What did women do in World War 1?

World war one was to give the opportunity for the women to show the male dominated environment that they can do much more than just bring up children and tending a home. In World War 1 women had a vital role of keeping soldiers equipped with ammunition and help run the transport system.

As there were so many young men enrolling in the army and casualties in Europe, There became a space for women to fill in. world war one was a point to show how women would survive doing this hard work in the war. In November 1918, women had proved that they were just as important to the war effort as men had been and in 1918 women were given some form of political representation.

How women found employment?

Women found employment in transport (the rail lines and driving buses and trams), nursing, factories making ammunition, the Women's Royal Air Force where they worked on planes as mechanics, on farms in the Women's Land Army, and in shipyards. Before 1914, these jobs had been for men only (with the exception of nursing).

As there were so many men away at war, someone had to bring in the harvests and keep the farms going, that is what women would do. Some of the most important done by women was in the project tiles factories. This vital work was done by women. It was very dangerous. Working with chemicals meant that one explosion in a factory could trigger off many other ones. There was no protection from this dangerous chemical and the women who worked with sulphur found that their exposed skin turned yellow as the chemical impregnated itself into any exposed skin.

Young women volunteered in the VAD’S which is first aid nursing. Their medical training was basic but the fact that they went to the war zone meant that they could comfort badly injured soldiers and give them basic medical treatment even if they were originally not allowed to give injections.

The war meant women had to take on a number of traditionally male roles. Their ability to do this led to a change in attitudes. Although it is not always realised, equality for women has come a long way in only a short period of time. From the outset, women were to be as actively involved in the war effort as men. Women applied to work in what were considered traditional women's role, such as cooks and clerk, so that the men could be free to go and fight. However, the government still discouraged any attempts by women to serve in the armed forces. The only women who were allowed to attempt in any form of active involvement were the nurses who served overseas.

Women who were not married or attached before the war, found it difficult to find a partner in the post-war period. With 416 000 Australian men enlisting for service, 60 000 of whom were killed and 150 000 wounded, there were not many young. At a time when women were expected to marry young and have children, the lack of permitted men had an intense impact on the roles of people in society.

The increase of jobs needed

As more and more men were drafted and had to leave their jobs. Various industries were seriously looking for female workers who could replace their men’s jobs. Especially during 1917 and 1918, there were a vast number of demands for female stenographers, telegraphers, and phone operators.

The Women’s Defence League was also placing a lot of effort to fill the gap. Potential telegraphers had to learn the code through memorization or by familiarizing themselves to carry out their work efficiently. The various railroad companies of the country employed hundreds of capable women operators, because they were known to be not only skilful, but also dependable. In many newspapers, ads looking for stenographers and other clerical works were increasing over time. The government was also in need of thousands of wartime positions open to women to work as government clerks, stenographers, and telegraphers.

Non-traditional jobs

Before the wartime, it was unusual in the country for women to enrol in higher courses of mathematics because the women’s role wasn’t to work in male dominated industries. Therefore, getting higher education and obtaining specific skills wasn’t a common road that most women followed. During World War I, however, women worked in virtually every field of industry. Newspapers started to cover more women’s work related articles, help ads, and spoke out about women’s great successes in education, sports, and various other areas in society. That started out to bring the bigger industries of their achievements of little activities to be involved in to the war.

What happened to the women in the end?

World War I was to give women a chance to show a male-dominated society that they could do more than simply bring up children and stay at home. In World War I, women played a vital role in keeping soldiers in place and in many senses they kept the nation moving through their help in various industries. World War I was to prove a turning point for women. Before the war, women had no power at all. By the end of the war, women had proved that they were just as important to the war effort as men had been. Women found employment in transportation including the railroads and driving cars, ambulances, and trucks, nursing, factories making ammunition, on farms in the Women's Land Army, in shipyards etc. Before the war, these jobs had been for men only with the exception of nursing.

As time passed by, the progress of women began to earn a great deal of respect through their time of war. Women finally had the opportunity to show the world that they had just as much to contribute and had the right to take on as much responsibility as the men.

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