

Wife of New Zealand's New Minister Loses No Time Joining War Work in Washington

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Washington

As busy in helping win the war as the women she left at home on the other side of the globe is Mrs. Walter Nash, wife of New Zealand's first Minister to the United States.

Mrs. Nash and her husband, former Finance Minister of New Zealand and now a member of the Pacific War Council, are among the most active of the United Nations representatives in Washington these days. While her husband goes to the White House for conferences to help determine the course of the war, Mrs. Nash helps plan United Nations benefits and makes her Government's attractive new legation on Observatory Circle here a restful gathering place for officials from all over the world, drawn to Washington by the war.

Washington hostesses are still calling Mrs. Nash on the phone to find who did the arranging for the successful garden party she and the Minister gave a few weeks ago for the United Nations delegations in Washington. Even old-time Washingtonians said the combination of gay-striped marquees against a background of purple rhododendron made the scene one of the prettiest they have seen for many a day.

Attractive Legation

The New Zealanders have been in Washington only since the end of January, but the legation their Government has acquired is a well-gardened and tastefully furnished brick mansion just behind the British Embassy. It had been the home of James Clement Dunn of the U. S. State Department.

Mrs. Nash has already taken up some of the war work she left off back home in Wellington, and hopes to do more when her official calls have been completed.

Back there a group of 32 women

used to come to her home one day each week to sew garments for the New Zealand Patriotic Society. Most were shipped to Britain.

"One of our ladies," Mrs. Nash recalls, "made 22 pairs of boys' pants in one day. So you can see we were not an idle group."

Since she has been in the United States the war has been coming nearer and nearer to New Zealand and many of the women who formerly contented themselves with sewing and weaving have gone into more active war work. Letters from "down under" have told Mrs. Nash that the women who formerly belonged to her "sewing bee" are now working as postwomen or in the woolen mills or the Women's Auxiliary Air Force.

War Work in New Zealand

Women's war work in New Zealand today, Mrs. Nash explains, is divided into three categories:

1. The Women's Auxiliary Air Force, in which more than 1,700 women are giving valuable services at air-force stations.

2. The Women's War Service Auxiliary, which has a membership of more than 60,000 and is an integral part of the civil defense organization. It trains women for dispatch service, for voluntary aid work with troops overseas, and for the land army for work on farms.

3. Women in factories, who more than doubled their overtime work last year. New Zealand authorities are agreed that the remarkable expansion of the Nation's woolen, clothing, and boot and shoe industries that has occurred since the war broke out would never have been possible if a Governmental appeal for factory workers had not met with such immediate and willing response from the women.

"Many," says Mrs. Nash, "have left more pleasant but less essential jobs to labor long hours at strenuous occupations."

Even women who, like herself,

have husbands in high positions are making their own gloves out of home-grown skins sold in department stores. Many have learned to weave, shearing and preparing their own wool to save men's labor.

Do the New Zealand women grumble at their hard lot? Not at all, says Mrs. Nash. Only once was there some dissension. It concerned members of the Women's Service Auxiliaries sent to the Middle East with the troops. So many wanted to go and few were chosen.

Back home in New Zealand the Nashes have left three married sons and seven grandchildren. Two of the sons are members of the home guard in their communities and the youngest is engaged in scientific research work in connection with the war.

Groundwork Already Laid

Much of the groundwork for New Zealand women's part in the war was already laid in its social security program, probably the most fully developed of any in the world. The Government there has been subsidizing day nurseries for children of working mothers ever since the last war.

Various other steps have been taken, under the leadership of Mr. Nash's Labor Party, to make women free from the fears of insecurity and poverty. The Government pays all costs in connection with the birth of a child. If the family income is under 5 guineas, the Government contributes 6 shillings a week for each child under 18.

New Zealand, Mrs. Nash also points out, was the first country to allow women to vote.