tennessee Area," 13 September, 1941, Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 1.

⁵⁷Bureau of Employment Security, "Survey," 7 August 1941, p. 2.

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 3-4.

By late 1941, despite the augmented production of many area manufacturing concerns because of the defense contracts, employment opportunities for women had not increased significantly in the Knoxville ✓ area. In Knoxville, as in other areas of the country, the initial increased demand for labor was met to a large degree by the replacement of men who had lost jobs during the Depression. In 1941, women were not needed as a potential source of labor because reemployment of men and overtime filled the demand.⁵⁹ With the exception of Fulton Sylphon, women remained in clerical and stenographic positions in manufacturing firms or remained as operatives in the textile and apparel firms. Classified advertisements in the Knoxville News-Sentinel showed the traditional, stereotyped jobs available for Knoxville women: beauty operators, home demonstrators, salesgirls for Christmas cards, cooks, and housekeepers.⁶⁰ Knoxville women, like those across the nation, would not enter the nonconventional arenas ✓ of employment in significant numbers until America entered the war and drained off the male labor and labor reserves.

As the United States shifted from supplying a war to active participation in a full-scale global war, it depleted the nation's manpower resources to fill its Armed Forces and to operate the immense war industries. The South alone lost over one million blacks who migrated North to seek employment in northern war industries. Despite

⁵⁹De La Vina, "An Assessment of World War II's Impact on Female Employment: A Study of the Decade 1940-1950," p. 30.

⁶⁰Knoxville News-Sentinel, 6, 15 March; 2 July; 26 September, 1940.

the reluctance of the war manufacturers to hire women during the defense period and early months of the war, it became increasingly apparent that the dearth of available labor would force a change. The federal government and big business eventually turned to the chief source of untapped labor: womanpower. Not only was the increase of the female labor force significant in terms of sheer numbers, but women began to work in areas formerly deemed off-limits to their sex. There was also a consequential increase in the number of married and older women who entered the work force.

Primarily economic and, to a less degree, patriotic motives spurred the massive entrance of women into the labor pool. Women who had often been deprived of jobs, material goods, and even early marriage by the fiscal hardships of the Depression, discovered new opportunities to obtain financial security. The war industries generally paid better wages than traditional women's work, such as the garment and textile concerns and the sales and service sectors. Consequently, women often abandoned their "women's work" to flock in droves to the war industries.

As Rosie the Riveter became an easily recognizable image of American governmental propagandists, she and millions of her female co-workers hastened to the assistance of their country in defense and civilian plants. In large part, women of Knoxville, Tennessee, shared in this, as thousands of Knoxville women entered war-related employment. Because of the manpower shortage, Knoxville women found new, nontraditional job opportunities. Although a large percentage of the Knoxville female labor force had

worked in the textile and apparel industries for many years, the war introduced women to a variety of new production jobs which had formerly been held exclusively by men. Throughout 1942, even though women in the Knoxville labor force generally remained in traditional occupations, area war manufacturing establishments suggested that they would increasingly utilize women in the near future.⁶¹

In March 1942, government contracts received by Knoxville manufacturers (exclusive of ALCOA) reached nearly \$8,000,000. Of that figure, almost \$3,300,000 in contracts were awarded during the first quarter of 1942.⁶² The most substantial portion of the government contracts in the Knoxville area to this date in terms of dollar volume had been awarded to the textile and garment manufacturers. Another significant portion of government contracts was allocated for the manufacture of ammunition and ammunition components, while a limited amount of contracts was appropriated for machinery and metal products.⁶³

⁶¹Office of Defense, Health, and Welfare Service, Region VII, Atlanta, Georgia, and Tennessee Valley Authority, Knoxville, Tennessee, "Report on Knoxville-Alcoa, Tennessee Defense Area," 16 November 1942, War Manpower Commission, Record Group 211, National Archives, Atlanta Regional Branch, p. 11; United States Employment Service, "Restatement of Labor Market Situation in the Knoxville Area, Tennessee," 15 October 1942, Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., pp. 1, 2.

⁶²Office of Defense, Health, and Welfare Service, Region VII, Atlanta, Georgia, and Tennessee Valley Authority, Knoxville, Tennessee, "Report on Knoxville-Alcoa, Tennessee Defense Area," 16 November 1942, War Manpower Commission, Record Group 211, National Archives, Atlanta Regional Branch, p. 11.

⁶³Ibid.

ALCOA had experienced a substantial expansion since its construction twenty years prior to the war. In 1942, ALCOA facilities consisted of four major components: the carbon plant, the reduction plants, the fabricating plant, and the new North Plant which had been constructed under a Certificate of Necessity federal allocation of \$42,000,000.⁶⁴ Although the plants were supervised and owned privately, the federal government determined the allocation of products of ALCOA in 1942, which were high strength aluminum alloy, common aluminum alloy, aluminum sheet and strip, carbon electrodes, and carbon paste.⁶⁵

Until late 1942, males made up the entire working population in the production areas of the plant. Although relatively few blacks had been employed prior to this time, ALCOA was considering hiring additional black males as well as black and white females for production workers as wartime increases in production necessitated expansion and army inductions created a high turnover rate. At the year's end, ALCOA proposed to "lower their sights some" and began using women as workers in light jobs including weighers, checkers, laboratory assistants, testers, strippers, and expeditors. Women were not utilized in the production areas of the plant, which, in 1942, remained predominantly white-male, although rumors abounded throughout Knoxville that ALCOA planned to employ healthy, black

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 10.

⁶⁵Ibid; Civilian Production Administration, Industrial Statistic Division, War Industrial Facilities Authorized, July 1940-August 1945, July 30, 1946, no page number given.

women who weighed approximately 170 pounds to "catch and turn sheets" [of aluminum].⁶⁶ Women's employment at ALCOA increased from 300 in April 1942 to 550 by September of the same year at an increase of 83 percent, while total employment at ALCOA increased only 6 percent during the same period.⁶⁷ ALCOA relaxed its employment specifications by October 1942, so that it could maximize the local labor supply. Although the CIO had organized ALCOA workers, the employees were not required to become members of the union as a prerequisite to employment. Unskilled jobs required no education, but a high school degree was necessary for supervisory, foreman, and mechanical crafts positions.⁶⁸ ALCOA employed 13,100 workers in August 1942, and estimated that it would hire approximately 800 more, reaching a peak employment of nearly 14,000 by December 1942.⁶⁹ ALCOA increased its total employment in 1942 by 3,750.⁷⁰

By 1942, the facilities of the Fulton Sylphon plant had been converted entirely to war production. Their conversion products included three-inch steel cartridge cases and fuses as well as

⁶⁶Tennessee Unemployment Compensation Division, "Survey of the Employment Situation in the Knoxville Area, Tennessee," 10 June 1943, Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 8.

⁶⁷"Knoxville-Alcoa Defense Area," 16 November 1942, p. 10.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Bureau of Employment Security, "Labor Market Developments Report for Knoxville Area, Tennessee," 15 April 1943, Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 4.

flexible brass, copper (and later steel) bellows which were shipped to other war manufacturers as components for a variety of instruments. Fulton also produced packless valves--which were designed to be leak-proof--and depth gauges for the Navy which enabled explosives to detonate at precise depths under water.⁷¹ Fulton Sylphon's war production was financed primarily through public funds which allocated over \$1 million to its operations by July 1945. Non-public financing accounted for \$601,000.⁷²

The employment levels at Fulton rose significantly from a normal level of 1,000 to approximately 1,500 workers in late 1942 as a result of expansion of operations. Fulton's expansion had been postponed until this time because of a delay in the procurement of building supplies. Increases in employment demand were met by converting both plant facilities and regular personnel to defense production and by hiring local trainees. It was anticipated that 500 unskilled workers, mostly unskilled women, would be hired in the first quarter of 1943.⁷³

In 1942, a new war production plant was established in Knoxville. Rohm and Haas Chemical Company, headquartered in Philadelphia,

⁷¹Interview with I. O. Johnson, Fulton Sylphon Company, Knoxville, Tennessee, 22 June 1987; interview with John Ruggles, Fulton Sylphon Company, 24 June 1987.

⁷²War Authorization of Industrial Facilities, no page no. given.

⁷³"Knoxville-Alcoa Defense Area," 16 November 1942, p. 11.

refurbished a former woodworking plant in Knoxville for the production of plastics to be used in the war. The target opening date was early 1943, and the Knoxville facility was readied for operation at a cost of \$2,250,000.⁷⁴ The Knoxville operations of Rohm and Haas were financed entirely through public funds as authorized by the Office of Price Controls and the War Production Board. Total cost through July 1945 was \$3,340,000.⁷⁵ Because of the light nature of the manufacturing, the company estimated that, of the 1,500-1,600 workers to be hired, 60 to 75 percent would be women. More than 1,000 of the 1,420 unskilled workers were to be female (including fifteen black females), although none of the eighty semiskilled workers would be female.⁷⁶ The fact that Rohm and Haas initially employed women only as unskilled laborers was indicative of the fact that Knoxville women lacked previous experience as production workers outside of the textile and apparel industries.

The Tennessee Valley Authority, which contributed electric power for war production establishments, employed 13,600 workers in September 1942 in the Knoxville and adjoining areas of Douglas Dam and Fort Loudoun Dam. At this time, TVA only employed women as office workers. Approximately 3,500 workers were employed at the Fort Loudoun Dam

⁷⁴United States Employment Service, "Restatement of Labor Market Situation in the Knoxville Area, Tennessee," 15 October 1942, Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 12.

⁷⁵War Authorization of Industrial Facilities, no page number given.

⁷⁶"Restatement," 15 October 1942, p. 5; "Knoxville-Alcoa Defense Area," 16 November 1942, p. 12.

project; Douglas Dam employed 6,455; and approximately 3,600 workers were employed in the Knoxville operation. It was anticipated that TVA's labor would decrease significantly in the early part of 1943, due to the completion of Douglas and Fort Loudoun dams, thereby releasing additional male workers for war production concerns in the area.⁷⁷

Throughout 1942, the BES designated Knoxville as an area of labor surplus, with a net labor supply of 10,000 females and 6,000 males. There was a demand for 1,100 females and 400 males in October of that year.⁷⁸ It was projected that the demand for labor would not increase significantly until January 1943. The potential labor supply in Knoxville drew from several sources: (1) workers who were currently registered with the United States Employment Services (USES) and were currently available for war work; (2) unemployed workers who were not currently registered with USES; (3) workers outside the Knoxville Labor Market; (4) those who were working in nonessential activities, including subsistence farming; and (5) construction workers who would be released from TVA during the subsequent six months, following completion of the area dams.⁷⁹

Of the estimated 16,000 workers in Knoxville's labor supply in the fall of 1942, only about 6,000 were registered with USES.

⁷⁷"Knoxville-Alcoa Defense Area," 16 November 1942, p. 12; Bureau of Employment Security, "Survey," 7 August 1941, p. 3.

⁷⁸"Restatement," 15 October 1942, p. 2.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 6.

A total of 810 were classified as administrative, professional, technical, or clerical, with 710 females and 100 males in this category. Five hundred and forty skilled workers were available (216 male; 324 female), as were 810 semiskilled workers (300 male and 510 female). The large bulk of available workers were unskilled laborers who numbered 13,840 (5,584 male and 8,456 female). Within these figures were one hundred male and one hundred female unskilled, black workers.⁸⁰

Given the immediate needs of local industry, there was virtually no demand for trainees in the Knoxville area between September 1942 and February 1943. Training courses were offered on a limited basis, and the majority of trainees came from areas outside the Knoxville Labor Market Area. In addition to the classes offered at The University of Tennessee and in-plant training courses given for defense work, Stair Technical High School in Knoxville offered classes in preemployment as well as refresher and supplementary aspects of defense training. ALCOA provided its own training program and hired trainees as unskilled workers. Of a total of 631 trainees for occupations, which ran from industrial accounting and office management to high school math and physics teachers to sheet metal workers, welders, and electricians, there was no demand for these trainees in 1942. Clearly in late 1942 the supply of labor in the Knoxville area more than adequately covered the area's war labor demands, and consequently, the impetus for hiring women was not yet evident.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 7.

Employment trends in Knoxville in 1942 paralleled the national picture. The Women's Bureau conceded that during the early months of the war, even though demands for female laborers had "increased markedly," the primary demand for the services of women in the war industries would be in the near future. Prior to the U.S. entrance into the war, job placement of men by USES had increased by 70 percent, while women's placement had increased by only one half that amount. At the same time, the ranks of unemployed men steadily decreased. In fact, the number of male work applicants lessened by 48 percent as compared to 13 percent among women. Even so, there were 3.5 million unemployed men who were seeking jobs in February 1942. Consequently, war industries continued to turn to unemployed men before they sought women workers in large numbers. For example, New York State, which was highly industrialized, estimated that only one-fifth of their industrial workers in the fall of 1942 would be women. According to USES, which reported on 12,000 plants, fewer than one-third of the anticipated additional war industry workers for the first half of 1942 were to be in plants that would employ women.⁸²

By late spring 1942, the Federal Works Agency reported that over one million women were still unemployed. Although specific war industries reported large increases in female employment, at the same time, nonessential civilian industries, which hired significant numbers of women, often had to lay off these workers. Among

⁸²U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, "Women's Work in the War," Bulletin No. 193 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1942), p. 2.

the civilian industries which were particularly hard hit were the hosiery industry, the jewelry industry, the women's clothing industry, games and toys industries, all of which primarily employed women.⁸³

As the nationwide reserves of male labor had begun to diminish after the United States became an actual belligerent in December 1941, governmental recruitment propagandists targeted women as the largest and most available source to enlist. Throughout 1942, the Knoxville newspapers reported on the increasing nationwide trends to employ women in war production, although local prospects for employment of women in production work still remained minimal. The Ladies Home Journal in an article titled "This Changing World for Women," described the lives of four young women who worked in an airplane factory in 1942. The article epitomized the juxtaposition of the changing world for women with the clear but subtle emphasis on the traditional female virtues of femininity and getting a man. The article reported that women under the age of forty were working at a variety of jobs in the factory: from riveting and welding to final assembly. Yet, the article described the hands of a female production worker which were lovely yet calloused and cut from using tools. The article addressed the male workers' reaction to the female entrants into the production areas: "How do the men feel about women workers? Just listen to the 'wolf cry' that often follows a pretty girl." ✓

⁸³ U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, "Questions as to Women in War Industries," Bulletin No. 194 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1942), p. 4.

Tommy and Ginny laugh off the catcalls, but wear carefully creased slacks and shirts."⁸⁴

In Knoxville, women were just beginning to untie the apron strings and the public as well as the women were only beginning to accept that the aprons could be exchanged for a pair of overalls. The Knoxville Journal pictured women employed at the Fairchild plant in Hagerstown, Maryland and captioned: "Woman's place not in the home." At the same time, the Journal advertised sex-segregated jobs in Civil Service positions throughout the Southeast. While free government training was offered through the public school systems to women who held high school diplomas, the major emphasis in Knoxville throughout 1942 was for women to help to win the war by rationing, planting victory gardens, home canning, and volunteering with the Red Cross.⁸⁵ Nationwide, women were beginning to enter the war production plants in large numbers. Knoxville, however, had not yet felt the squeeze of an inadequate labor supply which would eventually necessitate the full-scale recruitment of women war production workers. Fulton Sylphon was the only area war manufacturer that would hire large numbers of female production workers in 1942. Overall, women would not be needed extensively until 1943 when new and existing area war manufacturers would demand a vast

⁸⁴ Ruth Matthews and Beth Hannah, "This Changing World for Women," Ladies Home Journal, August 1942, pp. 28-29.

⁸⁵ Knoxville Journal, 14 February 1942; 15 February 1942; 16 February 1942.

increase in workers to fill their government contracts. The dynamic tension which the war produced in women's labor force participation would not be fully felt until then.

CHAPTER II

FROM APRONS TO ARMAMENTS: 1943

As the war accelerated, the demand for women workers continued to multiply. During 1942, industrialists and the government increasingly realized that women war workers would be the key to production goals. As women moved in vast numbers into the war industries, the conflict of role expectations for single and married working women increased. A significant number of women, nationwide, were experiencing new employment opportunities, but in many quarters they continually met with resistance to their new status. Co-workers, production experts, government, and management often clung tenaciously to the traditional concept of the femininity and separate sphere of women. ✓

The war thus created a tension between the utilization of women and an attempt to keep women in their place. War manufacturers and government realized that the war could not be won without the large-scale mobilization of millions of women. Nevertheless, the new woman in overalls presented a threat to the traditional American concepts of woman's place and the idea that the man was the family breadwinner. ✓

In Knoxville, the year 1943 proved to be the principal period when the employment of women spiraled to new heights. In September 1943, women's employment in Knoxville area war manufacturing peaked at over 14,000. At this time women comprised 39 percent of the ✓

total persons employed in manufacturing.¹ On a national level, by July 1943, the number of women in the civilian work force had increased to 17.7 million, or 32 percent of the total civilian labor force. This figure was nearly four million more than the number of women employed in July 1940 when women comprised 25 percent of the national labor force. The enormous increase in women's employment between July 1940 and 1943 partially resulted from the reemployment of unemployed women who were seeking work. Unemployment decreased from three million in July 1940 to less than one-half million in July 1943. The War Manpower Commission reported that three million of the net increase of nearly four million women workers during this period was affected by the wartime situation, and that, in all probability, these three million would not have sought work during peacetime situations.²

From one perspective, Ruth Millet, a columnist for the Knoxville News-Sentinel, claimed that "housekeeping is a war job, Mrs. America," and that women should not feel apologetic if they were not employed in a war plant while they were engaged in their own housework and took care of their children.³ During the same month, the News-Sentinel

¹Bureau of Employment Security, "Demand-Supply Supplement for Knoxville Labor Market Area," September 1944, Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 10.

²"Women in the Wartime Labor Market," 30 August 1943, War Manpower Commission, Record Group 211, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 1.

³News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 28 January 1943.

also featured an article on Mrs. Mildred Smith, a Fountain City housewife, who was the first Knoxville woman to obtain an arc welding job. Mrs. Smith, who had a nine-year-old son, had not previously been employed before she assumed a position at Dempster Brothers Machine Shop in January 1943. After completing a welding course at Stair Technical School, Mrs. Smith immediately found employment, and broke into a formerly all-male domain. Welding had been considered "strictly a man's job by local employers." A U.S. Naval inspector who observed Mrs. Smith's work commented: "I've been here several months, and given tests to lots of welders, but Mrs. Smith rated highest under actual working conditions of any person I've tested, male or female." The News-Sentinel editorialized that perhaps Knoxville war plants which had been "leery up to now about women workers" might be more positive about hiring women production workers since Mrs. Smith "broke the ice."⁴

Although it is impossible to ascertain whether or not Mrs. Smith really "broke the ice" concerning the employment of women in production aspects of war manufacturing in Knoxville, the demand for women in the war establishments increased significantly during 1943. Although the labor demand in the Knoxville area between April 1943 and April 1944 was relatively low at 14,000, nearly one half of this demand was for women in area war plants which included apparel firms, Fulton Sylphon, Rohm and Haas, and ALCOA. The percentage

⁴News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 24 January 1943, sec. A, p. 8.

of women would have been even greater had not there been a demand for 700 male coal miners.⁵

These figures did not include the production requirements of Clinton Engineer Works, which were undisclosed for security reasons. With the exception of CEW's labor specifications, which remained unknown, the Bureau of Employment Security assumed that "all needs for labor in production fields can be met locally if the demand can be filled by inexperienced female workers . . . the trend is definitely toward the use of women wherever possible."⁶ Knoxville war manufacturers were of necessity accepting the governmental directives of hiring women replacements as CEW's drain on local labor in 1943 precipitated an unprecedented labor shortage.

Although war plants increasingly utilized women in the production processes, the expansion of women's employment simply paralleled that of the augmentation of the aggregate Knoxville labor force. Because the supply of male labor was daily diminishing with the Selective Service requirements, however, the Bureau of Employment Security anticipated that local war plants would demand an increased

⁵"Labor Market Report, Knoxville," 15 April 1943, pp. 3, 12.

⁶Ibid. Although reports filtered out from CEW concerning the estimated required workers for the construction firms at CEW, no information was available concerning the nature of the project from Tennessee Eastman Corporation, Dupont, or Carbide, which were scheduled to operate the concern. The Manhattan District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers supervised the primary contractors for CEW. Others were Stone and Webster Engineering Corporation and E. I. Dupont deNemours. For further information on the Manhattan District in Oak Ridge, see: Charles W. Johnson and Charles O. Jackson, City Behind a Fence (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1981).

proportion of women workers throughout the year.⁷

By June 1943, women comprised 60 percent (at 16,000) of the estimated Knoxville area labor supply for the twelve-month period through May 1944. The supply of potential female laborers was composed of women who were currently unemployed, women who were presently working in the service and trade industries, and new labor market entrants.⁸ By July 1943, the employment of women in war-related establishments in the Knoxville area increased to 36.9 percent of the total.⁹

Mid-year employment calculations for 1943 presented a revised outlook on labor, and job-related rumors abounded throughout the Knoxville area. One rumor claimed that 500 Mexican workers were being imported as laborers on a major Knoxville area war project, but the Knoxville office of USES replied that the rumor was without foundation. Knoxville housewives complained that they had lost their maids to war industries, where, in many instances, they earned three times their wages as domestic help.¹⁰

In late 1943, Knoxville was reclassified from a Group II to

⁷"Labor Market Report, Knoxville," 15 April 1943, pp. 19, 11.

⁸Bureau of Employment Security. "Labor Market Developments Report, Knoxville Area, Tennessee," 15 June 1943, Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 11.

⁹War Manpower Program, "War Manpower Program for Knoxville, Tennessee Labor Market Area, 28 September 1943," Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 13.

¹⁰News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 14 May 1943.

a Group I Area of Critical Shortage, which meant that the area labor shortage had intensified.¹¹ The installation of CEW had precipitated the critical labor supply situation; in fact, none of the reporting industries was successful in hiring sufficient labor to meet their demands.¹² In November, the total personnel engaged in manufacturing in Knoxville war plants was nearly 35,000, which represented an increase of approximately 2,000 from the preceding November.¹³

The BES reported in December 1943 that nonapparel and nontextile war industries were using increasing numbers of women, particularly at ALCOA, Fulton Sylphon, Rohm and Haas, and Anacin companies. The number of women in area manufacturing firms had increased by 3,300, which represented a 10 percent gain in forty-seven identical establishments from November 1, 1942 to November 1, 1943. The garment and textile industries had been a part of the Knoxville economy for many years and, consequently, women did not think of these establishments as "war work," even though the bulk of the firms' output was for war contracts. This, in addition to the lower wage rates in the textile and garment industries, created an artificial shortage of female labor in these traditionally women's industries.¹⁴

¹¹Bureau of Employment Security, "Labor Market Developments Report for Knoxville Area, Tennessee," 15 December 1943, Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 1.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁴Bureau of Employment Security, "Labor Market Developments Report for Knoxville Area, Tennessee," 15 August 1943, Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 9.

In 1943, despite the increase in the utilization of women production workers in area war plants, Knoxville manufacturers often clung to traditional employment patterns and hired women production workers as a last-resort measure. They indicated that they would continue to hire men as long as they were available, and would only turn to women when the men were no longer around. Employers and labor forecasters realized, however, that the diminishing supply of men would not be able to meet the labor requirements, so they estimated that the percentage of women in war industries would continue to increase.¹⁵

To correct the labor problems which Knoxville war industries were experiencing, the War Manpower Commission made several suggestions. It recommended that Clinton Engineer Works recruit throughout the region and adjoining states for workers, and that area manufacturers better utilize local labor supplies. Further, the WMC suggested recruitment campaigns to utilize women more fully and to move workers from less essential to critical industries. Plans were designed to combat job turnover and absenteeism as well as to strengthen the Employment Stabilization Plan. To date, the plan had not been very successful in the Knoxville area. The local Building Trades Council had rejected certain provisions of the plan. More importantly, during a thirty-day period, CEW, which was a priority job, could hire workers from any industry without a job release.

¹⁵"Labor Market Report, for Knoxville," 15 December 1943, p. 4.

CEW itself had experienced an extremely high turnover rate. Finally, some area contractors had resorted to labor hijacking.¹⁶

The problem of job turnover among Knoxville workers was particularly acute in 1943. The turnover rate for selected industries more than doubled during the first half of 1943, and reached a peak in August at over 10 percent. This rate declined to less than 7 percent during October.¹⁷ The rate of turnover was unusually high in the textile, apparel (which primarily hired women), and the male-dominated lumber industries where wages were traditionally low. The separation rate in the textile industry rose to 21 percent in May/June 1943, and nearly 18 percent in the apparel industry during the same time period. At CEW, the separation rate reached nearly 41 percent in August 1943.¹⁸ Although few corrective steps were taken in 1943 to combat the high turnover rate in the area, ALCOA had implemented exit interviews, which appeared to help diminish the turnover rate there to less than 10 percent. CEW was also planning to initiate exit interviews within the USES offices at Clinton.¹⁹

Absenteeism was excessive among the construction workers, who were all male, at CEW. It was also noted in the outlying mines

¹⁶"War Manpower Program, Knoxville," 28 September 1943, pp. 1, 2.

¹⁷News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 21 February 1943, sec. C, p. 5; 2 September 1943; "Labor Market Report, Knoxville," 15 June 1943, p. 18.

¹⁸"War Manpower Program, Knoxville," 28 September 1943, p. 9.

¹⁹Ibid.

and in the textile industries to a lesser degree. However, most local war plant operators claimed that absenteeism was not a major problem in 1943, and consequently did not maintain a systematic penalty system for the offenders.²⁰ Since the majority of war plants did not keep accurate absenteeism records, the local USES office encouraged the manufacturing establishments to implement additional record keeping.²¹

Nationwide, women were often cited as being more prone to absenteeism than men (although this claim seemed to be unjustified in many instances). The National Industrial Council reported in a survey of thirty-nine plants in sixteen states in December 1943 that women exhibited a higher short-term absence rate of 649 per thousand workers as compared to 375 per thousand male workers. In long-term absence rates, the difference between men and women was less marked as women registered 157 per thousand and men 118 per thousand.²²

It was generally believed that women were more prone to illness than men, and the general consensus among employment authorities was that illness was the chief cause of involuntary absenteeism among women. Other causes of absenteeism were fatigue, home responsibilities, housing shortages, transportation difficulties,

²⁰News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 7 March 1943, Sunday Magazine Section, p. 1.

²¹"War Manpower Program, Knoxville," 28 September 1943, p. 10.

²²U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, "Absenteeism," April 1944, Women's Advisory Committee, War Manpower Commission, Record Group 211, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 1.

and poor factory morale.²³ The WMC encouraged employers to combat absenteeism either by a direct appeal to the worker which included disciplinary action, reward incentives, or adaptation of personnel policies, or by indirect methods such as increases in plant facilities and services to the workers. Indirect methods also included moderating the working hours or rearranging shifts to enable women to accommodate their household responsibilities, upgrading the plant facilities to enhance safety and health of the workers, and organizing transportation services such as car pools, and overall, striving to increase the morale of the workers.²⁴ Further, the WMC encouraged the community to combat absenteeism among women by changing business hours, providing adequate day care for children of working mothers, as well as by furnishing adequate housing and food services.²⁵ An exhibit in New York of the American Society of Magazine Cartoonists demonstrated the problem of absenteeism. In one cartoon, a man with a set of golf clubs slung over his shoulder called his plant: "Boss, I'm sick in bed today with a little fever." In the same exhibit, another cartoon showed a male manager looking askance at two young boys hiding in bomb shells while their mother worked. She matter-of-factly told the manager, as she looked toward her children: "It's either

²³U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, "Absenteeism," 11 March 1943, Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 2.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 5, 6.

²⁵Ibid., p. 7.

that, or time off until a day nursery is organized."²⁶ The cartoons particularly confirmed the dynamic tension of women's wartime employment. The male worker took time off from his job to relax playing golf, while the woman worker declared that she would have to have time off if the company did not provide a day nursery. The cartoons portrayed the obvious message that even though women were assuming masculine roles in production work, they were the primary caretakers of the children. ✓

To combat the problems of women workers, the President had established the Women's Advisory Committee as an appendage to the War Manpower Commission in September 1942. The purpose of the WAC was to advise the WMC on the difficulties which women workers were experiencing and to propose solutions to those problems. The WAC was composed of thirteen women who represented labor, management, the general public, women's organizations, education and journalism, personnel specialists of large industries, as well as the four geographical regions.²⁷ The WAC continually felt frustrated as to the effectiveness of their committee. They had no staff to prepare investigations and reports, and their advice--when consulted--was continually ignored. One WAC member even resigned in protest.²⁸

²⁶New York Times, 2 June 1943.

²⁷"History of the Women's Advisory Committee, War Manpower Commission," February 1945, Women's Advisory Committee, War Manpower Commission, Record Group 211, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 1.

²⁸Chafe, American Woman, p. 153.

One example of the WAC's frustration concerned their request to the WMC that Margaret Hickey, chairman of the WAC, be given full membership status of the WMC's Management-Labor Policy Committee, whose responsibility was the coordination of manpower policy for the war plants throughout the country. Paul McNutt, Chairman of the WMC, informed the Women's Advisory Committee that confirmation of full membership status on Hickey would upset the balance of the Management-Labor Policy Committee. He further claimed that the Women's Advisory Committee enjoyed the same status as that of the Management-Labor Policy Committee, as both groups offered recommendations that he acted upon.²⁹

The WAC also pointed out that the few suggestions of theirs which the WMC had accepted had not been enforced. They cited the committee's recommendation on child care as an example. Although the WAC had disapproved in-plant child-care facilities, they noted that the Kaiser shipbuilding firm was building three nurseries, partially financed by the Maritime Commission, which would serve children between the ages of six months and six years. The WAC noted that these nurseries were constructed despite the committee's policy (which had been accepted by the WMC) that recommended that mothers of children under the age of fourteen should not work unless all other labor supplies had been depleted. The WAC had also objected

²⁹ Women's Advisory Committee, War Manpower Commission, "Minutes of the Fourteenth Meeting," 12 May 1943, Women's Advisory Committee, War Manpower Commission, Record Group 211, National Archives, Washington, D.C., pp. 2, 3.

to in-plant child care facilities. Overall, the WAC believed that the status of the committee was "ineffectual" despite McNutt's reassurance that the committee's suggestions were valuable.³⁰

Knoxville war manufacturing establishments in 1943 tried to increase employee satisfaction and productivity through their morale-building techniques. Chief among incentives was the patriotic motivation to contribute in the fight against the hated enemy. Army and Navy "E's" for excellence were coveted awards, and, in 1943, three Knoxville firms were granted these recognitions for outstanding war production. The Knoxville News-Sentinel believed that Fulton Sylphon was the first in the state, and perhaps even in the South, to receive three "E's."³¹ Brookside Mills, which contributed 88 percent of its output to the Armed Forces, received an Army/Navy "E" in March 1943.³² In December of the same year, the Vestal Lumber and Manufacturing Company received the Army/Navy "E" as had the Appalachian Mills a month earlier.³³ A Knoxville industrialist, William Whaley, received the Ordnance Department's 94th Citation for his redesign of artillery parts which was touted as a vital contribution to the war production program.³⁴

³⁰Ibid., p. 3.

³¹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 1 September 1943.

³²News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 7 March 1943, sec. A, p. 8.

³³News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 1 December 1943; 21 November 1943.

³⁴News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 8 September 1943.

Celebrities were always a big boost to employee morale, and plant visitors ran the gamut from opera stars to families of war heroes. Mr. and Mrs. Thomas F. Sullivan and their daughter, Geneva Sullivan, parents and sister of the five Sullivan brothers who were lost on the Juneau, were present at the "E" ceremonies at ALCOA in May 1943.³⁵ Lucy Monroe, Metropolitan Opera star, sang at the dedication of a new addition at the Fulton Sylphon facilities.³⁶

Knoxville employers also found that their production output increased when their employees were well fed. The Bank of Knoxville took the lead in furnishing good food in its restaurant to its employees. East Tennessee Packing Company, Fulton Sylphon, Rohm and Haas, and Cherokee Spinning Company were among war establishments which provided in-house food services.³⁷ The city of Knoxville added its own, somewhat more aggressive, impetus to war production with its program of "Work, Fight, or go to the Workhouse" which imposed fines on both men and women who were caught loitering.³⁸

Although women increasingly entered Knoxville war industries throughout 1943, early in the year the BES had determined that demand for women workers had not increased significantly enough to warrant

³⁵News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 13 May 1943.

³⁶News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 25 May 1943.

³⁷News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 23 February 1943.

³⁸News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 23 February 1943.

a recruitment campaign for additional female laborers.³⁹ The primary war manufacturing establishments in the area for the most part recruited and hired new workers on their own. Many female workers sought employment at ALCOA through word of mouth. They heard that "ALCOA was hiring," and went to the personnel office to submit their applications.⁴⁰ By June 1943, however, several area firms began to utilize the United States Employment Services (USES) to supplement their personnel department's recruitment. Among the firms that employed the services of USES were Fulton, Knoxville Porcelain Company, Goodall Company, Appalachian Mills, and Brookside Mills. In fact, 55 percent of their newly-hired employees in June 1943 were USES referrals.⁴¹

The recruitment practices of USES produced positive results in the Knoxville area, as their placements increased from 22.5 percent during March and April, to 33.4 percent during May and June. Because CEW enjoyed priority privileges, USES directed extensive recruitment campaigns for construction and production aspects of this project which caused disruption in the hiring procedures of other area manufacturing firms.⁴² ALCOA, which typified several other war manufacturing firms, had infrequently turned to USES in

³⁹"Labor Market Report, Knoxville," 15 April 1943, p. 19.

