

Ammunition for the Workers' Arsenal

By MANUEL GOMEZ.

Women in American Trade Unions.

FIVE times as many women as in 1910 were members of trade unions in 1920.

Women in industry are not such docile slaves as many have supposed. They have shown a stubborn and courageous loyalty to the working class as a whole which the history of the American trade union movement amply testifies. They have been the backbone of great strikes, notably in the clothing industry and the textile industry. Women are getting into the trade unions in greater and greater numbers. If the union officials would devote more attention to the question of organizing women than they do at present it can be predicted with certainty that extraordinary results would be obtained.

Women Being Drawn Into Industry.

Some interesting facts for Women's Day are revealed by taking some trade union figures recently issued by the national bureau of economic research and comparing them with the latest census of women in industry compiled by the U. S. department of commerce.

Both in 1910 and in 1920 women constituted about one-fifth of the total number of "gainfully employed" persons. From 1880 on the increase of women "gainfully employed" has proceeded at a much more rapid rate than the increase of the total working population—which means that women are being drawn directly into the class struggle as reflected in industry, commerce and trade.

It should be understood that the term "gainfully employed," as used by the department of commerce, is far from being the same as usefully employed; it is not limited to workers but includes wage-earners and bosses alike. Nevertheless, 70 per cent of the 8,549,511 women listed as "gainfully employed" are wage-earners.

A Big Job Ahead.

Relatively and positively—any way you look at it—the number of working women who are also members of trade unions is small. There is a big job ahead. Only one-fifteenth of the working women are organized. This is a much smaller proportion than is the case with men—taking the American working class as a whole, it is about one-fifth organized. But with regard to the apparently poor showing of the women, there's a reason. The reason is that large numbers of women are employed as clerks, domestic servants, etc., occupations which have never been really organized, neither by women nor by men. If we consider

only the women employed in manufacture we find that they are nearly one-fifth organized—despite the fact that women are not engaged in mining or in the building trades or in other important industries from which a considerable proportion of the male trade union membership comes.

All organizations but two had a larger female membership in 1920 than in 1910, and as stated in the opening paragraph the total increase for all organizations was 500 per cent.

In both 1910 and 1920 the clothing unions were the dominating item. By 1920, however, the shoe, textile, railway clerks and electrical workers had added a very large number of women trade unionists.

There has been a large drop in union membership since 1920, in the case of both men and women. Between 1920 and 1923, some 100,000 women unionists dropped out of the files. This was due to the big unemployment crisis, the post-war "readjustment" and the unprecedented "open shop" offensive of the bosses. It was also due to the spineless and treacherous attitude of the bureaucratic labor fakers—and there are labor fakers among the women as well as among the men—who refused to conduct a militant struggle when the unions were attacked.

Study the Table.

Following is the table of the national bureau of economic research showing the per cent of organization among women wage earners in manufacturing industries for the years 1920 and 1910. Note particularly the huge increases in the case of the clothing, textile, leather, printing and tobacco industries.

DIVISION OF INDUSTRY	Per Cent Organized 1920	1910
All Manufacturing	18.3	5.2
Chemical and Allied	—	0.6
Clay, Glass and Stone	8.5	0.8
Clothing	46.0	11.2
Food	5.6	—
Iron and Steel	0.7	—
Leather	42.6	8.0
Liquor and Beverage	21.5	24.4
Lumber	—	2.1
Metal (except iron & steel)	—	—
Paper and Pulp	1.3	0.6
Printing and Publishing	25.0	11.4
Textile	11.5	2.6
Cigars and Tobacco	13.5	8.0

Of recent years considerable progress has been made in the organization of women "professional workers," such as teachers, musicians, actors