The Part-Time Employment of Women in Industrialised Countries

By François Bruntz

One of the characteristics common to highly developed economies is the growing rate of participation by women in the active population. The part-time employment of women, in particular, seems to be spreading in more and more countries. Work of this nature is, however, frequently criticised for economic or social reasons. Some people hold that the advantages gained by such employment of women are counterbalanced by the disadvantages of the cost of the services needed to replace their work in the home or of the semi-abandonment of children who are still very young or by difficulties in labour relations (competition from low wages), and so on. François Bruntz (of the French Ministry of Public Health and Population), after discussing the growth of the part-time employment of women, analyses these various disadvantages, balances them against the advantages, and comes out definitely in favour of part-time work for women. These general considerations can be borne in mind when the reader turns to the article by Amy Hewes, printed in this issue[1]*, in which she describes the growth of part-time employment of women in the United States.*

ANY attempt to define the issue of the part-time employment of women in industrialised countries calls for a prior definition of the relationship between the issue and the much more far-reaching problems connected with changes in women's employment in general. This is not an easy task, because the matter can and must be looked at from various angles, otherwise there seems to be a danger of a one-sided approach to the subject, which involves health, social, family and economic aspects.

Consideration of each of these can lead to conclusions that will be diametrically opposed, even though they are based on scientific findings and on absolutely orthodox thinking. As a result different specialists, all acting in good faith, can fail to reach common ground if they forget that the formulation of policy involves consideration of every aspect of the subject to which it

[1] See below, p. 443.

relates. The problem of the part-time employment of women is also particularly difficult to grasp because people often adopt an emotional attitude towards it. For example the part-time employment of women with children will be rejected out of hand both by intolerant diehards, who regard the mother's presence in the home as a categorical imperative, and by certain progressives, who are perhaps even more dangerous and want to " emancipate " women at all costs by forcing them to take up jobs outside their homes.

We shall deal successively with the volume of work done by women, its economic, social, health and family aspects, and the difficulties that hinder the development of new systems of employment such as half-time or part-time employment.

Volume of Work Done by Women

Free services—by which we mean services and goods in respect of which there is no monetary transfer—have always played a considerable role in the economy. Even nowadays there are enormous areas in countries in course of industrialisation where most economic exchanges take place without the use of money. A self-sufficient family farm, which is only occasionally in economic contact with the outside world, is typical of this kind of economy. However, to measure the national product, economists, like modern producers and consumers, make use of the unit of measurement provided by our economy, namely the currency. Hence, no doubt, the tendency to neglect goods and services that are provided free of charge and therefore do not come within the monetary circuit.

According to Colin Clark's estimate, the value of household services alone, which do not account for all free services, even in industrialised societies, amounts to 44 per cent. of the national product estimated on the basis of production for the market. Although housework is no longer all done by women, it can nevertheless be said that women do almost all of it. In quantitative terms there is a tremendous amount of work done within the household : according to certain French experts, it is equal to the total amount of gainful work or, in the case of France, to between 40 and 50 thousand million hours' work every year.

In most industrialised countries, however, the very existence of this tremendous amount of work is ignored both by the general public and by traditional economists. For the public, women who stay at home " don't work ", whereas in fact they manage the family consumption units and therefore direct the use made of most of the country's personal incomes. It is not intended to analyse the main items in household work, and we would merely point out that the family consumption unit acquires both capital

goods (household equipment) and consumer goods (food and clothing), while the running of such a unit involves the provision of services that may be commercial (supply, budgeting), technical (child care, cooking, sewing), or of a maintenance nature (house cleaning, dish-washing, laundering, etc.).

There is therefore a tendency to underrate the standard of living of families in which the mother remains at home, as compared with that of families in which the woman of the house goes out to work. To draw a valid comparison it would be necessary to deduct from the income of the latter family group the price of the goods and services which the mother used to supply to her family by remaining at home and which the group now has to find outside the home because the mother goes out to work (charwoman, preparation of meals, laundering, etc.).

The services rendered by women in the market economy are also very considerable.