⁴⁰Interview with ALCOA workers A and B, Alcoa, Tennessee, 10 December 1987.

⁴¹"Labor Market Report, Knoxville," 15 June 1943, p. 16.

⁴²"Labor Market Report, Knoxville," 15 August 1943, p. 15.

the past for recruitment purposes. With the increased labor demands generated by war contracts and the competition of CEW for area labor, ALCOA and other firms began to utilize the offices of USES to supplement their hiring practices.⁴³

By September 1943, the area WMC and USES offices had determined that the time was ripe for recruitment of women war workers. In their "intensive women power recruitment campaign," the area USES office conducted its crusade according to the guidelines which the WMC had established in addition to locally developed methods.⁴⁴ Recruitment tactics included full use of the local newspapers, not only in the classified sections but in other advertisements, editorials, photographs of women war workers, feature articles, and Women's Page news items. The WMC further suggested radio recruitment, theater recruitment, bulletins for women's religious and civic organizations, labor publications, and retail store victory-recruiting booths and window displays.⁴⁵

The BES determined that the majority of new employees for war establishments in the Knoxville area were procured either through personnel departments or "at the gate."⁴⁶ Nearly all of the area

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴"War Manpower Program for Knoxville," 28 September 1943, p. 13.

⁴⁵War Manpower Commission, "America at War Needs Women at Work," 4 June 1943, Women's Bureau, Record Group 86, National Archives, Washington, D.C., pp. 5-7.

⁴⁶Bureau of Employment Security, "Labor Market Development

employers recruited through newspaper classified advertisements, and in several cases employers used current employees and special representatives to recruit labor by personal contact.⁴⁷ Tennessee Eastman Corporation maintained the most extensive recruitment campaign for area labor. In addition to large-scale newspaper advertisements, Tennessee Eastman opened employment offices in Knoxville, Lenoir City, and LaFollette, and conducted house-to-house surveys to elicit additional labor.⁴⁸

Newspaper classified advertisements in 1943 ranged from traditional women's work requests to descriptions of new and unique opportunities for women's employment. In April 1943, LaFollette Shirt Company wanted "50 Girls" for "construction" of Army shirts. Waitresses, sales ladies, and office workers were also recruited, and classified advertisements enticed women to pursue the more innovative and unique opportunities of theater manager and milk wagon driver.⁴⁹ Sears, Roebuck, and Company entreated "housewives, students, defense workers' wives, and service men's wives" to apply for sales positions, and claimed that they provided excellent opportunities for advancement.⁵⁰ The Knoxville News-Sentinel also advertised civil service opportunities

for Knoxville Area, Tennessee," 15 October 1943, Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 15.

⁴⁷"Labor Market Report, Knoxville," 15 December 1943, p. 15.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 13 April 1943.

⁵⁰News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 17 September 1943.

for men and women, and further informed readers that local war industries would hire physically handicapped men and women.⁵¹ Among the more unusual nontraditional opportunities that became available to women during 1943 were the advertised positions for men and women to be trained as electrical operators, and mechanical maintenance and electrical maintenance workers at the Tennessee Eastman Corporation. The U.S. Flying Services solicited both men and women with mechanical ability to apply as airplane repair and service apprentices for aircraft which served the Army Aviation Cadets at the Municipal Airport in Knoxville.⁵²

The national recruitment of women--other than for the various branches of the military services--showed a geographical variation in the demand for women workers. Despite the WMC's establishment of hiring controls for labor shortage areas and the Executive Order of February 28, 1943 to require a forty-eight hour minimum work week for full-time workers in labor shortage areas, manpower requirements could not be filled in certain war manufacturing centers.⁵³ Consequently, the two primary tasks of the WMC were to determine the optimal local recruitment techniques for women workers and to educate employers, prospective female employees, and the public

⁵¹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 2 May 1943, sec. B, p. 6; 19 June 1943.

⁵²News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 17 September 1943.

⁵³Mary Elizabeth Pidgeon, "Women's Work and the War," Occupational Monograph 36 (Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1943), Women's Bureau, Record Group 86, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 11.

at large as to the importance of women workers in nontraditional roles, particularly those in the munitions industry.

Leila J. Rupp in "Rosie the Riveter: American Mobilization Propaganda," claims that the "ideal American woman in the prewar image was not at all prepared to participate in the war effort." Consequently, the government would be required to launch extensive recruiting campaigns to educate American women to the concept that their place during the war was not necessarily in the traditional role of homemaker or even that of an active war volunteer, but among the ranks of employed female war industry laborers.⁵⁴ Paul McNutt, chairman of the WMC, noted that "every effort is to be made to recruit and refer women, including older women, for jobs and training on the basis of qualifications." At that time, the Women's Advisory Committee to the WMC drafted a "Policy on Recruitment, Training, and Employment of Women Workers." In that policy the WAC stressed that local labor surplus should be employed before importation was implemented; that unemployed women should receive training; that labor and management should eliminate obstructions to the employment of women; that wages, including entrance wage rates, be determined not by gender but by work performed; that women should be required to work no more than forty-eight hours a week, and no more than six days a week, regardless of state laws; that adequate rest and meal periods, along with satisfactory health and safety arrangements

⁵⁴Leila J. Rupp, Mobilizing Women for War: German and American Propaganda 1939-1945, p. 137.

be provided in the plant; and that recruitment efforts toward women with young children be delayed until other available, local labor supplies had been exhausted.⁵⁵

Early in 1943, the WMC formulated a comprehensive strategy to effect the voluntary enlistment of women war workers. The conception included nine phases in the recruitment process. Area directors of the WMC were instructed first to determine which war industries should participate in the recruitment of women. Selection of establishments was based on information gleaned from manning tables and utilization studies from war plants which employed over one hundred workers. The next step was to determine which occupations would be suitable for women as well as assess the local labor supply of women.⁵⁶

Of major importance was the securing of the participation of plant management in the recruitment of women. Apparently, the WMC anticipated resistance among plant management in using women for nontraditional jobs, and consequently enumerated very specific steps to overcome resistance. Area directors of the WMC were advised to discuss the juxtaposition of the anticipated labor demands of the plants with the realities of the local labor supply in addition to providing information concerning the suitability of specific

⁵⁵Pidgeon, "Women's Work and the War," p. 6.

⁵⁶Women's Advisory Committee, War Manpower Commission, "A Suggested Spot Action Program for Increasing the Use of Women in War Establishments," War Manpower Commission, Record Group 211, National Archives, Washington, D.C., pp. 1-3.

occupations for women.⁵⁷ The Women's Bureau further recommended that plant operators would need to "sell the idea" of women production workers to foremen and male employees. Various examples of successful inplant indoctrination emphasized that the women to be hired were no different than wives, mothers, sisters, or daughters. One company promised its male employees that they would maintain their present jobs or secure even better jobs if women were incorporated.⁵⁸ These recruitment campaign promises typified an attempt to reconcile the dynamic tension that the war had produced as they sought to alleviate the resistance that male workers and employers might exhibit toward women production workers. ✓

Additional phases of the WMC's recruitment strategy included job training as required, and eliciting the cooperation of unions and support of community facilities such as banks, medical services, nurseries, shopping, transportation, and housing. The WMC area directors would then initiate recruitment campaigns for specific employers. The WMC emphasized that no recruitment campaigns should take place unless: (1) specific job offers would be forthcoming; (2) plant management was committed to keeping women workers; (3) training facilities were available as needed; (4) and union and community problems were dealt with effectively.⁵⁹

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 3-4.

⁵⁸U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, "When You Hire Women," Special Bulletin No. 14 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1944), p. 1.

⁵⁹War Manpower Commission, "Report, Region VII," 2 May 1944, War

Clearly in 1943 recruitment, as well as actual employment, of women was still a last-resort measure. Claiming that large-scale importation of workers from labor surplus areas to labor shortage areas was not feasible given the inadequacy of existing housing and transportation facilities, the WMC conceded in 1943 that "the fact remains that there just aren't enough men left to do the jobs . . . requirements of the Armed Forces will cut into the number of men now on the job." To alleviate the problem, the WMC added that "the only solution . . . is in the recruitment, training, and placement of women in essential jobs."⁶⁰ In its increasingly urgent attempts to fulfill labor demands, the WMC not only turned to women as potential labor reserves, but to minority groups, aliens, and the physically handicapped as well.⁶¹

In their recruitment of women war workers, the primary appeal of the WMC and the OWI was that of patriotism. Area USES officials were urged: "every additional woman you recruit means more production--more fighting power for America to speed the day of victory."⁶² A myriad of techniques was used to reach the American woman as a component of Womanpower. In the newspapers, news releases,

Manpower Commission, Record Group 211, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 5.

⁶⁰"America at War Needs Women at Work," p. 1.

⁶¹War Manpower Commission, "USES Operations Bulletin, B-63," 31 January 1943, War Manpower Commission, Record Group 211, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 4.

⁶²War Manpower Commission, "Urgent Working Plan," War Manpower Commission, Record Group 211, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 2.

pictures, advertisements, editorials, and feature articles on the women's pages dramatized the glamor, the excitement, and the lure of war work. Radio recruitment provided interviews, broadcasts directly from war plants, big name recording stars such as Kate Smith appealing for women war workers, and dramatic and live spot announcements.⁶³ Women were implored to consider employment by such patriotic and emotional entreaties as:

Mothers, sisters, sweethearts! Unless you . . . take war jobs, victory may be delayed. More American boys may be killed. These men have left jobs behind which must be filled by women . . . or too many on that Honor Roll will never come home.⁶⁴

Recruitment messages thus appealed to women to take on a man's job, which was a dramatic break from traditional sex-segregated employment patterns. Yet these same messages contradicted a progressive role in women's employment. In fact, the bottom line of the recruitment pitch was to get a war job, bring the boys home sooner, be relieved of a war job (which is what women should want to do), and go back home to a husband or a potential husband.

Local theaters were hothouses of patriotic appeal, and the drama of the big screen added its impact on the scores of women who flocked to the movies during the war. The OWI, through the War Activities Committee of the Motion Picture Industry, produced

⁶³ War Manpower Commission, "America at War Needs Women at Work," p. 5.

⁶⁴ J. Walter Thompson Company, "Womanpower, Twenty Second Live Spots for Local Stations," Record Group 208, National Archives,

several government films on Womanpower.⁶⁵ Films such as "Wanted-- Women War Workers" and "Jane Brown Changes Her Job" stressed the need for women workers. "Women in Defense," narrated by Katherine Hepburn and Eleanor Roosevelt, and juxtaposed against Bryant Baker's statue, "The Pioneer Woman," recalled the analogy between women war workers "who are working to save a way of life" and their pioneer forebears who "helped to build a nation."⁶⁶

Other recruitment pitches were bulletins to women's religious, civic, and service organizations, industrial publications and trade papers, movie trailers listing "Roll of Honor" women war workers, labor publications, shopping bulletins, speakers for conventions, mass meetings, and club groups.⁶⁷ Margaret Hickey, Chairman of the Women's Advisory Committee of the WMC, was always a much sought-after speaker. In her address at the Business and Professional Women's Club in Dallas, Texas, she likened the women war workers to the women who helped forge a nation out of the New World.⁶⁸ The OWI also suggested outdoor advertising and the use of retail stores to set up window displays, special exhibits, victory recruiting

Washington, D.C., pp. 1-2.

⁶⁵ War Manpower Commission, "America at War Needs Women at Work," pp. 5-6.

⁶⁶ War Manpower Commission, "America at War Needs Women at Work," p. 5; Office of Emergency Management, "Women in Defense: A Defense Report on Film," Women's Bureau, Record Group 86, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 3.

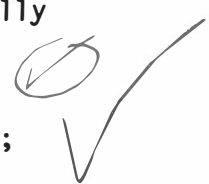
⁶⁷ "USES Operation Bulletin, B-63," p. 11.

⁶⁸ Women's Advisory Committee, War Manpower Commission, "Text

booths, work clothes promotions, and special womanpower week publicity.⁶⁹

If these intensive recruitment methods failed to elicit the desired response from women, and referral and transfer of workers were not enough to remedy the shortage of labor, then regional and area directors of the WMC were instructed to initiate enrollment campaigns. These house-to-house campaigns gleaned information concerning availability for employment, training, experience, and other facts to be synthesized by the employment office for subsequent referral for training or employment of women.⁷⁰

Training for women war workers was often the logical step which succeeded recruitment, since the majority of women war workers lacked production skills. War work training took the forms of (1) federally funded defense training classes through the school systems; (2) private school and college training; (3) industrial plant training; and (4) the National Youth Administration training projects.⁷¹ Before America's entrance into the war, few women participated in war industry training. Prior to December 1941, less than 1 percent of nearly 1,800,000 trainees were women. By 1942, 13 percent of trainees



of Address of A. Hickey," 2 February 1944, War Manpower Commission, Record Group 211, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 1.

⁶⁹War Manpower Commission, "America at War Needs Women at Work," p. 7.

⁷⁰"USES Operations Bulletin, B-63," p. 3.

⁷¹"Questions as to Women in War Industries," p. 8.

in government classes were women, and by May 1943, the number had risen to 31 percent. Thirty-eight percent of supplementary and 24 percent of preemployment trainees in the public school programs were women. Approximately 90,000 women had completed training within industry programs by May 1943.⁷² Between that time and April 1944, women comprised approximately 70 percent of the total of the participants in vocational classes in aircraft assembly and riveting; 28 percent of the trainees in welding; and 26 percent of the trainees in blueprint reading.⁷³

The various training programs for war industry reflected the war-induced dynamic tension in their treatment of women which was different than men. Employers were warned women were not just "small men" but that they varied in terms of physical, experiential, and psychological factors.⁷⁴ It was assumed that because most women had not experienced factory work before the war, they might be frightened by the noise and machines of the factory, and would "naturally lack self-confidence."⁷⁵ The average woman entered a new job with an

⁷²Office of War Information, "Report," 3 September 1943, Office of War Information, Record Group 211, National Archives, Washington, D.C., pp. 1-2.

⁷³U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, Elisabeth D. Benham, "Employment Opportunities in Characteristic Industrial Occupations of Women," Bulletin No. 201 (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1944), p. 4.

⁷⁴Office of Defense Transportation, "Practical Hints to Employers of Women with Special Reference to Transportation," October 1944, War Manpower Commission, Record Group 211, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 7.

⁷⁵U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, "When You Hire

"inferiority complex resulting from her limited physical strength and industrial background"; she responded to emotional appeals; she was more interested in people than in things; she was less direct in her approach to people and work; she followed instructions better than a man; and she was a born housekeeper and homemaker.⁷⁶ Consequently, employers were cautioned to exhibit "greater patience and detail" in training women in the use of tools and machinery and to teach women to approach their job in a "workmanlike manner."⁷⁷ Despite the increasing numbers of women in the war industries and the reports of women's competency in production work, the training programs continued to view women trainees differently than men. ✓

Training opportunities for women in the Knoxville area during 1943 were abundant, although the local demand for trainees was minimal.⁷⁸ The Knoxville News-Sentinel in January 1943, advertised special welding classes for women from ages eighteen to forty. The first woman attended the war training program at Stair in June 1942, and a feature article in the News-Sentinel in 1943 reported that 75 percent of the 450 enrollees at Stair were women. By January 1943, the majority of the women enrolled at Stair were married. Mr. and Mrs. Herman Clem were among the married couples who attended

Women," Special Bulletin No. 14 (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1944), pp. 8-9.

⁷⁶"Practical Hints to Employers of Women," p. 8.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 5.

⁷⁸"Labor Market Report, Knoxville," 15 April 1943, p. 17.

Stair at that time. Mr. Clem, who was deferred from the draft, held a position as unit foreman of reservoir clearance for TVA, and Mrs. Clem was a former school teacher. They had six children between the ages of three and thirteen. Mrs. Clem noted that "we are both taking machine shop training at night. I want to get work in a war factory in Knoxville."⁷⁹ Another couple enrolled at Stair, claiming that "we both want to learn to make bullets to beat the Axis and we're getting ready to do it." Approximately 1,200 students completed war training courses at Stair in 1942.⁸⁰

In April 1943, over three hundred students were enrolled in Vocational Education for National Defense (VEND) at Stair School, which was the local war production training program as provided by the Smith Hughes Act of 1940, and the National Youth Administration schools. A majority of the students who received training in the machine shop at VEND obtained positions at Fulton Sylphon. That company, along with Dempster Equipment Company, Stone and Webster Corporation, Tennessee Eastman Corporation, and ALCOA were the local war establishments which used preemployment or supplementary training programs. Generally, however, the greater portion of NYA trainees were transferred to NYA induction centers in Savannah, Mobile, and Brunswick, Georgia where they received supplementary training for

⁷⁹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 10 January 1943, sec. B, p. 3; 17 January 1943, sec. B, p. 6.

⁸⁰News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 17 January 1943, sec. B, p. 6.

the shipyards.⁸¹ Young women comprised approximately 50 percent of the students in the NYA training courses in Knoxville, LaFollette, and Rockwood.⁸² The NYA center in Rockwood recruited women from the East Tennessee area and provided a stipend of \$10.80 a month for boarders and a stipend of \$19.20 per month for day students.⁸³ Nearly all of the preemployment trainees in the Knoxville area schools were women, and while local employers declined to make commitments to hire trainees, the BES believed that "most women with training ability can be placed immediately on jobs that do require training."⁸⁴

Other training opportunities in Knoxville included supplementary in-plant VEND training programs at Fulton Sylphon. Employees of TVA and ALCOA obtained additional training in the science of war management as well as engineering from The University of Tennessee. Further, U.T. offered preemployment training programs in office management, industrial accounting, and industrial statistics on the college level in the College of Engineering. Tennessee Eastman Corporation initiated two subsidized training programs during the summer of 1943 which included hard soldering, hand tool practice, shop materials identification, hand temperature control reading, and machine practice. The demand for trainees from local business

⁸¹"Labor Market Report, Knoxville," 15 April 1943, p. 18; "Labor Market Report, Knoxville," 15 June 1943, p. 16.

⁸²"Labor Market Report, Knoxville," 15 June 1943, p. 17.

⁸³News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 25 February 1943.

⁸⁴"Labor Market Report, Knoxville," 15 April 1943, p. 18.

colleges was particularly high during this period. In fact, many students were given job referrals and placement before completion of their training.⁸⁵

By August 1943, the training status for war workers in the Knoxville area had undergone significant changes. The NYA training centers had been terminated, and the War Production Training Program had decreased its Knoxville operations considerably due to a lack of participation on the part of the trainees. The BES noted a difficulty in the recruitment and placement of local trainees. Further, the cutback of area training facilities had created a negligible impact on the labor supply for local war production facilities. Of the three remaining training courses available in Knoxville in August 1943, only ten persons were enrolled in machine shop and tracer IV courses, and fifteen persons were in electric welding.⁸⁶ Further, the demand for unpaid training was diminished in part due to the inauguration of Tennessee Eastman's program in June 1943 which paid trainees while they were in school. The University of Tennessee continued its college-level courses in engineering, management war training, and science, although the interest appeared to be declining in this form of training as well.⁸⁷ ALCOA and Fulton Sylphon continued with their supplementary training for upgrading.⁸⁸

⁸⁵"Labor Market Report, Knoxville," 15 April 1943, p. 18; "Labor Market Report, Knoxville," 15 June 1943, pp. 18-19.

⁸⁶"Labor Market Report, Knoxville," 15 August 1943, p. 17.

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Ibid.

By September 1943, the WMC attempted to discover which specific types of training were required in the Knoxville area, and in effect became a clearinghouse for information concerning trainees. Area USES offices recommended that war plants conduct their own in-plant training or furnish subsidized training.⁸⁹ At the same time, USES agreed to assist in the recruitment of trainees and to be a clearinghouse for trainees in the area.⁹⁰ By October 1943, the number of preemployment trainees in the Knoxville area was negligible. Thirteen persons were enrolled in machine shop courses, and thirty-six in two electric welding classes. VEND offered on-site welding courses at Dempster Equipment Company and a machine shop class at Fulton. The University of Tennessee organized seven supplemental training courses in radio, elementary engineering, advanced engineering, mechanics, industrial accounting, cost accounting, and personnel relations. Between June and September 1943, approximately three hundred people participated in preemployment training programs at Stair Technical School under the subsidized program of Tennessee Eastman. After September, the training program for Tennessee Eastman was conducted on site. By December 1943, only one preemployment training class in electric welding was offered in the Knoxville area. Vocational Education for War Training (VEWT) at the same time conducted two supplementary classes in arc welding and machine

⁸⁹"War Manpower Program for Knoxville," 28 September 1943, p. 14.

⁹⁰Ibid.

shop to workers who were currently employed. Full-time VEWT instructors continued at Dempster Brothers and Fulton Sylphon.⁹¹

Not only was the government charged with recruitment and training of women, it also had the task of selling the idea of nontraditional modes of employment to women. With the brief exception of a small percentage in World War I, women had been engaged for decades in traditionally labeled "women's work" if they worked at all outside the home. As early as July 1942, women had participated in assembly and inspection jobs, operating punch and drill presses, milling machines, and small turret lathes. In fact, USES had enumerated over 460 industrial jobs which would be suitable for women. Forty percent of these occupations would require job dilution or industrial rearrangement, however, to become applicable for female work, which necessitated less physical strength requirements, and due to a lack of training and experience, less skilled training.⁹²

Throughout the war, the Women's Bureau initiated several analyses of war industries to determine which occupations would be suitable for women. By the end of 1942, women were employed to some degree in most of what the WMC described as essential occupations and war industries as enumerated by the WMC. These encompassed the thirty-five primary war industries and approximately 3,000 vital

⁹¹Although data concerning male/female numbers of trainees are not available in these sources, it is likely that women were highly represented among these trainees. "Labor Market Report, Knoxville," 15 October 1943, p. 16; "Labor Market Report, Knoxville," 15 December 1943, p. 15.

⁹²Women's Bureau, "Women's Work in the War," p. 3.

occupations.⁹³ In June 1943, women in war production plants were used extensively in a large number of occupations. These included, in addition to those performed extensively in 1942, optical and ophthalmic glass grinding and polishing, burring and filing, electric arc welding, assembly of electrical wiring and parts, ordnance, touch-up painting and stenciling, packing, and factory service positions such as draftsmen and factory clerks.⁹⁴

Yet, despite their proven skill in new occupations, women were unable to break the sexual barrier completely in the work place during the war. Although women were increasingly given skilled positions, even in late 1943 men still occupied the top and most skilled industrial occupations.⁹⁵

As the war progressed, the Women's Bureau noted that various war industries were hiring increasing numbers of women. Of particular note was the aircraft industry which greatly expanded its utilization of women in the production areas. In the spring of 1941, fewer than 1 percent of those employed in the aircraft industry were women, and several companies hired no women at all in their production departments. The women who were employed by the aircraft plants worked in the covering and fabric departments, which strongly resembled the needle industries that were typical of women's work. By April

⁹³Pidgeon, "Women's Work and the War," p. 6.

⁹⁴Robinson, "Women Workers in Two Wars," p. 655.

⁹⁵Ibid.

1942, women employees in aircraft production had increased nine times, and by the end of the year, nearly 150,000 women were employed as production workers.⁹⁶ They worked primarily as riveters, welders, and electrical assemblers, as well as drill pressers, and milling, engine, and turret lathe operators. The majority of women worked in the sub-assembly of the aircraft, although a few women worked alongside men in the final assembly of the aircraft on the installation teams for the hydraulic landing gear systems. Workers on the final assembly lines had to read blueprints and handle a variety of hand tools.⁹⁷

Progress in the incorporation of women in final assembly of aircraft was noted at a particular final-assembly aircraft plant between December 1941 and March 1943. While in December 1941, operators claimed that women were not suited to final assembly work, by March 1942, over one-third of the workers in this plant were women.⁹⁸ Given the newness of women to aircraft industry, few females moved up to the skilled positions, although they were given extensive news coverage for their newly-developed riveting and welding skills. The aircraft industry employed more women than any other war industry, with the possible exception of the electrical industry, and women

⁹⁶Pidgeon, "Women's Work and the War," p. 15.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 17.

⁹⁸Benham, "Employment Opportunities in Characteristic Industrial Occupations of Women," p. 7.

constituted up to three-fifths of the workers in certain aircraft plants.⁹⁹

Of the industries which converted to war manufacturing, the electrical products industry had employed the greatest proportion of women before the war. As noted in Chapter I, the importance of women's contributions to this industry increased even more after Pearl Harbor as thousands of women entered this field. In the manufacture of war instruments such as instrument boards for aircraft, and instruments for optical, fire-control, and surgical and dental use, the skilled nature of the work resulted in the predominance of male employees in this area during the early stages of the war. By the spring of 1943, however, as a result of job dilution, nearly two-fifths of the production workers in this industry were women. Further, employers discovered that women were particularly well-suited to the manufacture of instruments because their temperaments were deemed more agreeable to the precise nature of the work.¹⁰⁰

Practically no women were employed in the manufacture of cannons and small arms before the war, but by April 1943, women claimed approximately 31 percent of the total jobs in this industry. There were extensive variations in the employment of women from plant to plant, and considerable interchanging of occupations among men

⁹⁹Robinson, "Women Workers in Two Wars," p. 658.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., pp. 659-660; Pidgeon, "Women's Work and the War," p. 17.

and women.¹⁰¹ In the manufacture of ammunition, women were utilized extensively, particularly in the processes of loading and assembling shells for artillery ammunition, as well as weighing powder, funneling the powder into bags, and stitching the bags.¹⁰² Women appeared to function in a sex-segregated labor system within the ammunition industries, and in many instances were participating in traditional women's type of work. ✓

The machine-tool industry, which was highly skilled in nature, hired few women during the early months of the war. However, between August 1942 and April 1943, the number of women employees in this industry increased by four times. In large plants which employed over 2,500 persons, the average percentage of women workers ranged from 12 to 25 percent. A survey of fifteen major machine tool plants indicated that 80 percent of the women employed in factory work were engaged in assembling, machining, and inspecting.¹⁰³

Have to hire women?

Perhaps of all the war industries, the shipyards experienced the most dramatic change in the employment of women during the war. In late spring of 1942, this industry began to hire women in what had been considered an all-male industry, although a few women had been employed in the yards during World War I.¹⁰⁴ ✓

¹⁰¹Robinson, "Women Workers in Two Wars," pp. 559-560.

¹⁰²Pidgeon, "Women's Work and the War," pp. 19-20.

¹⁰³Robinson, "Women Workers in Two Wars," p. 561.

¹⁰⁴Pidgeon, "Women's Work and the War," pp. 24-25.

By the fall of 1942, the shipyards had employed 25,000 women production workers, whereas in 1939, only thirty-six women were employed in the entire industry.¹⁰⁵ In February 1943, the Norfolk yards employed 1,700 women. Although this number was small proportionately, the conceptual change was important. By January 1943, the number of women employed in shipyards totaled over 54,000.¹⁰⁶ Women were employed in some aspect of welding, as electricians, machinists, burners, and assistants in other crafts. Various shipbuilding companies utilized women to a lesser degree in occupations such as electrical workers who installed power cables as well as fittings on the upper deck.¹⁰⁷

Both the airplane and the shipbuilding industries particularly witnessed a progression in the augmentation of women's occupational choices. In the airplane industry, women, who, in the early stages of the war were either relegated to seamstress-type occupations or sub-assembly, were often working on final assembly in later war years. The shipbuilding industry experienced a major conceptual change during the war, as it admitted women to the yards for the first time.

By 1943, the steel and iron industries also had to turn to women in increasing numbers to replace men who were leaving for

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

the Armed Services. Substitution of women for men was particularly apparent in the mid-west, where shortages of male labor were acute. The majority of the female production workers in the iron and steel industries was classified as unskilled, although increasing numbers were employed in skilled positions. By the end of 1942, women comprised nearly 20 percent of the labor force in metal plants.¹⁰⁸

Women worked as crane operators, core makers, chemists, hot chain workers, factory clerks, or as machine operators in the maintenance shops. In Gary, Indiana, one steel mill admitted women to the blast-furnace works and the open hearth areas for the first time in history, although their tasks in this traditionally male domain were generally to operate cars to transfer materials, or to serve as delay clerks, ingot shippers, or test carriers.¹⁰⁹

Although the participation of women as welders and riveters in the more nontraditional fields of the aircraft industry, ship-building, and steel mills generated more headlines, WMC Commissioner McNutt claimed that "two out of every three women workers will be needed in home front jobs," such as restaurants, laundries, offices, child care centers, transportation, and hospitals.¹¹⁰ Women replaced men as elevator operators, buyers, messengers, office and sales workers, railroad conductors, and turntable operators. Women also

¹⁰⁸Pidgeon, "Women's Work and the War," p. 23.

¹⁰⁹Robinson, "Women Workers in Two Wars," p. 663.

¹¹⁰Pidgeon, "Women's Work and the War," p. 30.

began to work for the government and commercial airlines in nontraditional occupations such as mechanics and ground crew members, and in air-traffic control towers. The commercial airlines were not hiring women as pilots or copilots, although in 1943 there reportedly was no discrimination between hiring men and women in other air-related occupations.¹¹¹ Leslie Frost, daughter of the famed poet, Robert Frost, and former English professor, editor, author, press agent, and reporter, made headlines as a member of the graveyard shift maintenance crew for TWA.¹¹² At the same time, the Federal Office of Censorship echoed traditional stereotypes when it discovered that the "natural curiosity" and intuition of women made them obvious candidates for mail censors, and consequently hired large numbers of women for such positions.¹¹³ In fact, by 1942, 60 percent of the new employees of the federal government were women.¹¹⁴ Women were found driving intercity busses, pumping gas, raising livestock and crops, working in lumber mills, and driving ten-wheeler trucks.¹¹⁵ Women truck drivers were advised that male chivalry would probably disappear with the onset of women in these occupations that were formerly all-male domains. The OWI warned that men felt that women

¹¹¹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 18 August 1943, sec. A, p. 12.

¹¹²News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 1 August 1943, p. 5.

¹¹³News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 3 May 1943.

¹¹⁴Office of War Information, "War Jobs for Women," Office of War Information, Record Group 108, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 5.

¹¹⁵Pidgeon, "Women's Work and the War," pp. 30-34.

who could "herd a ten-ton truck over the highway also can change tires on occasion."¹¹⁶

Throughout the country, women war workers became heroines of the home front. Government, employers, and the press were quick to praise their abilities and willingness to replace--and often to surpass--men in the techniques necessary for war and essential civilian industries. American Business magazine reported that women in the Vultee Aircraft plant in California "set up an automatic competition with the men, who, in turn speed up because they cannot let themselves be outdone by the 'weaker sex'."¹¹⁷ Reportedly, a woman burner in a shipyard performed such excellent work that she was requested at various parts of the shipyard when intricate burning patterns were needed.¹¹⁸ Josephine Lowman, a syndicated columnist who wrote "We the Women," visited Republic Aviation Corporation in Farmingdale, New York, and enthusiastically reported on the tremendous contributions that women workers were making to the war effort.¹¹⁹

Women in Knoxville paralleled national patterns as they increasingly assumed nontraditional types of occupations during the war. By July 1943, women comprised nearly 37 percent of the employment

¹¹⁶News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 7 June 1943.

¹¹⁷F. C. Minaker, "New Jobs for Women," American Business, April 1942, p. 23.

¹¹⁸Pidgeon, "Women's Work and the War," pp. 30-34.

¹¹⁹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 15 August 1943, sec. D, p. 16.

in "selected industries and establishments," which included the apparel and textile mills which had been converted to war production. Of a total of forty-two manufacturing establishments surveyed, the employment of women numbered nearly 14,000 out of a total of 34,400 workers. This figure indicated an increase from 11,300 women out of a total of 34,350 workers in June 1942.¹²⁰ The total employment increased only by fifty during the twelve-month period, but the employment of women increased by more than 2,600. Not only were women hired in addition to male workers, but they were replacing men who had left employment for either the Armed Services or out-migration to other employment.¹²¹

ALCOA experienced the greatest numerical increase in the number of women employed between July 1942 and July 1943, as the number of female employees expanded from 320 to over 1,450 for an increase of nearly 1,150, who were hired primarily for nontraditional jobs. During this period, the total employment at ALCOA decreased by 1,254. In July 1942, women comprised 2 percent of the employment at ALCOA. A year later, women made up 13 percent of the total employment.¹²²

Mr. Kent Withers, a major stockholder in ALCOA, later confirmed that, although the government provided deferments for many able-bodied men to remain at ALCOA to work in heavy, essential wartime jobs, approximately 1,500 male employees entered the Armed Forces. ALCOA

¹²⁰"Labor Market Report, Knoxville," 15 August 1943, p. 18.

¹²¹Ibid.

