





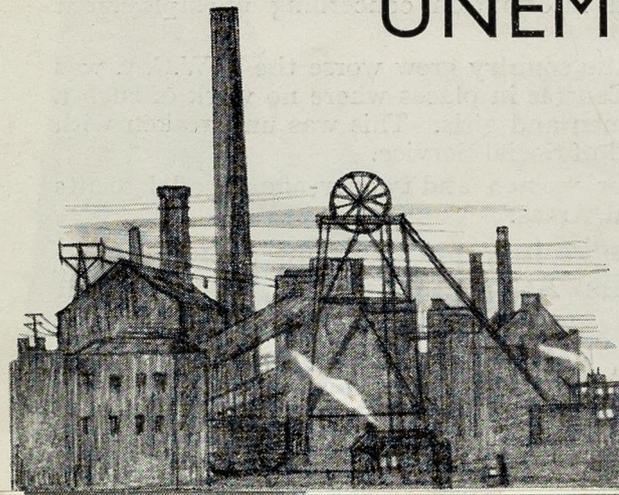
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237

# OPPORTUNITY

THE Y.W.C.A.

AND

# UNEMPLOYMENT



1936

# WOMEN AND UNEMPLOYMENT



For a number of years now large areas of Great Britain have been living under the shadow of prolonged unemployment. There is a tendency to think of Unemployment as a man's problem, yet in fact many hundreds of thousands of women and girls were the chief breadwinners in their homes.

The figures found in the registers of the Ministry of Labour can only tell part of the story. There are further thousands of older women who have never been in insurable occupations, who are without work, whose health is undermined by worry and poverty and who have little or no prospect of permanent work again.

Periodically we are faced with statistics giving the estimated total of unemployed married men; it needs little imagination to realise something of the burden carried by their wives, bringing up families on a minimum allowance, and keeping homes together in an environment of constant strain and depression.

Behind this bare statement of facts and figures lies a state of affairs which is a challenge to every Christian man and woman.

This leaflet gives a very brief outline of some of the practical ways in which one Christian organisation is seeking to meet at least some aspects of this challenge.

## THE Y.W.C.A.

Almost as soon as it became apparent that women and girls in certain areas were likely to have long periods of unemployment, Y.W.C.A. Centres began to extend their work to meet new needs.

In a number of the larger shipping towns, such as Newcastle, Cardiff, and Hull, office workers were among the first to be affected. Many Y.W.C.A. Centres as early as 1928 organised special classes and provided practice rooms with typewriters in order that unemployed clerks might maintain and improve their efficiency. These Centres worked in close co-operation with the local Employment Exchanges of the Ministry of Labour, helping the girls to secure openings as soon as they occurred.

Day-time activities were organised in over thirty-six Centres, including Keep-Fit, Cookery and Dietetics, "Make and Mend" classes, and popular talks on such subjects as "New Jobs for Old" and "Why I am Unemployed"—giving advice in seeking new work, and information concerning unemployment insurance.

As conditions in many parts of the country grew worse the Y.W.C.A. was called upon to organise new Club Centres in places where no work of such a nature existed among younger women and girls. This was undertaken with the support of the National Council of Social Service.

Since 1933 fifteen new Clubs for women and twenty-one for adolescents have been started in the Distressed Areas.

Each Club is, from the beginning, part of the national and international fellowship of the Association, with its Christian ideal and message.

*Young Women's Christian Association.*



## HEMOCRAFT and COOKERY

Many girls, after months of unemployment, realise the improbability of permanent work in the occupation for which they have been trained, or which they had hoped to enter.

Classes in Homecraft, Cookery and Dietetics, held in the informal atmosphere of the Club, help them to discover in themselves an aptitude for housewifery.

The voluntary cleaning and care of the Club premises gives an opportunity for elementary training and often leads to a decision to venture into domestic service.



The fact that there are Y.W.C.A. Clubs, open all day and every day, in most of the bigger towns to which girls are transferred, gives added confidence to those going away from home for the first time. Here are friends and activities waiting for the girl on "her night off."



## HANDICRAFTS

In this mechanical age vast numbers of workers are deprived of the joy of creative craftsmanship. The sense of achievement which comes through making something with one's own brain and hands is one of the most satisfying of God's creative gifts.

Unemployment offers the opportunity of time for all sorts of handicrafts but this is very largely useless when one cannot afford tools, material, and equipment.