In agriculture it is very difficult to assess the amount of work done by women, since in most cases a farmer's wife and daughters have no contract of employment with their husband or father. Part of their time is spent doing housework and part doing farm work ; they are neither employed persons nor self-employed, being paid in kind by the economic unit (the farm) that maintains them. However, although it is difficult to measure the amount of work done by women on farms, it is nevertheless very considerable. From the point of view which is of particular interest to us in this study, it can be seen that the question of the part-time employment of women on the land has special features. Unlike women employed in the non-agricultural sector, a mother who works on the farm in addition to doing her housework leads a life that forms a single whole, and in her case there is no likelihood of conflict between work in the home and work outside it. There are, of course, economic and social problems for farmers' wives or daughters, but these problems are not specific to farm women, being indistinguishable from those of country families generally (increasing productivity, organising community life and leisure-time facilities, etc.). We will therefore confine ourselves to trying to define the volume of work performed by women in non-agricultural production.

Outside agriculture the employment of women developed along comparatively different lines in the various industrialised countries. In the older ones of western Europe the proportion of women in the total labour force has on the whole been relatively stable since the turn of the century (30 to 40 per cent.). In the United States the proportion of women in the labour force rose from 23 per cent. in 1900 to 30 per cent. in 1950 and about 33 per cent. in 1962. Apart

from the U.S.S.R., where the proportion was 45 per cent.[1] in 1958, it can be said that in non-agricultural production in industrialised countries in Europe and North America and in Japan, one worker out of every three is a woman.

The relative stability of the proportion of women workers conceals very profound changes in the structure of the gainfully occupied female population. There is no need to analyse these changes; it should be simply observed that the normal process of the transition of labour from the primary to the secondary or the services sector, which is simultaneous with economic development, has been accelerated for women workers. It should also be noted that the dividing line between women's jobs and men's jobs is becoming blurred.

However, if the proportion of part-time employment to total gainful employment of women is measured, it will be found that the growth of this kind of employment has varied greatly in industrialised countries. In 1958 one woman worker out of every three in the United States was in part-time employment, and three-fifths of the women so employed were married. Part-time employment also seems to be growing in the United Kingdom, Switzerland and the Netherlands, in the Federal Republic of Germany to a much lesser extent and very little in France and Italy. Our aim is to discover the reasons for this by analysing the various aspects of women's work.

The Economic, Social and Family Aspects of Women's Work

Women's Work and Employment

There is one fundamental point which must be emphasised. In view of the very high proportion of unmarried women of all ages who are employed in almost all industrialised countries, an increase in the size of the female labour force would lead mainly to the employment of married women. It would be dangerous to underestimate the extent of the many problems that would face the public authorities as a result of the transfer of a large number of mothers to the so-called working population, since collective housekeeping services, crèches, kindergartens, etc., must be established in order that services akin to those provided by the housewife may be made available through commercial channels.

[1] It should be noted that this percentage is an arithmetic mean of the percentage of women in the total labour force in each of the major sectors of production in the U.S.S.R. It would need to be weighted according to the distribution of the labour force among the major sectors of production.

From the point of view of manpower needs, there is merely a shift in incidence and the problem remains. If a manpower shortage in industry is overcome by employing 200,000 married women, most of whom will have children, the result is to create several tens of thousands of new jobs in the sphere of collective services, and the holders of these jobs will have to take the place of the housewife. If this aspect of the problem is neglected, there may be very serious effects on women's physical and mental health, on conjugal life, and certainly on the quality of the work done by women outside their homes. Countries which mobilised female labour in wartime have learnt from experience that it is not in the interests of the community to oblige mothers with several small children to work outside their homes.

The Economic Aspect of the Employment of Women

With regard to work outside the home all the surveys show that absenteeism is higher among married women, especially mothers, than in any other category of workers. This certainly accounts for the unfavourable attitude of quite a number of employers towards women workers, and even girl workers, since marriage and maternity are " risks " to be reckoned with, at any rate until a certain age. Absenteeism among married women is due to the fact that during difficult periods in family life (children's illnesses, for example), women cannot both perform their duties as mothers and discharge their occupational responsibilities. This observation has prompted the traditional argument put forward by the advocates of part-time work, namely that part-time work, when technically possible, is bound to reduce absenteeism among women workers and that, by enabling them to combine their household duties and their outside work, it tends in the long run to increase the productivity of women workers.

