

# THE WORKING WOMAN'S HOUSE

BY  
A.D. SANDERSON FURNISS  
& MARION PHILLIPS



ILLUSTRATED

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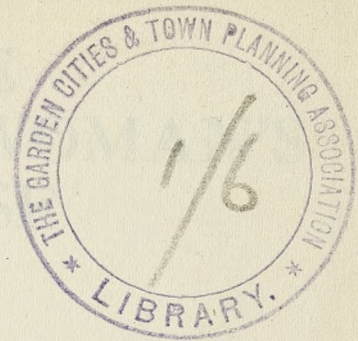
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HOUSE**

**By A. D. SANDERSON FURNISS**  
SECRETARY OF THE WOMEN'S HOUSING  
COMMITTEE OF THE LABOUR PARTY  
AND MEMBER OF THE HOUSING  
COUNCIL OF THE MINISTRY  
OF HEALTH

AND

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# THE WORKING WOMAN'S HOUSE

## PART I

### The Views of the Woman in the Home

**F**OR many generations, and with special emphasis in the last fifty years, we have been told that woman's place is the home. If women are to accept this position, they must also claim a right to have that home built according to their own desires. The war gave rise to a new phrase when the Prime Minister made his declaration that with the coming peace houses must be built fit for heroes to live in. In this book we propose to combine these two ideas. We admit frankly that for most women the home is the chief centre of activity, and we give here the woman's own view as to what that home should be like. She wants her house to be fit for a hero to live in, but she wants also to free herself from some of that continuous toil which is the result of the bad housing conditions of the past, and has prevented her from taking her full share of work as a citizen, wife and mother.

Though it has been so largely the concern of women to *keep* the house, the working woman has had very little to say in the past as to the *kind* of house that she should keep. When a well-to-do family build their own house, the architect consults, not only the husband, but also the wife. But the working woman, to whom it is so infinitely

## THE WORKING WOMAN'S HOUSE

important to secure a comfortable and convenient home, has never been consulted at all. In the main, working-class housing has been in the hands of builders, and of jerry builders at that, who have considered cheapness as far more important than health or comfort. Even when housing has been a matter of municipal concern instead of private enterprise, no effort has been made to learn the opinion of working women before deciding upon the plans.

Two years ago the first step was taken to correct this mistake. Organised women of the Labour Party, encouraged by the political power which had just been placed in their hands by the grant of the Parliamentary franchise, decided to conduct an inquiry into the kind of house a working woman wants. Since that inquiry began, similar efforts have been made in other quarters to record women's opinions; of these the most notable was the formation of the Women's Advisory Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction, which published two important reports on this subject. Both these reports drew a considerable share of their information from the Labour Party's inquiry, and one of the authors of this volume was included on the Committee. The various housing resolutions, which have from time to time been passed by conferences of working women of the Labour Party, have reiterated the demand that in all housing schemes the opinions of the women for whom the houses were being constructed should be taken. The inquiry itself has very much strengthened our opinion that, unless the working woman's point of view is understood, no housing schemes can be really successful. From direct personal experience a housewife knows, in a way that no other section of the community can know, the most pressing needs for the establishment of a healthy home life.

In this book we have embodied the chief results of

## VIEWS OF THE WOMAN IN THE HOME

this inquiry, setting forth the almost unanimous opinion of women with regard to the inside, the outside, and the general environment of our homes. We believe that these results show conclusively that working women in all parts of the country are not only interested in the question of housing, but that they have thought out very closely many of its chief problems. On all important questions opinion has been practically unanimous, and the unanimity has not been confined to urban or rural populations, but has included both. Townswomen and the women of the villages take very similar views; the essentials of a good house are the same for both, and the scope of our inquiry was sufficiently wide to include a substantial number in all parts of the country. The method pursued was a very simple one. A four-page leaflet was prepared, which gave in the following words the object of the inquiry:<sup>1</sup>

'Woman's chief task is to make a home. To do this well the house in which her family lives must be so constructed as to give opportunities for health, comfort, leisure, and social well-being. The house must be not merely a roof for shelter, but must be sufficiently well-planned, well-built, and well-furnished to make life pleasant and beautiful.

'The working woman spends most of her time in her home, and yet she has nothing to do with its planning. It is time that this state of things ended. After the war there will be urgent need of a million new houses, and as great a need for the re-modelling of those we have. The working woman with a home of her own will be a voter. *Let her first effort of citizenship be to improve this home.* She alone has the necessary knowledge and experience, and if she can do nothing, her case is hopeless. The Labour Party is giving an opportunity to working women

<sup>1</sup> *The Working Woman's House*. Four-page Leaflet. To be obtained from the Labour Party. Price 1d., or 1½d. postage paid.

## THE WORKING WOMAN'S HOUSE

all over the country to express their views, and the first step is to consider two questions :

1. *What is wrong with your house now ?*
2. *What sort of house do you want in the future ?*

‘This is not the time for making the best of a bad job. Let us make up our minds exactly what we do want in an ideal house.

‘In such a house there would be the healthiest and most convenient arrangements for cooking, bathing, and cleaning ; there would be enough space and sufficient rooms to give healthy sleeping and living accommodation for all ; the house would get the full benefit of sunshine and yet give protection from excessive cold and wet. But the home must not be just a place to live in ; it must provide a centre for social life and for the reasonable use of leisure ; and still more, it must be a good setting to the lives of those who inhabit it, and nourish the best qualities of their characters—in five words, it must be a *pleasure to live in it*.

‘In these pages we have plans—an architect's plans—of an ideal house for a family of five or six. What we ask of women is that they shall consider whether it is a woman's ideal house as well. On page 14 a few questions are asked, but these are only a few of the points which will occur to every woman. What we ask of you who read this is that you should answer the questions and add further comments. Please send your answers to Mrs. Sanderson Furniss, Secretary of the Women's Housing Sub-Committee, Labour Party, 33 Eccleston Square, S.W. 1, and please send them soon. We want to have the views of women and to bring them before all those authorities throughout the country who are concerned with the housing of the working people.

‘Do not consider the question of rent. We must make

## VIEWS OF THE WOMAN IN THE HOME

up our minds as to the sort of house we want, and see if we can get it at the price we can pay : that is where the *building expert* comes in. Women ought to be the *housing experts* and consider what they want, and leave compromises on one side. Do not carry your flag too low. Is there any reason why all children should not have the best homes that the nation can provide ?’

Some 50,000 copies of this leaflet were sold, and a very large number of replies received. The number of replies does not represent the number of women who contributed to their compilation, since most of them were filled in as a result of discussion at meetings of Women's Sections of the Labour Party, of Women's Co-operative Guilds, or at conferences, and not by individuals. Many hundreds of letters were received dealing with special points of importance, and the variety of the inquiry may be gauged by the following list of organisations which held special meetings or conferences :

Women's Labour League.	Baptist Sunday School
Local Labour Parties.	Union.
Women's Co-operative	W.E.A. Branches.
Guilds.	London Theosophical
Women Citizens' Associa-	Society.
tions.	National Council of Women.
Adult Schools.	Association of Teachers in
Federations of Girls' Clubs.	Domestic Subjects.
Women's Fellowships.	Garden Cities and Town-
Women's Municipal Party.	Planning Association.
Homeworkers' League.	Girls' Clubs.
Infant Welfare Centres.	Women's Institutes.

These meetings were all arranged at the request of the organisations by the Women's Housing Sub-Committee of the Labour Party, and they include twenty-four conferences and over forty meetings. In addition to these there were a very large number arranged locally without



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consultation with the Committee, and from these full accounts were received of the wishes of the women present. Some of the areas covered will be seen from the following list of conferences and meetings, almost all of which were convened by organisations of Labour women, and all of which were addressed by Mrs. Sanderson Furniss, who acted throughout as secretary of the Sub-Committee:

*Conferences.*—Central London, Barking and Ilford, Fulham, Cardiff, Leicester, Newport, Finchley, Todmorden, Hebden Bridge, Cleckheaton, Swindon, Abertillery, Machen, Maescymmer, Tre-Thomas, Bargoed.

*Meetings.*—St. Pancras Women's Liberal Association, North Kensington Health Association, Stockwell Green Women's Fellowship, Ilford Co-operative Society, Wood Green Adult School, Lewisham Hill Sisterhood, King's Cross School for Mothers, Camden Town Women's Fellowship, Bayswater Women's Christian Association, Princes' Club, Leytonstone Sunday School, Kelmscott Women's Education Association, Ascott Women's Education Association, Burford Women's Institute, Walthamstow Adult School.

Other members of the Party who took part in addressing meetings which were arranged by the Committee were Mrs. John Baker, Mrs. Lowe, Miss Heckford, Mrs. Salter, and Mrs. Chettle, and a number of conferences and other meetings were addressed by Dr. Marion Phillips.

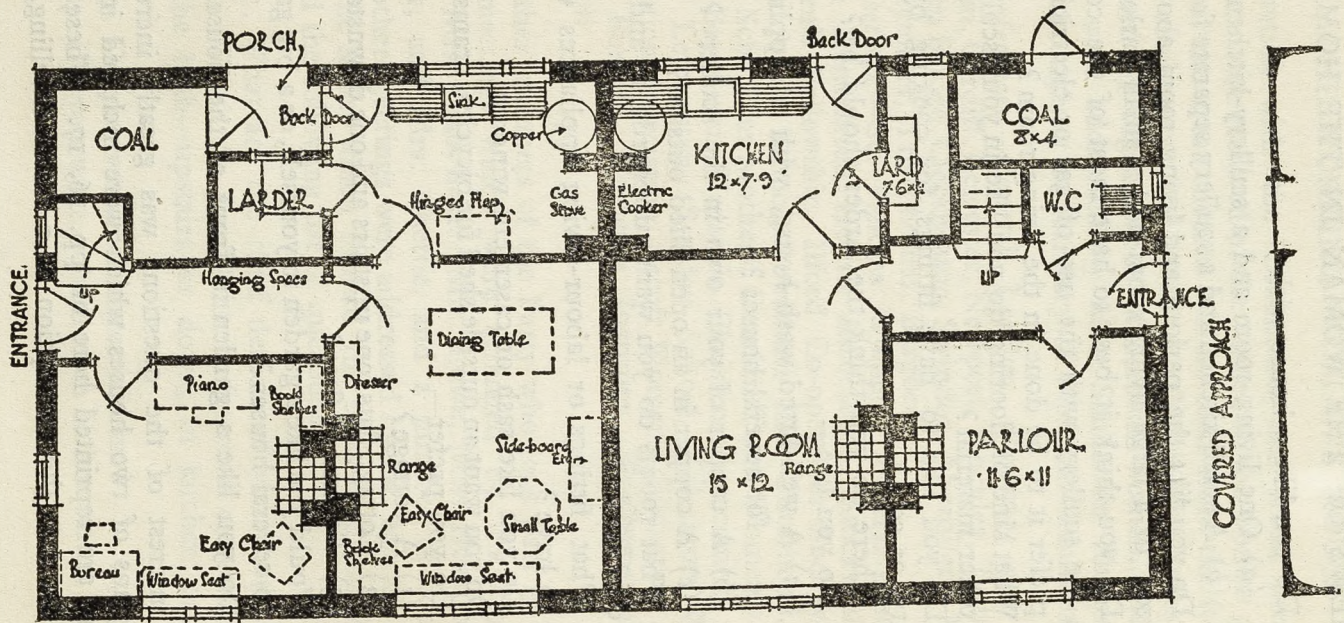
The leaflet which formed the basis of discussion contained the following list of questions:

- '1. What are the chief defects of your house?
- '2. Which do you think is the most convenient place for the bath—upstairs or down, in kitchen or separate room?
- '3. Do you want hot water laid on?
- '4. Do you want a bath even if hot water is not laid on?

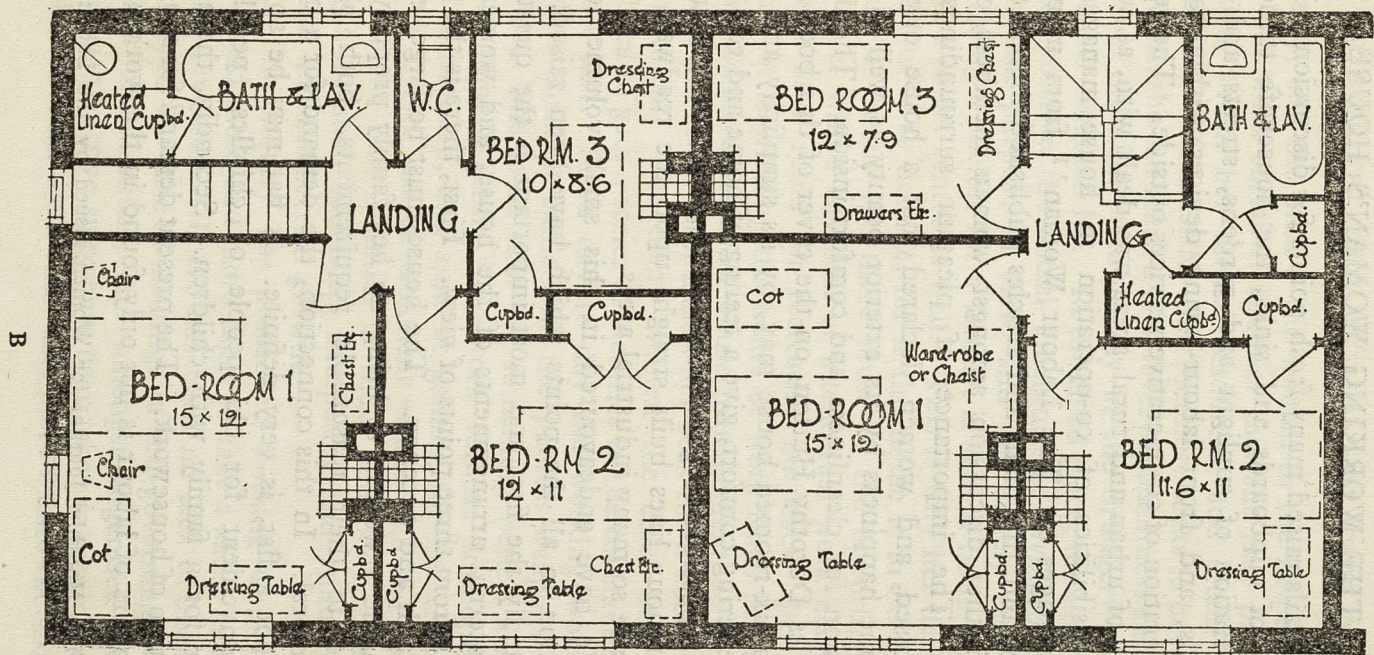
## VIEWS OF THE WOMAN IN THE HOME

- '5. Do you like a house with—
  - (a) One living room and a scullery-kitchen?
  - (b) A small kitchen and a scullery separate from it?
- '6. Do you like the parlour and living room about the same size; or a large living room and a small parlour?
- '7. Do you think it best to have most of the cooking done in the scullery with the use of gas or electricity, or do you prefer it to be done in the living room?
- '8. What kind of flooring do you like in your scullery—tiles or other material?
- '9. Do you like to have fittings for cooking by gas, electricity, or coal?
- '10. Where do you think the larder should be?
- '11. Do you like—
  - (a) A well-fitted wash-house, with all appliances, for several houses?
  - (b) A copper of your own in the scullery?
  - (c) A copper in an open shed outside?
- '12. What rooms do you want cupboards in, and what kind of cupboards?
- '13. What fittings or labour-saving appliances would you like to have?
- '14. Do you like sash or casement windows?
- '15. Do you want an outside shed for bicycles, prams, &c.?
- '16. Do you prefer—
  - (1) A cottage?
  - (2) Cottage flats (one upstairs and one downstairs)?
  - (3) Tenement flats?
- '17. Would you like a garden to yourself, or a big garden attached to several houses?
- '18. Do you like a garden in front of the house?