**Our Y.W.C.A. Clubs provide expert instructors, tools, and material at cost price, which can be paid for in convenient instalments.**

Dressmaking, knitting, slipper-making, embroidery, upholstery, and rug-making are to be found in nearly every Centre.

Many homes impoverished by unemployment have colour and beauty brought into them through the gay designs of simple craft work. Many a family exchequer is saved because a member has learned the knack of making old clothes into new.

Girls who seek domestic employment find that their voluntary training in thrift, crafts, and general "handiness" in the home gives them new value and opportunity.



"I too will something make, and joy in the making."

## THE YOUNGER GENERATION

Can you imagine what it feels like to receive your first earnings—the unique joy and sense of importance that it brings? Many girls in the distressed areas have never had that feeling.

They worked hard at school only to find that all they had learned was apparently useless; the world did not seem to want their newly-awakened powers so hungry for expression. Most of them were born soon after the war—not too strong—and less strong now through malnutrition. A few have been fortunate enough to find work but earnings are given to unemployed parents, while the young wage earner gets a very little for herself.

**It is dangerous to leave the potential personality of the youngster latent. In our special Y.W.C.A. Clubs for girls between 13½ and 18, we try to develop their awakening powers through drama, handicraft, and keep-fit—the rhythmic movement to music which gives a freedom not only of body but of mind. To quote one member—**  
**"This isn't like stiff marching; it makes you feel all happy inside."**

For many of them an artificial barrier between everyday life and religion has been removed in the atmosphere of a Club where prayers are held every evening, where stories are told round the fire and informal discussions spring up on such subjects as "Why we have a 'C' in our name" and "Are Christians long-faced?"





Photographs by courtesy of the Ministry of Labour and Strand Film Company  
AT HOME IN THE HOSTEL

## NEW JOBS FOR OLD

**TRANSFERENCE.**—Nowadays for thousands of young girls who have lived all their lives in rather remote mining towns and villages, the only prospect of work lies in transference to jobs in the more prosperous southern towns.

In addition to the ever present need for domestic servants, new industries and factories have been started in various Midland and Southern towns, which require a constant supply of juvenile labour. Parents are naturally nervous in allowing their 15-year-old daughters to go so far away unless they can be assured that they will be happy and well cared for, morally and physically, in the right kind of surroundings.

Many girls have returned home through sheer homesickness; the change of environment and the complete break from family and friends have proved too much for them in the difficult adolescent years.

The Y.W.C.A. (in close co-operation with the Ministry of Labour) has opened Hostels, with Clubs attached, in a number of places, under the wise and "motherly" wardenship of trained workers. Here is the atmosphere and freedom of a home, not an institution, and the Club not only offers interests and activities for leisure time, but the opportunity to make friends with local girls.

Hundreds of girls from the Distressed Areas have joined our established Club Centres in many towns—in London over 150 have been welcomed as members recently in seven Centres alone—Harrow, Richmond, Ealing, Hampstead, Tottenham, Acton, and the Central Club in Great Russell Street.

# C A M P



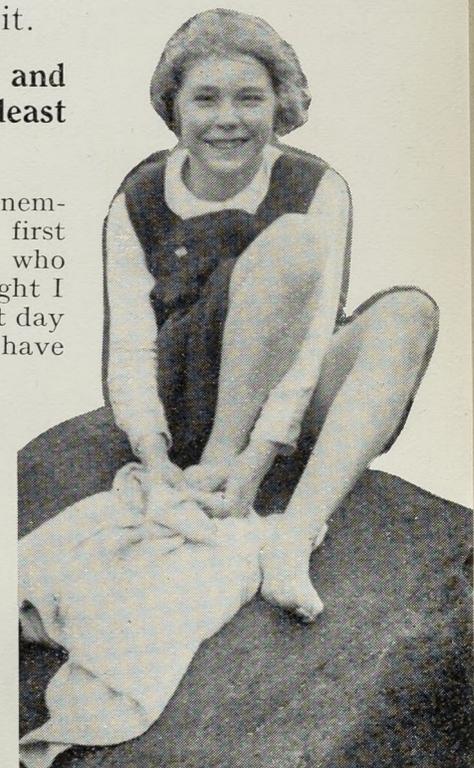
Our members in the Distressed Areas find Summer Camp quite as exhilarating as a Mediterranean Cruise! All through the winter the Camp is talked of, pennies are saved, for each member pays something towards the expense. Then Camp Week arrives, and what follows? It is not an exaggeration to say that members are transformed. Well-planned menus and abundant good food are a boon to the harassed mother who has been stinting herself for her baby; and the young overgrown schoolgirl is built up and made more fit to stand the strain of her first job.