We shall not dwell unduly on the characteristics of the employment of women outside the home since this aspect of the problem has been very often and very ably discussed. It should merely be remembered that while there are problems peculiar to the employment of women (such as remuneration and absenteeism), the reason lies not in the ability or inability of women to do certain work, since intelligence and working ability have nothing to do with the worker's sex, but rather in the fact that many women find it impossible to combine outside employment with the duties of a wife and mother.

The volume of work performed in housekeeping has already been mentioned. The analysis should now be taken further and attention devoted to the quality aspect. As is known, there can

be no true economic progress without an increase in the productivity of labour. It is also known that housework comprises a very great variety of functions. A mother therefore needs to show aptitudes and qualities corresponding to each type of function (an organisational and methodical bent, a knowledge of nutrition, taste, etc.). Even if she has all the qualities of a perfect housewife she will never (unless she relies on outside assistance) be able to do more than organise her housework to meet the needs of the necessarily small group which constitutes a modern family. There is no doubt that the limitation of the housewife's activity to her own family greatly reduces the possibility of increasing productivity in housework. The amortisation of housekeeping equipment is a charge on a limited number of consumers, and it is impossible to develop the specialisation of labour because a wife generally has to perform by herself all the housekeeping functions in her home.

This involves a tremendous wastage of energy, and it can be agreed, as certain authors claim, that the work done by a mother in her home is in a sense contrary to the interests of the economy, since a family could be provided with the same services by organising communal services with a much higher productivity. There can be no doubt that if a staff of 14 people can provide full domestic services (housing, feeding, maintenance) for 100 residents in a hotel (i.e. a ratio of eight persons to each member of the staff), the productivity of labour is twice that of an isolated housekeeping unit (i.e. an average family of four people). If by spending a limited amount of time—for instance two or three hours a day—at work outside her home a woman earns an income sufficient to purchase the goods and services which she would herself have provided for her family by remaining at home, it is clearly in the interests of economic progress that women should abandon low-productivity housework and take on outside employment, at any rate on a part-time basis. However—and this is an essential point—it does not appear that such an analysis can be applied to all the functions performed by a mother in the home.

It is true that a large proportion of housekeeping activities can profitably be entrusted to collective services. This applies to laundry, shopping, the preparation of meals, and perhaps even house cleaning by specialised staff. However, the care of children is quite another matter. Reference will be made below to the almost irreplaceable role played by the mother in relation to a small child. This means that the collective services (crèches and day nurseries) for children cannot—for the present at least—provide care equal to that generally provided by the mother. Moreover, and this is the point on which we should like to lay most emphasis at this stage, such substitute collective child-care services, however

imperfect as yet, are very expensive owing to the large qualified staff required. The previous line of reasoning can be followed in this instance again, but in this case the conclusion will be that a mother should remain at home.

There are two apparently contradictory conclusions to be drawn from the foregoing analysis of the employment of women from the viewpoint of the economy. They are that employment of a mother outside her home should be encouraged, or at least not discouraged, when by that means she can procure outside services similar to those which she would have supplied for her family by remaining at home and working longer hours than she does in her outside work ; and, conversely, that a woman should be urged to stay at home as long as she has very young children to look after.

The Health and Social Aspects of the Employment of Women

The employment of mothers outside their homes can have grave consequences for the physical, mental and emotional development of children of pre-school age. It is an established fact that the morbidity rate among small children is about twice as high when the mothers work outside the home as when they do not. This is explained by an elementary tenet of medicine, namely that many working women put their children in crèches and day nurseries and it is well known that a group of children provides fertile ground for the spread of epidemics.

It seems, however, that the absence of its mother is even more detrimental to a child's emotional development. On this point reference may be made to extensive passages from Dr. Bowlby's report on maternal care and mental health [1] and from the report of the Second Session of the W.H.O. Expert Committee on Mental Health.[2] Dr. Bowlby writes : " Among the most significant developments in psychiatry during the last quarter of a century has been the steady growth of evidence that the quality of the parental care which a child receives in his earliest years is of vital importance for his future mental health." [3] Direct studies of children themselves, follow-up or retrospective studies of the past history of certain adults have revealed the far-reaching effect and the often irreversible character of the harm done to a child's development by a lack of maternal care.[4] Dr. Bowlby also writes that—

[1] John BOWLBY : *Maternal Care and Mental Health*, World Health Organisation Monograph Series, No. 2 (Geneva, W.H.O., 1951).

