

Thomas Hakola

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# What Role did Women play in the labor movement history, and what role do you see women in the future of the labor?

While it was difficult for women to get into the labor force they have made a major impact from the moment they entered and their influence has been long lasting. Women started working outside of the home as America industrialized. Many took jobs in factories in order to support their families. In addition to working, one of the key roles that women played at this time was bringing support of unionization. They took on tasks such as organizing strikes and planning walkouts. They fought for things like fair wages, a better work environment and reasonable work hours. Fourteen hour shifts with no break were not fair, so they led and fought for laws to be put in place so that people were not overworked. Women also sought out safer working conditions because too many people were getting

injured or dying in their jobs because of unfair and unsafe labor practices. They would ultimately accomplish this goal as “The Fair Labor Standards Act” was passed in 1938.

World War II marked another important milestone for women and the labor movement. The government developed the famous “Rosie the Riveter” ads to sell to women that joining the workforce was a patriotic thing and a way for them to, “their part” during the war. The ad may have worked, but the truth of the matter is that working women inspired other women to come and join them and a movement began. Women stepped up and took on the difficult task of keeping the factories running while the men went off to war. Not only did this help the war effort, but it grew the labor force as well. Women in the labor force went from 27% to 37% during this time. Without these women stepping up, it would have been impossible to find enough employees to maintain the needs of the economy. After the war, many women continued to work in the jobs they took on during wartime and the labor force for women stayed near 30%.

These early pioneering women changed the mindsets of many and influenced more women later in time to choose both works and being a mother instead of believing they could only do one or the other. That mindset change has helped today's participation rate by women to increase to almost 59%. And as participation by women in the job

market has grown, wages have as well, bringing real benefit to the economy. A Harvard Business Review, discovered for every ten percent increase in women working, wages increased by five percent. Some may think that wages are growing because the wage gap is narrowing, but that isn't the case. While the gap is narrowing, women are receiving a pay increase on top of the closing wage gap. The study also found while this is occurring men's wages are increasing too. Furthermore, with the increase in women's participation in the labor force, it has been proven that productivity has also increased. This is likely due to the fact that when women are included in the workforce, the labor pool is more competitive and diverse allowing employers to select better overall candidates for their jobs.

As I look toward the future, I see women playing a more prominent role in leadership and executive level positions. Bringing more diversity into the top of companies will further improve things in the labor force just as it did in the earlier days. When diversity is seen in those higher level jobs, it will influence others to believe that goal is attainable and the trend will spread repeating many of the positives that history has already shown. It is no secret that some of the richest countries in the world have the highest percent of women in the labor force and many of them are in prominent positions. Another area where there is a need for more balance in the field of technology. It is no secret that the jobs of the future are becoming more and more automated and men and women alike will need to have different skill

sets to fill those positions. Today fewer women are employed in high tech fields which creates a higher hurdle rate for the future. We need to encourage and recruit more women into this field and the focus needs to start while they are young. Boys are girls who are equally equipped to learn these skills. The future is bright for all of us as long as we remain focused on seeing the benefits that come with a more diverse labor force.