

# EQUAL PAY for WOMEN

(By Salamander)

Even before the war there was a rising feminist movement throughout the world which was becoming more and more loud in its demands for sex equality.

Now that war-time conditions have brought the womanhood of the United Nations so prominently to the fore, those demands are likely to persist in the post-war years to a most embarrassing degree—embarrassing, that is, to the traditional breadwinner.

It is as well to consider the whole question pretty thoroughly and to discuss it in the comparative security and safety of the front line before entering the arena of civilian life. The shattering fury of an 88 mm will pale into insignificance beside the



measured, crushing tread of woman bent on establishing her imagined rights. There may, perhaps, be some elder brethren who, with pale faces and trembling hands, can recall the «women's suffrage» campaign of the last war.

One of woman's most charming characteristics has been her age-old claim to dependance on the male. Married men might protest wearily that such a dogma is but a myth—a snare to trap young players. Be that as it may, the pose has nevertheless been maintained for countless generations, with the utmost satisfaction to all concerned. But the war has tended to destroy this delightful illusion and, in this present day world of hard, grim reality, the more harmless illusions that are preserved, the better.

While a sturdy independence of spirit in a woman is admired by



all—from a suitable distance—on the other hand let there not be that material independence which enables her to snap her fingers in the face of the suplicating male. On these grounds alone must equal pay for women be fought—tooth and nail.

There are some who might point to Soviet Russia. In that country labour or skill is paid on a basis which disregards the sex of the worker. An excellent notion and one which seems to work admirably. Which brings up the point of equality of hardship. The Russians, in their own inimitable fashion, have reduced sex to its simplest terms. The female Russian coal-heaver is expected to toss around the same number and weight of sacks as her male counterpart—otherwise the question of equal payment undergoes drastic revision.

But what might work in Russia is no guarantee of similar success in, say, New Zealand. Russian women, perhaps, because of their peasant heritage, can mend roads, unload ships, engage in heavy industry, fight and live as soldiers in the firing line with all its squalor and discomfort and misery, equally well with men—and are paid accordingly. On the other hand, the average European woman would just not be equal to such tasks, which is probably



just as well, for few men could view such a prospect with equanimity.