[2] World Health Organisation, Expert Committee on Mental Health : *Report on the Second Session, Geneva, 11-16 September 1950*, World Health Organisation Technical Report Series, No. 31 (Geneva, 1951).

[3] BOWLBY op. cit., p. 11.

[4] Ibid., p. 15.

The infant and young child should experience a warm, intimate and continuous relationship with his mother (or mother substitute), in which both find satisfaction and enjoyment. . . . The mothering of a child is not something which can be arranged by roster. . . . The provision of a proper diet calls for more than calories and vitamins; we need to enjoy our food if it is to do us good. In the same way the provision of mothering cannot be considered in terms of hours per day but only in terms of the enjoyment of each other's company which mother and child obtain. Such enjoyment and close identification of feeling is only possible for either party if the relationship is continuous. Much emphasis has already been laid on the necessity of continuity for the growth of a child's personality. . . . It is for these reasons that the mother love which a young child needs is so easily provided within the family, and is so very, very difficult to provide outside it.[1]

Dr. Bowlby also deals with the economic aspect of this problem—

Though direct assistance to the mother is commonly meagre, in many cases public or voluntary funds are spent on the provision of day nurseries. . . . This is not a fruitful way to spend the money, from the point of view either of health or of industrial production. . . . Day nurseries are known to have high rates of infectious illness and are believed to have an adverse effect on the children's emotional growth. As regards production, there is little net gain in woman-power, since for every hundred mothers employed 50 workers are necessary to care for the babies and, as every industrialist knows, mothers of young children are unsatisfactory employees and often absent on account of minor illnesses at home.[2]

The Expert Committee on Mental Health points out [3] that—

. . . at the present time the social and fiscal policy of many nations appears to be designed to press the mothers of pre-school children to undertake productive work outside the home. The provision of crèches and day nurseries is often one of the instruments of government policy in encouraging such a tendency . . . such a decision, which should depend on weighing in the balance the needs of children and the demand for industrial productivity, has been taken in complete ignorance of the price to be paid in permanent damage to the emotional development of a future generation.

It therefore seems, from a reading of the reports of Dr. Bowlby and the W.H.O. experts, that outside work for mothers with young children is absolutely ruled out. Some authors, however, express less categorical views. They point out that Dr. Bowlby's observations related to children who were entirely separated from their mothers, generally as a result of a family crisis which gave rise to the separation.

According to another expert, it is not so much the presence as the availability of the mother which is necessary for a young child. The general report submitted to the International Family Conference held in July 1961 by the International Union of Family Organisations lays stress on what it regards as the absolutely

[1] BOWLBY, op. cit., p. 67.

[2] Ibid, pp. 85-86.

[3] World Health Organisation, Expert Committee on Mental Health, op. cit., pp. 15-16.

essential factor, namely the mother's behaviour, rather than the total amount of time she spends with the child. One need not be a pediatric specialist to suppose that a mother working part time in a job that suits her tastes and aptitudes, and who is relieved of most of the physical burden of housekeeping by a family help, can be much more readily available to her young child than the mother of a large family who remains at home, where her time is fully taken up by crushing household tasks.

This brings us to the consequences of employment outside her home on a woman's health and on her relationship with her husband. Surveys and opinions expressed by specialists lead to the conclusion that the fact of working outside her home cannot in itself be regarded as a threat to a mother's physical and mental health. Of course there is a risk of overwork ; one of the obvious advantages of part-time employment is that it allows a woman to divide her time more efficiently between her outside work and her home without having to give up the advantages of outside employment. Some women find it provides a change of tempo and an opportunity to fulfil personal aspirations which, far from having an adverse influence on family life, rather help to ensure its full development. Feelings of frustration are at least as widespread among women who remain in the home as among those who go out to work. The objection may be made that, save in a small number of exceptional cases, going out to work is not a matter of choice but usually one of hard necessity. The results of the surveys carried out in Denmark, France and the United Kingdom all lead to the same conclusion, namely that an overwhelming majority of women (whether married or not) who go out to work do so because of dire financial need. This argument is not conclusive, for the necessity to work does not exclude achievement and satisfaction in employment. However, it is of the greatest interest to note that 85 per cent. of the women who customarily work part time in the United States do so for non-economic reasons.[1] It would be interesting to know the corresponding percentage for women working full time ; it may be assumed that it would be considerably lower. In this connection, however, there is an essential point which must not be forgotten, namely that with the general rise in living standards, outside work by wives and mothers ceases to be an economic necessity and becomes a matter of personal taste, and at that stage part-time work is very popular among women.

