

WILLARD STORAGE Battery Co.

See American Can Co.

Division of Women in Industry

July 18, 1918.

My dear Mrs. Angell:

Dr. Hamilton has sent me your letter of June 29th, reporting on the employment of women at the Willard Storage Battery Company, and I have received your letter of July 13th.

The employment of women in industries in which lead is used is an important problem to which the Division of Women in Industry will give early attention. We shall probably have a special committee of experts appointed to deal with it. Meanwhile, we shall be glad to have you send us any material which the Ohio Committee may gather on this subject or on the employment of women in any other hazardous occupations.

Sincerely yours,

Chief, Division of Women in Industry.

Mrs. Ernest Angell,
Ohio Committee on Women in Industry,
612 St. Clair Avenue,
Cleveland, Ohio.

Ask for data

WOMAN'S COMMITTEE
OHIO BRANCH
COUNCIL OF NATIONAL DEFENSE

NOTED

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STATE HOUSE, COLUMBUS

CITIZEN 7883, 7031

JUL 15 1918

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MRS. HENRY R. SPENCER STATE HOUSE, COLUMBUS

Ohio Committee on Women in Industry,
612 St. Clair Avenue,
Cleveland, Ohio.

July 13, 1918.

Miss Mary Van Kleeck,
Woman's Division,
Ordnance Department,
Washington, D.C.

My dear Miss Van Kleeck:-

Dr. Alice Hamilton has written me that she has referred to you a report I sent her on women working on lead in the Willard Storage Battery and also in the American Can Company. She says that you will probably appoint a Committee in the Ordnance Department to deal with the whole question of women in the lead trades. We shall be most anxious to hear when such a Committee is formed, as we are gathering a good deal of material on women in dangerous occupations.

Your letter to Miss Jones in regard to the organization of the Woman's Branch of the Ordnance Department here in Ohio has just come. We have already talked to Miss Gilson who is a member of our state Committee on Women in Industry, and I hope that we may work out a plan of cooperation by which we may be of some service to you.

In the matter of Industrial Canteens, our Committee is going to ~~help~~ prepare a pamphlet on Industrial Canteens, the general need, with definite suggestions if possible on at least three types of restaurant service. Miss Gilson approves of this and when this pamphlet is distributed, we may then turn to you for actual advice in installing Canteens in factories. We of course think that it is very much better for the factories to establish their own Canteens rather than for any outside agency go into to do this.

Most sincerely yours,

Katherine S. Angell
(Mrs. Ernest Angell)
Executive Secretary.

KSA-F

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MRS. HENRY R. SPENCER

Cleveland Committee on Women in Industry.

June 29, 1918.

Dr. Alice Hamilton,
Bureau of Labor Statistics,
Washington, D.C.

File

My dear Dr. Hamilton:-

I have just been to the Willard Storage Battery Co. to see the women they have at work on jobs formerly held by men. They have 300 women now. Mr. Roof, their general welfare manager, and Dr. Wood took us about. Dr. Wood showed me the letter you had written him commending the work of the Willard Storage Battery Co. in the prevention of lead poisoning. I wanted to ask what you thought of the employment of women at certain processes, and knowing this company's plant as you do, felt sure that you could at once say whether the work would be harmful for women in spite of precautions taken. I went there because of reports from several girls who had come to the State-City Employment Bureau and complained of feeling sick, with symptoms that suggest lead poisoning, i.e., severe headache and constipation after two week's work.

Women are used in the Assembling Room. They place the pieces of prepared wood between the plates, put the plates together, file the edges of the plates, and solder. Most of them work sitting down at rather crooked dark benches. Not all of them wear gloves. The heaviest work done here by women is the lifting of the elements after they are put together during a certain process of inspection. The women stand for this and only lift the elements a short distance on the table. Women inspect over a suction table top the lead paste covered plates.

Women work in the Molding Room. They do not do the molding processes proper, but inspect lead molded parts and sit very near the kettles of molten lead. The room was filled with smoke, chiefly oil smoke from the furnaces and of course the hoods carry off the lead fumes well, but to a lay person it seemed absolutely unnecessary to have women inspecting in those rooms. The parts inspected are used next at the opposite end of the plant and so it would be wasted effort to inspect them there and carry back the discarded parts, Mr. Roof says.

Women are testing the battery boxes for leaks, by electricity. They are also working at a new mechanical device they are trying out for soldering, in which the plates travel on a moving belt under a flame.

Special batteries for aeroplanes are being made in a separate room and here women file lead edges. Here I saw girls eating lunch. A boy with a cart of pies and sandwiches was bringing food to the workers at their working benches. In the molding and assembling room both men and women bought food and left it open to dirt and lead for one half hour before the lunch period. Dr. Wood also saw this and said it should be stopped.

There is an unattractive lunch room for girls which is little used. They have good locker facilities but no rest room, except the hospital. There is one nurse for the girls. She and Dr. Wood say there is absolutely no lead poisoning among the women. Soap and warmwater are provided in the wash rooms but evidently there has been no effort to interest the women in the dangers of lead and the need of great cleanliness.

The method of preventing dirt in the factory seemed admirable, especially the sprinkling of the floors with water and magnesium sulphate.

It would be a great help to us if you would write us what you think in general of the employment of women at this work, and which would appear to be the work involving the most danger from lead, the inspection of the paste covered plates, the filing, soldering (very little done by women) or the inspection in the molding room. The State factory inspector Miss Bean was with me when I made this visit and is anxious also to have your opinion. Of course we can absolutely see to it that they discontinue the eating of lunch in the work rooms but we can have very little influence in preventing the employment of women in general.

I hope I am not taking too much advantage of your kind offer to be of service to us. I thought however, you would surely want to know of recent conditions in this factory since they are using your commendation to cover existing conditions. Dr. Hayhurst says he can do absolutely nothing on hazardous work for women through the State Board of Health unless we have an actual authenticated case of occupational disease to report and there are few doctors in Cleveland who recognize an occupational disease when they see it! We hope however, to get some help on more preventive work from Dr. Roger Perkins who is working now for the U.S. Public Health Service. I enclose a rather inadequate report of conditions at the American Can Company.

Yours sincerely,

Katherine S. Angell
(Mrs. Ernest Angell.)
Executive Secretary.

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