The interest of the questions was greatly increased by the plans of two houses which were included in the leaflet and are reprinted here on pp. 16, 17. These gave a living form to the conception of a decent dwelling, and



Plan of Ground Floor of Two Houses. Included in the leaflet with Questionnaire issued by the Labour Party.



Plan of First Floor of Two Houses.

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their details raised many fresh points for discussion. From talking of cupboards and sinks, the housewife turned to consideration of sunlight and gardens, streets and playgrounds, and from labour-saving devices within to the consideration of co-operative services outside. The general lay-out of urban and rural areas was dealt with, as well as the possibilities of co-operation in house management, in the pages of 'The Labour Woman'<sup>1</sup> from month to month, and the plans and articles published therein raised still further discussion amongst women members of the Party. The importance of pleasant surroundings was recognised, and women declared that a house ought to welcome happiness by its exterior beauty as well as make provision for cleanliness and comfort inside. The design, by Miss Dorothy Hutton, on the cover of this book shows how a six-roomed house may, by its simplicity and its air of sheltering comfort, give a feeling of home and rest which it is impossible to gain from the box-like cottages in long monotonous lines built straight upon the roadway which disfigure so many industrial areas.

We have endeavoured in this small volume to give attention to all the points which have been raised. Undoubtedly the first and most important is the question of the internal arrangements of the house, and women look at this from three points of view. First, there is the matter of health and decency. The house must be large enough to enable a woman to bring up her family properly, and attend to their reasonable requirements, both physical and moral. In this connection, the demand for a cottage, and not a flat, is very definite. A flat may be approved as convenient for old people or childless people, but never for a family with children. Secondly, there is the question of housework. The present demand for shortening the hours of labour is not only found in the workshop, the

<sup>1</sup> The Monthly Journal for Women, issued by the Labour Party. Price 1d., or 2s. a year, posted.

## VIEWS OF THE WOMAN IN THE HOME

factory, and the mine; the woman in the home desires to see her work curtailed in order that she may preserve her health, widen her mental resources, and attain a higher standard of life herself. She therefore seeks to have a house in which she can reach a high level of cleanliness and comfort without working continuously at the drudgery which has been her common lot. In the third place, the home should make possible the social amenities of civilised life, and with that purpose in view, and not merely the need of providing a shelter for a family, it should be large enough to be a social centre as well. This is why her demand for a parlour is so definite, for if the home is to be the social centre of family life there must be the opportunities for the quiet which any sort of intellectual work necessitates, as well as a room for recreative purposes. Just as her desire for shortening the hours of work leads her to think of co-operative means of house management, so her desire to raise the social level makes her seek for a better general environment. For many women the chief task of life has been to gain a series of victories in the constant struggle against dirt. From day to day the working woman has fought a constant battle with the poorest weapons against this foe. She looks now for something better, and seeks in her home a fitting framework for the development of good citizenship, and aims at gaining for her children as well as herself an environment which will aid development of the best qualities of mind and body, instead of being a constant handicap, hampering and stunting both physical and intellectual growth.

As this inquiry has proceeded working women have been found more and more eager to take a share in solving housing problems. There has been no lack of discussion, especially in the case of meetings of self-governing working women's organisations, and amongst organised working women many active steps have been taken to secure that full consultation with them shall take place before the Local or

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Central Authorities decide upon the plans for new houses. There is an opportunity to-day which is unique in the country's history, since never before has there been so urgent a need of houses, and never the prospect of building in such large numbers for the benefit of the public and not of the private landlord. A scheme of housing carried out by public authorities assisted by public funds gives an enormous opportunity for the building of houses such as the working woman wants, and it is universally recognised that if the present housing famine is to be reduced little less than a million houses are required. Bad housing means constant ill-health, the occurrence of dangerous epidemics, a low level of morals, and a continuous waste of national force, and no one suffers from that loss so much as the woman whose work lies within the home. With this great opportunity before her the woman of to-day is eager to place before the community the demand she makes in the interests of the whole nation. The reconstruction of society must depend very largely upon the energy and wisdom with which the housing problem is met, and in putting forward the results of this inquiry the women of the Labour Party feel sure that they are contributing to the welfare, not only of the present, but of future generations.

The book falls naturally into three divisions, and of these the first is that which deals with the internal arrangements of the house. In treating this, we have given not only our opinion as to future building, but our criticism of working class housing of to-day. The next part deals with the possibilities of co-operative house management. Here there is very little experience to guide us, but there is a very wide field for experimental work. This is followed by a discussion on the environment of the home itself, and the need for considering the whole lay-out of towns and villages, and ending the haphazard scheme of building houses as closely together as possible, and neglecting to

## VIEWS OF THE WOMAN IN THE HOME

provide healthy and beautiful surroundings for the community. Finally, we have dealt with practical questions of administration, emphasising those matters in which we believe that women should specially concern themselves, and suggesting lines of development, so that their opinions may have full force in gaining practical results.

## PART II

### The Inside of the House

IT is proposed in this section of the book to deal with the interior of the house, considering in the first place the many defects of the working-class home as we know it to-day, then proceeding to discuss the many improvements and labour-saving devices which women will demand in the house of the future. Increased opportunities for education and a growing consciousness of the rights of the citizen have done much to root out some of the conservatism which lies deep in the heart of nearly every woman, and in no direction is the change so marked as in the attitude of women towards their home life. They know that the drudgery of the past is unnecessary in the future; they take a keen and intelligent interest in new ideas and reforms, and those who suggest that women do not understand nor care for architects' plans will do well to make the experiment of placing such plans before a group of women. It will soon become apparent that not only are women keenly interested, but that they will go to some trouble to make themselves familiar with the intricacies of elevations and even with the purely technical details of the plan. The working woman of to-day is neither contented with the conditions of her home nor apathetic with regard to its improvement.

It will perhaps be simpler to consider first the house from the point of view of the urban population, and after-

### THE INSIDE OF THE HOUSE

wards to discuss the country cottage, though it must always be remembered that with some slight exceptions the needs of the housewife are the same, whether in town or country.

#### *The Faults of the House of To-day*

In considering the defects of the working-class home of to-day, it will be well to make a tour of the house, commencing from the entrance. Here the front door, if not opening directly into the living-room, leads into a long, narrow passage—dark and gloomy, with steep stairs, also insufficiently lighted, often with a sharp turn at the top in the darkest corner. There is no cupboard nor recess for hanging clothes, with the result that these hang on pegs in the passage, filling up the narrow space, and collecting the dust which comes in from the street. Darkness is one of the principal faults throughout the narrow-fronted town house, with its long rooms and insufficient window-space.

The living-room, which, it must be remembered, is the nursery, dining-room, and kitchen of the family, is in the old-fashioned house often inconveniently shaped—the range and the large dresser facing each other across the narrow room, and the position of the doors causing draught and discomfort. Tidiness is rendered impossible by the absence of cupboards and of space, for healthy children need space in which to romp, and the mother has to choose between allowing her little ones to play in the street or gutter, and working as best she may with them all around her.

The old-fashioned scullery, too, has no conveniences. The sink is small and shallow, often placed between door and window, or in such proximity to the back door that draughts play round the worker's feet as she stands to do her washing-up. Even in modern cottages the larders are often placed under the stairs or in a recess with no

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ventilation but a small ventilating brick, and their size suggests perpetual rations of the most meagre description!

Coal cellars are too small to take reasonable supplies of coal, thereby making it impossible to buy coal cheaply, and the coal cellar is often approached through the house, bringing dirt and dust to add to the labour of the housewife.

Small bedrooms, no cupboards, no shed for tools or perambulator, unnecessary steps, dark corners: these are a few of the results of the failure on the part of architects and builders in the past to consult women when planning the house a woman is to manage.

### *Defects of Rural Housing*

The country home suffers from many of the same defects. Though there is no lack of available space, and the cottage may have a wide frontage, it is often darker than a town house, small low-latticed windows shutting out air and sunshine. In the old-fashioned country cottage the front door usually leads direct into the living-room by means of a step down—the house being flush with the level of the ground. This fact, together with the rough stone floors, is probably responsible for much of the bronchitis and rheumatism which are the companions of our middle-aged and rural populations.

But from town and country women alike comes the cry that the most insistent need is for a water supply. It is this absence of a plentiful supply of hot and cold water which makes working women old before their time. Doctors and nurses alike agree that the carrying of heavy buckets from outside taps, and the constant lifting of heavy kettles, are not only responsible for many preventable illnesses, but are the direct causes of miscarriages and premature births. Those social reformers who are anxious to teach working women to be hygienic in the management

## THE INSIDE OF THE HOUSE

and care of their children should themselves make the experiment of keeping a house and a large family clean, when every drop of water has to be fetched from a well or pump outside the house, and heated by means of kettles. Their regret at finding some women dirty and untidy might then give way to a wondering admiration at the patience and perseverance of the working women of the country, and to a resolution to turn their efforts to effect a change.

### *Water Supply*

In passing therefore to our proposals for new housing schemes, for which it has been claimed that they will prove a monument to ideals of the reconstruction period, the water supply must be the first consideration. It appears to be generally recognised that each house should be provided with a water supply of some kind. But this is not sufficient. If the water supply is to fulfil the needs of the family it must be of a complete and satisfactory nature, and hot as well as cold water must be available. A bathroom cannot be entirely satisfactory unless a plentiful supply of hot water is obtainable, and working women are unanimous in their demand for a separate bathroom. The fixed bath in the scullery does not meet their needs. It is inconvenient from the point of view of work, and the scullery is not a suitable place for bathing children. The bathroom should be upstairs, but when in any special cases this is not possible, it is essential that it should be in a room apart. There are many contrivances for heating water, and where gas is available there are perfectly satisfactory schemes whereby the bath and lavatory basin and sink may be provided with hot water without any risk, and at a comparatively low cost. The usual method of heating the water from a boiler connected with the range is obsolete, and wasteful of coal in the summer time, and it would seem that the most satisfactory solution of the problem

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would be a system of central heating, which, while providing an endless supply of hot water, might also be used for radiators.

### *Central Heating*

It is usual to-day to find central heating installed in even moderately sized houses built for the well-to-do, and modern invention has gone far in making such a scheme possible for groups of cottages. In at least one of the new housing schemes the whole village is provided with a system of central heating, the power being obtained from the waste heat of a factory situated in close proximity to the outskirts of the village, and it is thought that the initial cost will be more than repaid by the saving of coal and labour. The stoking of the furnace is a very simple affair, and in a small group of houses the tenants might undertake to divide the work amongst themselves, while under a large scheme the cost of upkeep might be divided among them, and so divided would be a very small matter compared with the economy obtained by the installation of the system. It must, however, not be forgotten that there is a prospect of large generating electric power stations throughout the country, and granted that the scheme is carried out nationally, with a view to the needs of the community as a whole, the difficulties at present in the way of central heating will disappear. This should be borne in mind by all those responsible for the building of working-class houses, and provision should be made for installing the electric plant when electricity is available.

It is commonly urged that though every town house should be provided with a good water supply as a matter of course, and that every effort should be made to utilise streams and rivers in country places, there are yet some rural areas where this is impossible, owing to the dry nature of the district and to the extreme difficulty of obtaining

## THE INSIDE OF THE HOUSE

water. It would seem, however, that this is a matter which should be taken in hand and dealt with as a national problem. If, as is maintained, a plentiful supply of water is a vital necessity to health and well-being, it is surely worth while to consider the question from the point of view of the whole country, and to be prepared to spend very large sums upon a scheme which will solve the difficulty. There are still vast natural reservoirs in lakes and rivers which could be utilised for those parts of the country where water is unobtainable, and which could be worked in connection with the new electric generating stations, and it should always be borne in mind that in the case of large houses, even in such counties as Cambridgeshire, the difficulty has been overcome. If a wealthy man can solve the problem for his own need, the community as a whole should make a similar effort for the needs of the working population. That the need exists is evident. The women of the country will have just cause for discontent if it is neglected in the new housing schemes, whether in town or country.

Reconstruction, then, should commence with a real effort to solve the problem of the water supply, and to deal with it in a comprehensive and generous manner.

### *The Entrance to the House*

The house as it should be may now be considered in detail, commencing as before with the entrance. The front door should be of a nice appearance, and should give an air of comfort and solidity to the house. There is much to be said in favour of its being set back in a small porch, which protects it from the weather, and can be used as a small verandah on sunny days. Care must be taken, however, that the inner hall is not darkened by light being excluded from any window which may look into the porch. The step up to the door or porch should be wide and

## THE WORKING WOMAN'S HOUSE

shallow, and if a tap were fixed on one side with an attachable hose much labour would be saved to the housewife. No more would she have to kneel in the cold wind or the burning heat; the force of the water through the hose would satisfactorily swill both the step and the floor of the porch, and would be a simple and inexpensive contrivance.

### *Hall*

There appears to be a general wish that the front door should open into a square lobby or hall. This should be well lighted and should contain a good cupboard with pegs, and, if possible, a shelf at the bottom where boots and goloshes could be kept.

It is surprising to find in some of the new houses in some Government munition villages and other housing schemes that the halls, though square and otherwise good, are dark, and that the stairs are so arranged that they go up between the walls. This arrangement is very undesirable; of necessity the stairs are steep and narrow, and the gas or electric bracket fixed on one of the walls is dangerous to anyone coming downstairs. In case of illness, too, where food has to be continually carried upstairs, such an arrangement is most inconvenient.