With the restored body comes a vitality and alertness of mind and the friendship and fellowship of community life brings a new spirit.

**Last year between 300 and 400 women and girls from the Distressed Areas enjoyed at least a week's Camp Holiday.**

One woman whose husband had been long unemployed, was helped to have a holiday for the first time in five years by two other Club members who offered to take care of her children. "I just thought I couldn't stand another winter" she said on the last day in the country, "but now I feel I can go on. I'll have this to remember when I'm in the blues."

One girl aged 15, and the eldest of eight, liked Camp because there were "no kids to mind," and yet the psychological pull of the home, however poor, was shown by the same girl who at night was found crying—"I'se fretting 'cos there'll be no one to run the messages for Grannie."





THE  
CLOTHES  
SHOP.

## LANCASHIRE

Approximately one-third of the unemployment among women in Great Britain and Ireland is concentrated in Lancashire, largely in the cotton towns. Born and bred in the environment of a traditional industry and trained as skilled workers in it, thousands of women who expected to work in the mills until their old age are now almost without hope for the future. Younger girls, after months of unemployment, are now securing periodical work but find their one-time health and "staying-power" weakened by strain and undernourishment. Others are seeking new occupations and need help and advice.

The Y.W.C.A. has established Clubs at—

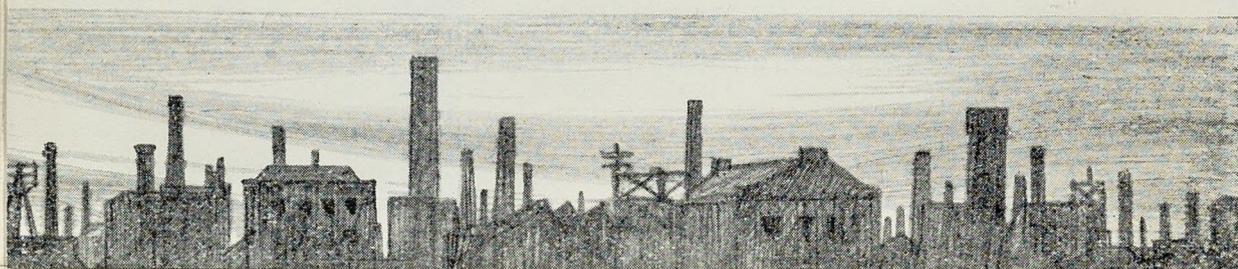
**BLACKBURN** where a full-time Centre is open every afternoon and evening. The membership is nearly 200 and increasing. Many girls have asked to become full members of the Association and have made their own Quiet Room. The Programme includes Keep-Fit, domestic classes, dramatics and handicrafts. The Club though only two years old, won the Y.W.C.A. North-West Divisional Competition for 1936 for the highest average in all sections.

**DARWEN**—a Club open four nights a week with a membership of about 120. Enterprising and keen.

**COLNE**—one night a week—a membership of between 60 and 80. New and full of promise.

**OLDHAM**—a temporary Club has been run here in conjunction with the Y.M.C.A.

The second-hand clothes shop stocked by Y.W.C.A. friends all over the country is a great boon to these Clubs.



## TYNESIDE, NORTHUMBERLAND and DURHAM

These areas were among the first to be struck by widespread unemployment and for many years now have suffered from its effects.

The Y.W.C.A. has three old-established full-time Centres in Newcastle and one at Gateshead, covering a total membership of some 2177, the majority of whom have been sharing the acute economic stress which has affected people in every walk of life throughout Tyneside, Durham, and Northumberland.

In addition to its existing work the Y.W.C.A. has undertaken the organisation and leadership of eight new one-or-two-nights-a-week Clubs for younger girls.

	Membership
<b>WINLATON, Co. Durham</b> ... ..	165-180
<b>CHOPWELL, Co. Durham</b> ... ..	100-120
<b>SEATON BURN, Northumberland</b> ... ..	65-75
<b>FOREST HILL, Northumberland</b> ... ..	87-95
<b>CARR HILL</b> ... ..	88-90
<b>THROCKLEY</b> ... ..	118-125
<b>DUNSTON</b> ... ..	60-70

A  
CHRISTMAS  
PLAY.





## WEST CUMBERLAND

The problems of prolonged unemployment in the mining area of West Cumberland are accentuated by its partial geographical isolation. The lack of openings and training in any skilled work for juveniles is a particularly serious feature.