¹²²Ibid.

hired women to replace these men whenever possible.¹²³ Throughout the war, ALCOA increasingly employed women in "occupations where they have never been used before": in electrical engineering and mechanical departments, in physical testing and chemical laboratories, as crane operators, as drivers of small trucks within the plants, and in the rolling mill.¹²⁴ Women's employment, however, was partially hindered by seniority rights and established lines of progression. Some jobs existed that were suited to the physical ability of females but were unattainable by women because they could only be reached via jobs which were unsuitable to women's physical strength.¹²⁵ A former female wartime machine shop employee concurred that men and women received the same wages for the same jobs, "but we couldn't build ourselves higher than crane operator." She elaborated that it was only after "women's lib" that women could advance past the position of crane operator.¹²⁶

According to former employees of ALCOA, men and women usually worked cooperatively in production. A retired male employee who was a foreman in production stated that occasionally women became somewhat "insubordinate" because they considered themselves indispensable to the war effort. Another former male employee, who was an

¹²³Interview with Mr. Kent C. Withers, Aluminum Company of America, Knoxville, Tennessee, 16 May 1983.

¹²⁴News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 19 August 1945.

¹²⁵"Labor Market Report, Knoxville," 15 April 1943, p. 23.

¹²⁶Interview with ALCOA worker A, Alcoa, Tennessee, 23 November 1987.

assistant shift foreman, added that, overall, male resentment toward the women was very minimal, although in "some cases, where men had to handle the heavier gauges of metal, there was some bickering." He commented further that "some [of the women production workers] were unsure of themselves" that "some adjusted quicker [sic] than others"; and that "some [women workers] were very good."¹²⁷

Former female production workers at ALCOA offered varying opinions regarding their acceptance by men into the production areas of the plant. Their different experiences typified the dichotomy of responses which the war wrought regarding women working in nontraditional jobs. One female machine shop worker believed the men accepted the new women entrants very well and that they worked closely together.¹²⁸ Another female machine shop worker argued that men did not like the new women production workers. She noted, however, that the male antipathy was not as severe during the war years. It primarily raised its head in the postwar years. Men believed that women should not be out in the plant, she claimed, but rather should stay at home. She went to work because she needed the job to support herself.¹²⁹ The same worker noted that she loved her work in the plant, and that she would never have been happy to sit behind a desk, even though she had taken secretarial courses.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Questionnaire B, developed by the author, see Appendix.

¹²⁸ Interview with ALCOA worker B, 24 November 1987.

¹²⁹ Interview with ALCOA worker B, 24 November 1987.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

Fulton Sylphon Company realized the second largest increase of female employment in the Knoxville area. Its employment of women increased from 220, for 14 percent of the total manufacturing employees in July 1942, to 1,466 in July 1943, when women comprised 40 percent of the employees in manufacturing. During this period, Fulton Sylphon hired primarily women as total employment increased by 873 and employment of women increased by 740.¹³¹ ✓

Although Fulton had hired women in its production areas as early as the fall of 1941, it greatly increased their number between mid-1942 and mid-1943.¹³² According to Mr. George Barnes, personnel director of Fulton in 1987, overall employment and employment of women increased significantly during the war.¹³³ According to Mrs. E. B. Nichols, Assistant Production Expeditor during the war, Miller's Department Store lost a significant number of female sales workers to the production lines of Fulton.¹³⁴ Women were not employed in the maintenance department or the stockhouse, but over four hundred worked in the inspection shop as well as another four hundred in the autostat departments. Approximately 250 women worked in the instrument department, and the rest worked in the press, corrugating,

¹³¹Ibid.

¹³²"Labor Market Report, Knoxville," 15 August 1943, p. 18.

¹³³The peak employment of women at Fulton Sylphon occurred in December 1944. Interview with George Barnes, Fulton Sylphon Company, 20 May 1983; "Labor Market Report, Knoxville," May 1947, p. 11.

¹³⁴Interview with Mary Francis Nichols, former employee of Fulton Sylphon, 22 June 1987.

culinary, case, automatic, sample, tank, service, machine shops, assembly departments.¹³⁵ Women started at Fulton Sylphon as unskilled workers and trained on drill presses and turret lathes there. Mr. John Ruggles, personnel director at Fulton during the war, commented on the quickness of the women at their work and stressed that, although they did not engage in heavy lifting, they performed well, particularly on the assembly line and, overall, produced on par with the men.¹³⁶ The majority of women who were employed during the war joined one of the two unions: the Machinist and what later became the Steel Workers' Union, although legally they were not required to do so.¹³⁷ Although George Ogdin believed that women during the war were a "little lukewarm about joining the unions," the unions controlled the factory wage scales (which were higher than clerical wages) which made the production jobs and union membership attractive to women.¹³⁸

According to both Mr. Ruggles and Mr. Lawrence Webster, a wartime employee of Fulton, women were well accepted in the production departments. Mr. Webster added that female employees "were treated like ladies"; that several female employees got a "kick out of driving

¹³⁵Seniority Roster, Robertshaw Controls (Fulton Sylphon), 1944, made available to the author by the personnel department.

¹³⁶Interview with John Ruggles, Fulton Sylphon Company, 24 June 1987.

¹³⁷Interview with George Ogdin, Fulton Sylphon Company, 21 October 1987.

¹³⁸Ibid.

carloaders," and that there was "far less cry about discrimination back then than there is now."¹³⁹ Although women did not advance to managerial or foreman positions during the war, men and women were paid the same wages for the same jobs, according to Mr. 

I. O. Johnson, former General Manager of Fulton. He affirmed that women performed excellently as production workers; at the same time, he noted that the male workers were not threatened because they realized the necessity of the women employees. Mr. Johnson stressed that Fulton Sylphon "hired employees instead of men and women."¹⁴⁰

Recollections of former wartime Fulton employees generally concur with Mr. Johnson's, Mr. Ruggles', and Mr. Webster's belief that women were well accepted into the nontraditional occupations in the production departments. Of sixteen women and twenty-three men surveyed in 1987 who were employed at Fulton during the war, only three men suggested that there were negative attitudes among the male workers toward the female entrants. One man suggested that the situation was "bad"; another man noted that there were mixed reactions--both good and bad--toward women production workers; and another man remembered that men were cold to women. The remaining men and all of the women who responded to this question suggested that the male production workers had a positive attitude toward the women workers. A female worker reminisced:

¹³⁹Interview with Lawrence Webster, Fulton Sylphon Company, 29 May 1987.

¹⁴⁰Interview with I. O. Johnson, Fulton Sylphon Company, 22 June 1987.

It was more of a family relationship between the women and older men as the younger men went to service. There was a lot of love and friendship that has lasted through many years, really until death.¹⁴¹

Fulton wartime employees also generally concurred that women production employees worked as well and as much as the men. Among the twenty-three men surveyed, only five believed that women did not perform their tasks as well as men, and only one woman suggested the same. Several women believed that the women produced "better" than the men.¹⁴²

Marie S. Brake, who worked as an assistant to the Assistant Production Manager during the war, assumed a job which had previously been held by a young man before he joined the Armed Services. Ms. Brake stated that women worked in a "matter of fact fashion--in a capable fashion." Apparently, a feeling of pride in being able to do a job that was "for the cause" and "to win the war" was pervasive among both the male and female employees at Fulton.¹⁴³ She added that the male employees appeared to appreciate and accept the "contribution made by the women replacements."¹⁴⁴ Although Ms. Brake's job did not involve physical labor, she concluded that her wartime experience at Fulton "made it quite evident that women

¹⁴¹Questionnaire C, developed by the author. See Appendix.

¹⁴²Ibid.

¹⁴³Interview with Marie S. Brake, Robertshaw Controls, Knoxville, Tennessee, 17 May 1983.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

had previously been unfairly denied certain jobs that were traditionally labeled as men's work."¹⁴⁵

Rohm and Haas Company, newly established in Knoxville in 1943, determined from the start to hire women whenever possible. Women comprised approximately 42 percent of its total employment in July 1943, for a total of 305 workers out of 721.¹⁴⁶ Mr. Ray Clift, personnel director for Rohm and Haas in 1987, concurred that his company hired large numbers of women during the war. Women worked in the production areas of Rohm and Haas from its initial stages, and Mr. Clift believed that women could have handled most of the jobs in the plant during the war. They were utilized primarily as glass polishers, however. Manning tables from the early months of Rohm and Haas's production indicate that the company hired women only as glass polishers and laboratory "helpers," and did not employ them in supervisory production positions of any nature.¹⁴⁷

Because both male and female employees of Rohm and Haas were unionized under the United Glass and Ceramic Workers Union, they received identical wages for identical work and were given the same seniority privileges.¹⁴⁸ However, the sexual division of labor

¹⁴⁵Ibid.

¹⁴⁶"Labor Market Report, Knoxville," 15 August 1943, p. 18.

¹⁴⁷Interview with Ray Clift, Rohm and Haas Company, Knoxville, Tennessee, 31 May 1983; War Manpower Commission, "Manning Table-Certificate of Acceptance," Rohm and Haas Company, 21 April 1943, War Manpower Commission, Record Group 211, National Archives, Washington, D.C., passim.

¹⁴⁸Interview with Ray Clift.

throughout the plant, at least during the early stages of operation, lessened the importance of the concept of equal pay for equal work.

The textile industry, which had long been established in Knoxville prior to the war, constituted the largest manufacturing industry in the Knox-Blount county areas and employed nearly 12,000 persons in April 1943. Eighty-seven percent of these workers were women. Prior to the major war plant conversion, the textile industry had always been able to draw from a surplus pool of labor. They generally hired inexperienced labor, providing them with in-house training. Textile employers, however, feared that their available labor supply would diminish as women sought higher wages, better working conditions, and employment that was more closely identified with the "war effort." The entrance rate for the textile industry was forty cents per hour, ten cents an hour lower than prevailing wage rates in other area industries.¹⁴⁹ The wages for the textile and apparel industries, which were primarily "women's work," had historically been lower than other manufacturing jobs which hired primarily men. Because the labor turnover rate in the textile industries was exceedingly high, employers relaxed employment specifications, and began to hire boys as young as sixteen years.¹⁵⁰ By August 1943, twelve textile firms in the area reported an employment of 11,900, which indicated a decrease of over five hundred since July 1942.¹⁵¹ The

¹⁴⁹"Labor Market Report, Knoxville," 15 April 1943, p. 23.

¹⁵⁰"Labor Market Report, Knoxville," 15 June 1943, p. 30.

¹⁵¹"Labor Market Report, Knoxville," 15 August 1943, p. 23.

turnover rate for August and September 1943 reached 19 percent, and five textile firms reported that they were experiencing critical shortages of labor.¹⁵²

Women did not experience the transition into nontraditional occupations in the textile industry. Female employees in both textile and apparel industries had been employed almost exclusively in these firms before the war, and continued in the same type of work during and after the war. Of the several retired Knoxville textile and garment workers who were surveyed, nearly 100 percent had worked in the same type of industry before, during, and after the war.¹⁵³ Consequently, they did not experience the occupational alterations similar to those of women who had entered production areas in war plants.

Geneva Sneed of the Amalgamated Textile Workers' Union stated that although women employees constituted the largest numbers of workers in the apparel and textile industries, men primarily held the skilled jobs of cutting, marking, and spreading. She recognized that because the men performed the skilled labor in the operations, they received more pay than the unskilled women. Because the women were unionized, however, they received the union minimum wage, which was higher than the federal minimum.¹⁵⁴ The State of Tennessee

¹⁵²"Labor Market Report, Knoxville," 15 October 1943, p. 25.

¹⁵³Questionnaire A, developed by the author. See Appendix.

¹⁵⁴Interview with Geneva Sneed, Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, Knoxville, Tennessee, 20 May 1983.

did not have a minimum wage rate for women during the war years, but it did restrict their employment to ten and one-half hours per day.¹⁵⁵

ALCOA, Fulton Sylphon, Rohm and Haas, and the textile and garment industries, in addition to CEW, represented the largest employers of female war workers in the Knoxville area. TVA as well as smaller war industries and area civilian concerns also hired women production workers, often in new and unique occupations. Two Knoxville women were featured in the News-Sentinel as tire retreaders for Firestone Rubber.¹⁵⁶ In the spring of 1943, TVA created numerous headlines in the Knoxville News-Sentinel as it offered women an opportunity to apply for positions as guards for TVA property. This wartime position, which paid a relatively satisfactory annual salary of \$1,742.00 for forty-eight hours per week, drew approximately seventy female applicants who ran the gamut from housewives to teachers and nurses to salesladies. The News-Sentinel described the situation in headlines which read: "Seventy Women Seek Chance to Swing Clubs, Pack Guns as Guards with TVA," and captioned a photograph of two women applicants as "Ready to Wield Weapons."¹⁵⁷

Training for the twenty-two women in a class of eighty-five took place at Watts Bar Dam, a TVA property near Rockwood, Tennessee.

¹⁵⁵City of Knoxville, Chamber of Commerce, "Industrial and Commercial Survey of Knoxville, Tennessee," 1944, p. 38.

¹⁵⁶News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 25 July 1943.

¹⁵⁷News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 4 April 1943, sec. A, p. 7.

Among the five Knoxville women who acquired positions as WOOPS (Women's Officers of Public Safety) were Mrs. Monte Shoaf, the wife of the athletic director of Park Junior High School; Barbara Bowers, a former Knoxville theater cashier; and Mrs. Hurtage Spires Rollins, a cashier at a Knoxville Drug store. WOOPS training included instruction in state and federal laws, judo, riflery, fire fighting, and guard dog handling.¹⁵⁸ In addition to the WOOPS, TVA also hired women as "guardettes" to patrol their buildings in the Knoxville area. The guardettes, who also pulled night shift duty, carried .38 calibre pistols when on duty. The News-Sentinel suggested that they had already distinguished themselves on night duty because they didn't screech when they saw a mouse. Mrs. Ruth Standridge, a guardette, claimed that her "husband thinks it's all right" but to "be careful with the guns and not shoot each other." Her young son Jimmy was extremely interested in whether his mom could make a bullseye during target practice.¹⁵⁹ While it is apparent that the TVA WOOPS and the guardettes were exceptional women, these new jobs were symbolic of the conceptual changes regarding occupational opportunities for women which the war was creating.

Probably the WOOPS and the guardettes as much as any other female war worker in Knoxville personified the dichotomy of women's wartime roles. On one hand, they were breaking new ground by assuming

¹⁵⁸News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 16 May 1943, sec. C, p. 10.

¹⁵⁹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 19 May 1943.

guard positions at TVA. At the same time, the News-Sentinel, which mirrored public opinion as well as offering its own, displayed a gender bias toward the women guards. The photographs alone indicated the novelty of the women who wanted to "wield weapons." The situation almost seemed comical to the News-Sentinel which intimated that women would be intimidated by a mouse, much less a two-legged creature which might stalk the government property while the WOOPS or guardettes were on duty. ✓

Women also replaced men as production workers at C. B. Atkin Furniture Company, a phenomenon which had also occurred during World War I when women composed over 50 percent of the personnel. Atkin, which began hiring female production workers in the spring of 1943, claimed that their women replacements were "very satisfactory" and were "exceeding our expectations" as they labor at "jobs heretofore thought too strenuous or too complicated for women to handle." Despite the "swell job" that the women were performing, it appears that they were utilized only as temporary replacements for male employees who had relinquished their jobs for the service. Mr. E. T. Booth, plant superintendent, noted that Atkin was reluctant to hire women at first, but realized that, if operations were to continue, the firm would have to hire women. Mr. Booth stated that "for the duration . . . all replacements will be made with women," whom he admitted were "better than some of the men they were replacing."¹⁶⁰

¹⁶⁰News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 11 April 1943.

In sum, 1943 proved to be the year that Knoxville opened up full throttle in its war production efforts. As was true in many other municipalities across the nation, the Knoxville area's labor supply was no longer adequate to meet the increasing demands of war manufacturers. Not only had the major war concerns in the area (which included ALCOA, Fulton Sylphon, and Rohm and Haas) largely increased their output and their labor requisitions, but CEW had drastically skewed the employment picture. Its attractive wage rates and massive labor demands continued to lure workers away from their present jobs. Conversely, the deplorable working and on-site living conditions at CEW created a high turnover rate among its employees.

Overall, in 1943, worker morale throughout the area appeared to be strong, and patriotic fervor was evidenced as war workers continued to participate in war bond drives and other incentive-producing measures. Perhaps the W. D. Kelly family personified the ideal Knoxville prototype for wartime activities. The husband and father, W. D. Kelly, who was a defense worker, also participated in gas and tire rationing duties at his plant, and he had invested one-third of his salary since Pearl Harbor in war bonds. His wife volunteered her time at the Red Cross canteen and in the sewing unit in addition to her efforts in the salvage of tin, fat, and grease and her attendance to her victory garden and devotion to home canning. One of the Kelly sons, a University of Tennessee engineering student, was also a part-time defense worker, a Red Cross blood donor, and somehow found time to study for his air raid

warden and first aid courses. A younger son participated in scrap drives and volunteered his efforts at making Red Cross splints. Finally, a married daughter, who was a defense worker, invested 10 percent of her income in war bonds. Surely the Kellys deserved their reward as the News-Sentinel's "Most Active Home Front Family" in 1943.¹⁶¹

As Knoxville war manufacturers in 1943 continued to adjust their demands for workers based upon the knowledge that they would be competing with CEW for potential workers, they increasingly turned to the hiring of women for traditional male occupations. The year 1943 thus brought increasing numbers of women into the factories, where they comprised 39 percent of the total employment in manufacturing. Female workers at Fulton Sylphon, ALCOA, and Rohm and Haas accounted for 25 percent of the total number of women in manufacturing. While the novelty of women for men's production jobs created much publicity, 70 percent of Knoxville women engaged in manufacturing remained in the traditionally defined "women's work" of textile and garment industries.¹⁶² Throughout 1943, the war continued to be a catalyst for change in women's occupations while at the same time, there remained a tendency to cling to the traditional values for which the American boys were fighting. By 1943, women had

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¹⁶¹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 17 October 1943, sec. B, p. 5.

¹⁶²Bureau of Employment Security, "Demand-Supply Supplement, Knoxville Labor Market Area," September 1944, Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 10.

established themselves in Knoxville and throughout the nation as a vital component of the blueprint for victory. Notwithstanding their news-making visibility in breaking through sexual occupational barriers, the claims of home and family still remained strong for married women, and a lure for single females. The powerful tension between these two concurring claims would continue to manifest itself throughout the war, but the groundwork had been laid for significant conceptual alterations in the future evolution of female employment.



CHAPTER III

COMFORTABLE IN OVERALLS: 1944-1945

"'Weaker Sex' Make up 49 Per Cent of Workers in Knoxville War Plants," claimed the Knoxville News-Sentinel headline in June 1944. This headline which cited a survey that the War Manpower Commission had disclosed, epitomized the dynamic tension which the war had wrought in the roles of working women. The article claimed that women had been "so-erroneously termed 'weaker sex'" as they comprised nearly 50 percent of the area's war workers, and probably more than that in less-essential industries.¹ Nonetheless, state WMC Director Rhoten P. Cliff registered surprise that women could "handle some jobs as well as men, perform some others better than the 'master sex'--and that there are still other jobs which women can execute that men can't do at all."² Despite Mr. Cliff's praise, however, the article sex-segregated women's superior skills which required a "sensitive" touch and "nimble-finger[s]" which typified traditional female occupations.³

Notwithstanding Mr. Cliff's sex-stereotyped praise for Tennessee women war workers, the significant fact remained that women comprised 49 percent of the war workers in the Knoxville area in mid-1944 compared to 28 percent in the same industries in "normal times."⁴ At least temporarily, women in the Knoxville area had established

¹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 25 June 1944, sec. A, p. 12.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

consequential inroads into the production lines of local manufacturers. They had entered into male-dominated occupations and proven that they were capable of working a man's job. ✓✓✓

The year 1944 consequently witnessed a continuation of trends established in 1943 regarding the utilization of women in the Knoxville and war plants nationwide. Women had become an important segment of the overall production plan for victory as the labor-draining ✓ Armed Forces and war manufacturers continued their requisitions for workers. At this stage of the war, governmental and private agencies were beginning to analyze the role that women were playing in the production of war materials.

Perhaps the most urgent problem in the Knoxville area in 1944 was the continued critical labor shortage which had been compounded by the priority labor demands of the Clinton Engineer Works. The Knoxville area had been reclassified as a Group I Area of Critical Shortage in late 1943. In February 1944, the Employment Stabilization Program became effective in the area, as did the forty-eight ✓ hour work week. The Regional Plan, which had preceded the ESP, had never really been in full effect.⁵ Under the ESP, employers could only hire workers who possessed official referral cards from the USES offices. The forty-eight hour work week affected all employers with eight or more workers. Employers were given a thirty

⁵Bureau of Employment Security, "Monthly Field Operating Report for Knoxville Administrative Area," February 1944, Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 5.

day compliance period, during which they could file for exemptions if they determined that the forty-eight hour week was not necessary for their concern.⁶

The WMC anticipated in May 1944 that employment in area war plants would increase from 37,000 in March 1944 to over 42,000 (exclusive of CEW) by September if adequate labor supplies could be found.⁷ CEW, ALCOA, Fulton Sylphon, and the textile industries generated the primary labor demands in January 1944, and consequently were the most seriously affected by the area labor shortages. The BES anticipated that the Knoxville area would continue to experience an acute labor shortage of between 3,500 to 6,000 males and 2,200 to 3,000 females. By March 1944, area war plants reported that they had been unsuccessful in filling labor demands as estimated in January, even though they had reduced their demands in keeping with a more realistic view of the labor shortage situation.⁸ BES reports for May indicated that the majority of the labor demand remained in the unskilled, untrained category of workers. Revised estimates of labor shortages showed a marked decrease in the

⁶Bureau of Employment Security, "Monthly Field Operating Report, Knoxville Administrative Area," January 1944, Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 6.

⁷Federal Security Agency, Office of Community War Services, "Knoxville-Clinton, Tennessee, Progress Report No. 1," 20 May 1944, Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 1.

⁸Bureau of Employment Security, "Demand-Supply Supplement, Knoxville Labor Market Area," March 1944, Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 8.

anticipated dearth of female workers as July projections of female labor shortages were around 1,000, and September and November shortages were less than 1,000. At the same time, estimated shortages of male labor, which was necessary for heavy production work, continued to increase from 6,300 in July 1944 to over 7,000 in September and November 1944.⁹

Aside from CEW's labor demands, ALCOA needed the largest number of workers at nearly 2,400 which included only twenty-four females. The textile industry indicated a demand for approximately 1,600 workers, which surprisingly included only 8 percent females. Fulton Sylphon required 400 workers, half of whom could be female.¹⁰

The BES estimated that the shortage of women workers would decrease during the summer of 1944. Projected shortages of male workers were less than 5,000 in September, and less than 4,500 in November and January. During the same forecast period, the anticipated shortage of female workers was less than 400 for September, approximately 130 for November, and a surplus of 300 for January 1945.¹¹

The total employment of women in fifty-two area plants reflected a decrease in their demand. Between September 1943 and September 1944, the employment of women had decreased from 14,000 to 13,000 in these firms. The textile industry lost over 1,000 female employees

⁹"Knoxville-Clinton Progress Report," 20 May, 1944, p. 6.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 8.

¹¹Bureau of Employment Security, "Demand-supply Supplement, Knoxville Labor Market Area," July 1944, Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 5.

during this period, although Fulton Sylphon showed a slight increase of around seventy-five women.¹² The employment of women at ALCOA had increased from 1,431 in September 1943 to 1,553 in July 1944. By September 1944, however, it had decreased to less than 1,300, which reflected an overall temporary cutback at the facility. At this time, women comprised 41 percent of the labor force at Fulton Sylphon and 14 percent at ALCOA. This constituted a negligible percentage fluctuation, whereas a year earlier women had composed 43 percent at Fulton Sylphon and 12 percent of the total employment at ALCOA.¹³

Although the employment of women in the key war industries decreased by only 5.6 percent as compared to a decrease of 10.4 percent in total employment from September 1943 through September 1944, downward trends during July and August indicated that the overall employment of women had already peaked, with the exception of Fulton Sylphon and ALCOA as noted above. During July and August, the total employment of women decreased by 3.2 percent as compared to a total employment decrease of 2.4 percent.¹⁴

The continuing personnel requirements of CEW generated the primary recruitment thrust for women throughout 1944. In January 1944, the WMC-USES and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers formulated a cooperative

¹²Bureau of Employment Security, "Demand-supply Supplement, Knoxville Labor Market Area," September 1944, Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 10.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 9.

recruitment program of direct hiring for common laborers and construction workers for the project. Recruitment offices and mobile units were established in Chattanooga, Nashville, Memphis, Johnson City, and Bristol, Virginia, as well as in selected locations in Georgia, Alabama, and South Carolina. CEW and other essential and less essential establishments continued to utilize newspaper recruitment during 1944. With the exception of CEW, however, the advertisements generally reflected trends of sex-segregated employment.¹⁵

Typical newspaper classified advertisements in 1944 indicated that women were "wanted" as beauticians, clerical and office workers, sales ladies, housekeepers, and cooks.¹⁶ Although ALCOA advertised exclusively for male production workers because of the physical strength requirements, CEW production concerns of Tennessee Eastman and Carbide and Carbon Chemicals Corporation advertised extensively for women production workers. Tennessee Eastman consistently displayed photographs of women production workers, as their advertisements stressed that openings were available to inexperienced women in chemical, electrical, and mechanical operations as well as in general office work.¹⁷ One Tennessee Eastman advertisement captioned "The Housewife and the War," attempted to appeal not only to housewives, but to the "women seasoned in industrial operations . . . sisters,

¹⁵"Monthly Field Operating Report, Knoxville," February 1944, p. 2.

¹⁶News-Sentinel (Knoxville), Classified Advertisements, 1944, passim.

¹⁷News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 20 September 1944; 15 October 1944, sec. B, p. 5.

sweethearts, and mothers of men in service--educators, professional women, students, and others." The temporary nature of Tennessee Eastman's demand for female laborers was quite evident in the advertisement, however, which read: "until this war is over, there will be a continuous demand for intelligent women desiring to serve their country."¹⁸

Throughout the nation during 1944, the demand for women war workers remained strong in major war production centers. In March 1944, the Office of War Information undertook a comprehensive recruitment program entitled "WOMEN IN THE WAR" which was to be utilized by radio, magazines, movies, graphics, and news releases. Despite the proven contributions that women had made in the war production arenas, this program intended to combat what the government believed to be the greatest obstacle to the recruitment of women into the war industries: apathy.¹⁹

In November 1943, the OWI had surveyed a national cross-section of women regarding their willingness to participate in war jobs. Its conclusions were that, while the majority of American women were aware that a labor shortage existed and believed that additional female laborers were required, they were unwilling to assume employment in war industries on a full-time basis. The survey identified

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Office of War Information, "Women in the War," War Manpower Commission, Record Group 211, National Archives, Washington, D.C., pp. 1, 2.

women as prosperous, average, or poor in regard to financial situations. Even though unemployed women who were classified as "poor" were more willing to take war jobs than "prosperous" or "average" women, the variation in responses among the three categories was not marked. Twenty-one percent of "poor" women who were surveyed were not willing to take a war job as compared to 16 percent and 14 percent of "average" and "prosperous" women respectively.²⁰

George Gallup, in March of 1943 had surveyed women twenty-one years of age or older who lived within a thirty-five mile radius of a war plant on their willingness to accept a war job. Based on the answers of his respondents, Gallup calculated that 8,800,000 women would take a war job if they were asked to do so personally. In addition, 2,300,000 married women with children under the age of ten would assume a war job if their children could be cared for at no additional expense to themselves.²¹

Notwithstanding Gallup's assessment of the numbers of women in war production/labor shortage areas who might be willing to take on war jobs, the OWI in the "WOMEN IN THE WAR" PROGRAM prepared to combat what it feared would be significant resistance from employers and the public at large. Citing that "reserves in every

²⁰The OWI does not specify the differentiations between "poor, average, or prosperous" in this survey. Office of War Information, "Willingness of Women to take War Jobs," Special Memorandum No. 93, 22 November 1943, Office of War Information, Record Group 208, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 2.

²¹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 28 March 1943, sec. C, p. 3.

war decide the final issue," the OWI concluded that womanpower by 1944 was America's "reserve of industrial labor and military strength." Consequently, the OWI in their appeal to potential women workers, sought to dramatize the role of the 17,000,000 women who were currently engaged in war work as well as to apprise nonworking women of the urgent need for them to work while the men were still fighting.²² At the same time, the OWI attempted to meet anticipated resistance to recruitment pleas such as the objections that women were being laid off in various parts of the country from war plants, that factory work was monotonous, tiring, boring, and unfamiliar, and that family responsibilities interfered with paid employment, or the belief that voluntarism in the war effort was sufficient contribution to the war effort.²³ Other problems that were foreseen included the disinclination of husbands to permit their wives to work and a belief that a wife's employment might alter the draft rank of her husband.²⁴

These obstacles to women's employment were not as important in reality as the OWI had anticipated. As noted in Chapter II, women registered a significantly larger short-term absentee rate than men, yet the difference in their long-term absentee rates was

²²Office of War Information, "Women in the War," p. 2.

²³Ibid., p. 3.

²⁴War Manpower Commission, "USES Operations Bull., B-63," 13 January 1943, p. 10.

negligible.²⁵ The OWI's survey revealed that over 40 percent of the unemployed female respondents claimed that they were needed at home. Yet only 10 percent of respondents stated that they did not feel that they were needed, and that they participated in volunteer work. Only 4 percent cited that their husbands did not approve of their working.²⁶ ✓

As a result of the OWI's belief that apathy and resistance were rife among potential female labor reserves, it continued throughout the war to bombard women in theaters, with newspapers, in department stores, on the backs of busses, at church and club meetings, and even at the doorstep with the patriotic appeal to help the war effort. Margaret Hickey concluded enthusiastically that women had responded to the recruitment campaign as

women in this war have proved by their works that they can rise to any occasion, that in so far as a job is concerned they can take the place of almost any man outside the actual combat forces.²⁷ ✓

By March 1944, nearly 16.5 million women were employed in the United States, which represented approximately 33 percent of all workers. This increase of around 4.5 million in the work force since the beginning of the war in December 1941, was not totally indicative of the aggregate number of women in the work force during

²⁵ Women's Bureau, "Absenteeism," April 1944, p. 1.

²⁶ Office of War Information, "Willingness of Women to Take War Jobs," p. 4.

²⁷ Margaret Hickey, "Address to Dallas Business and Professional Women's Club," 2 February 1944, p. 3.

this time. Given the numbers of women who had left the work force during this period, and the new entrants into the work force, the total number of women newly employed from December 1941 through March 1944 was greater than 6.5 million.²⁸ These women were drawn primarily from two sources: (1) the home, which provided approximately 3,700,000 workers; and (2) school, which contributed around 2,300,000 workers.²⁹ The WMC estimated that around 2.5 million housewives who would not have entered the work force in nonwar conditions, assumed jobs because they were forced to do so economically in order to augment their family incomes due to the absence of their husbands (and possible decrease in their absent husbands' wages).³⁰

During the war, the national marriage rate accelerated, and in 1944, the female population in the United States had increased by nearly 2.5 million married women over the 1940 Census figures. The number of married women spiraled concomitantly with the escalation in the demand for women workers during the war. This resulted in increased employment of married women workers. An additional three million married women as opposed to an additional one million single women, took jobs during the war, and "for the first time in history the number of married women exceeded that of single women in the labor force." Despite the movement of married women into the work

²⁸Pidgeon, "Changes in Women's Employment During the War," 1944, pp. 2, 3.

²⁹Ibid., p. 3.

³⁰Office of War Information, "Advance Release," 14 April 1944, Office of War Information, Record Group 208, National Archives,

force, in 1944 only 23 percent of the nation's married women were in the labor force as opposed to 55 percent of single women.³¹ Of the women who were in the labor force both in March 1944 and before Pearl Harbor, 42 percent were single, 30 percent were married, and 16 percent were widowed and divorced. Of the female workers who entered the labor force after Pearl Harbor, 44 percent were single, 46 percent were married (of this figure, 10 percent had husbands in the armed services), and the remaining were either widowed or divorced.³²

In Knoxville, non-census labor records for the war years did not differentiate between married and nonmarried women workers. Therefore, it is difficult to assess the number of housewives who entered the labor force during the war, but who might have remained unemployed during peacetime conditions. Although specific figures are unavailable regarding the marital status of Knoxville female production workers, newspaper articles and former employers and employees indicate that a significant number of Knoxville women war workers were married. The Knoxville News-Sentinel periodically featured women who were working on "both fronts," their home and in the factory. A survey of women employed at Fulton Sylphon during 1944 revealed that over 56 percent of their female production workers

Washington, D.C., p. 8.

³¹Mary Elizabeth Pidgeon, "Women Workers and Recent Economic Change," Monthly Labor Review, December 1947, p. 668.

³²Pidgeon, "Changes in Women's Employment During the War," June 1944, p. 19.

were married. It is probable that this trend was reflected in other area war plants as well.³³

In the war-induced labor market, two significant aspects of the demand for women workers emerged. The primary demand for these additional female laborers was in the munitions industry. This demand was often concentrated in labor shortage areas where women were already heavily employed and the labor supply of females was sparse.³⁴ Throughout the war, while many communities felt virtually no impact of the war on women's employment, in the labor shortage areas the demands for female war workers soared. In 1944, one West Coast war center reported that no hiring of women had taken place for several weeks and none was anticipated in the near future. During the same time period, San Francisco registered a demand for 85,000 women workers in nonwar jobs. The five major West Coast war production areas in the first half of 1944 had a net demand of 68,000 women workers. Los Angeles alone estimated that it would require 164,000 and 184,000 additional women workers in the months of January and July respectively. San Francisco needed 106,000 and 130,000 increases in female employment for the same months. At the same time, the Seattle area cited a demand of 50,000 and

³³This survey was based on a sampling of the seniority rosters of Fulton Sylphon for 1944. The Knoxville City Directory provided marital information. Of approximately 1,500 women workers, every fifteenth worker was selected to research the marital status. The number of children for these workers was not available in the 1944 city directory.