### *The Staircase*

A convenient and pretty staircase gives an air of space and comfort to the house, and the stairs should be wide and as shallow as possible, with good half-landings. The old-fashioned winders have been a source of many accidents to little children, while to the old and infirm they are a veritable death-trap, narrowing as they do in the darkest corners almost to a point. A good half-landing gives to the old an opportunity for rest, while a child, if it falls down a few straight stairs on to the landing, is not likely

## THE INSIDE OF THE HOUSE

to come to much harm. The stairs should be well lit, with a window sufficiently large to give light all the way up. It is often the custom to provide a skylight as the only means of lighting, but this is by no means ideal; it is difficult to repair if anything goes wrong with its cords, and it is not possible to keep it open in wet weather. The staircase window should provide ventilation for the whole house, and if one of the back rooms opening on the hall has a glass shutter at the top of the door, it is possible to obtain a real draught right through and so to ventilate the whole house.

In a certain Essex garden village, in view of the immensely increased prices of timber, the architect has made a bold departure from tradition, and has built his cottage staircases of steel. He has overcome the objection that a metal staircase must of necessity be noisy by laying a composition flooring on the stairs, and the arrangement on the whole appears to work very satisfactorily. It must always be remembered that on a pre-war basis the cost of building has practically doubled, and while, with our wise ideas of to-day, we are led to demand an entirely new interior construction, we must give full consideration to any substitutes for pre-war materials which may lessen the initial cost of building, or which may lead to economy in any material of which there is a shortage.

### *The Parlour*

Much has been said and written recently as to the uselessness of the parlour in the worker's home, and of the advantages of one large living-room. This, however, is probably the opinion of those who are accustomed themselves to a comfortable drawing-room, or of single women who do not know what it is to have a house full of children. It may, at any rate, be confidently affirmed that they have never discussed this matter with working women,

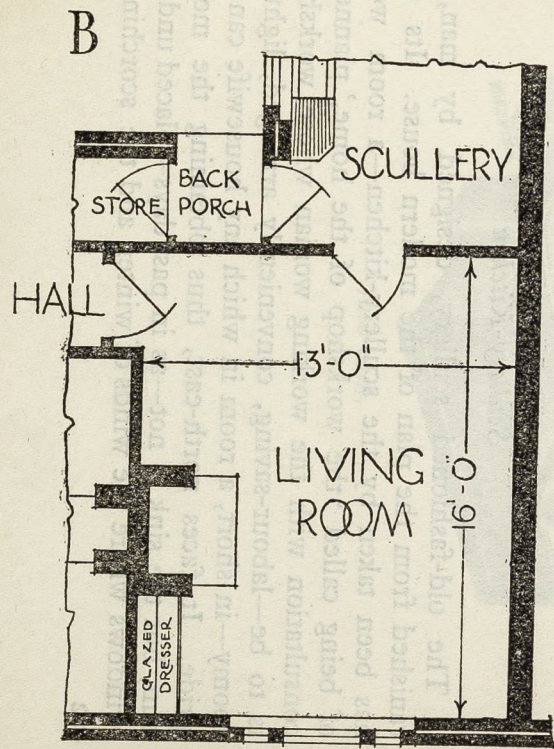


## THE WORKING WOMAN'S HOUSE

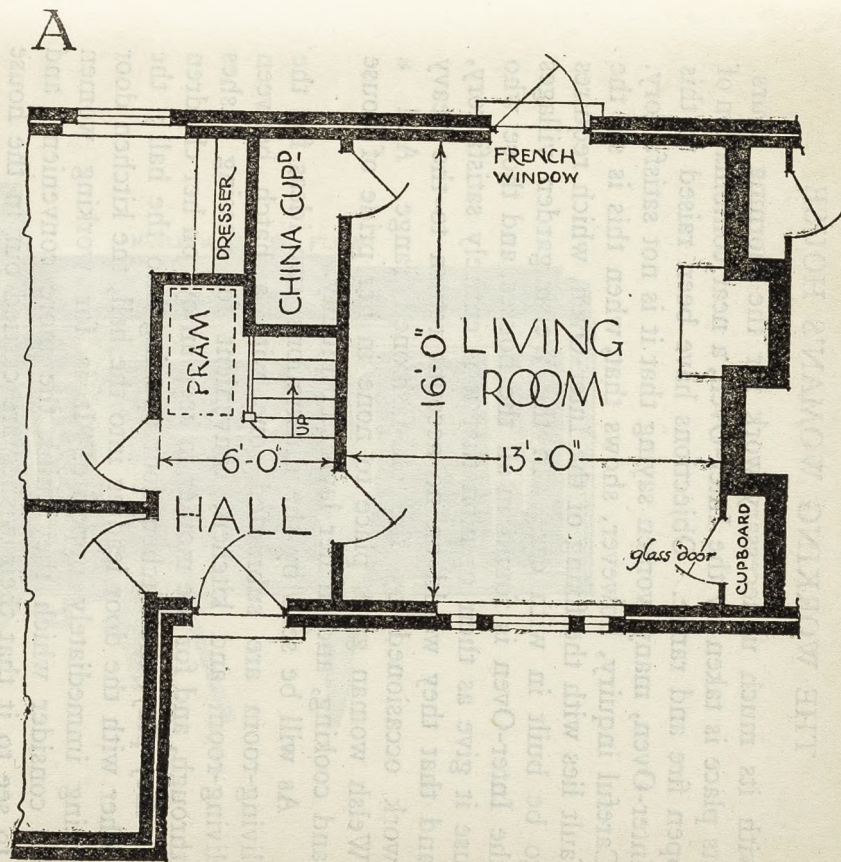
who are unanimous in their demand for a parlour. And, indeed, it is difficult to imagine how any quiet study is to be carried on, or any social life enjoyed, if there is only one room, in which the whole family, including the children and visitors, have to live. Among the plans submitted to the *Daily Mail* in their recent competition one of those which obtained a prize contained an excellent and, as far as cottages are concerned, somewhat original idea. The large living-room and small parlour were divided by a partition, which was so contrived that it could slide right back, thus making when necessary one very large room. The parlour should face south or west, or, if possible, south-west, making it a pleasant room in the afternoon, and it should be provided with bookshelves and a window-seat. The fireplace should be so arranged that it is possible to sit round it, and not, as is so often the case, with the door opening immediately upon it.

### *The Living-Room*

In considering the living-room it must be remembered that this is to serve the purpose of workroom, dining-room, and nursery. It must therefore be a large airy apartment, with large windows placed sufficiently low down to allow people sitting in the room to look out, and at least one window should have a wide window-seat for the children. Under the window-seat a cupboard is provided, sacred to their toys and books, for no child can be tidy unless it has a definite place assigned to its own use, and the constant clearing-up after the children have been at play is a source of unnecessary trouble to the mother. The old-fashioned open dresser, guilty of much dust-collecting, has given place to a built-in cupboard with panelled doors in its lower portion, while the upper is fitted with glass doors, behind which the glass and crockery look attractive and keep clean. The large kitchen range, too, has disappeared,



Plan of Living-Room 'B.' With communicating Hatch to Scullery.



Plan of Living-Room 'A.' With door into Hall. Kitchen door immediately opposite.

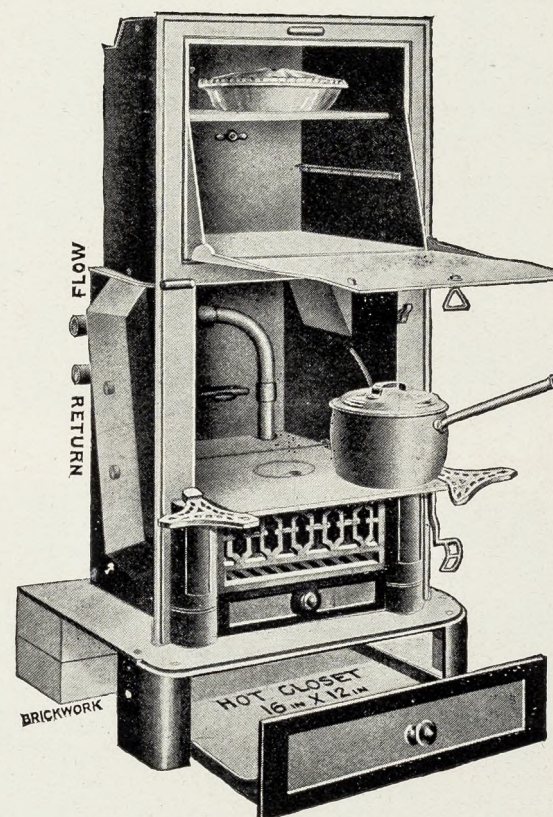
## THE WORKING WOMAN'S HOUSE

with its much unnecessary work for the morning hours. Its place is taken by the Inter-Oven, a neat combination of open fire and range. Objections have been raised to this Inter-Oven, many women saying that it is not satisfactory. Careful inquiry, however, shows that, when this is so, the fault lies with the fixing of the Inter-Oven, which requires to be built in with care. In the Welsh garden villages the Inter-Oven is found in all the houses, and those who use it give as their opinion that it is entirely satisfactory, and that they would on no account return to the heavy work occasioned by the old-fashioned range. And a Welsh woman gives place to none in her pride of house and cooking, and in her lavish hospitality.

As will be seen by the illustrations, two ideas for the living-room are submitted—one with a hatch between living-room and kitchen, convenient for passing dishes through, and for the mother to keep an eye on her children as they play, the kitchen door opening into the hall; the other with the door leading into the hall, the kitchen door being immediately opposite. It is for working women to consider which they think the more convenient, and to see to it that their wishes are carried out in the house which they propose to occupy.

### *Scullery-Kitchen*

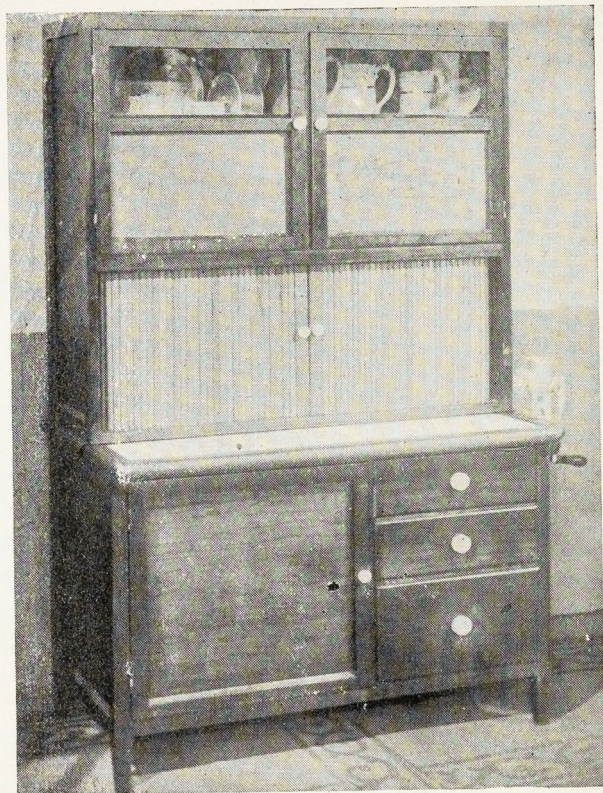
The old-fashioned scullery, designed by man, has vanished from the plan of the modern house. Its place has been taken by the scullery-kitchen—a room worthy of being called 'the workshop of the home,' planned in consultation with the working woman whose workshop it is to be—labour-saving, conveniently arranged, light and roomy—in short, a room in which any housewife can take pride. It faces north-east, thus obtaining the morning sun, but the sink is not—as in past days—placed under the windows where the winds of winter and the scorching sun



*Inter-oven.*



*The Worker's Cabinet  
(Open)*



*The Worker's Cabinet  
(Closed).*

## THE INSIDE OF THE HOUSE

of summer beat upon the head of the worker. It is to be found at right angles to the window, has a plug and is deep, with a draining-board on each side, and over it is a good plate-rack. By the side of the sink, and between it and the cooker, a cupboard is built into the wall—not the old-fashioned dresser nor an ordinary cupboard, but one which will go far to lighten the work of preparing meals. Here the housewife can sit at a convenient table where she may do her mixing, everything being ready to hand in the various shelves and corners of the cupboard. Her flour is in a large inverted bin with a narrow neck and with the stopper at the bottom. She has only to stoop to the shelf beneath the table to find her bowls. No more will she have to go to and fro from living-room to scullery to fetch her requirements, and only those who have worked and cooked for a large family know the fatigue of being constantly on their feet, making such journeys from room to room, and standing for hours at a time. The gas cooker is by now too widely used to call for commendation, but it should be remembered that new gas-cooking machines with up-to-date appliances are constantly being invented, and women should do all they can to keep themselves informed as to new developments in this direction.

### *Laundry Equipment*

The position of the copper is of great importance. In the country it is usually more convenient to place it in a wash-house outside, but whether in the kitchen or outside it should be provided with taps and with hot and cold water, and with a flue through the wall for the exit of steam. An alternative to the copper which appears to be worthy of consideration has been designed and is to be installed in a new housing scheme. Two deep tubs are fixed under the draining boards, and when laundry work is to be done these latter can be fixed up against the wall.

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Water for the tubs is obtained from the taps over the sink by means of lengths of strong rubber tubing—one on the hot and one on the cold water tap. This device, if it could be worked satisfactorily, would be economical in the initial outlay, and would also, by eliminating the copper, save a considerable amount of space. Laundry poles should be fitted to every scullery, on which the articles washed could be slung to the ceiling when the weather does not permit of out-of-door drying. But it is to be hoped that ultimately all heavy laundry work will be taken out of the home. Many women object at present to the idea of putting out their washing, both on grounds of expense and of injury to their goods. But if the price could be adapted to meet their needs and the laundries were democratically governed, we believe that the working woman would soon learn the value of being spared the burden of heavy washing, and would find that not only was her health greatly improved, but that the abolition of washing-day would give her increased opportunities for rest and leisure. Laundries attached to public baths are popular in many districts, but they involve the labour of carrying the washing to and from the laundry, and it is often difficult and inconvenient for a mother to be obliged to leave her young family. The best solution to the problem would seem to lie in the direction of the bag-wash laundry, mentioned below (p. 57). It is claimed for this scheme that the laundry work would be done efficiently and that the cost would be small. Even with prices as they are to-day a hundred or more articles could be washed for 1s. 6d., and if the municipalities would undertake the provision of such laundries, some share in the control would be ensured to the families themselves. Tubs under the draining boards in the kitchen could always be provided for the washing of small articles. But on this, as on many other points, it is essential that women should throw off their old conservatism and should realise that, unless they

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are prepared to interest themselves in ideas which may be new to them, such schemes as the bag-wash are not likely to develop along the best lines.

