

QUESTIONS
ON
COMMUNITY PROBLEMS



Young Women's Christian Associations, U.S.
National Board, War Work Council

Questions on Community Problems

Prepared by Research Workers of the
Student and Industrial Committees,
War Work Council, National Board of
Young Women's Christian Associations



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Introduction

This list of questions was prepared as a guide for persons wishing to study industrial problems in any local community. Through the courtesy of the national Y. W. C. A. Student Committee, under whose auspices the questions were originally prepared, and of the national Industrial Committee who have given permission to reprint these questions from their INDUSTRIAL NOTEBOOK, the questions are herewith made available for general use and have been annotated with various suggestions concerning how the data they call for may be obtained.

Before you try to analyze the industrial conditions in your community, get a clear idea of:

1. The geography and topography of your town. Have a map, if possible, or make a rough one to aid your thinking. Locate on it (a) residence section and character thereof; (b) business sections (stores, banks, etc.); (c) social agencies (schools, churches, asylums, institutions, Y. W. C. A., Y. M. C. A., War Camp Community Service, etc., playgrounds, parks and other recreation facilities); (d) industries; (e) transportation routes with distances.
2. General facts like population (men, women, children; native and foreign-born; number who work, in town and out of town, and if possible the number who work in various factories, department stores, etc.). See latest statistics of cities in your state reports; also U. S. Census, 1910, and Census of Manufactures, 1915. Your librarian and secretary of Chamber of Commerce will help get these facts. Local newspaper editors usually can help too.
3. Check your list of local organizations with the list of "Social Agencies" by Eleanor L. Lattimore, issued by the City Committee, National Board, Y. W. C. A., 600 Lexington Avenue, New York City. Have you a community council? Study

your local directory, telephone directory, business directory, advertisements in local newspapers; also most recent town history. Consult your librarian and Chamber of Commerce secretary.

4. Remember that if any of these questions deal with matters you are unfamiliar with and on which you cannot get satisfactory information from local sources, you can always get information or directions as to where to go for information from the Research Section, Industrial Committee of the War Work Council, 600 Lexington Avenue, New York City.

SEEING OURSELVES AS OTHERS SEE US

1. What industrial or agricultural interests affect your entire community?

Ask secretary of local Chamber of Commerce, Business Men's Club, Board of Trade, banks. Consult city directory and classified section of telephone book; also librarian. Take trolley, auto or pedestrian trip through community noting factory signs. Are the industries grouped in any way, e. g., along river, in valley, on hills, near railroad? Are they in one section or scattered? Why?

2. To what extent was the employment of women increased during the war?

Current Annual Report of Board of Trade, etc., year books of various firms, newspaper files. Has any local survey been made? Business men can comment. Factory managers can probably tell you of other factories beside their own.

3. To what extent were men replaced by women?

Best known to factory management, though possibly also available through organizations referred to under question 1 above.

4. How has the armistice affected the occupations of women? How many are out of work? How many have transferred from war to peace industry?

Same as in 1, 2 and 3 above. Consult also local branch of U. S. Employment Service.

5. How do the minimum and maximum wages of women compare with the minimum and maximum wages of men?

See schedules of legal wages for various industries as listed by State Labor Department, Industrial Commission or Minimum Wage Commission in certain States. Is there a wage law in your State? How far do local industries live up to the law? Whose business is it to keep track of whether they live up to it? A rough idea of wage rates may be gained through conversation with employes, trade union officials and social workers in your community.

6. Is "equal pay for equal work" an actual practice in your community? If not, why?

Compare evidence from various sources as in 5.

7. Does the minimum wage received by a working man in your community provide for maintaining both worker and family in health and comfort without the labor of mother or children?

In other words what is the cost of living in your community and how does it compare with legal or actual minimum wages? Study the various standards of living in your community and their several budgets. Consult Consumer's League, charity organizations, pastors, social workers, union officials for facts. How many laborers' widows are receiving pensions from the State or assistance from charitable organizations? How many children leave school early to take up wage-earning? Why? Consult State Pension Reports; also School Reports concerning working papers granted last year. How many mothers in your community go out to work part day or regularly?

8. Does the minimum wage for women provide only for the woman herself or for her dependents as well? (More than half of the working women in our country carry heavy financial responsibility).

Make a study of the number of dependents of all the wage-earning women you know of. How many have dependents? How many and how old are the dependents of each? How largely has the war increased the number of these dependents? Has any agency in your community studied this? How about school-teachers? How many married women work? How many young girls contribute to family income? Are these girls living with their families or are they sending money home to them?

9. Does the minimum wage make any provision for:
 - A. Decreased earning capacity due to illness, old age, accident, unemployment?
 - B. Contingencies?
 - C. Recreation and vacation?
 - D. Study?
 - E. Good citizenship? (Participation in community activities.)

Analyze budgets that you know of. Compare with legal minimum wage. See budget commission in "Legal Recognition of Industrial Women" by Lattimore and Trent, Chapter 5. What do items A, B, C, etc., in this list *cost* in your community.

10. What are the arguments against night work? How many women in your town work at night? What do they do in the day time?

