

A WOMAN'S PLATFORM

Presented to
THE POLITICAL PARTIES

National League of Women Voters

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Child Welfare

The United States is wasting the lives of mothers and babies. Last year more than 23,000 women died in child-birth. Almost 250,000 babies under one year of age die every year in the United States. This number of baby deaths is almost as great as the total casualty list of the United States in the great war. Almost one half of all infant deaths occur within six weeks after birth and are due chiefly to the condition of the mother before and during childbirth. Moreover as a result of the same causes which kill thousands of mothers and babies, countless mothers are impaired in health and vigor throughout their lives.

The greater part of this suffering and death is preventable. It is safer to be a mother in fourteen important countries than in the United States and infants have a better chance to live in seven foreign countries. Poverty, isolation and ignorance deprive many mothers of proper care. In many rural areas, doctors and hospitals are inaccessible and visiting nurses unknown. The federal government should cooperate with the states in providing a joint fund in each state to be used for the public protection of maternity and infancy. They should provide public health nurses, accessible hospital care and medical attention, and teach mothers the hygiene of maternity, infancy and childhood.

2,000,000 children, almost one-fifth of the total population in the United States between 10 and 15 years old, were wage earners at the time of the last census. Since then the enforcement of the federal child labor law has tended to reduce the number of children prematurely employed in factories and in certain mercantile and clerical positions. But neither federal nor state laws provide adequate regulation for the labor of children in other occupations, such as street work and "blind alley" trades.

The prohibition of all child labor is necessary in order that all children may have equal opportunity to grow up strong in mind and body and equipped to enter industrial life with a fair prospect of success and happiness.

The Children's Bureau is the only government department which is authorized by Congress to deal with all matters pertaining to the welfare of children. For eight years it has made reports and recommendations looking to more adequate protection of the health, education, and recreation of normal children and the care and treatment of children who are dependent, delinquent, or defective.

The sum appropriated by the Congress for the Children's Bureau for 1919 was \$268,160.

For the same year over \$4,000,000 was appropriated for the work of the Bureau of Animal Industry in protecting the domestic animals. \$446,900 of this amount was for the eradication of hog cholera alone. While the eradication of pests is important work and should receive due consideration, the conservation and development of childlife is of vastly greater importance.

Therefore we urge:

Adequate appropriation for the Children's Bureau;

The prohibition of child labor throughout the United States;

The protection of infant life through a federal program for maternity and infancy care.

Education

The experiences of the great war revealed serious dangers to our national life arising from illiteracy both among the native and the foreign-born.

That one-fourth of our enlisted soldiers were unable to read a newspaper intelligently or write a letter home, that more than one-fourth of those examined for military service were found physically unfit, and that millions of American citizens are unable to read our constitution, or even the ballot they cast,—these facts have emphasized the importance of public education from the national standpoint.

The life and prosperity of a free government must depend on an enlightened and patriotic citizenship. Our Republic can be made safe, efficient and enduring only by the development, through the right kind of education, of a citizenship physically and intellectually sound and imbued with the spirit and ideals of true Americanism.

The low salaries paid teachers in many states are an admitted injustice in view of the value of the services required of them; the shortage of teachers because of low salaries, is fast becoming a menace to our educational system. Federal aid is needed to stimulate backward states in providing training and adequate pay for teachers, particularly in country districts.

The importance of Education in relation to the national government demands that it shall no longer be administered by numerous related boards, bureaus and commissions, but that it shall be consolidated into one department, under a responsible head, thereby doing away with duplicating and overlapping agencies and saving large expenditures. Such a department of education should have appropriations from the Congress to encourage the states to make equal appropriations for the protection of public education, with the provision that federal aid shall not imply federal control, and that education in all its phases shall continue to be organized, supervised and administered by the legally constituted state and local educational authorities.

Therefore we request:

A Federal Department of Education;

Federal aid where necessary for the removal of illiteracy and for the increase of teachers' salaries;

Instruction in the duties and ideals of citizenship for the youth of our land and the newcomer to our shores.

The Home and High Prices

Prices continue to climb.

Meanwhile those who have controlled the distribution of the necessities of life have gone on reaping enormous profits.

