

“ QUESTION BOX ”

An Experiment to Promote Discussion

DISCUSSION GROUPS play an important part in A.E.W.S. activities by encouraging men and women to express their thoughts freely and intelligently to a group of their fellows. Constructive thinking and better citizenship are fostered with the regular discussion of international, national, social, and economic problems. But, as with any group of people, one section will invariably take confident and fluent part in the discussion, while another section will content itself with listening. To try to overcome this and to encourage all members of the group to take part in the discussion, one area headquarters in New Zealand has tried with success the experiment of a “ Question Box.” Here is an outline of how this group was managed.

Before a weekly discussion the members of the group were asked to prepare any question they would like answered, write it on a slip of paper, and address it to another member who they considered would answer the question satisfactorily. It was not necessary for them to sign the question, nor was any limit placed on the time taken to answer. Thus every encouragement was given to those who were timid or nervous of entering the discussions. The questions were placed in the Question Box and later distributed to the persons concerned by the unit Educational Officer. A full week was allowed members to prepare the answers and to obtain any help they needed.

The questions asked covered many topics and promoted spirited discussion. Some of the questions asked are quoted to show the subjects members of the group are interested in : (1) Should the occupants of State houses have the “ right to purchase ” ? (2) What is the meaning of “ market research ” and “ market investigation ” so often used in connection with advertising ? (3) It is often said that a country gets the government it deserves. What is the meaning of this, and do you consider it correct ? (4) Who was initially responsible for this war, and do you con-

sider this a “ War to end War ” ? (5) Do you consider men’s dress is sensible and healthy ? If not, what changes do you suggest ? (6) Give your view on what is meant by the expression “ Democracy in Industry.” What part should Parliament play in fostering true democracy in industry ?

A Waac dealt with the question of women war workers. Here is the question and answer given to the group.

Question.—“ Millions of women all over the world are at present doing men’s jobs. Do you think most of them will be willing to give up this work when men again become available ? ”

Answer.—“ Most of us will agree that it is the women’s place and right to give up their wartime positions to let returned men find employment again. It is more important for men to be employed than women and it should not be a sacrifice for any girl to give up her ‘ duration job ’ to a man who has made much bigger sacrifices serving in the Forces. We often hear it said that the women’s place is in the home, but in wartime we find women can fill men’s places in thousands of different jobs and that our women are fast becoming men’s equal. But in peacetime, with less production with less man-power, both men and women will find it difficult to secure employment, especially where the wages have been exceptionally high.

“ I think that the males should be the chief breadwinners, but we will find some women will not wish to give up good positions formerly filled by men, and I think that they can be classed as the widows of servicemen eager to earn high wages for the upkeep and education of their children ; the engaged girl who has lost her fiance overseas and wants security in case of life-long spinsterhood ; the modern selfish type eager to earn high wages to wrap herself in luxury ; the wife who finds she earns as much as, or more than, her spouse and considers money more important than the welfare of her home.