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OREGON STATE COMMITTEE ON CHILD CARE, HEALTH, AND WELFARE

Minutes of Meeting

A special meeting of the Oregon State Committee on Child Care, Health and Welfare was held at 4:00 P.M. on Monday, October 19, 1942 in Room 504, Spalding Building to discuss with Mr. John L. Mead, Head Counsellor, Kaiser Shipyards, problems and plans of industry with respect to care of children of working mothers, especially mothers who are employed in the shipyards.

Those present were Mrs. Saidie Orr Dunbar, Chairman; Mrs. C. W. Walls; Mrs. E. W. St. Pierre; Mr. A. G. Johnson; Miss Gladys Everett; Dr. John Frances Belz; Dr. Lewis D. Clark; Dr. DeNorval Unthank; Mr. Lester Wilcox, representing Miss Florence Beardsley, State Department of Education; Miss Jeanne Beach, representing Mrs. Sarah V. Case, Farm Security Administration; Mr. Mead; Miss Deborah Pentz, Assistant Regional Child Welfare Consultant, U. S. Children's Bureau; Miss Dorothy Potter, Field Representative, Office of Civilian Defense; and Mr. Clyde Getz.

The chairman asked Mr. Johnson, who had arranged for the meeting with Mr. Mead, to explain the purpose of the meeting. He discussed the interest of the committee in knowing the problems faced by industry in relation to care of children of working mothers, and the plans which the shipyards are considering to meet the problem. He said such information would be particularly helpful at this time inasmuch as the Chairman will be going to Washington, D.C. within a few days and will discuss with officials there plans which might be worked out to meet the problems in this state. It was also explained that Federal funds might be received for supervisory and administrative personnel relating to care of children of working mothers and that the total situation must be known before a plan can be presented.

Mr. Mead reported that estimates made a year ago indicated there probably would be approximately 15% or 15,000 women employed in the shipyards. It now appears that this number will be exceeded. There are 1155 women now employed on all shifts in the Kaiser shipyards in Oregon. However, some of these workers are being lost because of a lack of resources for the care of their children while they are employed. Twelve women welders were lost in the last week for this reason. He said the problem is primarily one of care for the pre-school child, because the Portland public schools have agreed to keep school children until 5:30 P.M. if necessary.

Mrs. St. Pierre told of her visit to the shipyards a few days previously. She talked to a number of women and found that the majority of them were mothers, many of whom had children under five years of age. Many had no relatives who could care for the children while they are employed and had been making their own placements in private homes. One mother stated that she had had to move her children eight times already, due to overcrowded or other unfavorable conditions.

Mr. Mead was of the opinion that the problem of care for children is closely related to the very serious housing situation. It was his belief, however, that as unsatisfactory as some placements might be, the homes in which children are cared for during the day are probably better than the ones they actually live in with their families. He told of two families of thirteen children who are living together in a four-room house. This is a situation in which a mother of six children, who is employed in the shipyards, invited a father with seven children from New York to share the home with them.

The children are all under the care and supervision of a nineteen-year-old girl during the hours of the mothers employment.

Mr. Mead said he did not have complete information concerning the number of children for whom day care could not be arranged but knew of eight pre-school children of mothers employed in the Oregon shipyards, for whom it has not been possible to arrange suitable day-care. He stated the shipyards have given some thought to construction of day nursery facilities but do not want to develop day-care programs unless absolutely necessary since they would prefer using regular community resources. He expressed a willingness to postpone any plans concerning development of industrial nursery schools or day nursery facilities for a while at least, to see what the state and community can do. However, unless facilities are developed soon, he thought it might be necessary to go ahead as the Douglas Air Craft Company has done. He suggested that it might be possible also to have such facilities included in some of the housing projects which are being developed.

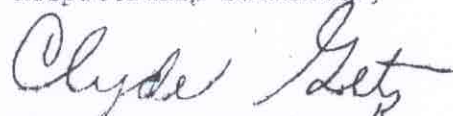
In response to a question raised by Mrs. St. Pierre, Mr. Mead explained that although a detailed history of each worker is taken, the shipyards do not ask women seeking employment whether it is necessary for them to work or whether there is another wage earner in the family. Neither do they inquire as to plans which the mothers have made for the care of their children during their hours of employment. Questions pertaining to care of children are raised only when the mothers themselves ask help in locating resources for the care of their children.

Mr. Getz asked whether the shipyards, should they consider it necessary to construct their own facilities, would establish small nursery schools scattered throughout the city which would be available to all children in the community or construct large projects near the shipyards. Mr. Mead stated the plan would probably be to construct one nursery school near each yard. This was discouraged by the Committee because of:

1. Problems involved in transporting large numbers of children to central nursery schools.
2. Advisability of caring for children in small groups in their own neighborhood regardless of where the mother might be employed.
3. Danger of concentrating too many children in one center, especially in the event of a bombing.
4. Advisability of developing such facilities as a public responsibility through Federal, state, and community services rather than industry.

Miss Everett stated that the Work Projects Administration will be able to help meet the need if information can be provided regarding the number of children in need of care and the various communities within the city in which the need is greatest. She said there is now 50% exemption of certification requirements for nursery school personnel and, according to latest information, it will be possible to have 100% exemption if need is indicated. This will enable the Work Projects Administration to establish nursery schools and operate them until such time as a permanent program can be developed by schools or other agencies. Mr. Mead stated he would be willing to cooperate in any way and would supply information requested with respect to the need in the Kaiser shipyards.

Respectfully submitted,


Clyde Getz, Secretary