What guidance can be drawn from this rapid analysis of the economic, social and health aspects of women's work ?

[1] See " Part-Time Employment for Women in the United States ", in *International Labour Review*, Vol. LXXXIII, No. 1, Jan. 1961, p. 89.

Differing but complementary approaches to the subject have led us to note that by enabling married women and mothers to divide their time between their homes and outside work, the system of part-time employment should meet a number of requirements that often conflict when a woman is working full time, namely—

(a) to provide the family with the additional income which is often essential ;

(b) to increase the productivity of housework by substituting paid collective services for certain household tasks carried out by a mother at home ; and

(c) to give the wives, and especially the mothers, who are thus relieved of the more tiresome household chores an opportunity of playing a fuller part in family life and caring for their children in conditions that will ensure the availability of the mother, which is such an important factor in a child's emotional development.

Nevertheless, how is it that, except in the United States and to a lesser degree in the United Kingdom, part-time work has not evolved to the extent required to meet the needs that emerge from the foregoing analysis ? That is the question to which we will now turn our attention.

Factors Inhibiting the Expansion of Part-Time Employment of Women

It should be noted, first, that the problem of part-time employment does not affect only women workers.

The part-time system can and must be applied to the work of other sectors of the population. From the social point of view the system may be suitable for older people. In addition, modern educational and vocational training methods are beginning to combine theoretical instruction with practical work ; the removal of the difficulties hindering an increase in part-time work is therefore a matter that falls outside the scope of this article. The fact remains, however, that people with an interest in part-time employment are mainly women, particularly married women.

The factors that inhibit the expansion of part-time employment of women can be classified under three main heads : sociological, technical and statutory.

Sociological Factors

In some west European countries public opinion is against women working outside the home. Two-thirds of a group of non-gainfully-employed women who were questioned stated that they

were quite happy not to have outside work ; only one-third would have preferred to have such work, half of them (i.e. one-sixth of the total) in order to increase the household's income and the other half simply as a matter of personal taste. Conversely over one-third (40 per cent.) of the women working outside their homes stated that they would like to give it up. It should be noted that the women who stayed at home were more favourable to part-time work than those who were already working full time.

In western Europe at least, employers' and workers' organisations have traditionally been against the part-time employment of women.

For employers such a system has all the drawbacks inherent in employing women, plus the specific difficulties involved in organising part-time work. A high rate of absenteeism is the main charge which employers have traditionally levelled against women workers. All the surveys agree on this point—for instance that carried out in France by Mrs. Isambert Jamati [1] and that carried out in Bermondsey by the Social Sciences Department of the London School of Economics.[2] Even if allowance is made for maternity—a natural cause—absenteeism remains higher among women than among men. In the Bermondsey survey the rate of absenteeism was found to be 40 per cent. higher for married women than for men. The survey also showed that women working full time had a lower rate of absenteeism than those working part time. This calls for comment. Does it constitute an argument against part-time work ? First of all, the scope of the Bermondsey survey was so limited—it covered a biscuit factory employing 4,000 workers, including 3,000 women of whom only a quarter were working full time—that it would be dangerous to generalise on this basis ; however, even if these findings could be validly extended to all part-time work done by women, they would not justify a condemnation of this kind of employment. There are grounds for believing that the high rate of absenteeism among women part-time workers was due not to the nature of the work but to the fact that the proportion of married women with young children was much higher among the women employed part time than among those working full time. It would be useful to compare, for married women with the same number of dependants, the rates of absenteeism of those working full time and part time respectively.