The scullery-kitchen thus becomes a pleasant well-appointed room in which the housewife can enjoy her work. Sitting at the worker's cabinet she has everything to her hand, and with the compact up-to-date stove by her side and the good sink she is able to do her cooking without undue fatigue, and her washing-up under the best conditions. It is probable that, as she works, ideas will come to her of new labour-saving devices, and with the feeling of citizenship developed and life more easy and tranquil, she will soon find means of putting forward her ideas and still further improving her house.

### *The Yard*

The second door in the scullery should open into the back porch, and here should be two doors, leading into the coal-cellar and into the w.c. Where it is possible two w.c.'s should be provided in every cottage, for while it is essential that one should be placed upstairs, it is most convenient to have one downstairs for use in the daytime. A lavatory basin in the downstairs w.c. would also be very practical.

The back door should open on to a concrete yard, part of which should serve as a drying-ground. It is obviously undesirable that a woman should be obliged to stand on wet and muddy ground to hang her washing to dry, and if the yard adjoined the house she would be spared the inconvenience of crossing any part of the garden in bad weather. Wet feet are the cause of many unnecessary colds and of much ill-health, and the busy housewife has not the time to be constantly changing her foot-wear—nor, in fact, is she likely to possess an unlimited number of boots and stockings. An excellent idea for a drying-ground

## THE WORKING WOMAN'S HOUSE

has been devised for some cottages in a garden village at present under construction. The walls on each side are provided with hooks for fixing the clothes-lines, and where the yard meets the garden two concrete pillars have been placed. Roses are planted to trail round the pillars, and by this means the drying-ground becomes also a pretty pergola or sun-porch.

It is to be hoped that back additions to small houses will find no place in modern housing schemes. The objections to these are obvious, and a glance at the back portion of an old house will serve to demonstrate that these additions exclude a great amount of the necessary light and air from the scullery or living-room windows, while in a long row of narrow houses, such as are common in towns, the back additions shut out the sunshine from the windows between them. In the house of the future all the rooms will be made under one roof; the shed, therefore, will be found in the garden at a little distance from the house. It should be oblong in shape, with hooks round it for garden tools and implements, and a small cupboard for seeds; it should be broad enough to contain bicycles and a perambulator. Architects are fond of providing a space under the stairs in the house for cycles and perambulators. They often, however, omit to make it long enough to contain either a bicycle or a full-sized perambulator, and anyhow, if anything better can be arranged, no woman will commend a plan which brings unnecessary dirt into her home.

It may be objected that a shed is a damp place for a perambulator, but if properly planned and well-built there should be no fear of damage. Some American sheds contain a concrete slab in the middle with an incline on either side, and the perambulator, when not in use, is run up on to the slab, and so lifted right above any moisture which might rise from the ground.

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### *Bedrooms*

While, however, in dealing with the new housing schemes it will be necessary to employ the most economical methods which are compatible with health and comfort, it must be remembered that light, air, and space are essentials, the neglect of which can only be false economy, and women will do well to pay special attention to the bedroom accommodation provided in new housing schemes. It is customary to-day to insist upon a minimum of three bedrooms to each house, but it cannot be too strongly urged that this number can be regarded only as a minimum, never as a maximum—that some houses with four or even five bedrooms will be necessary, and that in all cases the bedrooms must be really bedrooms, and not, as is so often the case, one decent bedroom, one small, and one merely a cupboard. The room may contain the requisite number of cubic feet to satisfy the Sanitary Inspector's requirements, and yet be totally unsuitable as a sleeping apartment for an adult,<sup>1</sup> e.g. the corners on each side of a dormer window may be reckoned in the air space of a room, but they are of no value to the general ventilation, and cause accumulations of dust. The shape of a small bedroom is also of primary importance. A narrow slip of a room is most inconvenient both on account of draughts and of the difficulty of arranging furniture. It should always be possible for the bed to stand out from the wall, as in this position it is easily made, and the space round the bed can be kept well swept and dusted.

Particular attention should be paid to ventilation. Under present conditions a fireplace should be provided

<sup>1</sup> Under the Public Health (London) Act, 1891, a room of 12 feet by 12 feet by 8 feet 6 inches, or 1224 cubic feet, would not be overcrowded with three persons (all adults), or with four persons (two adults and two children), or with five persons (one adult and four children), using it as a living and sleeping room.

## THE WORKING WOMAN'S HOUSE

in every bedroom, but where central heating is installed a radiator with a well-contrived ventilator should be sufficient means both of warming and ventilating the bedrooms. The intense damp and cold found in so many cottage bedrooms of to-day would thus be avoided, and anyone who has experienced the benefit of the even temperature obtained by radiators will feel that such a system is most beneficial from the point of view of health and hygiene. It is frequently urged that rooms warmed by radiators are stuffy, and the overheated atmosphere of American houses is cited as a proof. But the reason is to be found in the fact that an American room is usually provided with too many radiators for the cubic space, and that it is rarely sufficiently ventilated. For a cheerful appearance there is no doubt that a fireplace with a good fire is hard to beat. And in a properly-constructed house is there any necessity for fireplaces in the bedrooms, with all the extra labour involved? As has just been said, under present conditions a fireplace is a necessity, but in the house of which we are speaking a fireplace in the bedroom will be but a superfluous luxury. Even as things are now, the fire is only lit in case of illness, and every woman knows that many of the ailments with which we are now too familiar arise largely from the damp and badly-constructed houses in which so many have to dwell. The well-built house that is to come into being will provide its own cure for much of this illness, and a radiator should provide all the warmth that is necessary in an airy, well-ventilated room, either in health or in sickness.

### *Fitted Furniture*

It is a platitude to say that every bedroom should have a cupboard. Nevertheless, it is still rare to find good bedroom cupboards in plans of cottages. Young couples about to furnish are faced with the difficulty of obtaining

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furniture at moderate prices. A good bedroom cupboard therefore becomes all the more necessary, as it will eliminate the necessity of the wardrobe, which is an expensive piece of furniture, at best occupying an unnecessary amount of space in the room and requiring a considerable amount of dusting. A well-thought-out cupboard with a mirror in the door would entirely take the place of the wardrobe. But such a cupboard must reach from floor to ceiling, and its top shelf or shelves must be enclosed. Where the cupboard does not reach to the ceiling, the shelf on the top is comparatively useless, for it collects dust, and is not suitable for the storing of clothes. A good position for the bedroom cupboard is to fix it across a corner of a room. This method is economical both in space and material, as it makes use of a corner and eliminates the two side pieces of the cupboard. This corner wardrobe, with a mirror and a good enclosed shelf, will be found very practical, especially in a small room.

Built-in furniture must receive more attention than it has done in the past. Flap-tables, fixed seats, small cupboards for boots or medicines are aids to economy, both in the initial outlay of furnishing a house and from the point of view of the saving of labour. It should be unnecessary to have a wash-stand in the bedroom. A good lavatory basin in the bathroom does much to take its place, and some day it may be hoped that a lavatory basin with hot and cold water will be a natural fitting to every bedroom.

It is a debated point whether the linen cupboard should be in the bathroom, or on the top landing, with the bathroom hot water pipe running through it to air the clothes with its warmth. The latter is probably the better arrangement, as the steam from the bath is apt to affect clothes in the cupboard if this is placed in the bathroom itself. But that a linen cupboard should be provided is essential.

An additional cupboard could be contrived in a principal



## THE WORKING WOMAN'S HOUSE

bedroom by the provision of a seat under the window. This should not be an expensive fixture, as the wall forms the back, and the floor of the room is also the floor of the cupboard. Doors are also unnecessary, as the top lifts up, and such a cupboard would be of great service for the storing away of winter clothes in summer and *vice versa*.

We are all familiar with the remark: 'There's nowhere to put anything away,' and the housewife would be spared endless labour by having a place for everything and by not being obliged to keep things in boxes, which often have to find a place under the bed. Somewhere in the house—either in a loft or in a cupboard downstairs—there should be a boxroom, however small. It is impossible to keep a house really tidy if there is no separate place for boxes, and yet in small houses, as well as in cottages, the architect frequently fails to supply a boxroom. It might be placed under the stairs, or in a small recess off the back passage if there is no suitable place upstairs, and in many cases it would be more convenient on the ground floor, as walls are often damaged by carrying boxes up a staircase.

A beautiful variation from the cheap grained or stained wood furniture is to be found in the well-designed painted furniture known as Dawson-Heal, of which we give an illustration. One of the difficulties of the working woman to-day is that of getting well-made, well-shaped chairs, tables and cupboards; but in these beautifully designed pieces, made on standardised plans, painted in varied colours, all these difficulties are met, and they should soon be able to compete in price with the uglier, less comfortable furniture now found in the shops of industrial districts.

### *Conversion*

We have said that three bedrooms are the minimum for every house in which a family is to live. But, on the



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other hand, many old people, childless couples, and single women do not want more than two bedrooms, and would, in fact, find more than this number burdensome. It is obviously impossible, when planning a scheme, to make adequate provision for this contingency, for no one could say how many houses with two bedrooms would be required, and how many with more. But the problem might be solved by 'adaptable' bedrooms, especially where, as is the case in many cottage schemes, some houses are built in blocks of four. One bedroom in Nos. 2 and 3 of a set of four houses, all with three bedrooms, would have a door in the wall communicating with Nos. 1 and 4, and the result would be a block of four houses containing two, three, or four bedrooms at will. This method of adaptation carries with it the advantage of preventing in some measure any danger of the minimum of three bedrooms becoming a maximum. Take an example: an elderly couple require only two bedrooms, while the family next door want four. The extra room is handed over, the door locked, the key handed over to the authority owning the houses, and if greater security is desired, a set of bars dropping into slots could be placed on both sides of the door. The communicating door would be locked and barred in the same manner when the neighbouring houses were each utilising their three bedrooms. No intrusion on privacy need be feared; a curtain hung over the communicating door would ensure more privacy than is obtainable to-day with the lath-and-plaster partition walls of the ordinary jerry-built cottage, for it is to be remembered that the houses of which we are speaking will be built, not 'run up.' Better still, a sliding panel to cover the communicating door could be placed on either side of the wall, which would effectively prevent any more sound being heard from the adjoining room than would ever be the case with a complete wall partition. And why should not the same principle be adopted in the living-rooms?

## THE WORKING WOMAN'S HOUSE

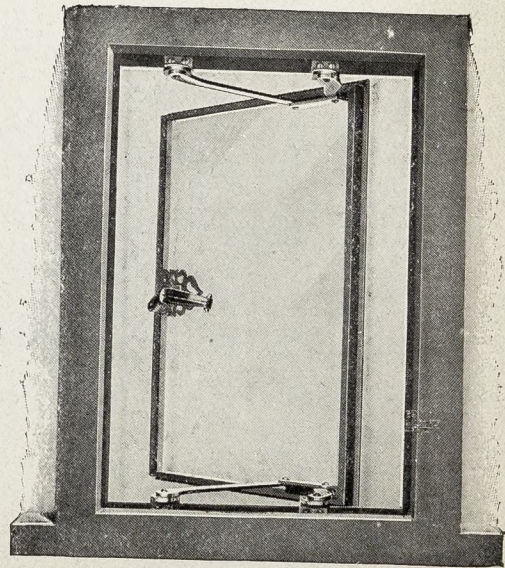
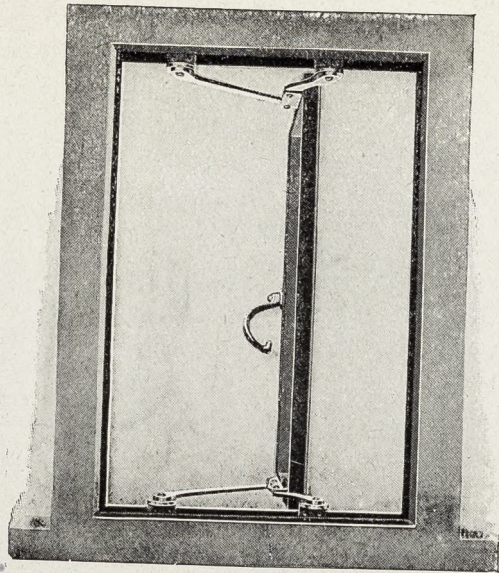
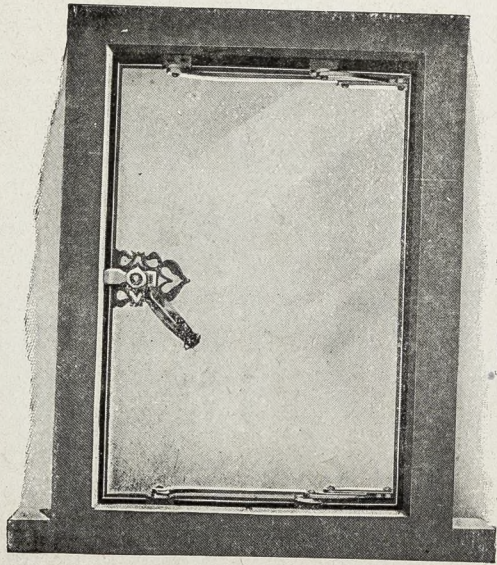
Our elderly couple would very often find that one living-room and a scullery-kitchen amply satisfied all their needs, while the larger family next door would eagerly seize the opportunity of possessing a third living-room.

There is, of course, an obvious drawback to the scheme ; a change of tenants might quite possibly mean that the adapted room or rooms were required by the newcomers. But this difficulty should not be insuperable. A possible solution might be found in this type of house being let on conditions that would ensure, say, six months' notice before any adapted room was recalled.

### *Windows*

One of the most important features of the house is its windows. Whether these should be of the sash or casement type is a matter in which there is much division of opinion. Many working women hold the view that sash windows are more satisfactory from the point of view of ventilation, and that they can be more easily cleaned. The objection to the sash window is, however, that cords are liable to break and are costly to repair, and the casement window appears to be more general in new housing schemes, and is likely in time entirely to replace the sash window. We will, therefore, deal with the latest suggestions for the improvement of casements. The complaints usually made against these are (*a*) that they are not good from the point of view of ventilation, as, being able to open at the top only, they cause draughts and admit the wind and rain ; (*b*) that they often fit so badly that they are not weather-proof when closed ; (*c*) that they cannot be properly cleaned.

