

Section 384

The Role of Women

With all the men away at war there was an acute shortage of labour for these war industries. Many occupations were defined as 'reserved' and someone working in such a job was not allowed to enlist unless he could find someone to take over. Despite the postal service being strictly reserved men still flocked to the colours. It got to the point where mid-day deliveries in the Tilehurst area were suspended in early 1916 due to a shortage of postmen.

One answer was to employ women in jobs that had previously been a all-male preserve. Reading Corporation employed young women as tramcar conductors and to rub in the message, paid them exactly the same wages as the men. A campaign was launched in early 1916 to get women to work on the land. This was highly successful and soon many jobs were taken by the embryo Womens Land Army.