During the years 1916-18, the consumer has been paying the food corporations whose reports are available over two and one-half times as large profits as were considered acceptable before the war.

Committees of Congress have held investigations continuously for the last three years but almost no remedial legislation has resulted.

Therefore the women home-makers are asking what they can do to relieve the economic stress that confronts them.

They desire to prepare themselves as home-makers, and they feel the need of increasing appropriations for vocational training in home economics because the federal government has thus far appropriated to this use only one-tenth the amount that has been given for vocational training in agriculture and in trades and industry.

Their interest in establishing proper conditions of food supply and demand is fundamentally due to their interest in the family, the home, and the present and future of childhood. They believe that if prevailing conditions continue children will not grow up fit for the world, and the world will not be fit for the children. Properly nourished bodies are essential for sound minds and the nation cannot do without either. Today in the United States many boys and girls are underfed. The food supply of the nation instead of being properly distributed, is being manipulated by speculators and gamblers for their own selfish profit, and the women of America have become convinced that it is high time to organize all their resources behind a protest that will remedy these conditions.

Therefore we request:

Increased federal support for vocational training in home economics;

Such federal regulation and supervision of the marketing and distribution of food as will tend to equalize and lower prices, and the enactment and enforcement of such other measures as will freely open the channels of trade, prevent excess profits, and eliminate unfair competition and the control of the necessities of life.

Women in Gainful Occupations

The fact that there are 12,000,000 women in gainful occupations throughout the country, 39.9 per cent of whom are between fifteen and twenty years of age, points out the necessity of legislative measures to protect their interests.

The standardization of working conditions for women can no longer be neglected by any country in the world.

Technically qualified women on industrial boards have been found needful for the proper consideration of the working woman's problems and the effective enforcement of protective legislation.

During the war it was proved that employment was best systematized by national supervision. The private agent must be largely governed by profit, not by public interest, in giving the worker the labor for which he is best suited. Because of the distance that labor is sent, because of the large, easily exploited immigrant factor, there is no country that needs public employment service as much as the United States.

The service should have definite provision for women as well as for men. **In every federal and state employment department, a woman's section is needed to secure intelligent and adequate protection for women looking for work.** Women cannot do what unemployed men have to do, travel, often walking from place to place, looking for a chance to work. The young girl in a strange city, out of work, without money, must be protected. Steady work is essential to her life and must be found.

Reclassification of salaries in the government service is vital not only in justice to the employees but in the interests of efficient service and economic administration.

Women have been appointed at lower pay than men for identical positions after taking identical examinations; have been denied protection because they were women; have been denied opportunity to compete for the higher positions in specialized fields.

The women in the service will be found massed in the lower ranges of the wage scale, and frequently are receiving less for work of corresponding skill or even for skilled labor than men receive for unskilled

Therefore we request:

The appointment of women in the Mediation and Conciliation Service of the United States Department of Labor and on any industrial commissions and tribunals which may hereafter be created;

The establishment of a joint federal and state employment service with women's departments under the direction of technically qualified women;

A reclassification of the Federal Civil Service with the merit system of appointment and promotion, free from discrimination on the ground of sex, and with a wage or salary scale determined by the skill demanded for the work and in no wise below the cost of living as established by official investigation.

Public Health and Morals

Vigorous, enduring health is a national resource.

Man and woman power are national assets.

The health of the nation depends equally upon the health habits of the individual, on the one hand, and upon those of the community on the other, and the health progress of neither can go very far without the other.

Therefore we assert the compelling importance of a joint state and federal program for the prevention, treatment, control and eradication of venereal diseases.

Not a community in the United States has escaped these diseases.

They ruin the family and the home.

They are passed on from the guilty to the innocent.

They deform and incapacitate men, women and children mentally, morally and physically.

The carriers of these diseases belong to no single town, county or state.

They are national liabilities and can be controlled only by a joint state and national program of action that includes education, information, medical measures and social measures for their prevention, treatment, control and eradication.

The campaign has been vigorously started by means of appropriations granted by the Congress during the war period. If the movement for public education is checked by the refusal of further appropriations, money previously expended and efforts previously made will be largely wasted through failure to complete the campaign.