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[1] See Viviane ISAMBERT-JAMATI : " Absenteeism among Women Workers in Industry ", in *International Labour Review*, Vol. LXXXV, No. 3, Mar. 1962, pp. 248-261.

[2] For a brief report on this survey see " Woman, Wife and Worker in Great Britain ", ibid., Vol. LXXXIII, No. 5, May 1961, pp. 507-509.

In the second place, employers tend to regard part-time work, and women's work in general, as being marginal, casual and temporary. When a job can be done equally well by a man or a woman, some employers will only take on a woman if they cannot find a man, except in traditional women's trades. Part-time work is organised as a last resort when the employer discovers that he cannot obtain workers by any other means. On this point the Bermondsey survey upsets quite a number of preconceived ideas: "... There was no evidence that the average hourly output of the part-timers was either higher or lower than that of those on full time"[1], and with regard to labour turnover "there was little ... to support the common belief that part-timers can only be regarded as temporary workers".[1]

A counterpart to the traditional distrust of employers with regard to the part-time employment of women is the equal lack of enthusiasm shown in certain countries by the trade unions. According to them, women working part time do not have the spirit of solidarity and the approach to defending workers' interests which should inspire a labour movement. Part-time work is said to detract from the prestige of women workers. It is claimed that because they are working merely to supplement other income, part-time women workers accept lower pay than men, although it cannot be ascertained whether the difference in the wages paid to men and women [2] corresponds to a difference in the quantity and quality of the work done or is due to the fact that women are less demanding than men with regard to remuneration. This attitude of the trade unions towards the part-time employment of women reveals certain Malthusian tendencies in matters of economic theory, which also show themselves in related fields. Since the serious economic depressions that took place in capitalist countries in the first half of the twentieth century the trade unions have been mainly concerned with ensuring full employment, and conversely with eliminating the fear of unemployment, even in countries such as France where there has been no underemployment for over 20 years. In this context competition from the new form of employment represented by part-time work seemed to be a factor that would increase the demand for jobs and would hardly be in the interests of labour.

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[1] "Woman, Wife and Worker in Great Britain", op. cit., p. 508.

[2] This applies to all forms of employment for women, not merely part-time work. In this connection see "Women's Wages", in *International Labour Review*, Vol. LXXXI, No. 2, Feb. 1960, pp. 95-109.

Technical Factors

The technical factors can be subdivided into two categories —factors inherent in the organisation of part-time work and those relating to the nature of the job.

First of all it should be noted that part-time work can be organised in several ways: there can be either full-time work three days a week or daily part-time work. The first system does away with the technical drawbacks that will be examined below; however, it need not be further considered here since there can be no doubt that it in no way meets family needs. Almost all the married women working part time want to be in a position to strike a fair balance in the time they devote to their homes and their jobs each day, and the only system that suits them is the part-time one.

The first technical difficulty inherent in the very organisation of part-time work lies in the time spent going to and from work, since a proper measurement of the productivity of gainful work must take travelling time into account. There can be no doubt that if a woman working part time takes as long to travel to and from work as a full-time worker and does only half as much work, full-time work will have a good start over part-time work in terms of productivity (at least in countries where full-time work is performed without interruption, the position is of course different when the full-time worker goes home for lunch). The conclusion to be drawn is that distance from work is tremendously important —perhaps more so for part-time work than for full-time. Apart from the observation made above with regard to the productivity of labour, there can be no doubt that the time available to a woman working part time is extremely limited, and that it is practically impossible for her to spend much of her time travelling to work. We shall see that, fortunately, the jobs that are naturally suited to part-time work are in service occupations and can conveniently be carried on in the vicinity of residential blocks or areas—in fact some of these jobs have to be done there.