³⁴War Manpower Commission, "Women in the Wartime Labor Market," 30 August 1943, War Manpower Commission, Record Group 211, National

65,000 for new women workers while Portland and San Diego's demands for new labor force entrants was around 50,000.³⁵

Of the approximately 16.5 million women in the labor force in March 1944, nearly one-half were in new occupations. However, only approximately 1.5 million of the women who were employed before Pearl Harbor actually changed occupations; the remaining 6.5 million women in new occupations were new entrants into the labor force.³⁶ Of the total women who had retained the same occupation they had prior to the U.S. entrance into the war, over 70 percent were professional, semiprofessional, and proprietary workers. Sixty percent of the domestic and farm workers retained their pre-Pearl Harbor jobs. The greatest shifts in occupations occurred in the manufacturing, sales and service (other than domestic) sectors, as 60 percent of these employees found new jobs during the war, while 50 percent of female clerical workers gained new employment.³⁷ Those who changed occupations tended to gravitate toward the manufacturing, sales, and service industries because of higher wages or other inducements such as better working conditions, better hours, or increased



Archives, Washington, D.C., pp. 1, 2. The WMC reported that the 17.7 million record in July 1943 was due in large part to seasonal agricultural workers and students who planned to return to school in the fall. Consequently, these numbers were not necessarily reliable when planning a manpower program.

³⁵Office of War Information, "Advance Release," 14 April 1944, p. 2.

³⁶Pidgeon, "Changes in Women's Employment During the War," pp. 7, 13.

³⁷Ibid., p. 5.

opportunity for advancement. In sum, a general picture of female employment trends during the war reflected the following situation: domestic workers entered the manufacturing and sales groups, manufacturing and sales laborers sought clerical jobs, while clerical workers entered manufacturing, managerial, or professional and semiprofessional work.³⁸ Thus occupational shifts in all directions occurred, particularly in the manufacturing sector.

As the most significant shifts in women's employment during the war occurred in the manufacturing, sales, and clerical positions, the same trends were evident among women who entered the labor force after Pearl Harbor. Nearly 2,900,000 joined the clerical ranks. Service and sales positions were next among the occupations for new female labor force entrants, although their numbers were much smaller at 730,000 and 950,000 respectively.³⁹ Over 50 percent of these new workers had been homemakers, and approximately one-third of the new entrants had been students. Forty percent of both groups went into war industries or essential civilian manufacturing.⁴⁰

A representative sample of female war workers at Fulton Sylphon showed that women employees generally followed the same pattern of occupational shifts that women on a national level experienced. Approximately 30 percent of the female war workers had been students before the war. Eighteen percent had been employed as clerical workers and an additional 22 percent had been service workers.

³⁸Ibid., p. 8.

³⁹Ibid., p. 7.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 7, 13.

Less than 14 percent of the women production workers at Fulton Sylphon held operative positions in area textile and apparel firms.⁴¹ Other production workers left positions as elementary teachers, retail sales clerks, service positions, and other operative positions.⁴²

As women moved into occupations that had been formerly monopolized by men, the question of equal pay for equal work became increasingly important. During the early stages of the war, a double wage standard was widespread, although industry, government, and labor sought to extend the equal-pay principle.⁴³ As early as 1918, the Women's Bureau had recommended the policy that wage rates, including the entrance rates, be the same for men and women. In 1942, the Women's Bureau reiterated its policy; in October of the same year, the Women's Advisory Committee of the WMC adopted a similar policy specifying wage rate determination based on work performed, regardless of sex.⁴⁴ The following month, the War Labor Board adopted General Order No. 16 which allowed salary or wage adjustments (without prior WLB approval) to equalize wage rates of men and women.⁴⁵ Between that

⁴¹This survey was based on a sample of the 1944 Fulton Sylphon seniority rosters. The Knoxville City Directory for the years 1940, 1944, 1950 was researched to determine prior and subsequent work experience.

⁴²Questionnaire C. See Appendix.

⁴³Robinson, "Women Workers in Two Wars," p. 670.

⁴⁴U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, "Equal Pay for Women in War Industries," Bulletin No. 196 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1942), p. 1; Women's Advisory Committee, War Manpower Commission, "Equal Pay for Equal Work," no date, War Manpower Commission, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 1.

⁴⁵National War Labor Board, Office of War Information, "Advance

time and January 1944, the WLB reported that 2,250 firms had equalized their rates, which affected approximately 60,000 women.⁴⁶ This represented less than 1 percent of women employed throughout the United States. Margaret Hickey declared that despite the fact that the WLB had established the principle of equal pay, state legislation was generally required to achieve this status. In 1944, only five states possessed equal pay statutes: Montana, Michigan, Washington, Illinois, and New York.⁴⁷

By late 1944, the Women's Bureau reported that women earned approximately 60 percent of men's earnings on a weekly wage basis in manufacturing. This discrepancy was due in part to the fact that men generally worked longer work weeks than women. Even so, based on hourly earnings, women's earnings varied from 65 to 81 percent of men's. Overall, men occupied more better-paying jobs than women, but even when men and women held the same occupation in the same industry, men still were more highly paid. Further, the Women's Bureau found the beginning rates for men and women in the majority of industries surveyed were usually the same, although they discovered many establishments which favored men over women. In addition, women generally experienced more obstacles to work

Release," 4 June 1943, Women's Bureau, Record Group 86, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 2.

⁴⁶National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Incorporated, "Clubwomen Discuss Equal Pay for Men and Women," War Manpower Commission, Record Group 211, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 2.

⁴⁷Ibid.

advancement than men, which was reflected in the difficulty that women encountered in having their wages raised.⁴⁸

In the Knoxville area, women plant workers at ALCOA could only advance to a certain level during the war. Further, they were blocked from advancing to many jobs which they would have been physically capable of handling because the line of progression to these jobs included positions which were too physically demanding for women.⁴⁹

At Rohm and Haas, most of the women worked as unskilled glass polishers during the war, and were not found in supervisory positions during that period, although Raymond Clift, personnel director in 1987, believed that women were capable of performing almost any task in the plant both during the war and at the present.⁵⁰ Mr. John Ruggles, wartime personnel director of Fulton Sylphon, added that women did not hold supervisory positions in the production areas during the war at Fulton Sylphon.⁵¹ The BES, however, reported in 1944 that women and men made equal beginners' wages in the Knoxville area: in the aluminum industry, both sexes began at 65 cents per hour; in the textile mills, entrance rates were 40 cents an hour for men

⁴⁸U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, "Women's Wages in Wartime," November 1944, War Manpower Commission, Record Group 211, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 2.

⁴⁹Interview with ALCOA worker B, News-Sentinel (Knoxville) 19 August 1943.

⁵⁰Interview with Ray Clift; Manning Tables of Rohm and Haas, 1944.

⁵¹Interview with John Ruggles.

and women; and in ordnance, the beginning rate for both was 50 cents an hour.⁵²

Nationwide, women realized a 90 percent increase in weekly earnings between 1939 and 1944; 21 percent of this increase was due to the lengthening of the work week from an average of thirty-four hours to over forty-one hours. In 1944, women averaged nearly \$31.00 per week as compared to \$16.00 per week in 1939. Men, who realized a 94 percent increase in weekly earnings during the war, on the average earned over \$54.00 per week in 1944 compared to \$28.00 per week in 1939. On the hourly scale, women received a 57 percent increase in 1944 over their 1939 wages, while men had a 52 percent increase. Yet the hourly earnings for women remained substantially lower than for men. Men earned on the average \$1.159 per hour and women earned \$.745 an hour.⁵³

Despite the leveling out in the number of women production workers in the Knoxville area during 1944, interest in war industry training in the area increased after a decline during the summer of 1943. In February, a female Special Agent of the Federal Security Agency of the U.S. Office of Education, conducted a training conference on "Women in Industry" in Knoxville for female supervisors and industrial counselors. The seminar, which was "fairly well attended"

⁵²War Manpower Commission, "Knoxville Area," 25 September 1944, Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 1.

⁵³Women's Bureau, "Women's Wages in Wartime," p. 3.

presented techniques for fighting absenteeism and labor turnover.⁵⁴

The Area Training Council, which was established in 1944, presented programs to area employers concerning specific problems in particular industries, such as coal and textiles. The Council presented answers to individual industrial problems while seeking to renew interest among the various war industries in the concept of war training programs.⁵⁵

Preemployment and supplementary training increased considerably in 1944. The BES estimated that approximately 3,000 persons were enrolled in Tennessee War Institute (TWI) classes as of September.  Fulton Sylphon, ALCOA, Rohm and Haas, Cherokee Spinning Mills, and three production firms for CEW utilized the TWI programs, both at Stair Technical School's campus and with Stair's on-site training procedures.⁵⁶ In December, the State Department of Vocational Education offered eight VEWT classes in Knoxville: preemployment training in arc welding and supplementary training in machine shop and arc welding at Stair, arc welding and light gas welding for in-plant training at Dempster Brothers and Fulton Sylphon.⁵⁷ In addition, approximately 400 persons were enrolled in the college level war training programs at U.T.

⁵⁴"Monthly Field Operating Report, Knoxville," February 1944, p. 3.

⁵⁵"Monthly Field Operating Report, Knoxville," August 1944, pp. 2, 3.

⁵⁶"Monthly Field Operating Report, Knoxville," September 1944, p. 4.

⁵⁷Bureau of Employment Security, "Monthly Field Operating Report, Knoxville, Tennessee," December 1944, Bureau of Employment Security,

in September. In December, the Engineering, Science, and Management War Training Program held college level courses in Alcoa, Knoxville, and Oak Ridge.⁵⁸ Actual figures indicating the number of women enrolled in the Knoxville area war industry training programs are not available. It is likely, however, that at least a small percentage of women war workers participated in this training in light of the industries which utilized the training programs, particularly CEW production firms and Fulton Sylphon.

In sum, the year 1944 witnessed a continuation of women's employment in war industries that had been established firmly in 1943. Interestingly, women war workers in 1944 received fewer feature articles in the local newspapers than they had in 1943 when the novelty of women participating in nontraditional modes of employment was still unique. As indicated, the first peak of wartime manufacturing employment of women in the Knoxville area (exclusive of CEW) occurred in September 1943, with the exception of ALCOA and Fulton Sylphon, which occurred in May 1945 and December 1944 respectively. Although the overall employment figures of women would periodically rise after this date, the downward trend had been established, and would continue to decline until a major up-turn occurred after the war.

On January 1, 1945, the Knoxville News-Sentinel reported that Knoxville had become a "bustling, throbbing boom town in 1944" as

Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., pp. 4, 5.

⁵⁸"Monthly Field Report, Knoxville," December 1944, pp. 4, 5.

thousands of newcomers as workers or officials swarmed the streets and pressed the housing facilities to their limits.⁵⁹ Despite the influx of in-migrants, labor shortages for war manufacturers continued to be a problem, particularly in the aluminum and textile industries. By May, even though the majority of Knoxville employers continued to be short of manpower, substantial cutbacks occurred in a few industrial plants. Rohm and Haas cut back its employment by 25 percent during this period.⁶⁰ Knoxville, however, continued to be the only labor market area in the state to be classified as a No. 1 critical area, and employers flooded the want ads with pleas for more workers.⁶¹ With the exception of CEW production firms, the primary employment recruitment through the newspaper classifieds was for men in the heavy industry of ALCOA aluminum manufacturing.

ALCOA was given a Production Urgency II Category Priority 2 rating since it needed to increase its production by 70 percent.⁶² Military and WPB officials claimed that a shortage of 50,000,000 pounds of aluminum existed below the necessary amount to produce B-29 bombers and other war planes.⁶³ Consequently, ALCOA tried

⁵⁹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 1 January 1945.

⁶⁰News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 11 May 1943.

⁶¹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 7 May 1945; Classified Advertisements, 1945, *passim*.

⁶²Bureau of Employment Security, "Field Operating Report for Knoxville, Tennessee," Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 1.

⁶³News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 6 January 1945.

to recruit 800 additional male workers. Part of the labor problem at ALCOA, in addition to a bitter strike in May 1945, was the fact that the pig aluminum requisition had been cut back in mid-1945, thereby giving the impression that the critical need for aluminum had been met. War requisitions for fabricated and sheet aluminum increased at the same time, however, to the point that aircraft production was threatened due to these shortages.⁶⁴ To alleviate the manpower shortage at ALCOA, which because of the heavy nature of its production required male laborers, employers imported furloughed soldiers to aid in the production.⁶⁵

The Knoxville textile industries also experienced a critical dearth of workers in 1945. Because of the more lucrative pay scales at CEW and other area war plants, the textile industry was habitually plagued with absenteeism and turnovers. In March 1945, requisitions for Knoxville textile workers amounted to over 700.⁶⁶ The major garment industries of Knoxville also experienced serious shortages of workers. Skilled help was especially needed at Goodall Company, Holston Manufacturing Company, and Hall-Tate Clothing Company.⁶⁷

The cancellation of war contracts throughout the United States following V-E day made no significant alteration in the supply/demand

⁶⁴News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 5 January 1945; 11 May 1945.

⁶⁵Bureau of Employment Security, "Monthly Field Operating Report, Knoxville Administration, Tennessee," May 1945, Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 2.

⁶⁶News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 18 March 1945, sec. A, pp. 1, 8.

⁶⁷News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 25 March 1945.

ratio in the Knoxville area, which was still classified as a critical labor shortage area in June 1945.⁶⁸ Approximately 5,000 workers were still needed by area concerns in addition to the requirements of CEW.⁶⁹ By July 1945, the employment ceiling program was still strictly enforced in the Knoxville area, although with written permission from the WMC, the forty-eight hour work week was relaxed in less-essential industries. Fulton Sylphon had been gradually reducing employment by 30 percent over several months, although the demand for textile workers, aluminum workers, and miners continued.⁷⁰

Throughout 1945, the downward trend in the employment of women ✓ in the Knoxville area became more pronounced, although in specific ✓ industries temporary increases of women's employment occurred. The total number of women engaged in manufacturing in January 1945 was approximately 12,400 as compared to 13,800 the previous January. The textile industry alone lost over 1,000 women during this period, but this was due to the extensive labor turnover which the textile industry experienced throughout the war rather than a decrease in the demand for women workers.⁷¹ The primary sources of demand for

⁶⁸Bureau of Employment Security, "Field Operating Report, Knoxville Administrative Area," June 1945, Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 1.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Bureau of Employment Security, "Labor Market Developments Report," July 1945, Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 1.

⁷¹Bureau of Employment Security, "Demand-Supply Supplement,

women workers in January 1945 were the traditional women's employers such as textiles, trades, and service industries. The BES noted, however, that generally women were not interested in seeking employment in these industries because of lower wages and less opportunities for advancement. On the other hand, Fulton Sylphon's employment of women increased from 1,360 to nearly 1,800 during the year.⁷²

In January 1945, ALCOA's employment requirements had continued to increase. ALCOA in late February needed 1,550 unskilled white males; 172 black males, 65 unskilled white females, and 10 unskilled black females. The WMC predicted that the female ranks could be filled locally, although nearly 900 men would need to be imported to fill total labor requirements for ALCOA. The heavy work created job openings primarily for men, however, and the War Department furloughed 1,000 soldiers for ninety days as production workers.⁷³ ALCOA continued to employ women during this time, and there were approximately 1,460 women workers out of a total of 10,600 in March 1945.⁷⁴ Women's employment at ALCOA peaked in May 1945 at 1,585. During the peak of women's employment, however, females comprised

Knoxville Labor Market Area," January 1945, Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 9.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³War Manpower Commission, "Certification of In-Migration, Alcoa, Area, Tennessee," 17 February 1945, War Manpower Commission, Record Group 211, National Archives, Atlanta Regional Branch, p. 1.

⁷⁴Bureau of Employment Security, "Demand-Supply Supplement, Knoxville Labor Market Area," March 1945, Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 11.

less than 16 percent of the total facility employment.⁷⁵ The BES expected the employment to stabilize at 1,400 females out of 10,200 total workers through September 1945.⁷⁶

In February 1945, the BES determined that womanpower had been fully utilized in the Knoxville area because women comprised 40 percent of the total employment, and the primary labor demand increases were for men.⁷⁷ In March, women totaled 55 percent of the labor supply in the area, although the BES anticipated that it would not be fully utilized.⁷⁸

Area cutback in war plants precipitated a decrease of 1.5 percent in employment between May and July of 1945. At the same time, women's employment decreased by 5.5 percent. The BES interpreted these figures to mean that women were leaving the labor market on a voluntary basis in the Knoxville area, because the area had experienced only minor cutbacks which could not have explained the decrease in women's employment. In July, women comprised 38 percent of the reported labor force, although future demands indicated a continuing decreased demand for women workers. Future demands for area women

⁷⁵"Labor Market Development Report," Knoxville, July 1945, p. 8.

⁷⁶"Demand-Supply Supplement, Knoxville," March 1945, p. 11.

⁷⁷Bureau of Employment Security, "Field Operating Report, Knoxville Tennessee," February 1945, Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 2.

⁷⁸"Demand-Supply Supplement, Knoxville," March 1945, p. 6.

workers estimated that women would compose 29 percent of the labor force.⁷⁹

V-J Day created cutbacks in two major area war plants and in one area government establishment which caused an immediate decrease in employment of approximately 10 percent.⁸⁰ Women constituted approximately 46 percent of the unemployed in the Knoxville area in September 1945.⁸¹ ALCOA reported a decrease in employment from 9,300 to 7,750 in July 1945, of which the company claimed 35 percent of the reduction was voluntary. Fulton Sylphon employed 1,800 as of September 1945, which was a decrease from the peak employment of nearly 4,400 a year earlier. Rohm and Haas, which reached a peak employment of 1,700 in December 1943, reported an employment cutback to less than 800 in mid-September 1945. CEW had employed approximately 75,000 construction, production, and service workers as of July 1945, and had cut back employment to 70,000 by September 1945, which was estimated to be 50 percent over future operating levels. The textile industry reported anticipated increased employment demands at the end of the war, although the BES did not note significant immediate labor increases within the industry.⁸²

Women's manufacturing employment had reached its first peak of over

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Bureau of Employment Security, "Labor Market Developments Report, Knoxville Labor Market Area," September 1945, p. 1.

⁸¹"Labor Market Developments Report," September 1945, p. 3.

⁸²Ibid., pp. 4, 5.

14,000 in the Knoxville area in 1943. Despite subsequent declines in women's employment, labor force figures of September 1945 indicated that the number of women in manufacturing temporarily equaled the earlier peak of 14,150. In April 1940, Knoxville had a total non-agricultural labor force of 105,000, of which approximately 30,000 were women. In the manufacturing sector, 20,940 men and 9,224 women were employed in 1940. July 1945 figures indicated that total manufacturing employment had increased to 37,000, of whom 14,000 were women for a 66 percent increase. As of September 1945, total manufacturing employment had decreased by 1,000, although women's employment had actually increased since July of the same year by approximately 150. Although women's employment was gradually decreasing at the major area war plants such as ALCOA and Fulton Sylphon, the textile industries gained nearly 700 additional female workers in those two months.⁸³

During the war, women made their most significant temporary gains in the nonferrous and iron and steel industries in the Knoxville area during the war years. In April 1940, only eighty-three women had been employed in the nonferrous industry out of a total of 5,200 for less than 2 percent of the total. By July 1945, female employment had increased to over 1,500 out of a total of 10,000. Women employees were still in the minority at ALCOA, but their percentage had increased to 15 percent of the total. By September 1945, it had begun to decrease as the figures indicated that 1,400 women out of a total

⁸³Ibid., p. 6.

of 9,400 were employed, although women still comprised approximately 15 percent of the total employment there. Before the U.S. entrance in the war, the iron and steel industry in the Knoxville area had employed only fifty-six women of a total of 1,400 workers in April 1940 for a total of 4 percent. By July 1945, over 1,650 women out of a total of 4,000 iron and steel workers were employed. At this time, women comprised over 41 percent of the employees in these industries, which consisted primarily of Fulton Sylphon. By September 1945, employment in this industry had begun to drop off, although 1,200 of the nearly 3,000 iron and steel workers at that time were women making up 40 percent of the workers at the end of the war.⁸⁴

In the metals, chemicals, and rubber industries, women numbered only 200 of a total of 7,450 in April 1940 for less than 3 percent of the total. In July 1945, nearly 4,000 women were working in these industries which employed a total of 16,500 workers. At that time, they comprised over 24 percent of the total workers. By September 1945, around 3,350 women of 14,700 workers worked in metals, chemicals, and rubber, and still composed 23 percent of the total employment. Women's employment in the textile industry remained fairly static at 6,500 throughout the war, although total employment decreased from 12,000 in April 1940 to 10,000 in July 1945, when women made up 65 percent of the total. By September 1945, however, the employment of women had increased to over 7,200 of a total of 10,700, or 67 percent, which indicated that women were reentering

⁸⁴Ibid.

the traditional occupation of textile workers as opportunities in non-sex-segregated employment in war production abated.⁸⁵

The impact that women had on the war effort in Knoxville and throughout the nation cannot be denied. Their contributions to both war and essential civilian industries were extraordinary. They invaded what were formerly considered all-male domains when they entered the shipbuilding, lumbering, aircraft, and steel industries. Josephine von Miklos, in her book, I Took a War Job, claimed:

So here we are and we are working among the men. We do the same work the men do. We are distributed over the yard, in little clusters of women among men; a few of us in the machine shop, a few in the electric shop, a dozen welders, a dozen shipfitters and so on. We get paid as the men do. We try to look like the men.⁸⁶

But the question remains whether Miklos' experience and experiences of thousands of other female war workers like her made a lasting impact on the employment of women in nontraditional occupations.

Lynda De La Vina suggests that even though women entered new industries during the war, they did not necessarily assume new occupations, as specific industries included several occupations. She further argues that by 1950, the operative category of production workers continued its prewar bias toward males, and that the 1940s "produced a marked stability in occupational structure, not a dramatic

⁸⁵"Labor Market Development Report," September 1945, p. 5.

⁸⁶Josephine von Miklos, I Took a War Job (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1943), p. 185.

change in female occupational distribution."⁸⁷ Karen Anderson concurs in her monograph, Wartime Women, that

although many women in production jobs worked equally alongside men, industrial employers continued to categorize work by sex to the extent that circumstances allowed, placing women in jobs requiring dexterity, concentration, and speed, and shifting men to heavier and more skilled work.⁸⁸



While no doubt the majority of Knoxville women wartime workers remained in traditionally-labeled "women's work," their entrance into production areas of ALCOA, Fulton Sylphon, Rohm and Haas, CEW, and other smaller war industries was significant, particularly in a conceptual sense. At ALCOA and Fulton Sylphon, women were allowed in the production areas for the first time, and in many instances worked alongside men, and not in a sex-segregated occupation. A former ALCOA production worker remembers when she first entered the production areas of the plant, many men were jealous of the women. She recalled that on many occasions the men would stand around and talk while the women worked. She remembered one incident when a young man who didn't want to work much accused her of being "job scared" because she was working so hard. She turned to him and replied: "If I were a young man I would work until the perspiration ran off my elbows before I grumbled about a worked-to-death

⁸⁷De La Vina, "An Assessment of World War II's Impact on Female Employment: A Story of the Decade 1940-1950", pp. 78, 114-115.

⁸⁸Anderson, Wartime Women, p. 35.

grandmother doing more work than I did."⁸⁹ The female production worker indicated, however, that almost all of the female production employees at ALCOA were at the North Plant, and were hired primarily in the shipping, inspection, packing, and rolling departments. The women worked alongside the men in these departments, however, and oftentimes would work harder than the men. One time a male worker complained of "bowel spasms," so a woman was given the heavier metal flat sheets and the man was given the lighter gauge metal sheets to catch and turn as they came off the rolling mill. This worker summed up her attitude in the mill: "I always tried to do more work than the men."⁹⁰

At Fulton Sylphon, although the stockhouse remained an all-male department, and several departments remained predominantly male, women entered the former all-male departments in large numbers during the war. Women outnumbered the men in the inspection department and the autostat department in 1944, but in both departments there were nearly one-half as many men as women, which would defy sex-stereotyping of work.⁹¹ Further, at Atkin Furniture Company, in the city's taxi fleets, and on the TVA dams, women departed from the "sex-stereotyped occupations" of prewar years.

⁸⁹Interview with Anonymous B, Alcoa Aluminum Company of America.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Seniority Roster, Fulton Sylphon, 1944.

Susan Kennedy argues that, despite the opening of industrial jobs to women during the war, "after five years of men's jobs, they were back in 'women's work.'" ⁹² Alice Kessler-Harris agrees that while women retained a slightly greater share of manufacturing jobs after the war, their "net gains in the war years were, therefore, negligible." ⁹³ Ruth Milkman claims that during the war, a temporary sex-segregation of labor existed, but the "lack of a strong feminist movement in the 1940s prevented women union members from combatting gender inequality in the work place at that critical historical juncture." ⁹⁴

Throughout the Knoxville area, World War II left its imprint on the status of female employment. The 1940 Census had indicated that a greater percentage of Knoxville women were employed in the manufacturing sector of the economy than the nation at large. At that time, however, the textile and garment industries provided the only significant opportunities for women production workers. During the war, women broke new ground in a variety of production areas formerly deemed off limits to their sex. Knoxville women found employment in steel mills, aluminum plants, airport maintenance shops, ordnance plants, chemical plants, as well as

⁹²Susan Estabrook Kennedy, If All We Did Was to Weep at Home (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), p. 189.

⁹³Kessler-Harris, Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning in the United States, p. 287.

⁹⁴Milkman, Gender at Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex during World War II, pp. 1, 153.

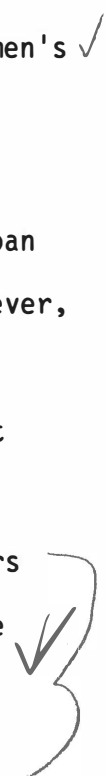
work as truck and taxi drivers, riverboat captains, and guards for federal property. Despite the initial reluctance of area war manufacturers to hire women in their production departments, the dearth of available male labor and the enormous labor demands of CEW necessitated the recruitment of women. Once hired, women generally proved that they could "pull a man's work" and oftentimes surpassed men in their on-the-job performance. ✓

As the Knoxville newspapers reported the employment of women in new and nontraditional modes of work, a sense of surprise was clear. Women could indeed perform nontraditional tasks, and do them well. By the end of the war, however, "women in overalls" had lost its headline appeal as Knoxville women were well integrated into war production. Male employers and production workers generally appreciated the contributions of female workers, and accepted them as co-workers, if at times a bit grudgingly. ✓

Knoxville women sometimes began work in war production for patriotic reasons, but frequently, once in, they did not want to quit simply because the war was over. Although World War II did not create a revolutionary change in the working patterns of the majority of Knoxville's female production workers, the war nonetheless offered undeniable--if for a majority of women, temporary--innovative opportunities on a large scale for alterations in women's employment. Despite the management's initial intent to hire women "for the duration," World War II provided Knoxville women a significant moment in history to demonstrate their ability to compete satisfactorily with men in the higher-paying, non-sex-segregated manufacturing jobs. ✓

✓ women athletes! Oh!

Knoxville's "Rosies" had shown that they could do what had been called a man's job; at the same time they were earning higher wages and their employers were learning first-hand that women often surpassed their male employees in competence as production workers. Knoxville's Rosies had come of age during a time when labor requisitions broke down traditional sexual barriers regarding women's "proper place." Even so, Knoxville working women would reflect the nationwide postwar trends of reentering traditional "women's work," increased domesticity, and the glorification of the suburban housewife. Their wartime performance as production workers, however, had set the stage for future trends in women's employment in the Knoxville area as a significant minority of women found permanent places on the production lines of area manufacturing firms such as ALCOA, Fulton Sylphon, and Rohm and Haas.⁹⁵ Their "forty years of service" retirement watches and pins would testify to the role that they had played in the economic history of Knoxville women.



⁹⁵ According to 1950 Fulton Sylphon seniority rosters, women comprised 23 percent of the total employment at this time.

CHAPTER IV

WHERE HAVE ALL THE ROS(I)ES GONE? RECONVERSION AND POSTWAR

Long before the end of the fighting, American economic strategists began to anticipate reconversion and postwar problems. The accelerated economic growth of the war years had pulled the American economy from the mire of the Depression. The general public as well as the economic experts feared that once the hostilities ceased and the government cancelled its gigantic contracts, this prosperous economy would shrink into a postwar recession--if not another depression. A contracting economy would not provide enough jobs for a labor force which would include not only these added male and female war workers, but the returning veterans as well.

The dynamic tension that the war had wrought in regard to "women's proper place" continued throughout reconversion planning during the latter stages of the war and into the postwar period. Government propagandists who had striven to lure women into the war factories were now challenged with the opposite problems. They needed to achieve what seemed to be an obvious solution for the anticipated postwar overabundance of labor: to encourage women to leave the factories and either to return home, or return to traditional "women's work." Manufacturers of consumer goods throughout the war forecast postwar homes and products which centered around the wife and mother in the home. At the same time, the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor, the Women's Advisory Committee of the War Manpower Commission, and various national women's organizations such as the National

Federation of Business and Professional Women, attempted to retain wartime gains for working women while recognizing the employment and seniority rights of returning veterans.

The fear of a severe postwar recession was widespread. Economic planners proposed all-out peacetime production to combat what they believed to be an inevitable postwar economic slump. In his book Challenge to Freedom, Henry W. Wriston, President of Brown University, reflected the prevailing attitude: "This war can be won and it can be paid for only if we produce . . . the American people should speak with one voice: Clear the road for production."¹ George Gallup determined in an October 1943 poll that Americans overwhelmingly believed that the postwar economic adjustment and postwar jobs would be the "most vital long-range issue ahead for the next few years."² Fortune magazine during the same period surveyed the nation's top business leaders and concluded, however, that 74 percent of them believed that

private business and industry, if given the opportunity, can maintain reasonably full employment after the war. Seventy percent of them even believed that the₃ nation would experience a 'general boom' following the war.³

In October of the same year, the Knoxville Chamber of Commerce organized the Committee for Economic Development as a subcommittee of their

¹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 31 August 1943.

²News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 2 October 1943

³News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 10 October 1943.

Postwar Planning Committee. The Knoxville CED emphasized the importance of individual postwar planning by manufacturers and businessmen to preclude postwar unemployment and depression.⁴

The postwar division of the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated in 1943 that within six months following the end of the war, the United States could be facing the possibility of 12,000,000 unemployed persons, and a possibility of 7,000,000 immediately after the war, "even under favorable conditions." To combat the potential postwar mass unemployment, the Bureau established a six-point program in 1943 which was prepared for the American Federation of Labor. The Bureau's program included a rapid reconversion to peacetime production, a public works program to provide jobs during the reconversion period, financial assistance to demobilized war workers and veterans, gradual demobilization of veterans; a Federal job placement service, and "voluntary withdrawal from labor markets of as many women, school-age youths, and over-age employees as possible."⁵

The government thus attempted to entice women (among others) to move over and make room for the returning veterans. Economic, governmental, and business leaders generally assumed that most married working women desired to return home following the war, and that young, single women wanted to work only until they could find a marriage partner who could support them. On the contrary, a government

⁴News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 14 October 1943.

⁵News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 20 August 1943.

survey of women concerning the postwar demobilization of female workers reflected a sense of frustration from several women who believed that "nobody asks our opinion." One woman declared after she was laid off that nobody had asked her if she needed her job. Another woman feared that because she was a woman that she would be one of the first workers to be laid off. A woman who was not completely dependent on her salary, said: "I contend that I have a right to a job and a right to work."⁶

June Sochen writes in Herstory that "Rosie the Riveter was a good wartime propaganda image, but that image disintegrated the minute the boys came home."⁷ In the war-era government film clips that were included in the 1981 film, Rosie the Riveter, young actresses portrayed defense plant workers who were anxious to give up their employment so that the veterans could have jobs when they returned home. When "interviewed" as to whether or not they would remain at their "posts" when the war was over, the "workers" responded: "I should say not. When my husband comes home, I'll be busy."⁸ Another response was: "Well, this job belongs to some soldier."⁹ The War Department also featured film clips entitled: "Welcome

⁶Catherine Filene Shouse and Ruth Young, "The Woman Worker Speaks," Independent Woman, October 1945, pp. 274-275, 296.

⁷June Sochen, Herstory: A Woman's View of American History (New York: Alfred Publishing Company, Inc., 1974), p. 344.

⁸Rosie the Riveter.

⁹Ibid.

