Petition from the State Federation of Pennsylvania Women for an investigation into the industrial conditions of women

Date: 1906

Dear Sir:

Following a recommendation embodied in the President's message to Congress, the Secretary of Commerce and Labor has asked the Appropriations Committee for a special appropriation to enable a bureau of experts to make a scientific investigation into industrial conditions of women in the United States. This is the first federal measure to be advocated by the Federated Clubs, and your attention is earnestly directed to the following reasons why the club-women of your State and all other States in the Union are advocating the investigation.

The United States census of 1900 reports 5,000,000 women engaged in gainful occupations, and of this number 3,000,000 are reported as working in manufacturing establishments. This influx of women into the industrial field is a moral phenomenon that gives rise to many complex questions. It is claimed that women have affected the labor market to the demoralization of wage-rates; that home life has been affected, that marriage has decreased, that divorce is increasing, and that the birth-rate barely exceeds the death-rate. It is both claimed and denied that the economic and social welfare of the country is menaced by this army of women wage-earners.

We feel that some conclusions can be reached only by having accurate data. It is the facts that are sought through the proposed Government investigation.

No such investigation as this one asked for by the Federated Clubs has ever been made, and its execution by our country would put scholars and legislators of all countries in our debt for having made the first thorough examination into one of the most important sociological questions of the century. The results would be of great value as a basis for general as well as local legislation.

We earnestly beg your influence in behalf of the appropriation.

[Signature]

President of the State Federation of Woman's Clubs Representing 100,000 members.

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