The first objection can be met either by a small circular shutter in the pane of glass above the casement, or in this pane being so contrived that it opens outward on a hinge. This should be sufficient to air the rooms in very cold or



*Casement  
Window  
Fastenings.*

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wet weather. With regard to the fixing of the window it would seem that the illustration shown above provides the solution. This casement also provides for windows to be cleaned with comparative ease, and it will be found that, where the windows can be satisfactorily cleaned, the casement has the advantage over the sash in that there is no such risk attached as having to sit on the window-sill, and no necessity to lean out to get at the upper part. From an artistic point of view casements are much to be preferred to sash windows, and where an artistic effect can be obtained without causing extra labour inside the house, or using space which is needed for the greater comfort of the house, it is strongly to be recommended. The comfort and convenience of the family are the first point to be considered, but this can go hand in hand with simple and dignified architecture, and it cannot be too strongly urged that it is of the utmost importance that we should give to the children of the future something of the traditional beauty of the England of bygone years.

### *Floors*

As has been said before, there is a shortage of timber and consequently an enormous increase in its cost. It appears, therefore, that it will not be possible for some time to come to provide hard wood floors if rents are to be kept within the limits of a working-class family. There is, of course, nothing so satisfactory or so pleasing in appearance both to sitting-rooms and bedrooms as a hard wood block flooring, and in the future we may hope to find it provided in all cottages. Again, there can be little doubt that a tiled floor is the most suitable form of scullery flooring. For the present, however, to meet the immediate needs it seems that some sort of composition will have to take the place of wood and tiled flooring.

The objection to composition floors is that, though not

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objectionable in sculleries and even in living-rooms, they are hard and cold, and very ugly for parlour or bedroom. A solution to the problem has, however, been partially found by a successful experiment made in the laboratories of Mr. Seebohm Rowntree at York. Both at New Earswick and at Braintree, Essex, two kinds of composition floors are being laid in the houses. The one is hard and extremely durable, and is used for sculleries, lobbies, and bathrooms. The other type is soft and warm, and while possibly not so durable as the harder type, is thought to have sufficient lasting quality for rooms which will not have such hard wear as others. It is produced in two colours—one a dull red, and the other a soft green. The latter has the appearance of cork lino, and would harmonise well with any carpet or rug. It is probable, however, that many experiments will be made, and in any case a composition floor, while of course less satisfactory than hard wood blocks, is likely to be infinitely preferable to any of the old-fashioned cement floors.

### *Walls*

With regard to the walls of the house, the principal features should be, we think, that they should be light and cheerful and easily cleaned. It is probable that, at all events in the new houses, wall-papers will be entirely superseded by the use of distemper. It is true that in the past this method of decorating walls has been unpopular among working women; in fact, it is only of recent years that it has come into favour with any class of the community. But its unpopularity has probably been due to the rough and uneven surface of old walls, the defects in which had to be covered, and also to the fact that really satisfactory distemper—satisfactory both from the point of view of colouring and cleanliness—has only been invented during the last few years. It is, however, possible

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nowadays to obtain the most delicate and beautiful colours both in oil and water paint, and—still more important—a distemper which can be washed without spoiling the surface of the walls. It appears likely that in future a flat oil paint will take the place of the old preparation. It is more durable, and also can be not merely wiped with a damp cloth as in the case of an ordinary distemper, but will retain its colour even when scrubbed. The advantages of distemper over wall-paper are obvious. The initial cost is very little more than that of a good paper, while its renewal involves merely the washing down of the walls with one coat of paint. In the case of wall-paper, not only is there the expense of the new material, but, if proper attention is to be paid to hygiene, it is absolutely necessary that the old paper should be stripped and the walls cleaned and prepared anew. This is, however, a costly proceeding, and quite beyond the range of the average working-class income, and as a result most cottage walls are covered with several thicknesses of old wall-paper, harbouring not only possible vermin, but the germs of tuberculosis and other diseases from which former generations of tenants may have suffered.

Women will all be agreed that for the walls of sculleries and bathrooms there is really no satisfactory substitute for tiles, both from the point of view of appearance and cleanliness. But tiles are expensive, especially at the present time, and it will probably be found more immediately practical to employ them only over the sink, round the bath, and over the lavatory basin. The remaining wall space, however, must be carefully treated. In the concrete house at Braintree mentioned above (p. 44), the architect has dealt with the problem in a manner which is cheap and simple, and which has met with the approval of the tenants. One light coat of plaster has been applied to the concrete blocks, filling up all crevices in the walls, which remain otherwise in their natural state. It is then extremely simple to keep them clean, and the concrete

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of which the blocks are made being of a good colour, the general appearance of the walls is quite pleasant and very similar to the warm brown stone of which Warwickshire houses are built. Experiments might be made along these lines in many types of houses, and would probably result in much economy. But there are, of course, several alternatives.

It is also possible to apply a coat of enamel or hard paint to the distemper, which may easily be washed. But this is expensive and, of course, not so entirely clean as tiles or the brick and concrete walls—provided that the latter possess no crevices in which dirt may collect.

### *Lavatory Accommodation*

With regard to lavatory accommodation, as has been said before, it is most desirable that there should be two w.c.'s in each house—one upstairs and one leading from the back porch. Where, however, this is not possible, the most suitable place is undoubtedly upstairs. It is true that this is not the most convenient arrangement in the daytime, when the stairs should be kept as far as possible free from muddy boots, but in case of illness it is so essential to have the w.c. in close proximity to the bedroom that this must outweigh the other disadvantages. In all cases care should be taken that the apparatus is of the simplest and most up-to-date nature, with a plentiful flush of water, and that there is a good window. It should have a frosted pane, and in this case a sash arrangement is altogether more satisfactory; the upper part of the window can then always be left open and a constant supply of air admitted. It might be well that the floor should have a very slight slope towards a small gutter at the side, as this would render it easier thoroughly to swill the whole place from floor to ceiling.

The combination of bathroom and w.c. is never

## THE INSIDE OF THE HOUSE

desirable. In case of illness it is often injurious to health, and where there is a lavatory basin, and consequently washing as well as bathing is done in the bathroom, the disadvantages must be obvious.

### *Labour-saving Devices*

Up to the present time few good labour-saving devices have been brought within the limits of small incomes, and consequently women have known very little of what may be done in this respect to brighten their household work. The advent of cheap electricity will, however, bring about a great change in this respect, and inventions to save labour are constantly being placed on the market, many of which may in the future find their way into working-class homes. A cheap supply of electricity will make it possible for plugs to be fixed in the walls in which the electric current will be sufficiently strong for vacuum cleaners, for irons and for washing-up machines, for a 'kitchen-maid' (an appliance which cooks vegetables, beats eggs, makes cakes, and does much of the less skilled kind of cooking), and eventually we may hope to see most, if not all, of the cooking done without unnecessary fatigue to the housewife and exposure to heat.

But women must be prepared to look out for such inventions: not to despair because of their costliness at the present day (for nothing will cheapen them so effectually as to bring them into common use), but to study them from the point of view of whether they have the labour-saving properties which are claimed for them, and as soon as it is possible demand that they shall be obtainable for each house. It is for the working woman to decide what she needs in her home, and then to press for all that can supply her needs. A labour-saving house is important to the comfort of all women; more especially is it important to the working woman who cannot afford to pay for help.



## THE WORKING WOMAN'S HOUSE

### *Woman the Home-Maker*

If reconstruction is to be a spiritual force, if indeed it is to mean anything more than a mere name, it must surely find its expression in the homes of the people. That this end may be attained woman must be set free to develop her own personality. Her work must be done under such good conditions that it may be enjoyable and stimulating. She must have time, not only to feed and clothe her children, but to train their minds and to build up character. She must, in short, be given every opportunity to lead a wider life, and leisure to live that life to the full. Then, and not till then, will she be enabled to take her rightful place in the community and to become the true home-maker.

It is for these reasons that working women from all over the country have responded to the invitation of the Labour Party by giving expression to their views.

## PART III

### Co-operative House Management

THE object of co-operation in the household is to lessen the waste of labour and materials without injuring any of the essential or good qualities of home life. In its ideal form it secures increased efficiency and a higher standard of life without interfering unduly with individual privacy. There are, however, a few people—very few in number—who like the idea of home as a place to sleep in and no more; other needs can be met by public restaurants and sitting-rooms, laundries, and nurseries. This is emphatically not the view of the working woman at home; she wants her own house to have its sufficiency of bedroom accommodation, its sitting-rooms and cooking and washing arrangements within itself; she wants her own garden both for the children to play in and for her to grow her own vegetables; she wants complete privacy for her family arrangements. But she recognises that by co-operation amongst householders she may save time and money and labour and improve the general amenities of life. In all her proposals she aims at the provision of a fully-equipped establishment where the whole of the work is carried out, and not an establishment to which each householder may go to do her work herself. Working women who have had experience of the common wash-house or the common kitchen have come to the very definite conclusion that if co-operation is to work well the whole work must be done by highly skilled people, and not by providing appliances which each tenant in turn

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may use. With this general statement to clear the way we may take the following functions in order of importance :

1. Food.
2. Laundry and Heating.
3. Child Care.
4. Home Helps.
5. Social Arrangements.

### I. Food

There is no duty of the housewife which is more extensive and takes more of her time than that of getting the meals, and this work is greatly added to by the fact that in very few households is it possible for all its members to be present for meals at the same time. In addition to this there is the difficulty that those in different occupations and at different ages require different kinds of food, and the higher its price the more difficult it is for the working woman to carry out the duty of feeding them all satisfactorily. She can be very greatly aided in this by the provision of kitchens and restaurants on the lines of the National Kitchens established by the Ministry of Food and the Local Authorities during the war. The benefits of these are the economy secured in cooking in large quantities and with a high standard of skill. There is also a very great saving in the important article, fuel, while good buying makes a very great difference in securing the cheapest product. It is impossible for each individual householder to know all about the food market from day to day, and a very large part of the time of the housewife goes in her search for cheap goods. The purchase of cooked food at cost price, that is, at a price which covers the cost of material, fuel, management, and labour is a boon to the working woman, and at a large number of Labour Women's Conferences the establishment of such kitchens has been warmly advocated. In every new housing scheme provision should be made for a good

## CO-OPERATIVE HOUSE MANAGEMENT

kitchen of this kind, not with the intention of providing all meals from it, but of enabling some at least to be obtained in this way. It is necessary that such kitchens should be near the homes of the people that they supply, in order that the meals may be obtained with the least possible waste of time and trouble, and coupled with the kitchen there should be a restaurant where meals are provided at equally low prices. Few people other than the housewife herself realise that every family feast means excessively hard work for the woman, and whatever her pleasure may be in providing well for her family, everyone knows also that, when the feast takes place, the mother of the family is usually too tired to eat. The working woman wishes very reasonably that she was able sometimes to go out with her family and have dinner comfortably in a restaurant, all of them equally enjoying the holiday. With a restaurant run on the lines we have described, the mother would be sure that the food was healthy and nourishing and that the money she paid for it was not more than a similar meal prepared at home, save that little additional amount in the cost of production due to the serving. Even that might well be met by the economy of fuel and that of buying well and in large quantities. Moreover, such restaurants would provide a very useful means for giving a good meal to workers who are unable to return home at midday. In cases of illness, invalid food could be more easily produced there. In families where dinner is wanted at midday for the children and in the evening for the man coming home late after work, the mother can provide one meal herself suitable for the children and get in a good substantial dinner for the man ready to be made hot at whatever hour he should happen to come. The kitchen would thus not take the place of the home fires, but would provide a very useful addition, and ease the woman's constant toil.

In our illustrations we show the delightful comfort of one of the National Restaurants which is situated in

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New Bridge Street in the very centre of London. At this restaurant customers buy tickets at the door and take them to the food counter, where they take trays and get their plates handed to them. The tables are kept tidy and laid with the necessary knives and forks and tumblers by a small number of waitresses, the self-serving of the food accomplishing a great saving in labour. The restaurant has been so successful that it is hoped to extend it greatly in the near future, and the following day's bill of fare shows how cheaply a meal may be obtained.

### NATIONAL RESTAURANT, NEW BRIDGE STREET, CITY OF LONDON

#### MENU

#### HOT DISHES

Farmhouse Soup	. 2d.
Fried Fish and Parsley Sauce	. 6d.
Sausage Rolls	. 4d.
Boiled Tongue and Parsley Sauce	. 6d.
Stewed Steak and Carrots	. 6d.
Minced Veal and Ham	6d.
Roast Leg of Mutton	6d.
Yorkshire Pudding	. 2d.

#### VEGETABLES

Potatoes	. 2d.
Spring Cabbage	. 2d.
Haricot Beans	. 2d.
Green Peas	. 2d.

#### SWEETS

Date Pudding and Sweet Sauce	. 4d.
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Tapioca Pudding	. 3d.
Chocolate Blancmange	. 4d.
Fruit Salad and Custard	4d.

#### COLD BUFFET

Beef	. 6d.
Ham	. 6d.
Tongue	. 6d.
Potato and Beetroot Salad	. 2d.
Lettuce Salad	. 3d.

#### VARIOUS

Scones (each)	. ½d.
Cakes	. 1d.
Tea (per cup)	. 1d.
Tea (pot for one)	. 2d.
Tea (pot for two)	. 3d.
Coffee (per cup)	. 2d.
Coffee with milk (per cup)	. 2½d.
Cocoa (per cup)	. 2d.
Aerated Waters	. 4d.

There is no reason why other districts should not have a similar restaurant, and wherever possible an open-air



*The National Restaurant, New Bridge Street, London.  
From Photograph lent by National Kitchens Department, Ministry of Food.*



*Poplar National Kitchen and Restaurant, showing counter where cooked food is sold to take away.*

*From Photograph lent by National Kitchens Department, Ministry of Food.*

## CO-OPERATIVE HOUSE MANAGEMENT

café should be provided in the summer months. The Ministry of Food has during this year been managing restaurants in the Royal Parks of London for the Office of Works, and by these means has been making a considerable profit for the community. Every municipality might, during the summer months, have open-air restaurants in its municipal parks, thus providing good food at cost price, and giving a pleasant place of recreation without any cost to the municipal income. The second illustration shows another national kitchen, one which was conducted in the Poplar Baths during the war. As the Baths are now wanted for their original purpose the kitchen will have to find other premises. Here again a very great success has been scored. This kitchen combines the duties of a restaurant as well as providing cooked food to those who take it away with them to eat at home. In our illustration all the electrical equipment for cooking can be seen behind the counter. When customers can really see where the food is cooked, they know whether it is clean and well looked after, and any mother might well trust her children's health when she knows that their soup and pudding comes from such good clean quarters. The list of bills of fare which follows shows at what a reasonable cost food can be prepared in this way, even at present prices. All these menus were collected in the month of June 1919. The Ministry of Food is still urging the establishment both of Restaurants and Kitchens, but the number all over the country is even yet not more than a hundred.

