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New Members

American Woman's Society of Certified Public Accountants

American Society of Women Accountants

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British Women Restless Over Wages

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There has been growing discontent among the women of Britain over the disparities in wages that exist between men and women in almost every field of activity.

This discrimination against the feminine sex is nothing new in this country. In times of peace it is generally accepted by women themselves. But in time of total war, when women are required by the Government to contribute an equal share of toil, sweat and tears in the face of equal dangers with men they are beginning to grow restless under a system that most of them consider grossly unfair.

Inequalities in pay exist for women in the uniformed services as well as those in industry. The British Government, however, carried the anomaly one step farther when it created a lower rate of compensation for women who are injured in air raids than that for men. Although women pay the same rate of income tax they do not receive the same benefits from the Government, it is argued by the women.

If a woman is injured in a bombing she receives only two-thirds of the payment made to a man similarly injured. Yet many whose husbands are in the services now are contributing more to the support of their household than their men and, therefore, feel that they should be compensated equally for the loss of their earning power.

It is this inequality which rankles most in the hearts of women here and about which there has been the bitterest discussion in Parliament recently. In the words of Eleanor Rathbone, member of Parliament, the growing irritation of women is due to the belief that the Government is playing the game of "heads I win, tails you lose," with them. Several petitions protesting against the inequality of compensation have been presented to Parliament and demands have been voiced in the House that there be no call-up of women for fire-watching duties before the disparity has been corrected. There has been no sign, however, that the Government is willing to give in on this matter.

Another cause for discontentment is the prevalent system under which women are doing the same jobs as men at lower

wages. Lately even men in industrial circles in Britain have shown dissatisfaction over this anomaly in the belief that it is seriously hampering the war effort. Women, it is argued, now have little incentive to acquire more skill in their trade since they know they will not get the rate for their work. At the same time offers of low wages are deterring thousands of women from entering factories on part-time work because when they are through paying their income taxes, insurance and the extra expenses of traveling to and from work, as well as hiring the necessary help at home, they have only a few shillings left to show for their patriotic labor.

A good idea of the disparities of wages between men and women can be gained from the latest inquiry conducted by the Ministry of Labor into the earnings in metal, engineering and ship-building trades. This shows that the average earnings of a man is 118s 4d weekly, while the average woman's earnings is 53s 3d weekly — a difference of 65s 1d weekly. There is a difference of 50 per cent in the average earnings of men and women employed in eight other industries.

These figures, however, do not quite show a correct picture, for they give the average earnings of all women, skilled or unskilled, employed in the factories taken as samples. There are more unskilled women workers in them than skilled workers, with the result that the average women's wage is much lower than the top wage paid to women. However, there is no evidence that more than a very few women in industry are getting the same pay as men for the same work.

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