America," which proposed that the American soldiers were the "most capable potential group of workers this world has ever known."¹⁰ The government reels showed an interview with Dr. Marynia Farnham who had co-authored Modern Woman: the Lost Sex. In her book, Dr. Farnham stated that wives had been allowed to become their husbands' rivals. The women had been allowed to assume masculine roles during the war. At the war's end, however, the women were asked to resume their femininity and dependence on men.¹¹

Mrs. Walter Ferguson, whose syndicated column "A Woman's Viewpoint" appeared on the editorial pages of the Knoxville News-Sentinel, described her conception of postwar homes. She cited a Birmingham, Alabama newspaper poll which had determined that the majority of its city's women war workers desired to return home and forfeit their jobs to men. She exhorted that the American public realized also that thousands of homemakers who assumed war jobs will want to remain employed after the war. Those women who would want to work after the war "are not going back to their kitchens in a happy state of mind . . . we must understand that homes are never happy places when unhappy women keep them."¹² Ferguson revealed an ambivalence here in her conception of the role of working wives and mothers. She postulated progressive theories on the postwar roles of married women in her acceptance of war-induced employment trends. Yet, she adhered

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 11 March 1944.

to a nineteenth century concept that relegated women to being the guardians of society. On one hand, she accepted--if not necessarily applauded--the decision of homemakers to remain in the labor force. On the other hand, she envisioned women as the caretakers of the home and society. In fact, she even claimed that "woman is the keeper of democracy; she is the custodian of American ideals."¹³

As the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Office of War Information dispersed information regarding the effects of war cutbacks on the employment picture, the Women's Bureau, the Women's Advisory Committee, and various national women's organizations sought to protect the wartime gains of women workers. But even among those who aspired to secure the achievements of the wartime female labor force, the tension between changes in women's employment opportunities and a perpetuation of prewar trends was clearly evident. ✓

In 1944, the Bureau of Labor Statistics released a study of all plants which were experiencing cutbacks from December 1943 through May 1944. This early investigation revealed that employment in these plants had decreased by less than 5 percent in the three-month period following cutbacks. Of the 5 percent decrease, voluntary resignations had accounted for 60 percent of the total, and layoffs for 18 percent. Women, who comprised 32 percent of the total number of employees in the sample, were laid off in proportionately greater numbers than the men, but their entrance rates into the war factories were also

¹³Ibid.

greater during this period. Consequently, women's employment remained fairly constant. The Bureau anticipated, however, that when cutbacks became greater because of a continual decrease in war production, women's employment in these industries would decrease both in relative and absolute numbers.¹⁴

During the same year, the Office of War Information released information regarding the effects of the government curtailments or cutbacks on war workers and communities:

In many instances, USES officials have reported that women workers, many of whom had not been employed [in war factories], did not seek other jobs when laid off but returned instead to their household duties. This was apparent in Pulaski and Lowell and even evident in some of the production shifts in labor-tight industrial areas.¹⁵

A subsequent OWI release reporting on a Bureau of Labor Statistics survey in labor surplus areas, commented that "other workers, especially women, did not seek immediate re-employment but stayed at home for a period to obtain a much needed rest."¹⁶

In 1944, the Business and Professional Women's Clubs proposed a plank in the Democratic and Republican presidential platforms for "equal opportunity to work and equal pay during the postwar period" ✓

¹⁴"Effects of Cut-Backs in War Contracts on Employment and Turnover of Selected Plants," Monthly Labor Review, June 1945, pp. 1175, 1180-1181.

¹⁵Office of War Information, "Advance Release," 20 February 1944, War Manpower Commission, Record Group 211, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 1.

¹⁶Office of War Information, "Advance Release," 17 April 1944, Record Group 208, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 2.

and for "job opportunities in the postwar world [that] must be open to men and women alike, without discrimination in rate of pay because of sex."¹⁷ The plank was also sponsored by the American Association of University Women, General Foundation of Women's Clubs, and the National Women's Trade Union League of America. These women's organizations who sent representatives to both the Democratic and Republican presidential conventions of 1944 were optimistic that the female vote would "tip the scales to achieve this long-deserved right."¹⁸ These national women's leaders also emphasized the necessity of a full postwar production and economy to provide jobs for men and women alike.¹⁹

The Women's Bureau in 1944, recognizing the inevitable, published an extensive bulletin entitled: "A Preview as to Women Workers from War to Peace." In this comprehensive publication, Mary Elizabeth Pidgeon presented arguments as to why women should be allowed to continue to work after the war. She stressed that one-fifth of the employed women in the United States were the primary wage earners of their families. She cited numerous examples of employers and government officials who lauded the wartime achievements of women in war industry. Among the plaudits that she included were Under Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson's assessment that "the women of America have responded ably and gallantly to the call to service the war has made upon them. Nowhere is this more evident than in



¹⁷News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 23 June 1944.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

the plants operated by the War Department."²⁰ Pidgeon also noted that a USES representative had reported that women passed Army-Navy acetylene-gas welding tests "two to one better than men" and that 60 percent of 146 executives who had reported to the National Industrial Conference Board confirmed "without qualification that the production of women workers who were on jobs formerly held by men was equal to or greater than, that of men on similar work."²¹

In December 1944 at a conference of representatives from twenty-five national organizations, the Women's Bureau subsequently adopted a "Reconversion Blueprint for Women." The "blueprint" itself was contradictory in terms of progression versus retraction of women's occupational opportunities. On one hand, it emphasized the necessity of postwar jobs for women and supported the incorporation of policies to prevent discriminatory practices against women. On the other hand, it retreated from supporting a continuation of wartime employment gains for women as the following points demonstrated:

- (1) Analyses of women's impending job shifts in terms of kinds and numbers of jobs which will evaporate, and of the possible transfer of war skills and new applications for those skills in civilian industries and employment. . . .
- (5) The establishment of at least adequate minimum conditions in the traditional woman-employing industries for women's shifts back to prewar occupations. . . .
- (7) Provision of funds for women workers when demobilized to return to

²⁰Mary Elizabeth Pidgeon, "A Preview as to Women Workers in Transition from War to Peace," Special Bulletin No. 18, March 1944, Women's Bureau (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1944), pp. 5, 9, 10.

²¹Ibid.

former homes or to new areas where employment opportunities are available.²²

Clearly, the Women's Bureau did not anticipate a significant challenge by women war workers toward the re-establishment of prewar employment patterns. The Bureau attempted to protect the concept of jobs for women, but did not challenge the governmental plan to ease women back into traditional sex-stereotyped employment.

The dichotomy of expansion and contraction of women's wartime opportunities was personified in the statements of three nationally prominent figures in 1944 who commented on the postwar employment of women. Brigadier General Frank T. Hines, who was the Administrator of Retraining and Reemployment in the Office of War Mobilization, agreed that the wartime presence of women in the armed forces and in the war factories gave them the right to be included in postwar employment plants. Yet, he declared that

Susie-the welder [who] is toiling in the ship yards, her heart aglow with patriotism and the feeling that she is doing her bit . . . will be Susie-the airplane-stewardess, or Susie-the radio-operator, or the chemist, dentist, or physicist; and there will be retraining for Susie-the welder to help her make the shift-over if she wants it.²³

General Hines continued, "let the men continue to be the welders, the butchers, the bakers, the plumbers. Who wants woman with a

²²U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, "Reconversion Blueprint for Women," 5 December 1944, Women's Bureau, Record Group 86, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 1.

²³Brig. Gen. Frank T. Hines, "The Problem of the Postwar Employment of Women," 5 May 1944, Office of War Information, Record Group

stillson wrench in her hand or a cleaver?"²⁴ He repeatedly echoed tension which the war had generated regarding women's place in employment. He articulated that

the right of the individual woman to work must be recognized and provided for . . . after the experience of the last four years it would be entirely unfair to treat women as a reserve group to be called upon during war only.²⁵

He argued, nonetheless, that women had always worked.

Homemaking is a job--women since 1940 have produced five million new babies, over and above the normal production quota--a production equal to half the armed forces in number. They have replenished where men have destroyed.²⁶

Margaret Hickey, Chairman of the Women's Advisory Committee for the War Manpower Commission and President of the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, called for a real partnership of men and women in this business of living that we approach anything like sound human relations, without which no great progress can be made toward world organization.²⁷

Hickey argued, however, that the goal could not be obtained by "women becoming pale imitators of men or competitors for an insufficient number of jobs."²⁸ She offered, instead, that women could contribute

208, National Archives, Washington, D.C., pp. 1, 2.

²⁴Ibid., p. 2.

²⁵Ibid

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Margaret Hickey, "The World Women Want," no date, War Manpower Commission, Record Group 211, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

²⁸Ibid.

most fully to a postwar world if they acted as moral and spiritual custodians of society by utilizing their "essentially feminine qualities of mind and spirit so needed to heal the hurt and damage of the war years."²⁹ While claiming that a partnership of the sexes was necessary for progress, Hickey subscribed to the nineteenth century separate sphere philosophy that women as the custodians of morals would reform a world which the male sex had debased.

Rosalind Cassidy, whose article appeared in the April 1944 issue of the Journal of Educational Sociology, offered perhaps the most acrimonious assessment of the role of women in the war and their possibilities in the postwar period. After listing what she recognized as the primary economic and social consequences of the increased utilization of women in industry, she noted that they had increasingly proved their abilities and skill in the area of manufacturing and other nontraditional modes of employment. She suggested that America both deplored and encouraged the concept of Rosie the Riveter. Ms. Cassidy further claimed that there were two cults in America, "the flag and woman," the latter which she claimed had become the "American Golden Calf."³⁰ Claiming that the Russians "have long been disdainful of our parasite class of women . . . who demand great luxury and give nothing in return to the social progress," she nonetheless envisioned a postwar antagonism and jealousy between men and women

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Rosalind Cassidy, "Careers for Women." Taken from The Journal of Educational Sociology, April 1944, Women's Bureau, Record Group 86, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 4.

as a result of the wartime employment achievements of women.³¹ Despite her feminist rhetoric, Ms. Cassidy also expressed a duality in her own definition of postwar roles for women. While she articulated a variety of nontraditional occupations and careers which she believed would be open for women following the war, she reflected the prevailing mid-1940s sentiment that

the greatest career for women in the postwar world remains that of homemaker, responsible for the bearing of healthy, able children educated by her into the beliefs and skills of cooperative responsible behavior.³²

Dorothy C. Stratton, head of the Women's Reserve of the Coast Guard, also addressed the role of women in the postwar world. She claimed that the confusion regarding women's roles in the postwar period arose from the widespread tendency to "generalize about sixty-five million individuals."³³ She voiced progressive, forward-looking ideas regarding women's place by her belief that women should not allow planning for postwar employment to "degenerate into controversies over women versus men, veterans versus civil service workers, married women versus single women, young versus old."³⁴ Yet, she also clung to the traditional concepts concerning women's skills in her assertion that women could utilize their skills in human relations for postwar occupations. The tension in her own thinking about postwar roles

³¹Ibid., p. 6.

³²Ibid., p. 7.

³³Dorothy C. Stratton, "Women After the War," Independent Woman, October 1945, p. 279.

³⁴Ibid., p. 295.

for women was further evidenced by her opinion that "women could not retreat to the vine-covered house and shut out the problems of the world outside," while at the same time claiming that "there can be little doubt that the major interest of most women after the war, as before and during the war, will be their homes and families."³⁵

Margaret Hickey not only addressed the issue of women who needed to work after the war, such as widows, single women, and married women whose husbands had been handicapped by the war. She also noted that many women could not support indigent relatives on their husbands' incomes. Few would argue against the validity of postwar jobs for these women. Ms. Hickey further confronted the more sensitive issue of postwar employment of women who did not necessarily need to work to make ends meet, but wanted to work. She described these women as workers who had trained and labored to obtain financial independence and had become accustomed to a higher standard of living. These women would not be content to return home at the end of the war. Ms. Hickey claimed that discriminatory hiring practices against women not only presented an inequity toward them, but that it was inefficient as well. Yet, she retreated to gender-specific stereotyping of women's occupations in her comments that married women could contribute in a special way to the educational field of home economics, and that future employment trends would focus on women's areas of expertise such as food and housing. She further supported the expansion of governmental social programs to enable women to remain at home

³⁵Ibid., pp. 295, 279.

with their children if they so desired.³⁶

The Women's Advisory Committee published a bulletin titled, "Woman in the Postwar," in April 1945 which was generally consistent throughout its contents in its progressive approach to postwar strategies for women. The Women's Advisory Committee expounded the belief that all citizens of a democracy, including women and minorities, should be given the right to choose to work if they so desired. The WAC warned that it must not be taken for granted that considerable numbers of women would not suffer economic problems if they were separated from their jobs following the war. Further, the WAC recommended that arrangements should be made to enable women to utilize the vocational skills that they had learned during the war in postwar employment.³⁷ These recommendations demonstrated a departure from the Women's Bureau's acquiescence to the concept of reemployment of women in traditional sex-segregated industries following the war.

Among the social welfare programs that the WAC recommended were the extension of social security to provide adequate medical care for the family, and the provision of additional aid to dependent children benefits to families who were not fatherless. The WAC further supported the concept of mandatory school for children until the age of sixteen years; the provision of low-cost housing, school

³⁶ Margaret A. Hickey, "The United Task Ahead," June 1945, War Manpower Commission, Record Group 211, National Archives, Washington, D.C., pp. 4-6, 9.

³⁷ Women's Advisory Committee, War Manpower Commission, Women in the Postwar, April 1945, War Manpower Commission, Record Group 122, National Archives, Washington, D.C., passim.

nutrition programs, and the expansion of child care services and facilities, which would encompass nursery schools, and after-school care for older children.³⁸ The latter particularly was a departure from the traditional concept that assumed such a service would not be necessary because of the importance placed upon the mother staying in the home. The WAC did, however, recognize the important contribution of married women who chose to stay outside of the labor force and bestow their talents and time on their home, family, community, and society. This concept reflected a safeguarding of traditional expectations regarding married women.

Knoxville, along with other war production areas throughout the United States, exhibited a continuation of ambiguity regarding employment prospects for women during the reconversion and postwar periods. It had recruited women when it became apparent that the war could not be won without their contribution. By mid-1945, however, it saw the enlarged female employment ranks as a threat to peacetime employment. Under the general heading of "anticipated labor market problems" in postwar Knoxville, the Tennessee Department of Employment Security worried that:

The increase of women in relation to the total working population may pose a problem, as indications are that the majority now engaged in manufacturing industries (other than textile) are interested in remaining in their current jobs.³⁹

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ State of Tennessee, Department of Employment Security, The Labor Market in Knoxville, July 1945, p. 3.

The Knoxville News-Sentinel reported in August 1945 that 70 percent of the Knoxville women war workers who were polled wanted to continue to work in their current jobs. Although reporter Margaret Ragsdale admitted that the seventeen workers she polled were not entirely representative of the thousands of women workers throughout the Knoxville area, she argued that the results of her poll indicated a "trend."⁴⁰ At least it was consistent with the Women's Bureau surveys which were conducted in 1944 and 1945 of women in all occupations (with the exception of domestic service) in ten war production areas throughout the country. Seventy-five percent of those surveyed wanted to keep their jobs after the war. In all, 87 percent of single, 94 percent of widowed/divorced, and 57 percent of married women stated that they planned to continue to work in peacetime.⁴¹ Seventy-five percent of the women surveyed in Detroit and 80 percent of the women polled in Buffalo wanted to continue working after the war.⁴²

The United Automobile, Aircraft, and Agriculture Implement Workers of America (UAW-CIO) sent a questionnaire to a representative sample of their female members throughout the country. Their results paralleled the surveys that the Women's Bureau had conducted. Nearly all of the single women, all of the widows, and approximately 69 percent of the married members--for an average of 85 percent of those

⁴⁰News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 19 August 1945.

⁴¹National Manpower Council, Womanpower (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), p. 161.

⁴²News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 17 June 1945, sec. D, p. 4.

polled--indicated that they wished to continue to work after the war. Only 26 percent of the women polled had worked in factories prior to 1942, and the remainder of those polled had either been students, housewives, or held occupations other than factory jobs. The UAW-CIO survey also revealed that nearly 50 percent of those women who had never worked in a factory before the war desired to continue in a factory after the war.⁴³ In actuality, between June and September 1945, 25 percent of the women who were employed in factories were either laid off or voluntarily quit their jobs. Between June and December of 1945, the employment of women in non-agricultural jobs had decreased by two million.⁴⁴

In Knoxville, Rohm and Haas reported in 1945 that 40 percent of their employees were women. Although women were hired in the initial stages primarily as glass polishers, by the closing months of the war they were working in the "heaviest and hardest jobs in the plant" as shrinking oven operators and mold room workers, in addition to inspection, finishing, checking, demasking, and polishing. Eighty percent of the females employed at Rohm and Haas in 1945 wished to "remain with the company after the war."⁴⁵ The company actually laid off nearly all of the employees in 1946 when the Defense Plant Corporation sold the plant to Rohm and Haas. The new ownership

⁴³"Women's Post-War Job Plans," Monthly Labor Review, May 1944, p. 1030.

⁴⁴War Manpower Commission, Womanpower, p. 162.

⁴⁵News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 19 August 1945.

rehired many of the former employees. Since Rohm and Haas had hired women in the initial stages of the Knoxville plant's operation, the women's seniority status was generally on par with the men. This enabled the women to retain the privilege of being rehired according to seniority rank rather than face possible employment discrimination following the war.⁴⁶

Throughout the war, ALCOA increasingly employed women in "occupations where they have never been used before"--in electrical engineering and mechanical departments, in physical testing and chemical laboratories, as crane operators, drivers of small trucks within the plants, and in the rolling mill.⁴⁷ Mr. D. W. Poage, wartime personnel director of the ALCOA fabricating plants, reported that ALCOA had at one time reached the "saturation point" for employing females due to the heavy nature of available jobs, but by August 1945, the company was hiring women again in several departments. He further declared that women "have no differential in pay or lay-offs," that seniority instead of sex provided the basis.⁴⁸ Since all female production workers were employed after the onset of the war, their seniority usually did not surpass that of the men, and consequently, the women were generally the first to be laid off. When questioned as to whether or not ALCOA would hire women in

⁴⁶Interview with Ray Clift, Rohm and Haas Tennessee, Inc., Knoxville, Tennessee, 31 May 1983.

⁴⁷News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 19 August 1945.

⁴⁸Ibid.

peacetime positions, Mr. Poage elaborated:

Some won't want to stay. Some came in for glamor--and it's about worn off now. Some came in for sincerely patriotic reasons. Some came for economic reasons. We have a definite plan to use women in any peacetime expansion.⁴⁹

The key to Mr. Poage's statement to the newspaper was the phrase: "any peacetime expansion." Because of the cancellation of government contracts, ALCOA would not embark upon major expansion following the war, but would continue to cut back on operations and personnel. Mr. T. I. Stevenson of ALCOA indicated that the company had hoped that the female production workers there would be temporary. Mr. Stevenson added that most of the women "wanted to go back home" and that "they just seemed to disappear after the war."⁵⁰

At Fulton Sylphon, the seven women who were interviewed by the News-Sentinel regarding their desire to keep their jobs after the war agreed that they wished to continue employment at Fulton during peacetime. Mr. Ruggles of Fulton, noted that women workers were given permanent seniority status just as the men were. Therefore, the women workers retained their seniority after they were laid off.⁵¹ Because the majority of female production workers at Fulton Sylphon were not hired until 1943, their seniority status was not as

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Interview with T. I. Stevenson, Aluminum Company of America, Alcoa, Tennessee, 16 May 1983.

⁵¹Interview with John Ruggles, Robertshaw Controls Company, Knoxville, Tennessee, 16 May 1983.

established as the men who had worked there much longer. Consequently, the returning veterans who resumed their former jobs at Fulton Sylphon were more likely to be displacing women than men.

When Fulton Sylphon hired women as production workers, the management believed that the employment of women there would be temporary--just during the war. However, after discovering that the majority of women wanted to keep on working after the war, the top management decided that women should not be laid off. Therefore, 80 to 90 percent of the female production workers remained at Fulton immediately after the war. With the cancellation of large government contracts during the postwar period, however, Fulton Sylphon initiated a substantial layoff. A small number of women remained in the production areas, even though they were generally the first to be laid off due to their lack of seniority.⁵²

Following V-J Day, during late August and throughout September, the employment of women in the Knoxville area continued to decline. ALCOA laid off 600 workers and Fulton Sylphon 1,000 workers. During the last week of August, however, only 20 percent of ALCOA's and 40 percent of Fulton's layoffs were women.⁵³ A continual supply of migrants who had left the Knoxville area for war production work in Detroit, Baltimore, and East Coast shipyards, began to return.

⁵²Interview with I. O. Johnson; interview with John Ruggles, Robertshaw Controls Company.

⁵³Bureau of Employment Security, "Weekly Narrative Labor Market Report, Administrative Area IV, Knoxville, Tennessee," 31 August 1945, Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 1.

By mid-September, the labor supply in the Knoxville area adequately filled the labor demands, except for construction and unskilled labor. A large majority of the layoffs in the Knoxville area, however, involved both male and female workers who had achieved a semiskilled status in the war plants. They were making seventy to ninety cents an hour on a forty-eight hour work week. These workers were not willing to work in the textile and apparel mills on unskilled or semiskilled jobs which paid only forty to fifty cents per hour.⁵⁵

By late 1945, the expected demand for women workers in the Knoxville area for the next two months was less than 5 percent of the total. Generally, the textile and apparel industries represented the only manufacturing jobs for women. At the same time, women made up 53 percent of the local labor supply, and many of these women were claiming unemployment compensation. The TDES further reported that

many women . . . who were employed during the war years have voluntarily withdrawn from the labor market, and it is anticipated that additional women who are now seeking work and filing U.C. claims may withdraw when benefits are exhausted, unless job openings offering wages and

⁵⁴Bureau of Employment Security, "Weekly Narrative Labor Market Report, Administrative Area IV, Knoxville, Tennessee," 5 September 1945, Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 1.

⁵⁵Bureau of Employment Security, "Weekly Narrative Labor Market Report, Administrative Area IV, Knoxville, Tennessee," 19 September 1945, Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 1.

conditions comparable to those offered by wartime jobs become available.⁵⁶

The decrease in the percentage of women employed as compared to total employment in the Knoxville area did not occur as rapidly as had been expected, however. In July 1945, women comprised 38.3 percent of the total employment, in November, 38.1 percent, and by January 1946, 36.0 percent.⁵⁷ Nationwide, the female labor force plummeted from over twenty million in June 1945 to less than sixteen million by February 1947. The percentage of women in the national labor force had declined from 38 percent to 29 percent. After 1947, however, this trend was reversed, and the employment figures of women have continued to increase since then.⁵⁸

Women who had worked in Knoxville area war plants expressed a variety of reactions in response to their employers' plans for reconversion and postwar employment and layoffs of women. One woman who held a position in the machine shop at ALCOA stated that she had never intended to continue in that kind of work after the war was over and the boys came back. She attended business school after the war and acquired a position as an office worker.⁵⁹ Another

⁵⁶State of Tennessee, Department of Employment Security, "Annual Report," 1945, Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 2.

⁵⁷Bureau of Employment Security, "Labor Market Survey Reports," no date, Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 2.

⁵⁸War Manpower Commission, Womanpower, p. 162.

⁵⁹Interview with Anonymous A, Aluminum Company of America, Alcoa, Tennessee, 8 January 1988.

female worker at ALCOA who had labored in the rolling mill represented a less acquiescent attitude toward the layoffs at ALCOA. She recalled that after the war "ALCOA was trying to get rid of the women."⁶⁰ She remembered that a few women were asked to transport five hundred pound boxes of metal on two-wheeled dollies in an attempt to prove that they could not meet the physical requirements in the plant.⁶¹ A former assistant shift-foreman also remembered that there were "some problems" regarding routing light and heavy gauge metal to the various work stations. According to ALCOA policy, the women workers were not permitted to handle metal over one half of their weight. After the war had ended, one of the assistant shift foreman's supervisors decided that ALCOA did not need women in the plant any longer. The supervisor attempted to persuade the assistant shift foreman to assign women to "rougher places of work." The assistant shift foreman refused "to aid in this plan as a means of getting women out of the plant. I simply told him he'd have to get someone else to carry out his plan."⁶²

A female war worker at ALCOA recalled an incident when women production workers were being laid off shortly after the war. Many of these women had acquired a higher seniority than the men who had been hired after the war. Yet, the women with the higher seniority were being laid off before the men. According to the union contract,

⁶⁰Interview with Anonymous B, Aluminum Company of America, Alcoa, Tennessee, 8 January 1988.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Questionnaire B, see Appendix.

seniority provided the basis for layoffs, yet the union--which claimed many females as members--was allowing ALCOA to lay off these women. (✓)

The women who had been laid off proceeded through several steps to attempt to regain their jobs. First they filed their grievances on the floor with their foreman; second, they filed their grievances with the supervisor. They then took the third step which was to report their grievances to the main office at the Blount County facility of ALCOA, with both the plant and union representatives. However, the grievances were not being forwarded to ALCOA's headquarters in Pittsburgh. After failing to elicit any response after the third step, several women decided to picket the union headquarters. Approximately twenty-five to thirty women and a few men "off the floor" went to the Local #309 Steel and Aluminum Workers Union (CIO) offices on Broadway in Maryville. The women had banners rolled up in their hands and sat on the outside of the union offices. They had called the Knoxville newspapers, although no reporters came out. The women who were picketing the union offices carried several slogans on their banners. One banner was addressed to Oak Ridge workers, who were attempting to organize a union after the war. It read: "Oak Ridge Workers, look what our union at ALCOA has done: they have taken our money and let our job go."⁶³ The union officers looked out of their windows and exclaimed: "These women are raising hell and they mean business."⁶⁴ Following the strike, the international

⁶³Interview with Anonymous B, Aluminum Company of America.

⁶⁴Ibid.

representative at ALCOA flew to Pittsburgh to hand-deliver the women workers' grievances. Consequently, the women retained their seniority on the jobs, and did not lose their positions to men who held lower seniority status than they did.⁶⁵

In May 1946, the Bureau of Employment Security reported that 21,000 workers in the Knoxville Labor Market area were unemployed. Of that number, 18 percent were women who were classified either as semiskilled, unskilled, or inexperienced. The group of women who had attained semiskilled status in the aluminum, steel, and chemical industries during the war were not interested in job openings in the available textile work which offered the low wages of forty cents to fifty-one and a half cents per hour. Furthermore, the displaced semiskilled female war workers had gained skills which were not applicable to the textile and garment industries.⁶⁶

Although the employment of women in manufacturing in the Knoxville area in December 1946 was higher numerically than it had been in 1940, women comprised a smaller percentage of the total manufacturing employment at the later date. The decrease in percentage of women's participation in manufacturing was due to the fact that employment expansion in the Knoxville area was in heavy industries where job opportunities for women were minimal.⁶⁷ Nationally, although the

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Bureau of Employment Security, "Labor Market Developments Report, Knoxville Labor Market Area," May 1946, Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 3.

⁶⁷United States Employment Service, "Labor Market Report,

percentage of women in the operatives and kindred workers occupational group decreased from a wartime high of 38 percent to 28 percent in 1947, it remained slightly higher than the prewar figure of 26 percent.⁶⁸

The primary Knoxville war industries which had employed large numbers of women were the textile and apparel firms, Rohm and Haas, Fulton Sylphon, and ALCOA. The Knoxville area textile industries had employed 4,500 women or 56 percent of the total in 1940, and reached a wartime peak of 6,000 women, or 67 percent of the total, in 1942. By December 1946, the employment of women in this industry had decreased to 4,000 for 56 percent of the total. The apparel industries had employed 1,500 women who comprised 75 percent of the total employed before the war in 1940. Women's employment in the apparel industry increased to 2,300, or 88 percent of the total, during its wartime peak in September 1943, and remained high at 2,500, or 89 percent of the total, in December 1946. In these two traditional "women's work" industries, employment of women consistently remained high both numerically and by percentage before, during, and after the war.⁶⁹

In the industries which had not hired women in production areas before the war, the postwar figures of December 1946 indicated a

Knoxville, Tennessee Area," May 1947, Bureau of Employment Security, Record Group 183, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 3.

⁶⁸U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, "Summary Data on Employment of Women," February 1948, Women's Bureau, Record Group 86, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 3.

⁶⁹"Labor Market Report, Knoxville," May 1947, p. 11.

sharp reduction from the wartime peak employment of women, although a significant number of women remained in these manufacturing firms following the war. There had been little activity in the chemical industries in the Knoxville area prior to the establishment of Rohm and Haas. In 1940, only 200 men and twenty women were hired in chemical manufacturing, with women comprising only 10 percent of the total employed. During the peak year of 1943, women comprised over 44 percent of those employed in the chemical industries as their figures numbered 930 out of a total of 2,100. By December 1946, only 800 employees worked in chemicals, of whom 220 were women. At this time, women comprised only 28 percent of the total. However, this was a significant increase from 1940 when only twenty women, who made up 10 percent of the total, were employed. Fulton Sylphon, which comprised the primary iron and steel industries in the Knoxville area, employed only 80 women out of 1,600 workers in December 1940. At this time women only comprised 5 percent of those employed at this firm, and they worked in the offices. At the wartime peak in of women's employment in July 1945, this industry had hired 1,653 women of a total of 4,034. Women comprised 41 percent of the workers at Fulton Sylphon at this time. By December 1946, Fulton Sylphon's employment had decreased to 1,900, which included 250 women. The percentage of women had declined to 13 percent of the total.⁷⁰

ALCOA, which was the main nonferrous manufacturer in the Knoxville area, employed only 120 women of 6,800 workers in December 1940.

⁷⁰Ibid. See also Table I, Appendix.

Women who made up less than 2 percent of those employed at ALCOA worked only in the offices. In the peak employment of women, which occurred in July 1945, the company employed 1,519 women of a total of 10,128. The percentage of women had increased to 15 percent. Although numerically the increase in wartime employment of women at ALCOA was large, women still comprised an insignificant percentage of all those employed. Following the war, in December 1946, ALCOA had reduced its employment to 10,800, which included 500 women. At this time, the percentage of women had decreased to less than 5 percent, although in numerical terms, the plant employed nearly 400 more women than it had in 1940.⁷¹

Despite the sharp postwar decrease in employment of women in these nontraditional manufacturing firms, it is notable that women entered the production areas of these industries for the first time during World War II. Although their wartime figures had been reduced considerably, a significant minority of women remained in the production areas of these plants. Nationally, women made up the same percentage of production workers in 1947 that they had in 1939, at 25.6 percent. In the durable goods industries, however, the postwar number of women production workers more than doubled that of prewar figures, and their percentage increased from 8.6 in 1939 to 12.6 in 1947.⁷²

⁷¹Ibid. Women's employment at ALCOA peaked in July 1945 although overall employment peaked in March 1943.

⁷²Mary Elizabeth Pidgeon, "Women Workers and Recent Economic Change," Monthly Labor Review, December 1947, p. 669.

In Knoxville, as in the major war production areas throughout the nation, World War II and the postwar period wrought a dynamic tension in the employment of women. The war had opened up new opportunities for women to assume new positions as production workers in industries which had traditionally been off-limits to females. Women had adjusted their economic status to absorb the increases in pay, and consequently often did not want to return to lower paying "women's work" or to no employment at all. A divorced female production worker at ALCOA who fought to retain her wartime production job, claimed: "her kids had to eat just like men's kids did."⁷³ Before her job at ALCOA, she had worked as a laundress, making fifty cents a day, bent over an outdoor washboard. Not only was the pay increase at ALCOA an incentive, but the work was indoors as well. This worker was unwilling to give up easily the economic and occupational gains that she had made during the war. She and several of her female co-war-workers remained in the plant for many years.⁷⁴

Although undoubtedly Knoxville working women would have eventually entered the production areas of manufacturing firms such as ALCOA, Fulton Sylphon, and Rohm and Haas, the war certainly provided a cataclysmic impetus for the enlargement in occupational opportunities for women. Despite the contraction of job openings in the postwar years, a significant minority of women remained in production areas

⁷³Interview with Anonymous B, Aluminum Company of America.

⁷⁴Ibid.

until they retired. In 1950 over 220 women worked alongside men at Fulton Sylphon in various production departments.⁷⁵ Women continued to work in the production areas of ALCOA, Rohm and Haas, and at Oak Ridge as well, although in reduced numbers.

Yet for the most part, women production workers in the Knoxville area vacated their wartime jobs. They were either laid off because of a lack of seniority or they just "disappeared." The 1950 Census reported that of a population of 124,769 in the city of Knoxville, 16,669 women were employed out of a total of over 47,500 employed. In 1950, women made up 35 percent of the total employed in Knoxville. This compared to a 1940 population figure of 111,580 for Knoxville city with an employment of 15,288 women of a total of nearly 43,000. In 1940, women constituted almost 36 percent of the total Knoxville employed persons. This indicates virtually no cumulative change in the percentage of women to the total number of Knoxville employed persons for these two census years. In the category of operatives, the 1950 figures actually show both a numerical and percentage decrease in women workers as compared to 1940. In 1940, there were 4,737 women employed as operatives, of a total of 11,206 in the same occupational group. Women comprised 42 percent of the operatives in Knoxville at that time. In 1950, only 3,959 women were listed as operatives, of a total of 10,637, or 37 percent.⁷⁶

⁷⁵Robertshaw Controls Company, Seniority Roster (1950), All Departments, made available to the author by the Personnel Director, Knoxville, Tennessee.

⁷⁶U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census,

The dichotomy which the war had generated regarding the place of women in the home and work continued throughout the postwar period, particularly in the role expectations of working married women and mothers. Although the ranks of employed women and married women continued to grow numerically after the war, sociologists, psychologists, educators, and purveyors of popular and prescriptive literature would emphasize the importance of the role of the mother in the home, and would encourage women to postpone employment until their children were older. Furthermore, marriage and family would still be a lure to single women.

In numerical terms, the war created only a temporary change in the status of most working women in the Knoxville area. The majority of women production workers had entered nontraditional work for the "duration" and consequently the war did not produce a revolutionary change in their status. A significant minority of women, however, remained on the production lines in several non-sex-stereotyped occupations in plants throughout the area.