However, the most serious problem connected with the organisation of part-time work is still that of mothers with very young children (up to the age of four). The accommodation needed in crèches is much the same whether a woman is working full time or part time, and short of a Utopian roster system for accommodating children in crèches (which would in any case be unhealthy) the cost of accommodation in a crèche is much the same whether a woman is working full time or part time. As stated above, the services provided by crèches are very expensive and not as good as the care

provided by the mother. In this connection we know that the interests of productivity are best served if a mother with very young children works near them in the home. The financial aspect of this situation is very often distorted by the role of the local authorities, which meet part of the daily cost of accommodation in crèches and day nurseries. If they did not—and in view of the fairly low qualifications required of part-time women workers—very few women would find it profitable to go out to work part time and to pay the full cost of a day's accommodation in a crèche. The fact remains that what is true of crèches is not true of kindergartens, and that the difficulty is most acute when a child is below the age of four. However, crèches and day nurseries are not the only means of dealing with the problem. First, for some women the family circle may provide a solution, if the grandparents look after the small children. Further, harmonious community development should lead family groups to deal with these problems by setting up neighbourhood units in residential blocks or areas. Community mutual assistance services could be established to ensure that children would be looked after by other mothers who remain at home. This need not necessarily be done free of charge ; there could be a rate of pay fixed by the family association. It would be a matter of organising a sort of family placement service for the children of mothers who go out to work. The women would be more willing to entrust their children to mothers whom they know than to an anonymous institution like a crèche. We do no more than mention this problem, which should, perhaps, be tackled by specialists in the development of community life in major urban residential blocks or areas.

It should also be noted that there may be a conflict between the extension of the crèche system and the introduction of part-time work if the two measures are taken simultaneously, since it seems that the shorter their weekly hours the less willing mothers would be to leave their children in a crèche. Conversely, those making use of a crèche would tend to prefer to work full time rather than part time.

The second category of technical difficulties hindering the expansion of part-time work concerns the nature of the work involved.

On the whole it is a fair assumption that the part-time work performed by women would be in the lower grades of skill, with an important reservation concerning girls, for whom it is an aspect of vocational training. This seems to be true of women's work in general in most industrialised countries, and the sociological factors that account for it must have an even more marked effect on part-time work. However, the main reason must be sought in the fact

that tenure of a responsible post requires continuous attendance. This, therefore, is an initial technical limitation on the organisation of part-time work.

Secondly, if it is desired to organise part-time work in industry by providing for two successive shifts or by authorising split-shift working—a system prohibited by law in certain countries—it is extremely difficult for the supervisors to organise the shifts because the rate of absenteeism will be very high and unpredictable. Moreover, industry is certainly not the field in which part-time work seems likely to expand. In the United States, of the 6 million women working part time outside agriculture in 1958, only 425,000 (or a little over 7 per cent.) were employed in manufacturing industries.[1] Part-time work can most easily be organised in service and trade industries (5.5 million out of the 6 million women who were employed part time in the United States in 1958). This fact deserves to be emphasised, for economic development leads to an increase in the number of jobs in the services sector (trade, banking, social services, teaching, entertainment, health services, etc.).

Whenever the worker's personality can be dissociated from the job, and whenever the job itself can be performed in relative isolation from other jobs in the undertaking, there is no technical difficulty in organising part-time work. Numerous examples can be given, for instance typists working in a pool, telephone operators, multicopying machine operators, etc.

Statutory Factors

The major difficulties inhibiting an expansion of part-time employment of women arise from the legislation respecting labour and social security.

Let us, for example, take the case of labour law. Split-shift working is prohibited in France. The timetable must be the same for all persons employed by an establishment or part of an establishment, in order to allow supervision by the labour inspection service. The result is that an employer wishing to introduce part-time work would have to split up his shifts and introduce part-time working for all his staff. Such an arrangement would certainly not suit women wishing to work full time. However, the difficulties arising out of labour law do not seem to be insuperable since they are in fact due solely to regulations.

The factors that are really slowing down the expansion of part-time work lie in the financial workings of the social security schemes adopted by certain industrialised countries, where the problem also

[1] " Part-Time Employment for Women in the United States ", loc. cit., pp. 89-90.

arises in connection with the part-time employment of older workers. In these countries the funds of the social insurance schemes are wholly or partly derived from contributions levied on wages. In some of them (Belgium, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands and others), contributions are levied on the part of the wage below a certain ceiling. Since the social insurance benefits are the same for all, it is considered in these countries that it would be unfair for contributions to be levied on the total remuneration of the higher grades of wage earners.

Benefits, or some of them at any rate, are payable to a wife and children by virtue of the employment of the husband and in France entitlement to family benefit (allowance for a family with only one breadwinner and for a mother remaining in the home) is subject to the condition that the woman is not gainfully employed.