### POPLAR NATIONAL KITCHEN

*Tuesday*

Vegetable Soup	1d. & 1½d.	Haricot Beans	. 1½d.
Macaroni Cheese	. 3d.	Marmalade Pudding	. 2d.
Meat Pies . . .	. 4d.	Stewed Figs and	
Roast Beef . . .	. 5d.	Custard . . .	. 2d.
Roast Mutton . . .	. 6d.	Rice Pudding . . .	. 1½d.
Potatoes . . .	. 1½d.	Raspberry Buns . . .	. 1d.
Greens . . .	. 2d.	Tea (per cup) . . .	. 1d.

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### COVENTRY NATIONAL RESTAURANT

#### Tuesday

Pea Soup . . . . .	1d. & 2d.	Gooseberry Pie . . . . .	3d.
Roast Beef . . . . .	10d.	Custard . . . . .	1d.
Yorkshire Pudding . . . . .	2d.	Rice Pudding . . . . .	1d. & 2d.
Meat and Potato Pie . . . . .	8d.	Stewed Fruit and Custard . . . . .	3d.
Mutton Fritters . . . . .	3d.	Nelson Tarts . . . . .	1d.
Potatoes . . . . .	1d. & 2d.	Custards . . . . .	1d.
Beans . . . . .	2d.		
Peas . . . . .	1d.		

#### Friday

Vegetable Soup . . . . .	1d. & 2d.	Cinnamon Pudding and Custard . . . . .	2d.
Roast Mutton . . . . .	10d.	Rice Pudding . . . . .	2d.
Steak and Kidney Pudding . . . . .	7d.	Stewed Fruit and Custard . . . . .	2d.
Meat and Potato Pie . . . . .	8d.	Rock Buns . . . . .	1d.
Fish Cakes . . . . .	3d.	Cakes . . . . .	1d.
Potatoes . . . . .	1d. & 2d.	Jam Roll . . . . .	1d.
Beans . . . . .	2d.		
Peas . . . . .	1d. & 2d.		

#### Saturday

Pea Soup . . . . .	1d. & 2d.	Beans . . . . .	1d. & 2d.
Roast Beef . . . . .	10d.	Vanilla Pudding and Custard . . . . .	2d.
Sausage and Mash . . . . .	6d.	Gooseberry Tarts . . . . .	3d.
Mutton Fritters . . . . .	3d.	Custard Blancmange . . . . .	2d.
Fish Rolls . . . . .	3d.	Treacle Tart . . . . .	1d.
Potatoes . . . . .	1d. & 2d.	Lemon Buns . . . . .	1d.
Cabbage . . . . .	2d.		

## CO-OPERATIVE HOUSE MANAGEMENT

### SUNDERLAND RESTAURANT

(June 1919)

Two Courses are served for 11d., table money 1d.—  
Total, 1s.

#### MENU No. 1

Liver and Bacon with Onions.	currant, or date; or Blancmange and Fruit;
Potatoes and Peas.	Rhubarb Tart and Custard;
Raisin Pudding — spice,	Rice; Sago; Tapioca.

#### MENU No. 3

Roast Beef.	Potatoes.
Yorkshire Pudding.	Steamed or Milk Pudding.

#### MENU No. 6

Hot Pot.	Potatoes.
Peas.	Pudding as above.

*N.B.*—The puddings are varied each day from list given in first menu, and always a choice is allowed.

### NEWCASTLE RESTAURANT

#### MENU No. 1

Potato Soup.	Jam Roly, or
Boiled Meat Pudding.	Rice, or
Potatoes and Beans.	Blancmange and Fruit.

#### MENU No. 3

Broth.	Currant Pudding, or
Steak Pie.	Tapioca, or
Potatoes, Peas.	Custard and Stewed Fruit.

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### NEWCASTLE RESTAURANT (*continued*)

#### MENU No. 5

Scotch Broth.	Spice Pudding and Custard,
Meat Hot Pot.	or
Potatoes.	Custard and Apples.
Cabbage.	

*N.B.*—The above are sample menus of three course, 1s. dinner.

### GLASGOW NATIONAL KITCHEN

*June 4, 1919*

Lentil Soup . . . . .	2d.	Tea	
Vegetable Stew . . . . .	4d.	Macaroni and Tomato.	4d.
Cold Roast . . . . .	8d.	Welsh Rarebit . . . . .	4d.
Steak and Kidney Pie	8d.	Cold Boiled Ham . . . . .	6d.
Potatoes . . . . .	1d.	Beetroot . . . . .	1d.
Turnips . . . . .	1d.	Meat Pies . . . . .	4d.
Plum Pudding . . . . .	3d.	Sausage Rolls . . . . .	1½d.
Semolina Pudding . . . . .	3d.		
Rhubarb and Custard	3d.		

### EDINBURGH NATIONAL KITCHEN

*Saturday*

Tomato Soup . . . . .	2d.	Marmalade	Pudding
Fish and Cheese Pie	5d.	(steamed)	4d.
Rissoles . . . . .	5d.	Potatoes . . . . .	1d.
Mince and Macaroni		Beetroot . . . . .	1d.
Pie . . . . .	6d.	Cabbage . . . . .	2d.
Cold Roast Beef . . . . .	6d.	Salad . . . . .	2d.
Rice Pudding . . . . .	2d.	Bread . . . . .	½d. & 1d.
Rhubarb and Sago . . . . .	3d.	Milk (per glass) . . . . .	2d.

## CO-OPERATIVE HOUSE MANAGEMENT

### 2. Laundry and Heating

We have already dealt with the possibilities of central heating in Part II, and undoubtedly the laying-on of hot water, especially from a central boiler-house, would greatly facilitate washing arrangements in the home; but there are other needs to consider. First, laundry equipment for doing all the work at home takes up considerable room, and washing is undoubtedly a very great strain on the health of many women. With the best possible appliances the washing day in the small homes of the workers is always a considerable trial. The washing of blankets, sheets, and heavy clothing needs a woman who is muscularly strong, and takes a very large amount of time. While working women believe very strongly that there ought to be a copper in every house so that they can do much of that work at home, they feel also the need for giving out part of the laundry so that they may be free to devote themselves to other work as well as to preserve their strength. For pregnant mothers there is no greater difficulty than that of the family wash, and often they have to sacrifice a great deal of what they need in the way of nourishment in order to pay for it going out at these times. The ideal arrangement is a double one. Every house should be provided with a copper and a wringer so that all things that a woman wants to do herself may be done at home, but a laundry run at cost price with good appliances and skilled workers is of very great value. Careful investigation on this question points to the bag-wash laundry as the best solution. The idea of this is that a woman sends out her bag of dirty clothes which is returned to her washed but not ironed, and she is then able to finish them off without too great a strain or too great an expenditure of time. Laundries suitable for this work should be established at the central boiler-house, where there is a



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plentiful supply of hot water, and very little further building is required to make suitable premises. The cost is arranged at a certain amount per bag, and when the expenditure on soap, soda, &c. is considered, the cost of the bag-wash is within the reach of the ordinary family. This system has very great advantages over the municipal wash-houses to which a woman takes her own things, though often that is a great boon in urban districts; for all the unpleasantness of the wet garments hanging about the house during the winter is done away with, and a real gain to health and comfort secured.

### 3. *Child Care*

The care of small children before they reach the ordinary school-going age is a serious problem in most households. The provision of day and night nurseries and a highly-trained nurse, which is the ordinary custom of the well-to-do, cannot be practised in working-class families, even if it were necessary or desirable for every individual household. But the truth is that a child grows up best with a healthy home and plenty of other children to play with, and not too much fuss being made about it. Still it is not good either for mothers or children that the little ones should always be under the care and within the sight and hearing of their mothers. The nursery school supplies the need for both, giving freedom for a few hours a day for the mother either to spend in her home or in other concerns outside it, and giving to the children a better training both for mind and body. The nursery school is more of a well-planned nursery than what we usually think of as a school, and it should be regarded as a necessary part of co-operative house management and of education, and not merely as a resource for slum children. Nursery schools should be placed near the children's homes, and should take only a small number of babies between the ages of two and six.

## CO-OPERATIVE HOUSE MANAGEMENT

The ideal number seems to be fifty. They should be in the charge of a woman trained for teaching, but also trained in the special care of the very young, a woman specially chosen for her sympathetic and knowledgable handling of small boys and girls. The building should be airy, with plenty of good lavatory and bathing accommodation, and a garden is a necessary part of its equipment. Sleep and play should form a large part of the school curriculum, the children learning by way of play rather than by means of set lessons. It should not be compulsory for a mother to send her child to such a school, but once having entered it in attendance, reasonable regularity would be necessary. At the same time it must never be forgotten that for very small children school attendance must not be too strictly enforced, for weather and childish ailments of all sorts need greater care and watchfulness than at later ages. The hours may well be those of an ordinary school, for the times of sleeping coming frequently would make up a school day without straining the child's attention in any way. Children at the age of six years would pass into the ordinary schools far better equipped, physically and mentally, to learn their lessons, and at the same time mothers would have far more time to give to the mental training and to playing with their children than they can under present circumstances.

Co-operative care of the child, however, must not end with the nursery school. The older children have also to be considered, and the working woman wants to have far larger provision for their recreation and far more attractive playing-grounds than is the ordinary lot of the industrial population of to-day. Open spaces with trees and grass and flowers should be a necessary feature of every area, while there is need for the older children of a great extension of recreation rooms and children's libraries. Such centres connected with each school would give a social life and a finer spirit of comradeship to the schools

## THE WORKING WOMAN'S HOUSE

themselves, and enable children to grow up with a far greater sense of their common interest and social obligations to one another. The old custom of building schools with merely asphalt playgrounds, and leaving to the youngsters no playing fields other than the streets, should be no more the common lot of the workers' children.

The knowledge that their children had healthy surroundings for their play hours and safe places for playing in would be a great relief to their mothers. It would also save a vast amount of work that they have to do to-day. Every mother knows well the difference between clean dirt that the children get in a garden and the filth they bring in from the coal dump or the muddy streets, and they know also the effect on their lungs of the clean air of green fields, and contrast it sorrowfully with that of the disease-laden dust of the streets.

It may be impossible in crowded urban areas to get all these advantages for the children of to-day, but in building new houses the crowded urban districts should not be the sites chosen, but the comparatively empty places round about, while in clearing slum districts, sites of old houses should be cleared up and left as open spaces for the children. But it is not only the crowded urban areas that neglect their children in this way, for in many small mill towns and colliery districts houses are dumped down without consideration of the children's needs, and not only must they play in dirt and mud, but often they are very ill-protected from the traffic of the roads or from dangerous falls—a very frequent trouble in colliery villages.

One other point may be noted in this connection. Change of air plays an important part in securing good health, and especially is this the case for those who live in towns. This need may well be met by co-operative holiday homes both for children and for adults, and there is something to be said for an occasional holiday for the parents taken separately from their children. It appeals particu-

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larly to mothers of small infants. In the beginning of life the mother has the constant work of caring for the child's nurture, and when the little one is old enough to be left in other care a fortnight's holiday for the mother is an admirable way of improving her health. Co-operative holiday homes for mothers would do much to raise the standard of health amongst the women, but they must be coupled with the certainty that their children are well looked after in an equally advantageous situation in a co-operative holiday home of their own.

### 4. *Home Helps*

However good a house a woman may have, and however good her general environment, she may yet suffer from overwork, and in this generation the overwork of the mothers is a serious problem. Many of them have had, during their girlhood, an occupation in which the hours of labour were too long, some of them have had work too heavy for them, very many have had insufficient food, and later the strain of child-bearing tells upon their impoverished constitutions. Even under the best circumstances a woman with a large family will find it very difficult not to feel the strain of caring for them all. Amongst better-off women the provision of help in domestic work is regarded as a necessity, and there are few women indeed outside the ranks of the workers who do not think that it is a very great hardship to do the whole of the work of their homes. That hardship is being more and more felt by working women as their interest in affairs outside their homes grows, and their desire for further education and the widening of their outlook increases. They realise more and more keenly that they also need some assistance, if they are to carry out their task of home-making in a way that will satisfy their desires. It is because of this

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that the idea of home helps has become so popular amongst them. This proposal was first put forward with special regard to the times of child-bearing. It was pointed out that during these times the working woman had the great anxiety of managing her household just when she should have been specially free from such troubles, and that she frequently got up and began her work again long before she was really fit to do so. This premature convalescence was very often the source of the many ailments of the married working woman, and it was to provide against it that the scheme of home helps was suggested. It was not only a nurse that was wanted, but the mother wanted somebody to look after her house, to do the shopping, cooking and cleaning, to attend to the children's clothes, to see that they go to school and go to bed, to keep them washed and well-behaved. It was therefore suggested that every Public Health Authority should arrange for the provision of capable, trustworthy women, who would go as home helps into the working woman's house for this period, and that such home helps should be paid for either by the family itself or from public funds in just the same way as the services of a midwife might be. This scheme, which was advocated especially by the Women's Co-operative Guild and the Women's Labour League, has become part of the recognised policy of the working women's movement, and is supported by the Ministry of Health in its circulars on Maternity and Child Welfare.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Circular of the Local Government Board (now Ministry of Health) of August 9, 1918.

### MATERNITY AND CHILD WELFARE

#### *Home Helps and other Assistance*

28. In many cases a woman is unwilling to leave her home, even if its conditions are unsuitable for her confinement. If the difficulty arises from the number of children, arrangements may sometimes be made for the children to be boarded out during the mother's lying-in period; if it is due to the need for a person to look after the house

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The scheme might, however, be much further developed. It is not only women during the time of child-bearing who need such help, but they need it in other times of illness, and also for their ordinary daily lives. Such a scheme has been strongly advocated, though it needs further discussion and consideration. On broad lines, what the working woman wants is the provision of help in her domestic work in order that her home and children may be properly looked after. Such help does not necessitate a resident domestic worker; what she wants is to be able to have someone to assist even for one or two hours a day, or even for one morning in the week. In large families the need is greatest, though many delicate women with few children require help as well. It is important, however, that the Home Help should herself be a working woman with personal experience of similar homes, understanding all the difficulties, the makeshifts and management of the working class family.

during this period, whether the confinement takes place at the home or elsewhere, a Home Help may be supplied for the purpose. The grant is available for assistance of this character where the Board's general consent has been previously obtained to the local arrangements.

Home Helps must, of course, be persons of suitable character. Where the confinement takes place at home they should undertake the necessary duties under the direction of the nurse or midwife in attendance.

The duties of a Home Help would be the ordinary domestic duties usually undertaken by the mother, including cleaning, cooking, washing, care of children, mending and marketing. She should not undertake any work which properly belongs to the sphere of the trained nurse or midwife nor assist at a confinement unless a doctor or midwife is in attendance.