During the past three years the Y.W.C.A. has established a group of Clubs in this area at:—

**WHITEHAVEN**, a full-time Y.W.C.A. Centre. The Married Women's Section here made as its first bit of community service two Maternity Outfits. The Senior Girls have a splendid Debating Group with the Young Men's Section. The programme of the 14-18 year old girls includes Cookery, First-Aid and Keep-Fit, and Dramatic Work.

**KELLS** Y.W.C.A. Club on the new housing estate of Whitehaven shares a Hut with the Girl Guides. The members are mostly younger girls and number from 87-100. There is any amount of scope for development here and an urgent need for it.

**MARYPORT** Club is in one of the most distressed towns in Cumberland. Here there is a membership of some 200—a rapidly increasing Junior membership including Guides and a good Married Women's Section. Seventy-five per cent. of the membership suffered in the recent floods but no complaints were heard!

**WORKINGTON** Club started with a Women's Group which has grown to a membership of over 100. Club singing and Handicrafts have been among the most popular activities. The Unemployed Men's Centre has joined in organising Christmas and Summer Treats for the children. There is a Younger Girls' Section.

**MILLOM** has a membership of over 130 women and carries on a most varied programme despite very inadequate premises.



## SOUTH WALES

Conditions in the distressed areas of South Wales are now too well known to call for more than special emphasis here.

The Y.W.C.A. old-established Centres at Cardiff, Newport, and Merthyr have each extended their work to meet new demands. Afternoon Clubs for women have opened in all three and special classes for unemployed secretarial workers at Cardiff.

With the help of Special Area Grants through the National Council of Social Service, Clubs for younger women and girls have opened at

**PORT TALBOT** with a membership of some 150, and

**CWMAVON** with between 50 and 60 girls.

In both these places there is great need for development and the call for further extension is coming from towns and villages in the district.

## SCOTLAND

There are few of the larger towns in Scotland which have not suffered from widespread unemployment. In many of these the Y.W.C.A. has old established Club Centres where extension work has been undertaken by Local Association Committees or in co-operation with the Community Service Councils. An outstanding example of such service is the Juvenile Instruction Centre incorporated in the Club programme at **ABERDEEN**.

Recently the Commissioner for Special Areas made it possible for the Y.W.C.A. to begin to meet the needs of younger girls in a number of towns.

**MOTHERWELL**—A Club open three afternoons and two evenings a week. Membership 90 with an additional 50 attending Keep-Fit Classes. Parents' nights have been arranged and the "Community Feeling" is growing.

**CUMBERNAULD**—A Village Club opening one night a week. Membership 30

**ARDROSSAN**—A full-time Club with a membership of 60-70. Many occasional attenders.

**STEVENSON**—A one-night-a-week Club with a membership of 30-40.



# YOU HAVE, WE HOPE, READ THIS LEAFLET

Will you help us to take our share in these needy areas of declaring the Message of Christ, the redemption of body, mind and spirit?

## OPPORTUNITY

**THE OPPORTUNITY IS OURS, BUT THE RESPONSE TO IT MEANS MONEY.** Certain funds have been at our disposal from Government Grants through the National Council of Social Service, from Charitable Trusts, and from friends within and without the Association. But we never have enough money to do all that is so urgently needed. **The work is only in its beginnings. If it is to be maintained it needs the constant supervision of trained leaders and it needs suitable premises and equipment.** We could help a far wider circle of people if we had more money. We want **your** help. Your money means our further opportunity. Your pounds make our power.

## SERVICE

Some cannot spare even a penny, but even they can perhaps give time and trouble.

Here are some of our needs:—

- Voluntary Helpers for the Clubs all the year round and for Camps in the summer.
- Clothes—new or second-hand—for the Club shops.
- Materials and equipment for handicrafts and Keep-Fit.
- Books for the Library, Fellowship Hymn Books and Song Books.
- Gifts of food for Camp during July.

THE FUTURE HAPPINESS OF THOUSANDS OF GIRLS  
MAY DEPEND ON THE ANSWERS OF READERS OF THIS  
APPEAL.

## WHAT IS YOUR REPLY ?

Please send it to the Y.W.C.A. National Offices,  
Central Building (4th floor),  
Great Russell Street,  
London, W.C.1.

Cheques should be made payable to The Hon. Treasurer, Sir Montague Barlow, Bt., P.C., K.B.E., and crossed National Provincial Bank, Oxford Circus, W.1.