The war did provide a large-scale opportunity for women of Knoxville to experience nontraditional jobs. Even though relatively few women were employed in these jobs after the war, their entrance into these jobs provided a basis for conceptual change in future employment patterns. Indeed, before many of Knoxville's Rosies came

Seventeenth Census, 1950: Characteristics of the Population, 42:223, 226; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Sixteenth Census, 1940: Characteristics of the Population, p. 705.

of retirement age, they would witness the maturation of a phenomenon ✓
in which they had played such a historical role.

CHAPTER V

SLACKS AND A VEIL: IMAGES AND REALITIES OF KNOXVILLE

WOMEN WAR WORKERS

Throughout World War II, Knoxville women and their sisters nationwide experienced a bombardment of propaganda concerning their place in the war. To varying degrees throughout the war, women were at the same time accosted with pleas to "Bring Johnny home sooner by taking a war job" while being encouraged to retain their traditional values of tending to home, hearth, and hairdo, which was what Johnny  was fighting for. Popular and prescriptive literature, movies, songs, etiquette books, and advertisements, were supplemented by a plethora of governmental directives. All advised women to become a part of the fighting home front--either by joining the Armed Forces, obtaining a war job, by rationing fats and tin, rolling bandages, or learning civil defense. Not only did the media engender wartime images of women, but it reported the realities of war which affected marriage, divorce, birth rates, and the behavior of children.

Perhaps the most accurate assessment of the images and realities of the wartime status of women is that no one single female person appeared as the ideal American--or Knoxville--female in wartime. She was at the same time Rosie the Riveter, the Foxhole pinup girl, the bespectacled mechanical engineer, the Navy nurse, the worried mother seated beneath a service star in her window, the socialite Red Cross volunteer, and the lonely wife who longed for her service husband to return home. Significantly, however, the war introduced

new images of women, even if traditional images of females remained as well. For the first time in American history, women were permitted to join the Armed Forces. This major gender breakthrough, in addition to the novel portrayal of women in overalls, slacks, carrying lunch-pails, changing tires, riveting and welding, points to the tremendous impact that the war had on altering conceptual images of women.

They were proving that they could take on a man's job.

As the war progressed, the national female labor force increased and, oftentimes, women's wages increased. Generally there was a change in the public attitude toward working women--particularly a more positive belief that married women whose husbands were capable of working should be permitted to engage in paid employment. Valerie Oppenheimer notes that in 1937 in the midst of the Depression, 82 percent of the national respondents in an American Institute of Public Opinion poll disapproved of married women "earning money in business or industry if she has a husband capable of supporting her." In 1942, however, 60 percent of the respondents in a nationwide survey believed that married women should work in war industry. But by 1945 when it appeared that the end of the war was in sight, 62 percent of the respondents disapproved of married women working if their husbands could support them.¹

In manufacturing, the female work force grew 110 percent during the war and the female labor force in war industry grew 460 percent

¹Oppenheimer, The Female Labor Force, p. 44.

on a national level.² By 1945, women comprised 36 percent of the labor force.³

Historians have devoted considerable argument to the question of the impact that this wartime increase in the female labor force had on the status of American women. While most historians agree that the war created at least a temporary improvement in the status of women, few believe that the improvement was permanent. William Chafe argues that despite the considerable statistical increase in women's employment, women did not challenge traditional assumptions regarding their place or the system which engendered sex-stereotyped jobs.⁴ Although Susan Hartman suggests that women's behavior in the public sphere had experienced significant changes as a result of the war and would continue to "develop in altered patterns," she posits that the public established limits on social change relating to women's wartime roles. Hartman notes that government and industry stressed several themes regarding women's employment during the war: that it was temporary (for the duration), that women should retain their femininity even if they assumed traditionally masculine occupations, and that patriotic motives should be the driving force

²Chafe, The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920-1970, p. 140.

³Susan M. Hartman, The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s, p. 21.

⁴William Chafe, Women and Equality: Changing Patterns in American Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 95.

behind their assumption of new and nontraditional roles.⁵ World War II, according to Susan Kennedy, provided an occasion for women of all classes to become "patriotic heroines," yet Sheila Rothman argues that the federal government "made it eminently clear that work for them [women] was an emergency measure and a temporary expedient."⁶ Leila Rupp asserts that American mobilization propaganda directed toward women utilized "prewar images when possible, created new images when necessary, but intended no permanent change in ideas about 'women's place.'"⁷ Karen Anderson concludes that the war created a "temporary retreat from prevailing notions of women's capabilities and proper roles."⁸

In Knoxville, it is clear that the war provided significant strengthening of the perception that women could successfully work in nontraditional employment. Before the war, the vast majority of Knoxville female workers were employed in the garment, textile, service, or retail sales industries. Throughout the war, they increasingly entered nontraditional types of employment particularly

✓ Attitudes
chg. ✓

⁵Hartman, Home Front, p. 23.

⁶Kennedy, If All We Did Was to Weep at Home, 184; Rothman, Woman's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices, 1870 to the Present, p. 22.

⁷Rupp, Mobilizing Women for War: German and American Propaganda, 1939-1945, p. 166.

⁸Anderson, Wartime Women, p. 4.

as production workers in medium light to heavy industry. While women would have undoubtedly entered these nontraditional industries eventually--as George Ogdin of Fulton Sylphon predicted, by the mid-1950s--the war nonetheless created a strong catalyst for change.

As Knoxville women increasingly entered war production, the media purveyed a variety of images regarding the wartime status of women. Local newspaper and popular women's magazine advertisements, popular and prescriptive literature, and movies all generated a multiplicity of women's roles. Four general themes revealing the heterogeneity of women's roles emerged throughout the war: the diversity of opportunities made available to women in wartime; nontraditional, progressive themes of women in war production, novel occupations, or the Armed Services; the femininity of women despite new and altered wartime roles; and the tension generated by the oftentimes conflicting claims of work and homemaking on wartime wives and mothers.

The wartime images of Knoxville women were juxtaposed against the realities of the war's impact on their status. A chronicle of their public and, occasionally, their private lives was particularly evident in the local newspapers. The papers narrated the community response to the large-scale employment of women in the Knoxville war production plants. Knoxville provided a number of child care centers for children of mothers who worked in the area war industries. In addition, war created a community awareness that women workers often required distinct services such as extended banking, shopping, and medical hours, and recreational facilities and organizations. Although the wartime images of Knoxville women often portrayed a

romanticized, larger-than-life interpretation of female war workers, the images nonetheless reflected a fairly accurate description of the realities of the war's impact on Knoxville women.

Perhaps the most widely utilized image of women which appeared throughout the media was the concept of opportunity which the war generated for women. Knoxville newspapers throughout the war, as early as 1942 and particularly in 1943, emphasized the diversity of alternatives which were available to women. An early example of the dual wartime images of Knoxville women was typified in a Park National Bank advertisement in a February 1943 issue of the Knoxville News-Sentinel which featured "soldiers in denim and gingham--one runs the drill, the other an eggbeater. One works in slacks, the other in skirts."⁹

Lane Drug Stores suggested that: "Ladies . . . weep no more." Lane exhorted that "time has passed when women in wartime spent their days in fear and their nights in weeping . . . this is a woman's war too." Pictured in the advertisement were three female representatives of various branches of the armed services cheerfully singing and playing the piano. Lane Drug Store noted that women not only were releasing men for the "sterner tasks" by joining the women's armed forces auxiliaries, but they were also engaged in essential war work or following guidelines for home management in wartime.¹⁰

⁹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 8 February 1943.

¹⁰News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 2 October 1943.

Johnson's Wax portrayed the variety of women's wartime roles in its narrative advertisement in the Knoxville News-Sentinel which was entitled "The Fighting Women of Winthrop Street!" It reads:

This is Martha Davidson, 28 years old. Funny thing, but Martha wasn't very much stirred up by this war. It's true that most of the boys in the town had gone. She bought a bond a month and did without that second cup of coffee, but she wasn't fighting mad yet. She was still thinking more about herself than she was about her country.

Then Martha received an invitation to visit her Aunt Susan.

Aunt Susan lives in a big old house on Winthrop Street. By the second day of the visit, she decided it would be a good thing for peace-time Martha to meet the women--the fighting women--of Winthrop Street. "Come in your work clothes," they were told--and they did, and here are a few of them.

Betty drives a taxicab, starts work at eight A.M. Last year she seldom got up before nine, rarely missed an afternoon party. Mary Lou joined the WAAC when her husband joined the Army and gets a terrific kick out of her work at the Army Post. Kay traded nursing for matrimony five years ago. Now she parks her three-year-old at the day nursery and is back at the hospital again as a Registered Nurse. And Aunt Susan herself is busy with meals, housework, sewing--and still gives a good many hours to Red Cross, Civilian Defense and her Victory Garden.

The men of Winthrop Street are either in the Service or busy at essential jobs. It's the women we're talking about! Every one of them who can, is doing a man's work at full-satisfaction to be doing their part in this war.

Here's Martha again! Back home, but she's caught the fighting spirit of those women of Winthrop Street. She went straight to the local branch of the U.S. Employment Service the day she returned, and now she has a full-time job behind a ticket window, filling a vacancy left by a man now in active war service.

There are far more women who could do likewise. Are you by chance one?¹¹

In this single advertisement, Johnson's Wax reminded women that

¹¹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 9 June 1943.

they could pursue one of several roles in the war. They could drive ✓
a taxi, work at a ticket office, stay at home and plant a victory
garden, or work as a nurse. The advertisement further addressed
the issue of mothers in wartime: it indicated that the three-year-old
child of Kay, the registered nurse, would not be adversely affected (✓)
by his mother's "parking" him at the day nursery.

Ladies Home Journal reflected the dichotomous wartime image
of women in a number of advertisements. Selby Arch Preserver Shoes
pictured "Women of the year . . . in action." A mother, clad in
a housedress and standing by her front door, watched as two younger
women, dressed in production overalls and service uniform respectively,
left the house for their jobs.¹² Another example of this theme was
found in a Gossard undergarment advertisement which pictured a woman
clad in a work jumpsuit and gloves, reading a blueprint. Gossard
offered: "Your war effort . . . whether it be on the home front
or production line . . . makes heavy demands on your energy."¹³

Margaret Culkin Banning in the Saturday Review described the
new heroine in non-fiction literature as one who

sees nothing inconsistent in owning a service cap and also
a provocative veil. She likes both. She often intends
to have both and that is where she differs from the woman
of the First World War, who usually believed that she must
make a choice and rule out the one if she had the other.¹⁴

¹²Ladies Home Journal, September 1942, p. 66.

¹³Ladies Home Journal, May 1943, p. 155.

¹⁴Margaret Culkin Banning, "A New Heroine in Literature: She

Banning suggested that the American Woman who emerged in wartime non-fiction literature was a fashionable, "outstanding contemporary type."¹⁵

The Knoxville News-Sentinel reported in 1943 that "Fans Approve Change as War Brings New Type of Women to the Screen." Instead of playing roles that depicted women as idle, glamorous playthings, the wartime movies introduced a variety of female characters who accomplished important deeds--often by self-sacrificing. Wartime movies demonstrated the contributions of selfless women such as "Madame Curie" which starred Greer Garson, and Rosalind Russell's depiction of Sister Elizabeth Kenny, who originated a treatment for polio in "And They Shall Walk." Paulette Goddard and Claudette Colbert portrayed two Army nurses on Bataan in "So Proudly We Hail," and later became shipyard welders offstage. Claudette Colbert also portrayed a refined, middle-class wife who opted to tote a lunch pail and wear overalls as she assumed a war production job while her husband was away in service in "Since You Went Away."¹⁶

Women production workers on the home front--in fact, any type of novel occupation or challenge for women--apparently created successful advertising copy, and Knoxville newspapers utilized this theme extensively, particularly in 1943. Coca-Cola ran several

Can Use both a Veil and a Service Cap," The Saturday Review of Literature, 15 May 1943, p. 22.

¹⁵News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 20 March 1944, sec. C, p. 6.

¹⁶News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 21 April 1943.

advertisements picturing women enjoying the "pause that refreshes" in the Knoxville News-Sentinel in 1943. The working women who drank Coke represented a number of different, innovative female types. A bespectacled draftswoman, clad in slacks, hoisted a Coke. A kerchiefed female production worker, carrying a toolbox and wearing a jumpsuit, was pictured both welding and enjoying a Coke with her cafeteria lunch. In an advertisement which read: "Have a Coca-Cola= [sic] Hail Hail, the Gang's All Here . . . or how to welcome a WAVE on furlough" portrayed several overall-clad production workers drinking Cokes as they gathered around their girl friend who was home on leave from the Navy. Interestingly, Coke portrayed the women workers as both young and middle-aged. Amidst a backdrop of factory chimneys and boilers, the young women in the advertisement exhibited a look of longing on their faces, while the older women seemed cheerfully and robustly stoic about the war and their jobs on the production line.¹⁷

Home Federal Savings and Loan Association, while at the same time enlisting readers to "Go to Church on Easter," pictured kerchiefed, slack-wearing women operating drill presses. Arguing that "young and old, fit-for-fighting or not, Americans everywhere are pitching in to help win the war," Home Federal suggested that "Bond Buying may be your way of fighting the Axis."¹⁸

¹⁷News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 7 June 1943; 17 May 1943; 6 September 1943.

¹⁸News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 21 April 1943.

Rowe Transfer and Storage Company declared that "Women are doing men's work very efficiently" as the corresponding cartoon demonstrated a leggy female taxi driver opening the door for a male customer. Rowe emphasized, however, that if women used Rowe Transfer and Storage Company, they could leave the heavy lifting to the men who were "trained to do the job swiftly and expertly."¹⁹ Chesterfield cigarettes portrayed photographs of two servicewomen and a helmeted welder smoking cigarettes. Chesterfield declared that women and cigarettes "make good everywhere": the cigarettes with their milder taste, and the women production workers and servicewomen by releasing men for active duty in the Armed Services.²⁰

Morris Plan Bank of Knoxville ran an advertisement captioned "Women at Work," which stressed the fact that for the first time, all of their receiving tellers were women. While claiming that "they're doing a grand job," the bank requested that its customers be patient if they had to "stand in line a few minutes longer these days . . . as the job is rather new to most of them."²¹ The Hamilton Bank saluted the bankers who had used foresight and progressive attitudes as well as cooperated with the government's manpower recruitment by hiring women as bank tellers. The bank pointed out that they too were utilizing women as bank tellers,

¹⁹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 7 March 1943, sec. C, p. 8.

²⁰News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 26 May 1943.

²¹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 24 May 1943.

and implored the community that these women were performing a war job just as a riveter would be in a munitions plant.²² Miller's Department Store advertised openings in sales positions at their stores by reporting that several of their workers had left their positions at Miller's to assume work in area war plants. "I'm quitting to take a war production job" titled the advertisement, and while Miller's claimed to be proud of their former employees who had left to take up war jobs, they stressed that "not every one can be a war plant worker." Miller's particularly attempted to appeal to the wives of war workers, who could "find they can work at Miller's and still manage the home. They have the satisfaction of being busy, and they help buy War Stamps and Bonds."²³

Ladies Home Journal extensively utilized the theme of women war production workers in both advertisements and articles. Manufacturers of cars, coffee, tampons, tape, and home appliances all promoted their products with the woman production worker. The Pan-American Coffee Bureau advertised two young kerchiefed and trousered production workers drinking coffee from their lunchbox thermoses. The Coffee Bureau claimed that "There's nothing on this earth like it to quicken energy, sharpen wits and step up efficiency."²⁴ Tampax claimed that "War workers cheer the extra freedom with Tampax."

²²News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 26 October 1943.

²³News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 25 July 1943, sec. A, p. 2.

²⁴Ladies Home Journal, February 1944, p. 85.

This advertiser editorialized that "Things move fast in war time. Changes that might take years now happen in weeks." Tampax suggested that slacks-wearing "girls" found their product "practically a necessity."²⁵

Scotch Tape headlined an advertisement which pictured two very pretty and feminine war workers: "Hitler forgot about these girls." In an appeal to the unemployed women, Scotch Tape offered that "millions of American women have answered Hitler's challenge by changing from sewing circles to swing shifts . . . from beauty shops to machine shops . . . from afternoon teas to TNT plants." Scotch further reported that because women had proven their capabilities on the job, only 56 out of 1,900 war jobs were listed as "unsuitable to women."

Norge household appliances lauded women for assuming new and different jobs in a competent manner; at the same time Norge saluted America for being a "land where men and women are equal in freedom and opportunity" where "millions of women volunteer freely for work so difficult and unfamiliar; only in such a land would they have the incentive to carry on . . ."²⁶ Chrysler Corporation addressed the concept of war training programs for women in an advertisement headed: "Alice has gone to school again." Cast in the prevailing patriotic mode, Chrysler suggested that many women were embarking upon training programs so that they "may add their skill and effort

²⁵Ladies Home Journal, April 1943, p. 82.

²⁶Ladies Home Journal, October 1943, p. 146.

to the 'on time' quantity production of essential equipment, for the men who are fighting the war." In the same advertisement, Chrysler described the types of women who were working in their factories: recent graduates of high school, wives, mothers--in fact "girls and women from all walks of life."²⁷

The novelty of women wearing slacks appeared in numerous articles and advertisements in the Knoxville News-Sentinel. Slacks for women represented more than mere style change; slacks represented a change in the behavior and attitude of the women wearing them. In the minds of many, when a woman wore a pair of slacks, she was thought to be progressive, and even radical in some circles. Ethel Gorham probably summed up the prevailing public attitude toward women wearing slacks in her column, "So Your Husband's Gone to War." She editorialized that people either loved or hated slacks, while some advertisers intimated that "victory won't be ours until every woman wears them." Gorham observed that although there were legitimate times and places for slacks, such as the factory or as lounging pajamas, she argued that they were out of place on the city streets. Stating that the majority of women were violently opposed to slacks, Ms. Gorham concluded that women should wear them only when necessary and appropriate.²⁸

Ruth Millet, whose column appeared in the Knoxville News-Sentinel, suggested that slacks were "merely [a] new symbol of responsibility."

²⁷Ladies Home Journal, January 1943, p. 11.

²⁸News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 18 January 1943.

She argued that slacks were just an "outward expression of women's new role" of becoming the "men of their families--as their husbands go to war." Millet, who claimed that the fad of wearing slacks hurt only the "egos of a few domineering males," reassured them that the fad would not last for long, because she believed that women would gladly relinquish the role and responsibility of wearing the pants of the family when the men returned home.²⁹

Other articles that appeared in the Knoxville News-Sentinel reported the wave of controversy that women wearing slacks had caused. The Mayor of New York reportedly looked the other way when slack-clad women walked down the street, and he rejected the proposal that female air raid wardens wear slacks. Coeds at Wellesley College received a favorable ruling regarding the wearing of slacks on campus the same day that Mme. Chiang Kai-Shek visited the campus--dressed in slacks. In an article entitled "Mme. Chiang 'Ruins' Anti-Slacks Drive," the president of Wellesley College, Commander Mildred H. McAfee, who was also the national commandant for the WAVES, declared that Mme. Chiang's "slacks have ruined our anti-slack campaign. We are now for slacks."³⁰ At Louisiana State University, the Dean of Women, Nora Neill Power, ruled that coeds with fat backs could not wear slacks on campus. When interviewed, Hollywood screen stars Gene Tierney and Paulette Goddard supported the dean in her decision.³¹

²⁹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 7 March 1943.

³⁰News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 2 May 1943, sec. D, p. 8; News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 10 March 1943.

³¹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 26 February 1943.

Knoxville area war plants did not encounter problems associated with their female war workers wearing slacks or sweaters.³² In fact, pants-clad war workers appeared to be well-accepted in the Knoxville area. ALCOA and Fulton Sylphon mandated that slacks be compulsory for specific jobs, and the Knoxville mills directed that women who had assumed jobs formerly held by men wear slacks.³³ The News-Sentinel featured two pretty young Fulton war workers modeling "slack-alls," a one-piece jumpsuit, which the company planned for eventual utilization by all its female production workers.³⁴ Knoxville garment stores such as Miller's and Bowen's ran several advertisements for overalls, coveralls (a one-piece jumpsuit), and matching slacks and shirts for women and men. The advertisements promoted the slacks for use by women in war production work or in their victory gardens.³⁵ The local Knoxville stores did not endorse slacks-wearing for general use; they specifically referred to slacks as apparel for war production work, yard work, or as Miller's suggested, for "an occasional trip to the mountains."³⁶

Not only did the media create a new type of female image in its advertising, but also in its articles which appeared in the Knoxville newspapers and popular women's magazines that stressed the theme

³²News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 6 March 1943.

³³News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 7 March 1943.

³⁴News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 11 March 1943.

³⁵News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 24 March 1943; 17 February 1943.

³⁶News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 14 May 1943.

of the realities of women attempting new and challenging tasks. ✓

Dorothy Thompson, in a Ladies Home Journal article titled "Women and the Coming World," wrote that

war has a curious way of speeding up all historical processes and pushing people and their societies much more rapidly into the future than they would ever move under normal peacetime processes. For instance, it has speeded up, even more rapidly than did the last war, the revolution in the life of women.

She addressed the question of the postwar labor demand for women:

There is no example that I can recall in which a class or group of people who have once succeeded in expanding the area of their lives is ever persuaded again to restrict it. So, although we may presume that a certain percentage of women now employed will prefer to lead purely domestic lives, once the war is over, we cannot count on that being the reaction of the majority.³⁷

George W. Crane, whose column "Case Records of a Psychologist" appeared in the Knoxville News-Sentinel, quipped in an article entitled "Women Taking Over":

One more World War may relegate the American male to the status of the Indian whose women did the work while he remained the fighter and thus picked quarrels with neighboring tribes to help inflate his ego and justify his existence.³⁸

In 1945, Emily Post heralded the new image of women in her revised book of etiquette. While still clinging to traditional etiquette

³⁷ Dorothy Thompson, "Women and the Coming World," Ladies Home Journal, October 1943, p. 6.

³⁸ News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 13 July 1945.

in most areas, Post claimed:

In this modern day, when women are competing with men in politics, in business, and in every profession, it is really senseless to cling to that one obsolete convention--no matter what the circumstances--that the man must buy the tickets, pay the check, pay the taxi, or else be branded a gigolo or a parasite.³⁹

She warned women, however, against attempting to pick men up or chasing members of the opposite sex. "The freedom of today allows her to go to meet him halfway," she cautioned, "but the girl who runs, runs after a man who runs faster."⁴⁰

The Knoxville News-Sentinel reported numerous stories of women attempting new and challenging feats. Ann Curtis, women's national freestyle swimming champion, was the first female to win the annually awarded James E. Sullivan award, given to the outstanding amateur athlete in the United States. Curtis won the award in 1944, followed by the second and third place winners who were male swimmers.⁴¹ Alma Cloud, who was Knoxville's premier female swimmer in 1943, was pictured in the News-Sentinel loaded down with a regulation Army outfit and other G.I. paraphernalia, in which she swam the length of a swimming pool as part of a Red Cross instructors' course.⁴²

On an international level, the News-Sentinel reported that eighteen-year-old Princess Elizabeth of England had joined the ATS, which

³⁹Emily Post, Etiquette: The Blue Book of Social Usage (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1945), p. 171.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 177. ⁴¹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 5 January 1945.

⁴²News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 10 June 1943.

was the British counterpart to the American WACS. The King of England ordered that his daughter receive no special privileges, as she left for training in southern England for a position as an officer-driver.⁴³ Paris correspondents reported in early 1945 that a number of young Frenchwomen had trained in Britain as paratroopers whose jobs were to drop into German-occupied France and to give aid to the French Resistance. The female paratroopers, in addition to their jump training, learned to handle explosives, Morse and secret codes, radio transmission, map reading, German uniform identification, French food rationing, and shooting. A young female paratrooper exclaimed "The most astonished man in the world was certainly the Marquis chief, in charge of parachutists, the night he saw me fall from the skies."⁴⁴

Evelyn Steele, in her book Wartime Opportunities for Women, which was published during the war, claimed that "It's a woman's world." She noted the paradox of the tragedy of war juxtaposed against a period which, at the same time, offered an expansion in careers for women.⁴⁵ The Knoxville News-Sentinel reported in an article titled, "Gets Man's Job," that for the first time in the 150-year history of the New York Stock Exchange, a woman had acquired a job on the floor as a telephone clerk for a brokerage firm.⁴⁶

⁴³News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 5 March 1945.

⁴⁴News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 4 March 1945, sec. C, p. 4.

⁴⁵Evelyn M. Steele, Wartime Opportunities for Women (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1943), p. 5.

⁴⁶News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 2 May 1943, sec. A, p. 2.

Asheville, North Carolina reported that it was the first city in the United States to employ women as traffic police. The eight policewomen, led by Mrs. Mary Jo Eller, Captain, were the Asheville police force's solution to the manpower shortage. Marriage and maturity were prerequisites for a position on Mrs. Eller's squad, as all candidates for the position must be married or widowed and at least thirty-six years of age.⁴⁷ In Knoxville, News-Sentinel columnist Bert Vincent reported that Knoxville sported seven female taxi drivers.⁴⁸

Several organizations, following the example of the Armed Service's WACS, WAVES, SPARS, and FEMARINES (who were usually referred to as Women Marines), utilized the acronym concept for innovative women's tasks. Knoxville's TVA had their WOOPS, the female dam guards. The War Manpower Commission created the WIPS, the Women's Industrial Production Services, whose function was to promote safety for women war workers.⁴⁹ In 1943, twenty-year-old Lorraine Heinisch became the first female baseball umpire in the semi-pro leagues, and was thus dubbed the first WUMP (woman umpire).⁵⁰

On a social level, a Knoxville bridal party utilized a wartime innovation: girl ushers.⁵¹ A Knoxville cartoon summarized the

⁴⁷News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 21 February 1943, sec. B, p. 5.

⁴⁸News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 17 April 1943.

⁴⁹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 21 February 1943, sec. C, p. 3.

⁵⁰News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 22 February 1943; 18 August 1943.

⁵¹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 5 December 1943, sec. D, p. 6.

concept of women assuming new and nontraditional positions in a caricature which pictured a woman sitting behind a desk with a man on her lap holding a dictating pad. The cartoon read: "Take a letter, Mr. Pringle."⁵²

With the novelty of wartime images of women wearing slacks and riveting airplanes came the reality of the community response to women who had assumed nontraditional tasks during the war. The U.S. Department of Labor in its bulletins, "Community Services for Women War Workers," outlined a strategy of assistance which would alleviate a variety of problems which women workers faced. These services included an adjustment in shopping and banking hours, child care, housing, transportation, and recreation.⁵³ In Knoxville, the YWCA hosted three members of the national staff to discuss the problems of women in industry. The national staff recommended that the local YWCA establish programs which would meet local needs and form recreation committees.⁵⁴ Young, single, Knoxville women who worked the swing shift at ALCOA petitioned the YWCA to organize themselves into a club, which the YWCA granted. The women said that recreation opportunities were limited to those who worked the 2:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. shift, because they had to get home while the busses were still running. At the request of the swing shifters, a Knoxville

⁵²News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 1 March 1943.

⁵³U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, "Community Services for Women War Workers," Special Bulletin No. 15 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, February 1944), pp. 1-11.

⁵⁴News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 17 April 1944.

theater showed a morning movie once a week, but "otherwise the field of entertainment is closed."⁵⁵ The ALCOA swing shifters, who dressed in their slacks ready for work, met on Thursdays at the YWCA to play badminton, swim, and lunch.⁵⁶ By the fall of 1944, the YWCA had incorporated several swing shifter and ladies'-day-out luncheons into its schedule.⁵⁷ Various women's basketball and softball teams were established throughout the city, and many war manufacturing firms sponsored teams. The News-Sentinel reported that the Fulton AF of L team posed a threat in the City Recreation League, and Rohm and Haas Lassies beat Standard Knitting Mills in the softball league.⁵⁸

Although women were performing new and nontraditional tasks, they were quite often portrayed as very feminine creatures in the Knoxville newspaper advertisements, popular women's magazines' advertisements, popular literature, and in cartoons. Nell Giles, a feature writer for the Boston Globe during the war, wrote a popular book titled Punch in Susie, which reflected her impressions and observations on women working in the war production factories. Giles, who took a war job in order to "write the glamour out of women in war," nevertheless wrote:

I believe that it is a mistake to think it impossible to be a gentlewoman on a factory bench. Women are changing,

⁵⁵News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 23 May 1943, sec. C, p. 5.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 29 September 1944, sec. C, p. 9.

⁵⁸News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 21 February 1944; 22 May 1943.

yes; but why can't a feminine character be substituted for a feminine hat. Yes, I know it isn't as much fun! If we are to have less perfume and lipstick and nail polish and pink underwear, then let us have more daintiness and good grooming and gentleness and womanly character.⁵⁹

Miller's and George's Department Stores advertised "Camp Support" corsets for women who were performing war work, and consequently engaging in extra straining, standing, and bending over.⁶⁰ Miller's even hired a graduate nurse as a consultant in their corset department as they advertised an "Invitation to America's War Workers" who included production workers pictured in slacks, a housewife clad in her apron, and a nurse wearing her uniform.⁶¹

Cosmetic companies attempted to offset the newly-acquired smudgy war-production image of women by informing their readers that they could retain their femininity even in slacks and amidst the grimy working conditions of war factories. Woodbury facial soap and Pond's cold cream featured photographs of war workers who retained their feminine beauty while assuming nontraditional jobs. Woodbury spotlighted "lovely Vera Dawes Covell," a civilian pilot and a Pan American air traffic controller--in fact the only female "Flight Watch" in the United States--who "keeps 'em flying and keeps her beauty 'on the beam'" with Woodbury facial soap.⁶² Another Woodbury

⁵⁹Nell Giles, Punch in Susie! A Woman's War Factory Diary (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1943), pp. 79-80.

⁶⁰News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 2 July 1943; 2 May 1943, sec. D, p. 3.

⁶¹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 28 February 1943, sec. A, p. 2.

⁶²Ladies Home Journal, February 1943, p. 83

woman "turned her back on the social scene and is finding romance at work!" Woodbury's representative, Marguerite Kirchner, who wired panel boards for Flying Fortresses in the Boeing Plant at Seattle, Washington, exclaimed: "My job is worth every broken finger nail and dirty oil smudge a million times over." But Ms. Kirchner's skin was not jeopardized by her factory job. She gave herself a Woodbury Facial Cocktail every day. Woodbury summarized the image of beauty and the machine: "busier lives--but beauty as usual."⁶³

Hind's blond and big-eyed female mechanic epitomized the image of feminine war workers. She exclaimed: "I'm the mechanic with the soft, white hands!" The same mechanic was pictured in the same advertisement on the arm of a lieutenant. Her pretty white, brace-leted hands showed no evidence of the grime that they had been exposed to earlier in the day. Pond's cold cream utilized the theme: "She's Engaged! She's lovely! She uses Ponds!" In advertisements appearing in January and February 1943, Pond's pictured Anne Nissen, a job instructor in shell manufacturing, and Susan Tucker Huntington, a drill punch operator, at their respective jobs. In the same advertisement, Pond's displayed photographs of their fiances and engagement rings. Susan remarked in the advertisement: "Drills, bolts, screws and nuts have a way of leaving grimy smudges on my face, so I'm being extra fussy about getting my skin extra clean."⁶⁴

⁶³Ladies Home Journal, November 1943, p. 64.

⁶⁴Ladies Home Journal, January 1943, p. 37; February 1943, p. 43.

Constance Luft Huhn, the Head of the House of Tangee, wrote on "War, women, and lipstick" in an advertisement that appeared in an issue of Ladies Home Journal. Huhn exclaimed that for the first time women were working alongside their men while doing the double duty of continuing with traditional woman's work of homemaking. She even went as far as to suggest that: "It's a reflection of the free democratic way of life that you have succeeded in keeping your femininity--even though you are doing man's work!"⁶⁵ Another Tangee advertisement pictured Ms. Huhn against several photographs of women in the various Armed Services uniforms. She claimed:

Many of us may be serving shoulder to shoulder with America's fighting men--but we're still the weaker sex . . . It's still up to us to appear as alluring and lovely as possible. . . . Whether you're in or out of uniform, you'll want to be completely appealing and feminine.⁶⁶

The Tangee advertisements epitomized the dynamic tension of the contradictory messages which war employment offered women. Female war workers were working alongside men, "shoulder to shoulder," which connoted an equality in physical strength, yet women were "still the weaker sex."

In a Knoxville News-Sentinel advertisement which pictured a young woman operating a punch press, George's urged that "It's Every Woman's Duty to Defend Her Beauty!" even if her "hand that rocks the cradle is learning to work with steel . . . doing a man's job

⁶⁵Ladies Home Journal, August 1943, p. 73.

⁶⁶Ladies Home Journal, September 1944, p. 122.

with a man's skill . . . and NOT forgetting femininity!" George's suggested that while "a smudge of grease on a tilted nose, tousled curls and overalls may look fine in a newspaper story and on the job, but across the dinner table, you'll want to look your best."⁶⁷ Another example of Knoxville advertisements' predilections for femininity in war workers was in a Lane Drug Store advertisement in the Knoxville News-Sentinel which was captioned: "Beauty Backs the Attack." Faces of women who represented war workers, service women, nurses, secretaries, and women dressed in evening finery headed the advertisement which also announced Lane's Cosmetic Contest.⁶⁸

The image of beauty and the machine was also perpetrated in articles which appeared throughout the Knoxville News-Sentinel. The paper ran photographs of feminine-looking war workers on and off the job as typified by a photograph titled: "War worker makes pretty picture." The war worker was shown frolicking in the surf of Venice, California on her day off.⁶⁹ Another News-Sentinel photograph entitled "Pretty Welder," depicted female war workers dressed like belly dancers in the Mare Island Follies, for shipyard workers at Welljo, California.⁷⁰ The News-Sentinel further reported that women war workers agreed to wear masks when necessary, if they were becoming.⁷¹

⁶⁷News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 18 May 1943.