If you cannot get the facts for this from agencies listed in 1, 2 and 3, watch factory workers going to and from work. Ask Y. W. C. A. or Y. M. C. A. industrial secretary. Ask pastors, ask the women themselves, ask school or district nurses.

11. Compare the working day for women in your community with the eight-hour-day standard of the Federal Government. How much overtime work is indulged in? How much time do workers spend in going to and from work?

What factories do women work in? Watch lights in their windows at night. When do the whistles blow? How long noon-hours have they? Where do these women workers live? How do they travel? Study map of your transportation system. Travel on the cars at rush hours; count the workers and see how far they each travel.

12. What are the physical handicaps under which women work? Are there industrial hazards, such as monotony, poisoning, strain, fatigue, etc., to which women are more subject than men?

Study in detail the processes in your community. What is the raw material used? What happens to it at each step of its manufacture? If possible, see it happen. Librarian can refer you to books on industrial processes, machinery, etc.; also on industrial hazards for any particular industry. See industrial moving pictures showing process. Write the American Museum of Safety, 18 West 24th Street, New York City, for their literature on industrial hazards. Write industrial departments of big life insurance companies for pamphlets on industrial poisoning and the prevention of industrial diseases. Write your state and city health or industrial department for safety-first pamphlets. The U. S. Bureau of Mines issues a good first-aid pamphlet published in several foreign languages as well as English. City health departments and county health officers have been publishing health literature, some of which is particularly useful among industrial workers. Some colleges and state universities have made special studies along this line; also the U. S. Public Health Service of the Department of Labor, Washington, D. C.

Have you read the reports of Dr. Alice Hamilton's investigations for the Government printed in the Monthly Labor Review of the U. S. Department of Labor? (This is usually on file in any public library and in any Y. W. C. A. having an industrial secretary). Have you read "Fatigue and Efficiency" by Josephine Goldmark, and "The Human Machine and Industrial Efficiency" by Frederic S. Lee?

13. What provisions have been made for protecting the health of women workers in your community by:
 - A. State industrial laws?
 - B. Local factory welfare work, safety appliances, etc.?
 - C. Community ordinances and agencies?
 - A. Consult library or write your State Labor Department or Industrial Commission.
 - B. Talk with welfare workers, district nurses, management and workers themselves. Read descriptive handbooks published by Chamber of Commerce or individual plants. Read advertisements for workers. Ask U. S. Employment Service (local branch).
 - C. Read your city ordinances. Know the purpose, plans and activities of each organization in your community including the Department of Health and the schools.
14. Make every effort to understand, through personal conversation, outside of the factory, with workers and factory representatives, the conditions of work in the plants, such as: cleanliness, ventilation, fire protection, lighting, sanitary arrangements, etc. Visit a factory on invitation or when proper arrangements have been made, always recognizing that such a visit is welcome only when the visitor has a constructive contribution to make, and that it is never justifiable when she enters merely as an inquisitor.

Published advertising matter, reports, etc., as in 13 (B) ; sometimes advertising films; see also the plant newspaper or magazine.
15. Do the laws in your state conform to the standards of the War Labor Board and those under which the government war contracts were awarded? They are as follows:
 - A. Adult labor (child labor under 14 prohibited).
 - B. Wages.
 - a. The highest prevailing rate of wages in the industry which the contract affects.

- b. Equal pay for equal work.
 - c. Those trades where there is no wage standard whatsoever shall be placed in the hands of an adjustment committee.
 - d. That all wages be adjusted by this committee from time to time to meet the increased cost of living and that other wage questions be submitted to it.
- C. The eight-hour day.
 - D. One day's rest in seven and suitable rest periods during work.
 - E. Prohibition of night work for women.
 - F. Standards of sanitation and fire protection.
 - G. Protection against over-fatigue and industrial diseases.
 - H. Prohibition of tenement house labor.
 - I. Exemption from the call into industry of women having small children needing their care.
 - J. Exemption from the call into industry of women two months before and after childbirth.

Get copy of Labor Laws from State Labor Department at your State Capitol,—usually on file at library or in any local Y. W. C. A. See also “Laws Affecting Women in the Various States” (maps and key for making them) published by The Womans Press, 600 Lexington Avenue, New York City).

- 16. How many women in your community are employed in household service?
- 17. How many have transferred from war industry to household service?

Employment office may have these facts. Has church or any other local organization made a recent canvass to find out? What does the city directory or last local police census show? Does anyone really know?

18. How do their wages, hours and working conditions compare with those of the women in industry?

19. What types of girls enter household service?

Make your own analysis here.

20. What, specifically, are the difficulties in this field of industry, both from the point of view of the household director and from the point of view of the household assistant?

Talk with both women who employ helpers in their homes and with the helpers themselves. Talk with women who go out by the day. Ask Y. W. C. A. Ask employment office.

21. What opportunity for training for household service does your community afford?

22. What efforts are being made in your community to solve the problems connected with household service?

23. Note what information is available in your community as to experiments along this line which are being made in other communities.

Canvass all likely agencies, schools, etc., in your community.

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