Therefore we urge:

A continuance of appropriations to carry on an active campaign for the prevention of venereal disease and for public education in sex hygiene.

Independent Citizenship for Women

When an American woman marries a foreigner, she becomes an alien, even though she continues to live in the United States. When an American man weds a foreign wife, she becomes, automatically, an American.

In the one case an American-born woman loses her citizenship more easily than an American-born man. In the other case a foreign-born woman acquires citizenship more easily than a foreign-born man.

In both cases there is injustice.

The present law may deprive many American-born women of their professional opportunities in districts where legislation forbids the taking on of aliens as teachers in public schools, in civil and federal positions, and in the practice of law.

It may also deprive American-born women of land holdings and the right to public benefits. In 11 states widows whose husbands were not citizens may not receive the mother's pension.

Such measures show that American-born women should be allowed to retain their citizenship as long as they continue to reside in the United States.

The ordinary precautions which the government takes before naturalizing a man are dispensed with in the case of an alien woman whose husband is an American born or has taken out citizenship papers.

The country is not benefited by conferring citizenship speedily on those as to whose qualifications and knowledge and intentions it has no information. To admit to the electorate people wholly ignorant of our government whose residence has given them no knowledge of national, state or local problems may prove an injury to the nation. Women voters should have resided here long enough to be able to cast an intelligent ballot.

Therefore we believe:

That American-born women resident in the United States should not forfeit their citizenship by marriage with aliens, and that alien women should not acquire citizenship by marriage with Americans, but rather by meeting the same requirements as those provided for the naturalization of alien men.

PLANKS PRESENTED BY THE
National League of Women Voters

TO THE
PLATFORM COMMITTEES OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES

Child Welfare. Realizing that the hope of the nation lies in the children of today, the citizens of tomorrow, we pledge ourselves to support:

Adequate appropriation for the Children's Bureau;

The prohibition of child labor throughout the United States;

The protection of infant life through a Federal program for maternity and infancy care.

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II

Education. We recognize that the appalling percentage of illiteracy among both native and foreign born in the United States is a blot upon our civilization; the lack of understanding of the essentials of good government, a menace to our future. We therefore advocate:

A Federal Department of Education;

Federal aid where necessary for the removal of illiteracy and for the increase of teachers' salaries;

Instruction in the duties and ideals of citizenship for the youth of our land and the newcomer to our shores.

III

The Home and High Prices. As a means of increasing the efficiency of the home and reducing the cost of living we favor:

Increased Federal support for vocational training in home economics;

Such Federal regulation and supervision of the marketing and distribution of food as will tend to equalize and lower prices, and the enactment and enforcement of such other measures as will freely open the channels of trade, prevent excess profits, and eliminate unfair competition and the control of the necessities of life.

IV

Women in Gainful Occupations. In order to promote the welfare of millions of women engaged in gainful occupations, we advocate:

The establishment of a Women's Bureau in the Department of Labor, with an appropriation adequate for the investigation of all matters pertaining to wage-earning women, for the purpose of determining standards and policies which will improve their working conditions and increase their efficiency;

The appointment of women in the Mediation and Conciliation Service of the United States Department of Labor and on any industrial commissions and tribunals which may hereafter be created;

The establishment of a joint Federal and State employment service with women's departments under the direction of technically qualified women;

A reclassification of the Federal Civil Service with the merit system of appointment and promotion, free from discrimination on the ground of sex, and with a wage or salary scale determined by the skill demanded for the work and in no wise below the cost of living as established by official investigation.

V

Public Health and Morals. We commend the effort for moral protection of the fighting forces of the nation made during the World War, and we urge a continuance of appropriations to carry on an active campaign for the prevention of venereal disease and for public education in sex hygiene.

VI

Independent Citizenship for Married Women. Believing that American-born women resident in the United States should not forfeit their citizenship by marriage with aliens, and that alien women should not acquire citizenship by marriage with Americans, but rather by meeting the same requirements as those provided for the naturalization of alien men, we urge Federal legislation insuring to the women of the United States the same independent status for citizenship as that which now obtains for men.