⁶⁸News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 18 May 1944.

⁶⁹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 23 April 1943.

⁷⁰News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 26 June 1943.

⁷¹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 12 May 1943.

Women production workers' hairdos and attire created perhaps as much press as any other aspect of their femininity. Long hairdos created a physical hazard for women who worked closely with machines. The Sentinel recounted a story of a St. Louis war plant worker whose hair had become entangled in a machine. Mrs. Eagen, who received two hundred stitches to replace her scalp, was given little hope that she would ever grow hair again.⁷² Many war firms required that women wear hats or kerchiefs to prevent industrial accidents, and some experts suggested that women trim their hair. The War Production Board wrote to Paramount Pictures and declared that actress Veronica Lake's "peek-a-boo" hairdo, which was imitated by a large number of women, was a menace to female war production workers. Paramount Pictures and Veronica complied, and she began wearing her hair on top of her head.⁷³

Despite the suggestion that women bob their hair, they were extolled to do so in a feminine manner. An article which appeared in the women's section of the Sentinel extolled "Work and Be Beautiful: Don't let war work rob you of beautiful hair and a fine complexion."⁷⁴ The Knoxville Journal reported as early as 1942 that "the swing of women-at-work for their nation's defense has created a new coiffure, a short-cut curly affair."⁷⁵ The Sunday Parade

⁷²News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 28 July 1944.

⁷³News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 16 February 1943.

⁷⁴News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 14 February 1943, sec. D, p. 6.

⁷⁵Knoxville Journal, 2 February 1942.

section of the Journal claimed that the

new victory bob is trim yet feminine: World War II still has short haircuts but they are anything but unfeminine. Today's women have made up their minds that efficiency does not demand harshness, that good grooming tones up morale and helps women to meet wartime problems.⁷⁶

The issue of women production workers wearing sweaters on the job created quite a controversy when seventy-five women walked off the job in a Bridgeport, Connecticut airplane factory after management had decreed that sweaters could not be worn at work.⁷⁷ Although management was against the sweater wearing, labor supported sweaters. Hollywood actress Ann Sheridan declared that a "properly filled sweater is no hazard at a machine."⁷⁸ The two-month controversy was resolved when union and management agreed that the company would survey all jobs which required safety clothing, and purchase work clothes in two styles and in two colors for those jobs. Women who worked at jobs which did not require the safety outfits were permitted to dress within the established regulations of clothing, which consisted of jacket and slacks. The women had complained previously that these outfits were expensive, unattractive, sloppy, and hard to clean. The company further noted that women on certain jobs could wear sweaters until the safety survey was complete. Ann Sheridan backed down from her initial assessment of sweaters and machines

⁷⁶Knoxville Journal, 8 February 1942.

⁷⁷News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 18 March 1943.

⁷⁸News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 18 February 1943.

and commented: "Big sweaters on little girls cause accidents, little sweaters on big girls make men whistle."⁷⁹

Knoxville war plant operators were not worried about the sweater controversy. They noted that their female production workers wore slacks and sweaters, and that neither issue created a problem for them.⁸⁰ None of the Knoxville war plants established regulations which stipulated that their female employees could not wear sweaters. Breezy Wynn, a Knoxville garment manufacturer, commented: "We don't care what they wear--slacks, sweaters or what have you . . . that sweater girl fuss is a lot of foolishness. If wearing sweaters keeps up the workers' morale, so much the better."⁸¹ In a headline titled: "Sweater Girls OK at Appalachian Mills," the News-Sentinel reported that ILGWU members at Appalachian Mills wear sweaters to work and "neither plant officials nor fellow workers have voiced a single objection."⁸² This issue generated front page news in the News-Sentinel.

Feminine images of women were not confined to beauty and the machine. Other images of femininity abounded. Pinup girls enjoyed an unprecedented popularity during the war. Numerous war manufacturing firms throughout the nation selected pinup girls, such as "Bubbles" Dryer, a die polisher from Cleveland, Ohio, whose pictures were sent

⁷⁹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 4 April 1943.

⁸⁰News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 6 March 1943.

⁸¹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 7 March 1943.

⁸²News-Ser:itinel (Knoxville), 7 March 1943.

to former employees who were away in service.⁸³ Fulton Sylphon selected Miss Arvil Legg as its most beautiful employee, who made headlines by her entrance into a regional competition in Louisville, Kentucky, for the title of "Miss Reynolds Metals."⁸⁴ Various branches of the Armed Services selected an assortment of favorites typified by the Marines' selection of Tommeyer Adams' leggy pinup photo as their "Foxhole Favorite."⁸⁵ A wartime New York model attempted to explain: "A wolf is still a wolf and a man a man, and they go for the girls whose pictures they can pin up on a wall."⁸⁶

The plea to women to remain feminine--even if they were assuming new types of employment and tasks--emanated from a variety of sources. (V) George W. Crane, whose column appeared in the News-Sentinel, implored women to "wear a smile; accentuate your femininity" and to avoid masculine type fads such as short haircuts, shoulder pads, and slacks. He warned: "no real male gets a lift out of kissing or fondling a 'half man.'"⁸⁷ Crane dogmatically decreed that

girls are probably driving men into homosexuality by their boyish haircuts, cigarettes, and liquor, vulgar language, and slacks. If a man wants to fall in love with a man, he'd prefer the real McCoy instead of the imitation.⁸⁸

⁸³News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 20 June 1943.

⁸⁴News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 7 January 1945, sec. A, p. 8.

⁸⁵News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 13 February 1944, sec. C, p. 6.

⁸⁶News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 19 June 1944.

⁸⁷News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 4 January 1943.

⁸⁸News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 4 January 1943.

The Pennsylvania Railroad reported that their feminine employees made the train ride much more enjoyable for their passengers. The "girl brakemen [who] make train ride much sweeter" received standard wages for brakemen, and collected tickets, checked signals and switches, and called stations, just as their male counterparts did.⁸⁹ Sanitary Laundry in Knoxville advertised their cleaning services, and at the same time sermonized to women war workers. Against two pictures of women, one in overalls on the production line, another in a hat and dress, Sanitary warned: "You want to be more feminine than ever in your off-duty moments."⁹⁰

The traditional image of the feminine, talkative female was personified in a South Central Bell advertisement. The phone company pictured a woman chatting on the phone in a plea to request that customers limit phone calls in order to keep the lines clear for essential war calls.⁹¹ Greensboro, North Carolina, reported that over 5,000 women, some of whom had been waiting since 4:00 a.m., blitzed the federal building to purchase nylon stockings legally which had been confiscated from the black market.⁹² Even at the Republican National Convention, "Dewey's Blonds and Bricker's Brunettes Provide Rival Sex Appeal for Convention."⁹³

⁸⁹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 7 February 1943, sec. A, p. 6.

⁹⁰News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 28 February 1943, sec. A, p. 12.

⁹¹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 10 May 1943.

⁹²News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 23 June 1944.

⁹³News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 26 June 1944.

Perhaps the most blatant accentuation of women's traditional feminine traits was found in cartoons. D'Alessio, in his cartoon series entitled "These Women!" pictured a foreman scolding a young female war worker. The foreman admonished: "Valentine's Day or not, young lady, keep your mind to your work." The young lady was riveting heart-enclosed initials in the wall of the war factory.⁹⁴ Another cartoon pictured a woman production worker accidentally drilling into a male worker who was inside a fuselage. Another male worker who was standing nearby asked: "Is this fuselage supposed to give out a piercing scream?"⁹⁵ Ladies Home Journal ran a cartoon which pictured two production workers walking through the factory. They were helmeted, gloved, and covered from head to toe in a work uniform which disguised their sex. One worker said to the other worker: "It's of heather-colored wool. The jacket is hip length, with the neckline accented by two white pique bows."⁹⁶ In another News-Sentinel cartoon, an overall-clad female war worker who was stationed in an area which cautioned: "Danger! High Explosives," nearly dropped an explosive as a mouse ran beneath her feet and scared her.⁹⁷ These three cartoons accented women as typically feminine,

⁹⁴News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 14 February 1943, sec. C, p. 3.

⁹⁵News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 29 August 1943.

⁹⁶Ladies Home Journal, October 1943, p. 160.

⁹⁷News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 4 April 1943, sec. C, p. 4.

whose thought patterns ranged from fashion to romance to fear of a mouse.

While Knoxville newspaper advertisements were conveying images of the multifaceted--if often very feminine--women, specific advertisers, particularly those purveyors of household equipment such as furniture and appliances, continued to appeal to the traditional homemaker image of the American woman. In a sizable News-Sentinel advertisement, the Knox County Red Cross claimed: "Inspiration . . . Woman's Role--Today as Always." The Red Cross eulogized: "The unsung hero of every war sits at the hearthside. Unfeted and unpraised, she is the moving force and inspiration of every righteous victory and every righteous peace."⁹⁸ Fowler Brothers Furniture Company ran several advertisements throughout 1943 which appealed to the "Minute Woman '43." The Fowler advertisements extolled American homemakers in their exclamation that

Your Home is Vital to Victory: Mrs. America, you're doing your duty well! Continue to make your home the citadel of American faith and preserve the morale of your family and friends. . . . Be a Minute Woman of 1943 right in your own home, hasten the hour of victory.⁹⁹

Fowlers, not surprisingly, glorified the home by advertising, "in these days of rationing and war work, home is more than ever the center of family life."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 14 February 1943, sec. D, p. 10.

⁹⁹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 13 January 1943.

¹⁰⁰News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 23 May 1943, sec. D, p. 8.

Knoxville laundries pictured Uncle Sam in an ad with his arm around a middle-aged woman, saying "Mrs. Housewife, You are Uncle Sam's Partner." The laundries suggested that housewives would help win the war if they helped to ease the burden of the overworked laundries by using less demanding services such as the "family finish."¹⁰¹ Clark and Jones Music Company encouraged women to "stay at home and like it with Victor Records."¹⁰² In several advertisements which appeared in the Ladies Home Journal were aproned women, busy with their cooking. A Chef Boy-Ar-Dee advertisement noted that women were serving America by serving "foods that build strength and endurance and courage."¹⁰³

Thus, traditional and nontraditional images concerning the roles of working wives and mothers abounded throughout the war. But, although nontraditional images of married working wives and mothers surfaced during the war, generally the image of the husband as the authority figure remained strong.

Advertisements in Ladies Home Journal portrayed a particularly strong traditional image of wives, even if they had assumed non-traditional jobs in war production. General Electric advertised a postwar all-electric kitchen that Madge would want to return to when she quit her war job. Madge, an attractive war worker, watched her husband as he knotted his tie. The husband, who obviously held

¹⁰¹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 11 June 1943.

¹⁰²News-Sentinel (Knoxville) 7 February 1943.

¹⁰³Ladies Home Journal, April 1943, p. 155.

a white collar job, was glancing over his shoulder at his wife as he said:

I've been wondering about my wife . . . don't get me wrong. I felt darn proud of Madge when she took over a man-sized job in a war plant. But here's what got me stewing. At the plant, she just pushes buttons and zing! The work's done automatically! Well--how's she going to feel about going back to the old housekeeping routine after the war?¹⁰⁴

Madge and her husband, who appeared to enjoy a middle-class life-style, epitomized the conventional family where the husband remained the obvious authority figure. A Jergens Lotion advertisement in the same magazine further reflected the middle class, traditional image of wives. Corinne MacLennan claimed: "Our marriage comes first so though I work hard for victory I keep my hands attractive." Corinne, who changed tires as part of her job with the volunteer motor corps, always kept a bottle of Jergens Lotion handy--just as she did at home when her hands became chapped from housework.¹⁰⁵

In a Chrysler Corporation advertisement that claimed they had hired over 25,000 women to replace former male employees who had entered the armed services, the company appealed to the homemaker to enter war production service. "I was a housewife only yesterday . . . and in doing war-production work, I feel that I am in this war right along with my husband."¹⁰⁶ Although this advertisement

¹⁰⁴Ladies Home Journal, July 1944, p. 107.

¹⁰⁵Ladies Home Journal, January 1943, p. 49.

¹⁰⁶Ladies Home Journal, December 1943, p. 11.

attempted to appeal to the patriotic impulses of women who had loved ones in the service, it cast women in a more egalitarian light than the previous two advertisements. Chrysler complimented the women workers' "natural skill and nimble fingers" which enabled them to learn quickly to use the rivet gun, bucking bar, reamer, and drill during their training period.¹⁰⁷

Advertisements generally pictured working women in the roles of both war worker and housewife, although occasionally ads focused solely on the war production aspect as exemplified by the Hamilton Bank advertisement which pictured a young female riveter. "Today 'Mrs. America' is using Bank Service more than ever before."¹⁰⁸ Tennessee Eastman Corporation in its desperate attempt to recruit workers for the massive government project at Oak Ridge, ran a byline simply headlined: "The Housewife and the War." The advertisement claimed that woman's place was in the home and plant. Eastman, which claimed that all types of women were performing vital war work in its operations, was straightforward in its assessment of the durability of employment for women. "Until this war is over, there will be a continuous demand for intelligent women desiring to serve their country."¹⁰⁹

Sanitary Laundry of Knoxville promoted their "Sunshine Service," which they claimed was the favorite for busy housewives, in a cartoon which pictured an overalled, kerchiefed, lunch pail-toting wife

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 25 May 1943, p. 12.

¹⁰⁹ News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 22 July 1944, p. 6.

leaving her house for work. She called back over her shoulder to her husband who was preparing to paint the house while he watched their child, who was digging in the victory garden: "Don't forget, dear--call Sanitary! and be sure to tell them we want the Sunshine Service." The Sunshine Service provided laundered and folded garments. "Thus the housewife can iron at her convenience!"¹¹⁰ Even though the husband had assumed a nontraditional posture of child-care, he was still performing sex-stereotyped jobs around the house. He did the painting while the wife still ironed when she returned from her shift at the war plant.

Windex was less subtle in reminding working wives that they still were bequeathed with the job of housekeeping even if they worked outside the home. Windex queried: "Having Trouble Working Double?" Windex continued:

Job Number One
for our Dorothy B.
Is doing canteen work
9:30 to 3.
Job Number Two
you can tell from this scene
Is running a house
and keeping it clean.¹¹¹

Psychiatrists, sociologists, purveyors of etiquette, and columnists all proffered advice to wives concerning their role in the war. Although it is unlikely that war production workers in Knoxville--or

¹¹⁰News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 28 March 1943, sec. D, p. 5.

¹¹¹Ladies Home Journal, December 1943, p. 54.

elsewhere--read the sociologists' manuals, they did peruse the popular magazines and newspapers which reflected the prevailing professional advice. Generally, the "experts" recommended an egalitarian type of marriage, although they usually agreed that mothers of young children should postpone or curtail careers or jobs--if economically feasible--until their children were older.

Eleanor Roosevelt contributed an article to The Good Housekeeping Marriage Book: Twelve Ways to a Happy Marriage entitled: "Should Wives Work?" Ms. Roosevelt, in answer to the question, "is it possible for a woman to marry and still have a career?" suggested that the majority of married women did not possess a career. Rather, if they worked, they generally were engaged in a non-career type of employment. She further commented that the question implied that "marriage in itself is not a career. Anyone who believes that has no real understanding of marriage."¹¹² Ms. Roosevelt proposed instead that if a wife contemplated marriage and work she should ask herself the question: "Are you able to carry on two full-time jobs?" Ms. Roosevelt believed that the various aspects of marriage could be a satisfying career for most women (with the exceptions of those who had established careers before marriage and would "find much of the savor of life is removed when they are not doing something which requires independent thought and initiative"). Although she believed that "any young couple is fortunate when the woman has to do everything

¹¹²William Frederick Bigelow, The Good Housekeeping Marriage Book: Twelve Ways to a Happy Marriage (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1938), p. 43.

about the house and does it happily," she declined to offer specific advice to couples, but urged them to carefully study their own situation in determining whether or not the wife should work.¹¹³

From an even more egalitarian perspective, Joseph Kirk Folsom in his sociological treatise, The Family and Democratic Society, counseled that equality between sexes was "part and parcel of the larger issue between Fascism and Democracy. . . . Democracy requires justice and equality not only between races, nations and classes, but between the two most basic divisions of mankind: men and women."¹¹⁴ Paul Popenoe, Director of the American Institute of Family Relations, extolled the concept of egalitarian marriage as he urged Ladies Home Journal readers to "Make Your Marriage a Partnership." In a time when democracy was one of the ultimate values, he proposed that American marriages were ideally a "democratic copartnership--a fifty-fifty relationship in which each spouse has equal rights, privileges, duties, responsibilities, and obligations." In his opinion, less than one-third of American couples--even among the educated--had achieved this "fifty-fifty status."¹¹⁵ Mr. Popenoe, in a later article, cautioned his readers to "Keep Your Individuality in

¹¹³Ibid., pp. 44-45, 52-53.

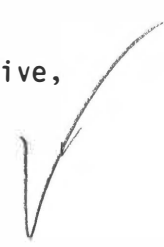
¹¹⁴Joseph Kirk Folsom, The Family and Democratic Society (New York: J. Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1943), pp. 632, 634.

¹¹⁵Paul Popenoe, "Keep Your Individuality in Marriage," Ladies Home Journal, January 1944, p. 90.

Marriage," and proposed a quiz to his reader questioning: "How submissive are you?"¹¹⁶

Ladies Home Journal represented both sides of the coin concerning the issue of whether or not wives should work. While the traditional image of homemaker provided the prevalent theme which ran throughout the wartime issues of the magazine, a number of articles appeared which extolled the concept of wives working. In January 1944, the magazine published two articles which represented opposing views concerning employment of married women. Leslie B. Hohman, a psychiatrist at Johns Hopkins University, wrote that "Working Wives Make the Best Wives." Dr. Hohman conveyed she had discovered in her psychiatric practice that the claim that working wives lost interest in their husbands and families was not true. The "greatest danger to marriages in everyday situations is in not remaining intelligently alive. The greatest danger is boredom."¹¹⁷

The opposing view was offered by "a successful career wife" who declared that "You Can't Have a Career and be a Good Wife." The anonymous author, who was writing from a middle-class perspective, suggested that the three reasons why women chose to work after marriage--which included a desire to earn extra money, to combat loneliness and boredom, and to express themselves--were all dangerous to the survival of the marriage. The author marveled at women's



¹¹⁶Paul Popenoe, "Keep Your Individuality in Marriage," Ladies Home Journal, November 1942, p. 18.

¹¹⁷Leslie B. Hohman, "Working Wives Make the Best Wives," Ladies Home Journal, January 1944, p. 90.

"suicidal hunger for success outside the home," and claimed that a marriage was generally more successful if it had one spouse who generated the ideas and plans for the family, and another spouse who was the audience.

Husbands become discontented as they feel themselves neglected . . . the real trouble, of course, is that in his heart, whether he himself knows it or not, he has an age-old male resentment of the fact that his woman is out in the world about her own business instead of staying safely in the cave he provides for her.¹¹⁸

Ethel Gorham, whose column appeared in the News-Sentinel, proposed a variety of suggestions to wives in her byline, "So Your Husband's Gone to War!" Her advice ranged from volunteering, to enlisting in training, to assuming a war job. Gorham noted that many new employment opportunities were opening up for women, and that many factories had incorporated part-time schedules for women who found full-time work too cumbersome with household duties.¹¹⁹ She also suggested that wives volunteer for home jobs such as air raid wardens, USO workers, Red Cross canteen workers, bandage rollers, and knitters. Gorham also advised wives to enroll in the American Women's Voluntary Service training courses on civil defense, photography, Morse code, gardening, and physical fitness.¹²⁰ At the same time, she warned

¹¹⁸"You Can't Have a Career and be a Good Wife," Ladies Home Journal, January 1944, pp. 91, 107.

¹¹⁹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 7 January 1943.

¹²⁰News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 8 January 1943.

women to guard against lonely holidays by inviting friends over for easy suppers, and to avoid criticizing women who were giving up "nothing but their mink coats."¹²¹ For mothers who desired to work, Gorham suggested that they investigate the various child care options available to them such as the maid, city-sponsored nursery school, WPA, or church nursery school.¹²² Generally speaking, Gorham did not advise wives whether or not they should take a war job or stay home; rather, her primary message to wives was that they should become active participants in the war effort in some capacity.

Despite the multiplicity of opportunities which were available to women during the war, the traditional claim of marriage remained a strong reality, both nationwide and in Knoxville. According to Census Bureau figures, between 1940 and 1943, more than one million marriages had taken place as compared to similar periods in prewar years.¹²³ In Knox County, the number of marriages just prior to the war ranged between 1,500 and 1,600 per year for 1940 and 1941. The figures plummeted to 1,055 for 1942, but increased to over 1,300 in 1943 and 1944. In 1945, the number of marriages surpassed the annual prewar figures, and peaked at over 2,200 in 1946.¹²⁴

The wartime strains of separation, anxiety, differentiation in sex roles, and a relaxation in sexual mores created an even more

¹²¹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 4 January 1943; 9 January 1943.

¹²²News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 6 January 1943.

¹²³Hartman, Homefront, p. 164.

¹²⁴Information made available to the author from Knox

significant impact on divorces. Between 1940 and 1945, the national divorce rate for women increased from less than 9 per 1,000 in 1940 to over 14 per 1,000 in 1945.¹²⁵ The number of divorces in Knox County rose at an alarming rate throughout the war. Between 1940 and 1942, the number of divorces remained generally the same as there were approximately 800 divorces in 1940, 874 in 1941, and 900 in 1942. In 1943, the number of divorces soared to over 1,200, and in 1944 there were actually more divorces than marriages in Knox County, as the divorces reached 1,777. The divorce incidences reached a wartime peak in 1945 at 2,338, and by 1950 decreased to approximately 1,500.¹²⁶

As the prosperity of the war years replaced the deprivations of the preceding decade's Great Depression, the general public accepted the concept of married women working, particularly in labor-starved war production areas. The employment of mothers of young children, however, remained a hotly debated topic among sociologists, psychologists, and educators. The media, for the most part, favored the position that mothers of young children remain at home. Large-scale employment of mothers was blamed for the increase in juvenile delinquency: babies were reported locked in cars while their mothers pulled their eight-hour shifts. Horror stories as well as success stories abounded as the public attempted to come to terms with this quantum

County archives, Bonnie Smith, clerk.

¹²⁵Anderson, Wartime Women, p. 83.

¹²⁶Court Records, Knox County Archives, information collected by Ruth Suniko.

progression in women's employment. Throughout the war, despite the increasing claims on mothers outside the home, the birth rates nationwide and in Knoxville increased significantly over Depression all-time lows of 18-19 per 1,000 population. The national birth rate climbed to 20.4 in 1941, and by 1943 it was 22.7. The rate dropped during 1944 and 1945, when many couples were separated by the war, but it rose again in 1945, and remained at approximately 25 per 1,000 throughout the remainder of the 1940s.¹²⁷ Knoxville birth rates paralleled the national average for 1940 and 1941 at 19.4 and 20.6 respectively. It surpassed the national average, however, in 1943 at a rate of 24.5. During the years 1944 and 1945, the birth rate dropped to around 23, but rose to 27.6 in 1946, as servicemen came home.¹²⁸

As both the birth rates and the employment rates of mothers increased during the war, the "experts" addressed the issue in popular literature and in governmental directives. Dr. Leslie B. Hohman, in a Ladies Home Journal article titled, "Can Women in War Industry be Good Mothers?" argued that "if children feel neglected, it is because they have neglectful or inadequate parents; not because their mother has a job outside the home." Dr. Hohman stressed that a child developed a perception of security if he was surrounded by a stable environment. Refuting what Dr. Hohman claimed was a widespread

¹²⁷Hartman, Homefront, p. 170.

¹²⁸State of Tennessee, Department of Public Health, "Annual Bulletin of Vital Statistics, Including Summary Vital Statistics," 1940, 1941, 1943, 1944, 1945. Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee, pp. 31, 31, 31, 31, 31.

American fear that the increase in women's employment was creating a possibility of "ending with a generation of orphans of the storm," she claimed that working mothers usually contributed to the creation of a stable environment for children.¹²⁹ Mary Beckman, whom the same magazine featured as "the story of a mother working on two fronts," claimed that her job did not cause her to neglect her family. To the contrary, she believed that her war job made her a "more efficient homemaker."¹³⁰

On a more utilitarian theme, Parents magazine addressed the problem of how married women could contribute to the increased requirements for workers without "endangering their homes and families."¹³¹ Parents suggested that because the demand for women workers was increasing, mothers in specific labor shortage areas would be needed. The magazine recommended that mothers should consider several factors before they assumed a war job. These included whether or not the mother lived in a war-production/labor-shortage area, the availability of good child care, and the strengths and abilities of the mother who would need to "carry a double load."¹³² Ladies Home Journal assumed the inevitability of employment of mothers

¹²⁹Leslie B. Hohman, "Can Women in War Industry be Good Mothers?" Ladies Home Journal, October 1942, pp. 100-101.

¹³⁰"Meet the Beckmans," Ladies Home Journal, October 1942, p. 95.

¹³¹Frances Frisbie O'Donnell, "The War Needs Women," Parents, September 1943, pp. 24-26, 37.

¹³²Ibid.

in wartime in an article titled, "Children of Working Mothers." While not taking a stand, the magazine emphasized that when mothers decided to seek employment, it was imperative that adequate child care be provided.¹³³

From a perspective which opposed mothers working, the Ladies Home Journal featured the life of soprano Lois White Eck, who "gave up my career to save my marriage." The article editorialized:

The story of a typical American family may usually be the story of the mother; but, if she fills to the full the old-fashioned but still good definition of a wife as a helpmeet, the husband and father is really the head of the house. Moreover, his work has to be the foundation; and when Lois Eck came to understand this, the life of the Ecks as a successful family was assured.¹³⁴

When Mrs. Eck was asked what her daughters' talents were, she replied: "I don't know. The career I am educating them for is marriage, pure and simple. It's the only lasting happiness a woman can have."¹³⁵

Armram Scheinfeld, in his appeal for larger families, claimed that "Motherhood's Back in Style." In his Ladies Home Journal article, Scheinfeld saw a trend toward larger families because

not only will a war-ravaged world want more children, but because increasing numbers of women, disillusioned with

¹³³Dorothy Thompson, "Children of Working Mothers," Ladies Home Journal, July 1942, p. 6.

¹³⁴Booth Tarkington, "I Gave Up My Career to Save My Marriage," Ladies Home Journal, July 1942, p. 6.

¹³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 132.

their present roles or with what the workaday world can offer, will turn toward motherhood as the happiest road to fulfillment.¹³⁶

Ruth Millet, Knoxville News-Sentinel columnist, reflected the usual objection to employment of mothers in her comments that staying home with their children was more important than the big paycheck that enabled them to buy the "extras." While stressing that financial needs forced some mothers to work outside the home, she condemned mothers who worked when they could afford to stay home. She queried:

Can't such mothers be made to see that they can't make up to a kid for leaving him alone all day by giving him spending money, or sticking him in a day nursery, or hiring someone else to take care of him? There just isn't any way a mother can pay a youngster for shifting him off on someone else.¹³⁷

Ms. Millet's only "consoling thought" regarding "women getting jobs at the expense of their young children" was that a woman who assumed a job at the sacrifice of her child's prosperity, could not possibly have been "much of a mother in the first place, so the child isn't giving up a really good mother."

Despite the negative images which often accompanied the concept of working mothers, the fact remained that mothers of young children increasingly entered areas of employment as the war progressed. Although government and employers were often reluctant to hire mothers,

¹³⁶Armram Scheinfeld, "Motherhood's Back in Style," Ladies Home Journal, September 1944, p. 136.

¹³⁷News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 4 July 1943, sec. D, p. 6.

the increasing need for workers in labor-shortage areas led to their recruitment and to the development of child care strategies.

In 1942, the War Manpower Commission clearly stated that mothers of young children should be employed only after all other sources of labor had been exhausted. At the same time the WMC developed strategies to provide access to employment for mothers, particularly in labor shortage areas. The Commission's policies in this regard read:

I. The first responsibility of women with young children in war as in peace, is to give suitable care in their own homes to their children.

II. In order that established family life may not be unnecessarily disrupted, special efforts to secure the employment in industry of women with young children should be deferred until full use has been made of all other sources of labor supply.

III. Barriers against the employment of women with young children should not be set up by employers. The decision as to gainful employment should in all cases be an individual decision made by the woman herself in the light of the particular conditions prevailing in her home.

IV. Whenever it is found that women with young children are gainfully employed in essential activities, or that labor requirements of essential activities have not been met after the exhaustion of all other sources of labor supply and that to meet such requirements women with young children must be recruited, it is essential that:

(a) Such women be employed at such hours and on such shifts as will cause the least disruption in their family life; and (b) If any such women are unable to arrange for the satisfactory care of their children at home during their working hours, adequate facilities be provided for the day care of their children during working hours. Such facilities should be developed as community projects and not under the auspices of individual employers or employer groups.¹³⁸

¹³⁸"Employment in War Work of Women with Young Children," Monthly Labor Review, December 1942, p. 1184.

Early in 1942, Congress passed the Lanham Act which provided federally-funded emergency support for child-care programs in war production communities. Although the act did not stipulate specific funding for child care, government administrators determined that resources for child care, which included nursery schools and nursery school personnel, could be encompassed in the act.¹³⁹ In July 1942, the WPA called a conference concerning day care for working mothers. At the conference, the WPA reported that Congress had recently passed legislation which provided an appropriation of "not less than \$6,000,000 by the WPA" for a day care program for children of working mothers. Although the law did not stipulate that the mothers were required to work in the war industries, the limited amount of funds dictated that the day care services would be utilized primarily by children of mothers in war industries.¹⁴⁰

In 1943, the WPA had provided forty-one nursery schools which enrolled 1,300 in thirteen communities throughout the state of Tennessee.¹⁴¹ Knoxville was described by the News-Sentinel as a "pace setter in Tennessee in the WPA-financed nursery schools for

¹³⁹Anderson, Wartime Women, p. 123; "Conference on Day Care of Children of Working Mothers Called by W.P.A. in Washington, July 1, 1942," Women's Bureau, Record Group 86, National Archives, Washington, D.C., pp. 1, 2.

¹⁴⁰Ibid.

¹⁴¹Tennessee State Department of Education, "General Outline of Proposed State Program for Services to Children of Working Mothers," Record Group 215. National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 1.

underprivileged children."¹⁴² In 1931, the City Association of Women's Clubs had initiated a project which resulted in the creation of the Moses Nursery School for children whose mothers worked. The Moses center, which was described as "one of the first of its kind in the South," was operated under the auspices of the School Board.¹⁴³ By April 30, 1943, when the WPA nursery schools were terminated, Knoxville had established ten such child care centers throughout the city which had been staffed by approximately fifty WPA nursery school workers. The WPA funded 75 percent of the operating expenses of the Knoxville nursery schools, with the remainder of the funding provided by the county, city, and the Community Chest.¹⁴⁴

Since wartime Knoxville was considered an "overpopulated, acute-labor-shortage area," the federally-sponsored Children's War Service Child Care Facilities were established to provide day care for children of working mothers. The purpose of the facilities, which were established under the auspices of the City School Board, was to provide a desirable experience for children whose mothers are working; to release women for work and accelerate war production; and to reduce absenteeism of those mothers already at work."¹⁴⁵ The first Children's War Service project in Knoxville was the Beaumont nursery school-

¹⁴²News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 27 June 1943, sec. C, p. 3.

¹⁴³Ibid.

¹⁴⁴News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 15 May 1943; 1 May 1943.

¹⁴⁵Knoxville City Schools Department of Child Care Facilities, "Operating Child Care Units," Record Group 215, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

recreation project. In fact, Knoxville was the first southern city to apply for Lanham Act assistance for nursery schools.¹⁴⁶ A certificate of war necessity of \$60,000 in federal funding--from the Federal Works Administration in cooperation with the U.S. Office of Education--was designated to refurbish and maintain the old Beaumont School which would house facilities to care for children of Knoxville war workers. The Beaumont facility--which eventually was awarded \$33,000 in federal money--was designed to provide facilities for approximately 350 children, whose ages ranged from two to seventeen years.¹⁴⁷

In early May 1943, President Roosevelt approved an additional \$36,200 of Lanham Act and Federal Works Administration money to operate ten additional Children's War Service Center nursery schools in Knoxville for children whose mothers worked. The city of Knoxville, by way of the City Council, County Court, Community Chest, City Association of Women's Clubs, church contributions and parental fees, contributed \$33,860 toward the nursery schools in order to receive the federal funding.¹⁴⁸ The total federal funding for the ten nursery schools and the Beaumont facility totaled \$69,440.00, which was matched by \$58,256.00 of local money.¹⁴⁹ The ten nurseries, which planned to accommodate nearly 500 children, were formerly

¹⁴⁶News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 27 June 1943, sec. C, p. 3.