This system not only provides a powerful incentive to the mother not to enter gainful employment (which may, after all, seem justified when the children are very young) ; it further encourages women not to take up part-time work. The result (quite contrary to the interests of the family) is to face the wife with a dilemma—either to work full time or to remain at home. From the point of view of social insurance schemes (sickness, maternity and invalidity insurance), the gainful employment of the mother provides almost no additional benefits for a family whose members are already insured by virtue of the employment of the father. The contributions levied on the wife's wages (often amounting to over one-third of the wage proper) are simply lost to the family. The existence of a ceiling for contributions is unjust in its effects. For instance a father whose wages amount to twice the ceiling will pay only half the contributions paid by a family in which the father and mother are both at work and both receive wages equal to the ceiling amount ; the earnings of the two families are the same, yet the fact that the mother is gainfully employed means that the social insurance contributions levied on the second family's income are twice as high. Moreover, in Belgium and in France a family which pays twice as much in contributions on the same earnings will also lose entitlement to the allowance paid to a family with only one breadwinner. To complete the picture, it should be added that, besides unjust assessment for social security contributions and unequal benefits, there is discrimination in tax assessment since the services rendered to the family free of charge by a wife who remains at home are not taken into account for income tax purposes or for social security contributions. In spite of the very heavy deductions made against the wages of the wife, and for which she gets practically no return, many married women are still compelled to go out to work by reason of pressing financial need. They then work full

time because in their case part-time work has the same drawbacks as full-time work, without having the latter's advantage, namely relatively higher pay.

Industrialised countries wishing to promote part-time work must therefore start by ensuring that the financial provisions of their social security schemes will not conflict with this aim.

Conclusions

The part-time employment of women meets an undeniable need. All that has been said above concerning the value of this system for married women, especially those with children, is confirmed by statistics from the United States.

It has often been said that a mother should be free to choose between her home and outside employment. Unfortunately a wife very often has no choice ; dire need forces her to do exhausting work in her home and, if the economic pressure is too great, to procure from outside her home the additional income which her family cannot do without, at the same time still having to do the essential housework. A choice becomes possible when economic pressure slackens ; it is not by chance that in the United States 85 per cent. of the women working part time do so for non-economic reasons. The importance of these statistics is apparent : they make it quite clear that women who are free to choose tend of their own accord to do part-time work.

The economic changes connected with development (especially the rise in the standard of living and the shift of labour into service occupations) should lead to a considerable increase in the part-time employment of women, provided that prejudice and the difficulties artificially created by legislation do not prevent this natural and beneficial process.

Workers' and employers' organisations should therefore revise their attitudes towards the part-time employment of women and undertake a systematic search for jobs in which such employment is possible.

Action by the public authorities can take such varied forms as—

(a) the establishment of collective services, if possible along co-operative lines, to enable families to find in the market economy the goods and services which a mother working part time cannot herself supply (laundry, cooked meals, etc.) ;

(b) an attempt to find a means of looking after children of pre-school age : in this connection the system of family placement of children among neighbours and members of a local family association deserves to be studied within the framework of community development—it is very expensive to set up crèches and

day nurseries, which are sometimes harmful to the children's mental and physical health; and

(c) a reform in the financing of social security schemes in order not to penalise part-time work done by mothers and to induce those with very young children to remain at home ; in this connection there are several conceivable methods, which must tend to ensure that social security contributions levied on a wife's wages will produce additional benefits for the family and that in no case may part-time work by a mother lead to a reduction in family benefits (for example, owing to disqualification for the allowance payable to a family with only one breadwinner).

Above all, the public authorities must in all fields show a continuing and clear awareness of the fact that there are two sides to the question of women's work. The main achievement of modern social science has perhaps been its substitution for the abstract conception of the citizen and worker of a more realistic conception of him seen in his social setting, above all in his family. The principle of the equality of men and women is not infringed by noting that the question of gainful employment is different for a bachelor than for a woman with children. The role of women as wage and salary earners is in no way depreciated by their being at the same time wives and mothers ; nor is the position of a wife and mother imperilled by giving her the opportunity to lead a fuller life by doing work outside the home.