It is advisable to arrange for special training of Home Helps. This training may be given at Maternity Centres and Day Nurseries, and should include practical instruction in plain and invalid cookery, food values and prices, laundry work, mending, infant care and hygiene. A course of one to three months, according to the previous experience of the woman, should be sufficient.

A scale of charges for the service of Home Helps should be made, but the charge may be remitted or reduced in individual cases where the circumstances justify it.

## THE WORKING WOMAN'S HOUSE

### 5. *Social Arrangements*

We have laid stress several times in the course of this book on the importance of improving the social arrangements of life generally for the population, and here we give some of the ways in which these matters may be specially dealt with. Our towns provide a large variety of amusements for which sometimes a very high price must be paid. Poor people have fewer opportunities of such enjoyment, and in any case industrial areas are very much less well off in this way than the well-to-do residential districts. Not only does educational opportunity need great extension in order to place it within reach of the whole of the people, but recreational opportunity needs extension also. Those who have written and spoken of the need for a revival of rural life in the villages know well the almost complete absence of any opportunities for recreation in the greater part of the countryside, while anybody who has lived in the industrial areas of towns or colliery districts knows the scanty scope for amusement amongst the people. What is wanted here is the free provision of social institutes, in the management of which all the people of the district may have something to say. Every housing scheme should provide for a social centre, including not only library and reading-room, but a concert hall and theatre. In small areas one hall might combine all purposes. The love of the drama is almost universal, and there is no reason why it should not have much more scope, so that all should have an opportunity of sharing its enjoyment. There is scarcely any district in which a good dramatic company could not be found amongst the residents, while the love of fine drama, proved so notably at the 'Old Vic' in South London, has its parallel wherever it has been tried in an industrial or rural area. But it has been the common experience of educational and artistic organisations that the

## CO-OPERATIVE HOUSE MANAGEMENT

first difficulty they have to overcome wherever they have established themselves is the difficulty of finding premises. The use of schools has been an advantage, but schools built for teaching children are not suitable as recreational halls for grown-up people, and in regard to most of the other halls it must be noted that ugly and sordid surroundings make enjoyment of the best kinds of pleasure infinitely more difficult. This is why well-planned halls and theatres, though they may be small, would have a great social advantage in raising the standard of life. Not only the theatre but music also needs the right environment, in which sight, hearing, and ventilation are all-important.

The people's hall should also be the centre for picture exhibitions, flower shows, and every other interesting communal effort, and should be open for the use, without prejudice, of all political and educational bodies. Under general supervision of the Local Authority a committee of residents should deal with the daily affairs of its management.

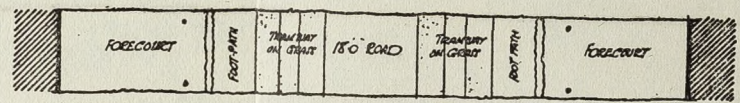
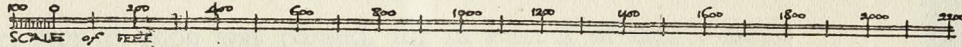
#### PART IV

### The Healthy Town

**T**HE old-fashioned way of building houses for the people was to put up long rows of little box-like shelters, until the countryside was scored by line upon line of monotonous and dingy dwellings. Front doors opened straight upon the roadways, while an occasional covered entrance between blocks of anything from eight houses upwards, little backyards, paved or mud-covered, were the usual environment of the houses in our industrial areas. In the villages, cottages were dumped down with equally little thought for the grouped appearance of them all, or for securing the general amenities of life by attention to their surroundings. The great aim was to put up as many cottages as possible with the least expenditure of ground space, so that, with the least possible expenditure of money on the buying or the leasing of the land, the greatest amount of profit might be reaped from the rent of the houses. The first definite legislative recognition of the evils of this system is to be found in the early Housing Acts towards the end of the nineteenth century, when it became necessary to clear some of the worst slums in the towns, and powers were given to Local Authorities to do this work and build decent dwellings in their place. Some thought was given to the planning of these areas in order to get sufficient air and light. A new note was struck when the Housing, Town Planning,

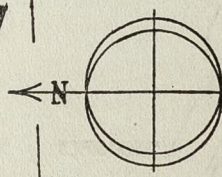
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# SUGGESTED HOUSING SCHEME · READING



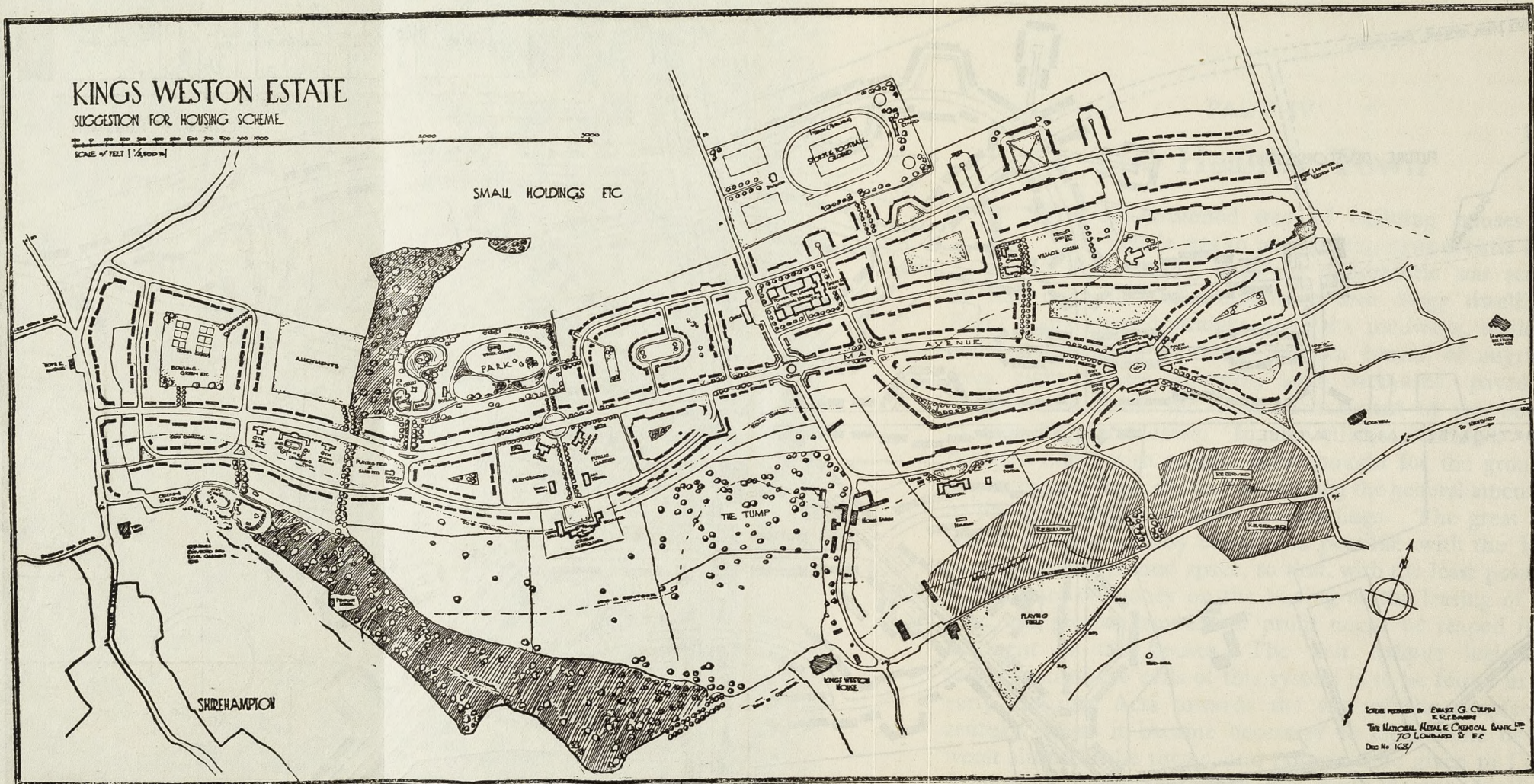
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&c. Act of 1909 was passed, for in Part 2 of this a large number of sections were devoted to the work of town planning, and permission was given to a Local Authority with the authorisation of the Local Government Board to prepare town planning schemes for areas 'likely to be used for building purposes with the general object of securing proper sanitary conditions, amenity, and convenience in connection with the laying out and the use of the land, and of any neighbouring lands.' It was, however, necessary for the authority first to show reason to the Local Government Board before making a town planning scheme, and there was a long and tedious procedure before such schemes could be made operative. The Housing, Town Planning, &c. Act of 1919 carries these proposals very much further. It is now no longer necessary to obtain the consent of the Ministry of Health before proceeding with a town planning scheme; now any Local Authority may draw up and submit a scheme without first obtaining the sanction of the Ministry. Moreover, every Borough and Urban District with a population over 20,000 must prepare such a scheme before January 1926, and may be compelled by the Ministry before that date to do so if the Ministry consider it urgent.

It has been the policy of the Labour Movement<sup>1</sup> declared in January 1918, to urge that overcrowding in the large towns should be relieved by the establishment of new towns, and the reconstruction of the smaller existing towns on garden city principles, including the reservation of a stretch of country all around, the wide spacing out of houses and factories, the provision of gardens, allotments, and small holdings, and the installation of the most modern power-plants and labour-saving industrial facilities. Whenever in the course of the inquiry which we have dealt with in this book the matter of housing has been considered at

<sup>1</sup> This New Town policy was first put forward in the Garden Cities Association.



## THE WORKING WOMAN'S HOUSE

meetings and conferences, the further question of the general planning of towns, small and large, has also been raised. Nor is it only for the town that these matters are so important; wherever houses are being built in a village, this question of the general planning so as to allow of future developments must be a matter for careful consideration. There is a great revolt amongst women against the long rows of cottages with treeless streets and a general aspect of slumdom, and they constantly make the demand for open grassy spaces interspersed amongst the groups of houses, small front gardens for those houses themselves, and tree-shaded, foot-pathed roads. Very important also are the questions of easily accessible back entrances, and vegetable gardens for every house. In clearing slum areas it is held to be far better to leave the area set free to increase the lung space of the town, and to put the new houses on the outskirts. To do this so as not to make the distance from work too inconvenient the whole question of transport must also be considered. But women hold that it is more important to have a healthy environment for the children than to live in the very centre of a town near the place where the fathers may work. Moreover, the development of new areas makes it possible to carry out schemes for providing means of recreation, and an opportunity of getting better school premises for the children. It gives also an opportunity for ending the old custom of segregating the working classes in streets of their own. It has been said many times at women's meetings: 'Why should all the pleasant hilly parts of the town be kept for the big houses, and only the less attractive and less healthy areas be used for building the workers' homes? Why not build new areas of houses of many different kinds, so that the manager of the factory may live side by side with the worker in it, the only difference being the number of rooms in a house and not the address which is given?' By such methods there would not only be greater equality

## THE HEALTHY TOWN

in securing pleasant surroundings for all, but much would be done towards reducing some of the worst forms of snobbery in the community. The lay-outs which are illustrated here give, one of them the plan of a new village with the possibility of developing into a town, and the other a scheme for adding a large number of houses required for the inhabitants of a growing town. The King's Weston scheme has already been described in 'The Labour Woman' of September 1918, and the description given may be quoted here. As at present planned, it should house from 12,000 to 15,000 men and women, but there are opportunities for extending it on both sides.

'Looking at the plan the reader must imagine she is high in the air looking down upon fields and houses and trees. The little black oblong blocks represent the houses, while the round blobs show trees and open spaces. Right round the town stretches wheat-land or open fields which are reserved in perpetuity. To the north, small holdings can be taken up, while to the south are some specially beautiful wooded areas. The stone that will be necessary is being quarried from a point at the south-west, and when it has been taken out the quarry will be turned into a great rock garden. In a similar way sand is being procured for bricks and that sand-pit will be prepared later for a special playing ground for the smaller children. There will be two or three shopping centres and several areas for pleasure grounds and playing fields. It is proposed to have one theatre, and probably a concert hall as well. The lake which will be part of the pleasure ground has its utility in helping to drain the flatter land. Another piece of land is set aside for allotments, but in addition to that every house will have its garden. The first choice of sites is to be given to the Education Authority and it is hoped that they will build a series of Nursery schools so that all the small children will have them close to their homes. In about the middle of the area is a set of buildings of special interest to women. There will be placed a power house

## THE WORKING WOMAN'S HOUSE

for the supply of electricity, a communal kitchen, and an up-to-date laundry.

'The Society originally proposed to have about ten different types of houses so as to suit the needs of all sized families. Under the present building restrictions they cannot carry out this plan in full, and the houses now being put up in order to supply the urgent needs of those who are employed at the spelter works are being erected on plans of the Ministry of Munitions, which are on much more rigid lines, but when the war ends and the scheme is carried out in its entirety, the more varied planning will take the place of these few types.

'One most important matter is to be noted. There is to be no snobbery in this new town. No part is set aside for houses for the well-to-do, but all kinds are erected in all parts, not with a view to suiting the social standing, but simply with a view to providing a sufficient number of rooms for different sized homes. This is a very important feature of the town planning scheme. It means that the social amenities provided in common shall be used in common. The poor will not be quartered in narrow small streets with a restricted outlook while the rich enjoy the woods and finer avenues.'

The Reading scheme is much smaller and is intended to supply a more definite need. The alternative before the Reading Town Council was either to build in the crowded town area, or to take land on the outskirts, where there was space for good town planning. The scheme given shows how this may be done and many people housed. The proposal gives space for future developments, and involves a tram extension, so that the people from the new town can go easily to their work in the old. It will be seen that in the centre is a large open space, and round it are all those buildings which are necessary for communal purposes. There is a general social institute, a laundry, communal kitchen, to which would be added a restaurant, shops, churches, and a little farther out a large school. It will be seen that

## THE HEALTHY TOWN

the houses are grouped in small blocks, so arranged that all of them can have gardens in front as well as at the back, and in addition to these there are a large number of open plots for general use. There are a few large roads, but most of them are small, being used not for the general traffic business of the town, but just for the houses themselves. In a somewhat similar scheme for the outskirts of Lincoln, a very interesting proposal is made for one central boiler-house, which will supply hot water to the whole of the houses, and such a proposal would seem to be easily within the scope of all such plans. Built as they are on the outskirts of an already existing town, their inhabitants will have the double advantage of pleasant and healthy surroundings, and with many features of country life will combine those which belong to urban areas. Socially, educationally, and industrially they will gain by their close connection with the town, but physically they will have the great advantage of free and open surroundings.