¹⁴⁷News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 17 February 1943; 27 June 1943, sec. C, p. 3.

¹⁴⁸Knoxville City Schools, "Child Care Facilities," p. 4.

¹⁴⁹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 27 June 1943, sec. C, p. 3.

operated by the WPA for the purpose of assisting low-income families and were consequently reorganized in 1943 to aid working mothers in war production.¹⁵⁰

Seven of the Children's War Service Centers opened in Knoxville in mid-May 1943. The Centers, which were located near war industries or neighborhoods which housed large numbers of working mothers, were racially segregated. Centers for white children were opened at Lonsdale, Mountain View, Oakwood School, and Old Pickle School. Those at East Church Avenue and Maynard were for black children.¹⁵¹ In June, an eighth nursery was opened at South Knoxville School, which accepted children through age ten. Miss Dorcas Wilson, Director of the Children's War Service Program, reported that none of the centers was filled as of June 1943, and that they were planning to open additional centers as they were needed. The Knoxville News-Sentinel carried an application form for the centers which read:

If you are a working mother and have difficulty in providing care for your children (two to 12 years of age) or if you are able to work but are not working because you cannot arrange care for your children, fill¹⁵² out this blank, and mail to Knoxville Nursery Schools.

The nursery schools provided a program which emphasized nutrition, health, and the development of the child's mental, physical, social,

¹⁵⁰News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 1 May 1943.

¹⁵¹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 15 May 1943.

¹⁵²News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 24 June 1943.

and emotional skills. The centers provided a hot lunch, breakfast if desired, milk, and vitamin supplements as well as immunization and regular health inspection. For school-age children, the centers provided before-school care of breakfast, rest, and activities as well as snacks and recreation for after-school hours. The hours of operation varied from center to center, but they ranged from 5:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. to accommodate as many shift schedules as possible.¹⁵³

Betty H. Luck, field supervisor for the Federal Works Agency, praised Knoxville's Children's War Service program: "I found the eight operating units showing very steady and satisfactory growth." She also extolled Knoxville for its ability to contribute 40 percent of the expenses for the month of June which she said was excellent for the first month of operation.¹⁵⁴ The News-Sentinel also commended the War Service Centers, and reported that 350 children were "getting the best possible care that skilled training and organization can offer children between the ages of two and 12 whose home life has been disrupted." The News-Sentinel article examined the questions which had been raised in regard to working mothers: "Is there really any satisfactory substitute for home life for a child? Can children be kept happy and amused and well-fed while their mothers work?" The News-Sentinel claimed that Knoxville knew

¹⁵³Knoxville City Schools, "Operating Child Care Units," pp. 4, 5.

¹⁵⁴News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 13 August 1943.

the answers to those questions "and in that respect is unique among southern cities." The answers, stated the News-Sentinel, were found in the Children's War Service Centers.¹⁵⁵

The legacy of the WPA nurseries and the fact that Knoxville was successful in receiving governmental assistance in the form of Lanham Act funds testified to the city's acceptance of working mothers. The question remains, however, if it was an across-the-board acceptance of working mothers or a recognition of the economic necessity for lower-income mothers to work, in addition to a wartime labor expedient. The Children's War Service Child Care Facilities were located in the working-class sections of Knoxville, generally near the textile and apparel mills. None of the surveyed female employees who worked at Fulton Sylphon (which was not located in the clothing district) during the war, utilized these nurseries if they had children. Instead, they relied on baby-sitters or relatives.¹⁵⁶ Further, the name of the day care centers indicated that the nurseries were a wartime, emergency provision. Yet, despite the motivation and intention of the Knoxville public child care centers, they represented a clear, ongoing awareness of the necessity to provide child care for children of working mothers.

Karen Anderson and William Chafe argue that the Lanham Act funding for child care centers was completely inadequate, and furthermore

¹⁵⁵News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 12 November 1944, sec. C, p. 8.

¹⁵⁶Questionnaire A, see Appendix.

was complicated by the bureaucratic application processes. Chafe points out that at its peak, funding for centers from the Lanham Act offered services to only 100,000 children, or less than 10 percent of the children who needed it.¹⁵⁷ Yet both historians concur that public assistance to child care provided an important conceptual progression.

Anderson states that "although it had only served a minority of those it had hoped to, the wartime effort represented the largest commitment to public child care in the nation's history." Chafe agrees, claiming that "from one point of view, the figures represented significant progress, especially given the suspicion with which many Americans viewed child-care centers and the unprecedented nature of the program." Margaret O'Brien Steinfels argues that the Lanham funding for child care was primarily to encourage women to work in the defense plants and not to provide day care for children. She labels the funding a wartime expedient which created centers for which there were no established standards of quality. In February 1946 the Lanham funding for child care centers was terminated, which removed the federal government from child care services.¹⁵⁸

If the News-Sentinel believed that the young children of working mothers were given a tremendous opportunity for quality care through

¹⁵⁷ Chafe, American Woman, pp. 166-170; Anderson, Wartime Women, pp. 122-123.

¹⁵⁸ Anderson, Wartime Women, p. 146; Chafe, American Woman, p. 170; Margaret O'Brien Steinfels, Who's Minding the Children? The History and Politics of Day Care in America (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), pp. 67-70.

the War Service Centers, the paper also reported that juvenile delinquency in Knoxville was rapidly increasing. A great deal of discussion regarding the problem of juvenile delinquency centered around the causes of its increase. These discussions generally pointed to the disruptions of war: the father who was away in service, the mother who worked at a war job and left her older children unattended, the uncertainty of the future, and the prevalent relaxation of rules and mores which often accompanied a war. Nell Giles, in Ladies Home Journal article entitled "Teenage Trouble," reported on the juvenile delinquency problems and remedies in Newark, New Jersey. Ms. Giles cited the case of a particular delinquent:

Look at Mary and you see a typical juvenile delinquent. She is one of 13,562 children in Newark whose mothers are working. She lives in a crowded section of town, jammed these days with a boom-town population of ex-miners, ex-farmers, and ex-office workers here to make big money in a war plant. In her school district there are twelve factories, forty-nine bars and twenty-two poolrooms.¹⁵⁹

Ms. Giles cited a survey conducted by Newark's Board of Education which studied the number of Newark teenagers whose mothers worked outside of the home vis-a-vis juvenile delinquency. In the third ward, the survey revealed that where 1,500 black mothers were staying home for the first time because their husbands had employment in the area war plants, juvenile delinquency had dropped 29 percent.¹⁶⁰

Knoxville newspapers published several articles concerning

¹⁵⁹Ladies Home Journal, November 1943, p. 24.

¹⁶⁰Ibid.

juvenile delinquency, particularly in 1943 and 1944. Youth experts, clergymen, club women, and civic groups offered counsel or presented seminars which addressed the issue. The News-Sentinel reported in August and December of 1943 that juvenile delinquency was increasing, although the police department was working hard to control the situation.¹⁶¹ Columnist George Crane suggested that parents "vaccinate" their children against possible delinquency by "passive or prophylactic procedure of longtime moral instruction" through churches, schools, and organizations such as the Boy Scouts. Crane also recommended an active approach which included increased police protection and curfews for teenagers.¹⁶² Ruth Millet recommended educating parents about their responsibility in raising their children.¹⁶³

The theme of juvenile delinquency enjoyed unprecedented popularity among Knoxville civic and church organizations in 1943. Dr. Hazen Werner, who addressed the Methodist Evangelistic Mission, claimed that juvenile delinquency was the "most acute problem facing the home front."¹⁶⁴ The Knox County League of Women Voters presented a forum in October 1943, whose theme was "'dealing with war time delinquency."¹⁶⁵ The University of Tennessee scheduled a course

¹⁶¹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 19 August 1943; 31 December, 1943.

¹⁶²News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 11 July 1943, sec. C, p. 9.

¹⁶³News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 26 July 1943.

¹⁶⁴News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 9 February 1943.

¹⁶⁵Knox County League of Women Voters, "Interpretation of League Purpose and Policy in the Community Program," May 1944, Record Group 215, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 1.

on juvenile delinquency which was opened to college students and Knoxvilleians alike.¹⁶⁶

Knoxville strove to combat the "juvenile welfare" problem in a variety of ways. The Office of Civil Defense, which was under the jurisdiction of the city's police department, imposed a 9:00 p.m. curfew on youth under the age of sixteen who were "without proper escort."¹⁶⁷ A group of Knoxville ministers and social workers from the Religious Advisory Group on Juvenile Delinquency and the United Council of Church Women prepared to fight the problem.¹⁶⁸ Hal Stephens, director of the Knoxville Boys Club, cited broken homes and the absence of the parents as two of the chief contributory causes for delinquency. He suggested that those attempting to combat the problem first attempt to discern the motive behind the delinquency and then plan programs which addressed the motives.¹⁶⁹

In March 1944, the Knoxville Council of Social Agencies conducted a conference on the topic, and a youth committee of the Council was established to promote "informal conferences within established youth groups to secure the cooperation of youth in meeting the problem." The Office of Community War Services reported in October 1944 that, although a great deal of interest had been demonstrated throughout

¹⁶⁶News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 7 December 1943.

¹⁶⁷News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 8 August 1943, sec. A, p. 10.

¹⁶⁸News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 28 August 1943; 23 December 1943.

¹⁶⁹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 1 January 1944, p. 9.

the Knoxville area for combating juvenile delinquency, "few concrete plans for combating it have actually been worked out."¹⁷⁰ Pearl Blough, the national USO director of services pertaining to women and girls who was in Knoxville to review the local USO work, reported that mothers who were working at war jobs were giving their children more attention than when they initially assumed employment. Claiming that the working mothers were not as preoccupied with the jobs as they were initially, Ms. Blough noted that juvenile delinquency was gradually improving.¹⁷¹

Thus, as Knoxville female war workers experienced the war years, their lives often reflected many of the images that the era had perpetrated upon them. A significant number of women entered war production jobs, broke through former sex-segregated employment barriers, and personified the Rosie the Riveter image. Yet, throughout the war, Knoxville women had experienced the dynamic tension of nontraditional employment opportunities vis-a-vis traditional forces which related change in established gender-specific patterns. Although they and their sisters nationwide had carried lunch pails and assumed a more masculine image in their overalls, as a former ALCOA female production worker explained: "The men expected us to have curls underneath our factory kerchiefs."¹⁷² Both wartime images

¹⁷⁰News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 14 October 1944; Office of Community War Services, "Knoxville-Clinton, Tennessee Progress Report," No. II, Office of Community War Services, Record Group 215, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. iv.

¹⁷¹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 19 December 1944.

¹⁷²Interview with ALCOA worker A.

and realities reflected this dynamic tension, and because of the conflicting claims of both traditional and nontraditional role expectations of women, the war failed to produce a revolutionary change in the employment patterns for women. Instead, it created an evolutionary modification of existing prewar employment trends for women.

Long before the end of the war was in sight, government and business leaders sought to determine what to do with all of the women workers whom they had worked so hard to recruit. Fearing a postwar recession and massive unemployment, the government attempted to persuade women to leave their war jobs and return home. Although many women left the labor force voluntarily as government cutbacks diminished labor requirements, a significant portion of women indicated that they desired to remain in the work force. The war had given them an opportunity to engage in occupations which offered better pay and working conditions, and many women did not want to leave these jobs to return home or to return to lower-paying traditional women's work.

The dynamic tension which the war had created in women's employment patterns was reflected even in assessments of whether women desired to retain their jobs after the war. In a misleading headline titled, "Women Are Ready to Stop Their Work After Victory," the Knoxville News-Sentinel reported only on women workers in the small shipbuilding town of Pascagoula, Mississippi. A survey of residents of a federal housing project/trailer camp indicated that women war workers wanted two things: "get the war won and return to their housekeeping." One female war worker, who worked at the Ingalls

Shipbuilding Company and lived in a four room row house, declared: "Now that I had a taste of what the men have to put up with in the yard, I'll be glad to stay home and take care of the children when the war is over." Another mother who worked in the shipyards indicated that she would rather work than "stay cooped up in one small room all day with two beds, two chairs, and a hot plate. That was monotonous."¹⁷³ Less than six months later, the News-Sentinel reported that the "Majority of Women Want to Keep Jobs After War." The Women's Bureau survey revealed that women desired consideration for postwar employment, although they did not wish to exclude returning veterans from their jobs.¹⁷⁴

Two young Oak Ridge women gained front page attention in the Knoxville News-Sentinel as they offered to give up their jobs to veterans who could qualify for them. The two sisters who had obtained war jobs at Oak Ridge, had heard much on the radio about jobs for returning veterans. The News-Sentinel described the women as "two very pretty girls from Oak Ridge [who] are ready to pay a debt . . . they say they will step aside and give their jobs to any discharged veteran who needs a job and hasn't been able to find one." The women wrote a letter to the News-Sentinel and indicated that they "will be more than glad to step aside for the ones to whom we who have stayed on this side owe so much."¹⁷⁵ This article encapsulated the idea that

¹⁷³News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 20 December 1943.

¹⁷⁴News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 17 June 1944, sec. D, p. 4.

¹⁷⁵News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 17 May 1945.

these women, who incidentally were "very pretty girls," had assumed war jobs but at the same time were unselfishly giving up their employment so that a veteran might gain what he had earned overseas.

Images of women in the later war years particularly accentuated the conceptions of romance, homes, and consumer products. Movie star Carole Landis, in a plea to women to continue to save cooking fat, reflected on the time "when he comes back." She expressed:

I am a woman waiting for the day he comes back. There are millions like me. We buy a hat . . . and wonder how he'll like it.

We cook something he loves for dinner and sit alone eating it with a throat so tight we can hardly swallow. We have friends in and as we bid them good-bye at the door, we miss his strong arm around our shoulders. For him . . . to bring him back . . . we buy bonds, do a war job.¹⁷⁶

In her plea, Ms. Landis further perpetuated the feminine qualities of women in her declaration that women assumed war jobs to bring their men home and in her longing for his strong presence.

Fowler's Furniture Store in Knoxville conveyed a similar message in an advertisement entitled, "We Specialize in Dreams." The advertisement, which illustrated a young naval officer and his wife sitting together on a park bench, also pictured a living room filled with new furniture from Fowler's. The caption read:

Remember the last time he was home, how you sat on your private park bench and he scratched out a house in the dirt? There was a lot of thought and planning behind that idle sketch. You know that now, Mrs. Navy Ensign. Don't lose sight of the future for one instant. Keep

¹⁷⁶News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 17 January 1944.

putting his allotments into War Bonds. They're your ticket to a lifetime of happiness in a perfect home of your own.¹⁷⁷

Newspaper articles in the latter stages of the war described postwar homes and new consumer products. A Scripps-Howard Newspaper survey of women in thirteen cities discovered that over 50 percent of those surveyed expected to see a tremendous improvement of postwar consumer goods such as radios, refrigerators, and cars, despite industry's warnings that such "dream products" would not be available immediately after the war.¹⁷⁸ The News-Sentinel ran a series of articles in the summer of 1944 entitled "Your Postwar Home." The articles featured consumer items such as new kitchen appliances and glass walls and fabrics.¹⁷⁹ Home television sets received much publicity, with the postwar models in the \$200 price range.¹⁸⁰ The emphasis on the postwar home focused on the mother as the center of that home, and by the late stages of the war, the images of Rosie the Riveter had given way almost entirely to that of idealized women who were either very feminine or very motherly.

In January 1946, the Women's Bureau wrote of the status of American women as workers and citizens in "this new year of peace--and indeed the dawn of a new epoch." The Women's Bureau echoed the dynamic

¹⁷⁷News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 27 February 1944, sec. B, p. 6.

¹⁷⁸News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 24 April 1944.

¹⁷⁹News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 18 June 1944, sec. B, p. 4; 16 July 1944, sec. B, p. 4.

¹⁸⁰News-Sentinel (Knoxville), 2 July 1944, sec. C, p. 7.

tension in the employment of women which continued after the war. From one aspect, the Bureau idealized and feminized women in its belief that "women, even more than men, hate war and its aftermath--war which disrupts family life, calling sons, husbands, brothers, sweethearts to the front lines of combat--killing and maiming millions. Women love peace and its constructive pursuits."¹⁸¹ The Women's Bureau then reviewed the achievements of women in the war as members of the Armed Services and in factory jobs in the war industries. Yet, despite their contributions to the war, women found that

certain occupational doors--opened so widely to them in the war--are once again being closed in their faces. Such attitudes on the part of employers, coupled with a back-to-the-home campaign by some groups of the public, come as a shock to women after the extensive praise of their wartime performance.¹⁸²

The Bureau urged that "full recognition be given to women's rights to jobs, since they are citizens in a democracy."¹⁸³

The dynamic tension which the war had wrought regarding women's place in employment continued throughout the postwar year. Despite the glorification of the postwar home which centered around a home-bound mother, the question of women's employment, particularly that of married women, was never entirely put to rest. In a Fortune poll in 1946, only 34 percent of the men and 42 percent of the women surveyed approved of married women (with no children under sixteen)

¹⁸¹U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, "Women's Frontiers in 1946," January 1946, Women's Bureau, Record Group 86, National Archives, Washington, D.C., pp. 1, 2, 4, 7.

¹⁸²Ibid.

¹⁸³Ibid.

working if her husband could support her.¹⁸⁴ ✓

Although American women had increasingly entered the labor market since the onset of the Industrial Revolution, World War II created an emergency-induced urgency which demanded that women work in the war factories regardless of marital status or economic need to seek employment. ✓ Throughout the war, women were praised for their heroic efforts as war workers, nurses, or members of the Armed Services. ✓ Despite the fact that she remained a feminine being even while carrying a welding torch, never before had the woman worker been so greatly exalted. ✓ Although women had always worked, World War II witnessed a departure from the Depression's prerogatives which were unfavorable to working women. ✓ Instead, the war years signified a tremendous celebration of women in overalls. ✓ Because of the overt nature of the recruitment and glorification of women workers, the war established a pattern in women's employment which the postwar years would have to acknowledge. ✓

Harrison Smith, the associate editor of the Saturday Review of Literature, claimed that "fate has a way of kicking women upstairs. They seem to thrive under adversity, whereas they often fall apart when life is smooth, pleasant and conspicuously prosperous." He cited the example of the Depression which "pulled millions of women out of a slough of lethargy and complacency" in their efforts to add to the family income when the husband lost a job. "In the

¹⁸⁴ Oppenheimer, Female Labor Force, p. 45.

holocaust that was World War II an even greater advance was made. American women in overalls and slacks worked tirelessly beside men in countless war factories; in uniform, they became adjuncts to the armed services." Yet, Mr. Smith contended that after the war, women became the object of criticism from several fronts. He declared that the postwar era was not the time to send women back to their homes, that "most modern women now know that there can be no security for them in any sort of return to Victorianism." Mr. Smith suggested that a new feminism should be embraced which realized a full partnership of the sexes rather than a rivalry.¹⁸⁵

The Women's Bureau Conference in 1948 addressed the topic of "The American Woman, Her Changing Role as Worker, Homemaker, Citizen." Chief among topics at the conference was the role of women in the economic system. Mildred Thompson, Dean of Vassar College, in her assessment of the status of women in the past, present, and future, suggested that women had not failed at their attainments. Rather, they were incomplete in their pilgrimage as a result of "environmental causation, and to traditions of culture." Arguing that women were still carrying on the legacies of Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton in their journey, Ms. Thompson nonetheless rejected the conflict of the sexes. Instead, she claimed that there were two sexes, but one society, and she summarized her statements in her quote from

¹⁸⁵ Harrison Smith, "Must Women Work," Independent Woman, December 1947, pp. 341, 342.

Shelley: "Can man be free if woman be a slave?"¹⁸⁶

At the conference, Ordway Tead, Chairman, Board of Higher Education of New York City, claimed that women experienced an "irrepressible conflict" in their need to attain material and inner security, while at the same time fulfilling the desire to bear or not to bear children. While Mr. Tead believed that women and men both exhibited the same basic needs, women "distinctively" also had to come to terms with the concept of childbearing. Mr. Tead suggested several recommendations to help women not only call "the vote her own, [but] the woman of tomorrow could more completely call her soul her own." He suggested that labor unions confer equal rights upon their female members, allow part-time work and maternity consideration for the working woman, extend women's education on a large scale, and extend public all-day nurseries to children as young as three years old.¹⁸⁷

Throughout the postwar years, as women continued to enter the labor force, public sentiment toward working women reflected prewar trends. The general consensus was to accept employment of single, widowed, or divorced women, women who were heads of households, or of older mothers whose children had left home. There was still resistance to the concept of mothers of young children working unless it was an absolute economic necessity. Emphasis was placed on the problems which the mother/worker faced as she had to balance the

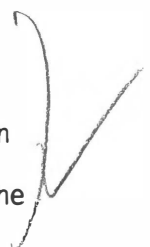
¹⁸⁶C. Mildred Thompson, "Women's Status--Yesterday-Today-Tomorrow," 17 February 1948, Women's Bureau, Record Group 86, National Archives, Washington, D.C., pp. 6, 9.

¹⁸⁷Ordway Tead, "Social Patterns for Women," 18 February, 1948, Women's Bureau, Record Group 86, National Archives, Washington, D.C., pp. 3, 6, 8.

demands of home and work. The issue of the husband shouldering more than a traditional amount of home responsibility was not forthcoming; all emphasis was placed on the juggling act which the mother was required to do if she was employed. Discussion of working mothers was epitomized by such articles and speeches as: "Managing Home and Job, Family Responsibilities of Earning Women"; "A Double Life for Mothers"; and "Should a Mother Work?"¹⁸⁸ Even among those who believed that mothers should work if they could find adequate child care, the message was clear: a mother could work if she could manage her home and job without detracting from one or the other.

In the postwar years, the father was still the breadwinner, and scant attention was given to the possibilities of his contribution to home and child-care responsibilities. Yet despite the reluctance of married women themselves and the public at large to support the concept of employment for this group, the fact that magazines such as Parents would even address the issue suggested an evolutionary trend toward its acceptance.

Sociologists, psychologists, educators, and popular and prescriptive literature would continue to address the dynamic tension of working women throughout the postwar years. While accepting the



1948, Women's Bureau, Record Group 86, National Archives, Washington, D.C., 3, pp. 6-8.

¹⁸⁸ Hazel Kyrk, "Managing Home and Job, Family Responsibilities of Earning Women," 18 February 1948, Women's Bureau, National Archives, Washington, D.C., p. 1; Millicent Carey McIntosh, "A Double Life for Mothers," Parents, October 1948, p. 39; Ruth Schley Goldman, "Should a Mother Work," Parents, September 1950, p. 40.

concept of working women--if still primarily in gender-specific employment--the public at large had not yet acquiesced to the large-scale employment of mothers of young children. Yet, questions were beginning to be raised not only among the experts, but among the women themselves who often felt a restless discontent with their escape to suburbia, their acceptance of a lower standard of living because they were not in the labor force, or their concession to lower-paying sex-stereotyped jobs. Part of this discontent and questioning without a doubt stemmed from the war years, when women en masse were encouraged to work and to be independent. As a Knoxville woman who had been a war production worker put it: "How can they stay on the farm when they have seen Paris?"¹⁸⁹

By 1963, Betty Friedan would call this discontent the "feminine mystique." The dichotomy of the dynamic tensions of role expectations of working women versus the traditional glorification of femininity, motherhood, and the home would continue until it was clearly articulated in the women's liberation movement in the 1960s. Knoxville's Rosies had "seen Paris," and only the future could judge if they would ever again be content to remain on the farm.

¹⁸⁹ Interview with Marie S. Brake, 12 January 1988.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE A

WORLD WAR II WOMEN AT WORK QUESTIONNAIRE: TEXTILE AND APPAREL WORKERS

THIS SURVEY IS PART OF A RESEARCH PROJECT FOR A UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE SEMINAR. NO INDIVIDUALS WILL BE IDENTIFIED WITH THEIR ANSWERS. YOU DO NOT NEED TO WRITE YOUR NAME OR ADDRESS ON THE QUESTIONNAIRE. YOUR COOPERATION IN ANSWERING THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS WILL GREATLY ASSIST THIS RESEARCH PROJECT ON KNOXVILLE WOMEN DURING WORLD WAR II. THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR TAKING PART IN THIS EFFORT.

1. Sex:

- 1) ☐ Female
- 2) ☐ Male

2. Race:

- 1) ☐ White
- 2) ☐ Black
- 3) ☐ Hispanic
- 4) ☐ Other _____

3. Age:

- 1) ☐ 45-59
- 2) ☐ 60-64
- 3) ☐ 65-69
- 4) ☐ 70-74
- 5) ☐ 75-79
- 6) ☐ 80-84
- 7) ☐ 85-89
- 8) ☐ 90 and over

4. Occupation before World War II: (If you had more than one occupation before World War II, list the first occupation as "A", the second occupation as "B", etc.)

- 1) ☐ Sales (sales worker, clerk, advertiser, underwriter, insurance agent, etc.)
- 2) ☐ Housewife
- 3) ☐ Laborer (construction, freight handler, warehouse worker)
- 4) ☐ Professional (doctor, teacher, technician, lawyer, artist, accountant, engineer, scientist, etc.)
- 5) ☐ Craftswoman (foreman, mechanic, machinist, repairwoman, carpenter, baker, crafts, etc.)
- 6) ☐ Clerical (bookkeeper, secretary, stenographer, typist, bank teller, postal clerk, cashier, etc.)
- 7) ☐ Operative or transport (assembler, inspector, packer, butcher, garbage worker, truck driver, bus driver, etc.)
- 8) ☐ Farm worker
- 9) ☐ Service worker (policewoman, health worker, child care, beautician/barber, teacher's aide, private household cleaning)

- 10) ☐ Student
- 11) ☐ Manager
- 12) ☐ Not employed

5. Did you work only during the war? YES ☐ NO ☐.
If you answer yes, what years did you work? Check as many of the following as needed:

- 1) ☐ 1941-1942
- 2) ☐ 1942-1943
- 3) ☐ 1943-1944
- 4) ☐ 1944-1945

6. Occupation during World War II. (If you had more than one occupation during World War II, list the first occupation as "A", the second occupation as "B", etc.). Categories are same as #4:

- 1) ☐ Sales
- 2) ☐ Housewife
- 3) ☐ Laborer
- 4) ☐ Professional
- 5) ☐ Craftswoman
- 6) ☐ Clerical
- 7) ☐ Operative or transport
- 8) ☐ Farm worker
- 9) ☐ Service worker
- 10) ☐ Student
- 11) ☐ Manager
- 12) ☐ Not employed

7. Was your job during the war directly related to the "WAR EFFORT?" YES ☐ NO ☐

8. Did you work at a job during the war that had previously been held by men? YES ☐ NO ☐

9. Were you asked to quit your job when the war was over to make room for the returning veterans? YES ☐ NO ☐

10. Did you participate in volunteer work during the war? YES ☐
NO ☐ Other _____

11. Occupation immediately after the war (between 1945 and 1950). If you had more than one occupation after the war, list the first occupation as "A", the second occupation as "B", etc. Categories are same as #4 and #6.

- 1) ☐ Sales
- 2) ☐ Housewife
- 3) ☐ Laborer
- 4) ☐ Professional
- 5) ☐ Craftswoman
- 6) ☐ Clerical

- 7) ☐ Operative or transport
- 8) ☐ Farm worker
- 9) ☐ Service worker
- 10) ☐ Student
- 11) ☐ Manager
- 12) ☐ Not employed

IF YOU HAVE ADDITIONAL COMMENTS, PLEASE USE THE BACK. THANK YOU.

QUESTIONNAIRE B

WORLD WAR II WOMEN AT WORK QUESTIONNAIRE: ALCOA

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1. Age during World War II _____
2. Place of employment _____
3. Occupation _____
4. If you were in supervision, number of persons under your responsibility _____
5. In your department, approximately how many men did the war take from jobs? _____
6. Did women or older men replace the young men who went to war?

7. What do you recall were the attitudes of the men toward women working at men's jobs? _____

- (Use extra paper if necessary. Any and all attitudes you may recall will be useful information.)
8. What were the attitudes of the women working at "men's jobs?"

9. Did social relationships of men/women working together develop? Comment. _____

10. Do you recall any specific reactions or attitudes displayed by the non-working woman toward the working woman? _____

11. Productivity. Quality and Quantity of work by women at men's jobs. _____
12. SPECIAL PROBLEMS OR SPECIAL BENEFITS you were able to identify.
(Please use back.)
13. Please include any additional information you may have.

QUESTIONNAIRE C

WORLD WAR II WOMEN AT WORK QUESTIONNAIRE: FULTON SYLPHON

THIS SURVEY IS PART OF A RESEARCH PROJECT FOR A Ph.D. DISSERTATION FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE. NO INDIVIDUALS WILL BE IDENTIFIED WITH THEIR ANSWERS. PLEASE DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS ON THE QUESTIONNAIRE. YOUR COOPERATION IN ANSWERING THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS WILL GREATLY ASSIST IN THE COMPLETION OF THIS RESEARCH PROJECT ON KNOXVILLE FEMALE PRODUCTION WORKERS DURING WORLD WAR II. THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR TAKING PART IN THIS EFFORT.

1. Place of Employment during World War II. _____
2. Department _____ 3. Position/occupation _____
4. Year you were born _____ Sex _____ Race _____
5. Marital status during war _____
(note if you were married during the war).
6. Did you have children at home during the war? _____ Ages _____
7. If you were in supervision, how many people were under your responsibility? _____
8. In your department, approximately how many men did the war take from their jobs? _____
9. Who replaced the young men who went to war? Women? _____
Older Men? _____ Other? _____
10. When women started working at men's jobs, how did the men feel toward the women working at these jobs? _____

(Use back if necessary)
11. Did men and women production workers date? _____
Marry? _____
12. In your opinion, did women production workers produce as well and as much as the men workers? _____

13. Are there any stories of your memories of working at Fulton Sylphon during the war that you would like to share? _____

(please use back if needed)

14. Did you move to Knoxville during the war to work in the war plant? _____

THE NEXT QUESTIONS ARE FOR WOMEN PRODUCTION WORKERS ONLY:

15. If you were a female employee during the war, why did you take a job at Fulton Sylphon? (better pay, conditions, unemployed, patriotic reasons?) _____
16. If you were a female employee during the war, was this your first job? _____ If not, where did you work before the war? _____
17. Did you want to keep your job after the war? _____
Did you? _____ Was it the same job? _____
18. If you had children at home, who took care of them? _____

(grandparents, friends, babysitters, daycare)
19. Did you find it hard to work because of shopping hours, banking hours, housekeeping, etc.? _____

20. If you were married, was your husband in the service? _____
War Work? _____
21. If married, did you move to Knoxville because your husband came for a war job? _____ Did you already live in Knoxville _____

TABLE I. Estimated Total Manufacturing Employment in Knox and Blount Counties for Selected Dates, Showing Estimated Employment of Women

Industry	Est. Employment Dec. 1940		Est. Wartime Peak Employment		Date of Peak	Est. Employment Dec. 1946	
	Total	Female	Total	Female		Total	Female
TOTAL	24,900	7,000	35,000 ^a	12,100	Sept. '43	31,800	8,800
Food	2,000	200	3,000	500	Sept. '43	2,800	300
Textile	8,000	4,500	9,000	6,000	June '42	7,200	4,000
Apparel	2,000	1,500	2,600	2,300	Sept. '43	2,800	2,500
Lumber	700	20	1,300	90	June '42	1,200	60
Furniture	600	40	700 ^b	40	June '42	600	90
Paper	200	30	200	30	Dec. '41	200	30
Printing	600	80	800	110	Sept. '41	700	120
Chemical (incl. Rohm & Haas)	200	20	2,100	930	Dec. '43	800	220
Stone & Clay	1,500	200	1,700	240	Sept. '41	1,800	300
Iron & Steel (incl. Fulton Sylphon)	1,600	80	4,400 ^b	1,400	Dec. '44	1,900	250
Non-ferrous Metals (incl. AlCOA)	6,800	120	13,000 ^b	1,200	Mar. '43	10,800	500
Mach. (exc. elec.)	400	30	900	40	Mar. '44	800	40
All Other	300	80	1,800	450	Mar. '42	200	50

^aTotal peak wartime employment is not the sum of employment figures shown below as industry estimates relates to different periods as shown in Column V.

^bEmployment for total is estimated peak for industry; however, peak employment of women in this industry occurred at a later date when total employment was lower than employment shown. Peak employment of women in the Iron and Steel industries was in July 1945 at 1,653 women of a total of 4,034. Peak employment of women in the Non-ferrous industry occurred in July 1945 when 1,519 women of a total of 10,128 were employed.

Note: The above totals of estimated manufacturing employment may vary somewhat from the statistical data elsewhere in this paper, but reflect the overall trends of employment as otherwise indicated. Of note, other sources show the peak wartime manufacturing employment to be 37,000 and peak female manufacturing employment to be 14,150.

Source: United States Employment Service, "Labor Market Report, Knoxville, Tennessee Area," May 1947; Bureau of Employment Security, "Labor Market Developments Report, Knoxville Labor Market Area," September 1945.

VITA

Patricia Brake Howard was born in Longview, Texas on January 30, 1952. She later moved to Portsmouth, Ohio and Ashland, Kentucky, where she graduated from Russell High School in June 1970. The following September she entered The University of Tennessee where, in June 1975, she received a Bachelor of Arts degree in History. The author taught Social Studies at Girls Preparatory School in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and in June 1980, she received the Master of Arts degree in History from Andrews University.

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