Women In Buddhism Essay, Research Paper

“The men may have started this war, but the women are running it.”

In the beginning of the war, around 1941, most American women lived as their mothers previously had. Women were supposed to have jobs just until they were married and those who did work after they were married or were mothers were regarded with a sense of pity and scorn from society. In a pre-war poll, 82 percent of Americans believed a wife should not work if her husband did. A majority of Americans believed there should have been a law to prohibit it since rural and city women, alike spent about 50 hours a week on household chores alone.

When the war began it became apparent that more workers were needed. However, women were among the last groups hired. Managers believed that women would take more interest in male workers than they would with the factory machines. As the war progressed and more men were shipped out for military duty, all the men that could work in the United States were so there was no other choice but to hire women. In response the need for more workers, 6.5 million women entered the work force.

Factories and companies, as well as special branches of military service tried to lure women into taking jobs by comparing the housework they did everyday to the work they would be doing in their new jobs. One billboard even stated, “If you’ve followed the recipes in making cakes, you can learn to load a shell.”

Women in America accounted for one third of the work force during World War II. In the beginning of the war, most of the women who worked were single but shortly thereafter the need for wartime workers increased so greatly the factories began recruiting housewives as well. By 1943, housewife workers outnumbered single workers for the first time in history.Throughout the war women went to work in shipyards, aircraft plants and other assembly lines. They also loaded shells, operated cranes, painted ships. Many of

them became welders, bus drivers, train conductors, mechanics, bellhops, nurses and day-care providers. Women comprised a third of the workers in aircraft plants and about 10 percent of the workers at the shipyards and steel mills were women. Although most war work was in factories, many women found work elsewhere. Many became secretaries and clerks in Washington D.C. and more than 200,000 women entered the special branches of the military. Such branches include Women’s Army Corp (WAC), Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES), and Women’s Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS). These military positions allowed women to take over tasks for soldiers so they could be free to go to combat.

Although women participated in jobs extremely similar to men, they were not treated equally. For the long hour’s women put in, their salaries averaged only 60 percent of men’s. However, the greatest struggle for American women throughout the war was not simply the issue of money.

The working life was difficult for these women. They would work eight to ten hours, often on a night or overnight shift and there were long rides home. When many of these women returned home from work they had to worry about their families and children. There were lines to buy food and other products and very appliances in their households to help with cooking and cleaning.

World War II gave women a patriotic excuse to leave their homes. A Department of Labor poll found that 85 percent of women in the United Auto Workers union wanted to keep their jobs after the war ended. However, after the war more than 1.3 million women were released in late 1945.