

Recommendations for Promoting Women's Work in East German Enterprises (1949)

Abstract

These recommendations from the Thuringian Ministry for Labor and Social Affairs make clear that women's work met with resistance in East Germany in early 1949. As the document suggests, the resistance came from both enterprises and the women themselves. It was to be overcome through intensified propaganda, material incentives for women in the form of additional opportunities for consumption, and improved state-run childcare.

Source

The Ministry for Labor and Social Affairs of the State of Thuringia to the German Economics Commission, Main Division for Work and Social Care

Erfurt, January 7, 1949

Statistical surveys have provided incontrovertible proof that, when it comes to shaping a healthy labor deployment, the concerted promotion of women's work is among the most urgent tasks of the labor deployment administration. But in order to secure a larger number of women for the work process, certain preconditions need to be put in place.

Propaganda. Through appropriate propaganda on a widespread basis, with participation from all agencies interested in economic issues, the necessity of women's work from an economic-policy perspective must be illuminated in such a way and must become so popular through regularly recurring images that the groundwork needed for the implementation of these measures will slowly be laid.

Eliminating reluctance. This also includes relevant educational work to eliminate the still present reluctance among women themselves. This work should be suitably carried out by the women's organizations, the DFD [*Demokratischer Frauenbund Deutschlands* or Democratic Women's League of Germany]. Unfortunately, the German woman is not of the mind to want to expand her sphere of tasks beyond the framework of caring for the family. It will therefore be necessary to offer her a certain incentive through perks, which will, in turn, benefit her household.

Preferential provisioning with consumer goods of every kind, food, household items, textiles. Shopping locations close to enterprises, an adequate number of laundry facilities, sewing rooms, and shoe repair workshops must be created; this, in turn, would be the task of the FDGB [*Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* or Free German Trade Union Federation].

Kindergartens. Expansion and improvement of the kindergarten system, of communal as well as work-based kindergartens, childcare and daycare. Of special importance here is providing children with a warm lunch and adjusting the opening hours [of these facilities] to the work times of women. Here, as far as work-based kindergartens are concerned, one could take the same path as with the creation of workplace polyclinics. In accordance with the number of employed women and the number of children in need of care, workplace kindergartens should be established in all enterprises with more than a certain number of employees.

Supply of food ration cards. A timely supply of food ration cards would contribute very significantly to an

easier household management, just as, generally speaking, the Food Ration Card Group 3 for all workers would be the best incentive for those women who are still on the outside. This fact could already be ascertained back when we had Card 6 for the unemployed.

Educating the enterprises. Just as important as educating people is eliminating the resistance of enterprises. The willingness of women alone will not bring about success as long as enterprises reject the notion of deploying women and, above all, refuse to consider the employment of older women. If need be, an employment quota should be imposed on enterprises, as has already been done with young people. A survey is currently under way for the purpose of establishing target figures.

Reserves. Furthermore, it is necessary to determine where there are reserves and which occupations are available.

The relocation of enterprises will prove necessary to create work opportunities for women who are still living in remote locations. Given that women who are tied to their families have few other options, this suggestion should be given special consideration.

By proxy,

Wagenhaus, *Regierungsrat*

Source: BArch, DQ 2/2072, copy; reprinted in Udo Wengst and Hans Günther Hockerts, *Geschichte der Sozialpolitik in Deutschland*, Bd. 2/2: 1945–1949. *Die Zeit der Besatzungszonen. Sozialpolitik zwischen Kriegsende und der Gründung zweier deutscher Staaten. Dokumente*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2001, pp. 555–56.

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