## PART V

### The New Housing Act and Women's Needs

**T**HE Housing, Town Planning, &c. Act of 1919 does in many ways increase women's responsibility as well as their opportunities. In the Appendix to this book a memorandum recently issued by the Ministry of Health has been printed, which gives in very abbreviated form the provisions of the Act, and in these pages, without repeating these provisions, some suggestions are given for the work that women may do in seeing that full use is made of the powers now placed in their hands. Two important principles are accepted in the new Housing Act. For the first time every Local Authority is given the definite duty of providing such houses as are required for the working classes in every district, and which cannot be supplied by other means. Moreover, they are under the obligation to prepare an outline scheme within three months of the passing of the Act, and to submit that scheme to the Ministry of Health for approval. If the Local Authority fails to carry out this duty adequately, or when the scheme has been approved fails to complete the houses, the Ministry of Health may call upon the County Council to act in their place, or may themselves act in place of the Local Authority. This is a new obligation, and one of which the importance cannot be overestimated. It is

## NEW HOUSING ACT AND WOMEN'S NEEDS

a duty which can only be avoided if it can be shown that private enterprise fills the needs; in our present position it is impossible to believe that those who build only for profit will do any important work towards providing houses for the people. Public Utility Societies, however, have certain privileges, which may make them important rivals of the Local Authorities.

The second important principle in the Bill is that financial help is given for losses upon an approved scheme of any local authority, due to the abnormal costs of building. While the financial help is certainly not sufficient, it is a step forward, and will go at least some of the necessary distance in getting houses provided on a proper scale. A great increase in financial help will, however, be necessary before much progress is made. The principle now accepted can be largely extended.

The Local Authorities for housing purposes are, outside London, the borough, urban and rural district councils, and for London the County Council, the City Corporation, and the Metropolitan Borough Councils, the last-named providing houses within their area for their own population, and dealing with small slum areas and unfit houses in their respective boroughs.

The Ministry of Health recommends that the Local Authority should appoint Housing Committees without delay, and suggests that these should consist of members of all local bodies, together with a certain number of co-opted persons. The Ministry say, 'It would usually be desirable that some of these should be women.' Organised working women would add that some of them should always be women, and that these women should be representatives of working women's organisations, wherever possible being themselves women who are housewives in working-class homes. These Housing Committees will have large powers delegated to them, and will be the real local centre of housing activities. The central organisation consists of

## THE WORKING WOMAN'S HOUSE

the Housing Department of the Ministry of Health, and an advisory body is connected with this under the name of the Housing Council. There are at present three women upon this Council, two of whom, Mrs. Barton and Mrs. Sanderson Furniss, were appointed upon the nomination of the Standing Joint Committee of Industrial Women's Organisations. The country has been divided up into districts, and a Housing Commissioner, who is an officer of the Ministry of Health, has been placed at the head of each of these, and it is proposed that he also should have an Advisory Committee within his area.

The special task of organised working women is to see that throughout this machinery for housing the working woman's point of view shall be constantly represented, and as a result of conferences, meetings, and correspondence, the following proposals have been put forward as most likely to meet the needs :

1. There should be a strong effort made to secure that amongst the Labour Councillors on every Local Authority there should be a good proportion of women. The November elections of 1919 gave a fine opportunity for helping this proposal forward. As the years pass on it is hoped that both in the April elections for the urban and rural district councils, and in the November elections for municipal bodies, the number of working women nominated as candidates and elected will greatly increase.

2. Working women's organisations should press by means of resolutions, deputations and meetings for the appointment of their nominees upon the Housing Committees of Local Authorities.

3. In addition to the Housing Committees it will be well to have Advisory Committees of Working Women, whose special object it would be to study and criticise any housing plans put forward.

4. Where this method does not seem sufficient, arrange-

## NEW HOUSING ACT AND WOMEN'S NEEDS

ments should be made for getting the advice of the working women generally :

(a) By holding public meetings and conferences to which plans would be presented and any matters of interest in regard to housing would be discussed. Such conferences might be organised by the Local Authority, who would invite to them representatives of all working-class organisations, or failing the Local Authority, the work might be taken up by the Labour organisations themselves.

(b) By posting in some public place the plans which it was proposed to adopt and notifying people where they might come to look at them.

5. Where Local Authorities are slow to act in any of these matters it would be well to have a Housing Committee formed by the Labour organisations, who would in the first case call a conference of all suitable bodies for the purpose of forming it, and again from time to time to give it fresh inspiration and power.

6. The Housing Commissioners should be urged to set up their Advisory Committees and to include in them a large proportion of representatives of working men and working women.

7. Full use should be made of the Housing Council at the Ministry of Health, and working women's organisations should keep the women representatives well informed of any questions which arise in their own districts. These representatives may always be communicated with through the secretary of the Standing Joint Committee of Industrial Women's Organisations, 33 Eccleston Square, London, S.W.1.

8. Where there are Labour Councillors, whether men or women, on Local Authorities it would be well for such working women's organisations as the Women's Sections of Local Labour Parties &c. to form a special Housing

## THE WORKING WOMAN'S HOUSE

Committee to work in touch with these Councillors, being informed by them and keeping them informed of any matters of interest, and studying constantly the question of the housing needs of the district.

It is not possible to bring this chapter to a conclusion without saying a word about the rent of the houses which working women want. It must be recognised that these houses are a great advance on any that women have lived in before, and it is therefore natural that some increase in rent should be urged. But it is equally important that the rents of the houses should be such as will place them within the reach of the great masses of the working people. They must not be built and let at rents which only the aristocracy of labour and the poorer middle classes can afford. Under the Housing Act power is given to the Local Authorities to fix these rents, and it is admitted that it will not be possible to charge what is called an economic rent in view of the present high cost of building. The proposal of the Ministry of Health will be found in the Appendix in paragraph 7. The scope of this book does not allow us to go in full detail into the question of cost, but the matter must be approached from two directions. On the one hand steps must be taken to make land cheaper and more easily accessible, and to restrain the operation of trusts, rings, and profiteers of all sorts dealing with housing materials; on the other hand efforts must be made to secure that the rents fixed shall be within the reach of the people most needing the protection of healthy and comfortable homes. The Housing Committee of the Local Authority will in general have power to fix the sum, and it is advisable that before doing so a conference of working-class organisations should be held, at which the matter could be thoroughly discussed.

It will be seen that women now have a full opportunity of expressing their desires on housing questions. Their

## NEW HOUSING ACT AND WOMEN'S NEEDS

responsibility is a very great one, for upon the efforts they make in the next two years will depend the comfort, well-being, and health of generations to come. The future of their homes lies in their own hands. Their new political power cannot be better used than in securing the reforms which they themselves have outlined through their representative organisations, and many of which have been set forth in these pages.

[NOTE.—Since this book was written a Circular has been issued (December 1919) by the Ministry of Health, proposing various ways in which the advice of women may be obtained, and embodying several of the suggestions put forward here.]

## APPENDIX

**T**HE following circular has been issued by the Ministry of Health :

FOR OFFICIAL USE

### HOUSING, TOWN PLANNING, &c. ACT, 1919

The following statement shows briefly the principal provisions of the new Act, and especially the increased responsibilities of local authorities in the matter of housing.

The local authorities for housing purposes are, outside London, the borough, urban, and rural district councils, and for London the county council, the city corporation, and the metropolitan borough councils, the last-named providing houses within their area for their own population and dealing with small slum areas and unfit houses in their respective boroughs.

#### 1. *Obligation on Local Authorities*

Every housing authority must provide such houses as are required for the working classes in their district, and as will not be supplied by other means.

For this purpose they must prepare an outline scheme and submit it to the Ministry of Health within three months of the passing of the Act.

## APPENDIX

If the local authority fail to prepare an adequate scheme or to carry out their obligations under the scheme when it has been approved, the Ministry of Health may either empower the county council to act, or may themselves act, in the place and at the expense of the local authority.

#### 2. *Financial Help*

Subject to the conditions prescribed by the regulations, any losses upon an approved scheme or schemes of any local authority which exceed the produce of a penny rate will be defrayed by the State if the scheme is carried out by the 31st July 1922, or such extended time as the Ministry of Health may in exceptional cases allow. If a local authority has more than one scheme the limit of the local burden will still be the *1d.* rate.

#### 3. *Land—Price to be Paid*

Land will, as a rule, be obtained by agreement, and local authorities should consult the Inland Revenue valuers with regard to the price.

Where the necessary land cannot be obtained by agreement the local authority may, with the approval of the Ministry of Health, exercise compulsory powers.

Under the Acquisition of Land Bill now before Parliament the price to be paid for land compulsorily acquired will be fixed according to its market value by official valuers appointed by the Government.

Where a slum area is purchased for clearance, the price to be paid will be the value of the land as a site cleared of buildings, unless it is necessary to use the site for re-housing for or an open space, in which case the price will be reduced.

## THE WORKING WOMAN'S HOUSE

### 4. *Land—Larger Powers to Buy, Sell, or Lease*

Under the new Act local authorities are given larger powers with regard to the purchase and disposal of land.

Local authorities can let or sell the land or parts of it to other bodies or persons for the erection of working class dwellings or for the erection of dwellings for other classes, or it may be of factories, churches, &c., or for any purpose incidental to its development as a building estate, and can thus obtain the advantages of estate development which were formerly possible only to private enterprise.

Where a local authority is authorised to purchase land compulsorily they can enter upon it after 14 days' notice.

### 5. *Power to Buy Houses*

A local authority can also buy houses and any interest therein, and alter them so as to make them suitable for the working classes.

They can further, if they think fit, arrange to buy houses erected or to be erected by a contractor.

### 6. *Relaxation of Bye-Laws*

If the plans and specifications for a housing scheme, as approved by the Ministry of Health, do not comply with the local building bye-laws, these bye-laws are to that extent superseded.

This does not mean that a lower standard is recognised, but that a proper planning of the whole scheme is provided for.

Private builders in any district will have the same privilege to build in accordance with any plans and specifications approved by the Ministry for a housing scheme in that district, even if these are inconsistent with local bye-laws.

## APPENDIX

### 7. *What Rents are to be Charged*

In view of the present high cost of building it is not anticipated that it will be possible to charge an economic rent (*i.e.*, one which gives a fair return on capital cost) in respect of the new houses, and it is for this reason that the Government is giving the financial assistance already mentioned.

Local authorities should, however, obtain as high rents as can reasonably be charged, and in fixing them should take into consideration not only the rents which are being paid in the locality for houses of a similar class, but also the fact that they are providing better houses with greater amenities than is usually the case, and by the end of seven years (by which time the cost of building is expected to be only two-thirds of the present cost) local authorities should obtain rents which would represent an economic return on houses built at that date.

### 8. *County Councils*

It is now made clear that county councils may build houses for any persons employed or paid by them—*e.g.*, roadmen, police, teachers—and the Government will give financial assistance in the shape of an annual payment equivalent to 30 per cent. of the annual loan charges.

The Ministry of Health can authorise county councils to act in place of the local authorities if the latter are in default.

### 9. *Public Utility Societies*

The Government will now give financial assistance to Public Utility Societies to build working class dwellings, both by way of loan and by annual subsidy equal to 30 per cent. of the total loan charges.

In addition to this, local authorities (including county

## THE WORKING WOMAN'S HOUSE

councils) may promote Public Utility Societies or assist them by making them grants or loans, by subscribing for share or loan capital or by guaranteeing the payment either of interest on loans borrowed by them or of any share or loan capital they may issue.

Full particulars on this subject are given in a booklet (price 1d.) entitled 'Housing by Public Utility Societies,' issued by the Ministry of Health.

### 10. *Purchase of Houses by Tenants*

A local authority (or a county council) can now lend up to 85 per cent. of the value of any house not exceeding in value 800*l.* to enable any person resident in the district to buy the house in which he lives or intends to live.

Moreover, a local authority can, with the Ministry's consent, sell any houses bought or erected by them, and may agree to the price being paid by instalments or to the payment of part of the price being secured by mortgage of the premises, but any house so sold may not be used by any person having an interest in it to house his employees.

### 11. *Clearance of Slums*

It is the duty of local authorities to clear any areas which are shown to be insanitary, and, where necessary, to rehouse the inhabitants.

It is also the duty of local authorities to close, and, where necessary, to demolish unfit houses and to remove buildings which interfere with proper ventilation or are otherwise obstructive.

### 12. *Repairs*

New powers have been given to local authorities to lend money, in suitable cases, to house owners to carry out necessary repairs.

If a house is not in sound condition but is capable of

## APPENDIX

being made fit without reconstruction and the owner fails, after notice, to carry out the necessary repairs, the local authority may do the work and charge the cost to the owner.

### 13. *Tenement Dwellings*

Local authorities are now given full powers, in the case of houses used or to be converted for use as tenements for the working classes, to make and enforce bye-laws to prevent overcrowding and to secure the provision of the necessary sanitary conveniences, water supply, precautions against fire and the like.

If a local authority fail to exercise their powers where needed, the Ministry of Health may themselves act.

### 14. *Town Planning*

Any local authority may now prepare a town planning scheme without having first to obtain the sanction of the Ministry.

Every borough and urban district with a population over 20,000 must prepare a scheme by the 1st January 1926. The Ministry can before that date require a scheme to be prepared by a local authority where they consider this course necessary.

Local authorities should from the outset consider the town planning needs of their district with a view to making a complete town planning scheme as time allows.

The procedure in connection with the making of a town planning scheme has been simplified by the new Act.

### 15. *What Local Authorities should do immediately*

Every local authority should at once, if it has not already done so, appoint a housing committee and delegate to it wide powers. Under the new Act the power of entering into a contract is among the powers which may be so



## THE WORKING WOMAN'S HOUSE

delegated. The committee may consist partly of persons who are not members of the local authority and it would usually be desirable that some of these should be women.

The immediate business of the committee will be to progress as rapidly as possible with any schemes in hand, to ascertain the needs of the area as regards new houses, to see what houses should be closed or demolished and what slum areas cleared, and to prepare schemes for the purpose where this has not already been done.

The important matter is to have houses built. At the earliest possible moment work should be started, there being no need to wait until a scheme has been sanctioned in all its stages before making a beginning. Sewering, street works and the like may be started as soon as the layout has been sanctioned and the tenders for that work approved. Moreover, without waiting for the complete scheme, any portions of it which are urgent or on which work can be commenced quickly should be submitted immediately, so that the actual erection of houses, even if few in number at first, may be begun.

It is of the utmost importance to get ahead as quickly as possible while the summer weather lasts, and the Ministry will in every way they can support the local authorities in their efforts to avoid delay.

Further particulars will be given in a booklet entitled 'Housing—The Powers and Duties of Local Authorities,' to be published by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Reconstruction, and to be obtained of H.M. Stationery Office or through booksellers, price 2d.

Ministry of Health,  
7th August 1919

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