

Cleveland, Ohio, March 16, 1934

Honorable Louis D. Brandeis
Justice of the Supreme Court
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

If the future destiny of all America is to depend on the justice and mercy of the Supreme Court, we should like you to know how the present conditions are dangerously affecting us – stenographers and other office workers. Won't you kindly read this? It means everything to us – our very existence, in some cases; in others, the existence also of those dependent on us for support.

With the coming of the NRA and the necessity for reducing expenses in every possible way, business places have fired stenographers and other office workers in wholesale fashion. By means of careful study, it was found much non-essential work could be out out, some of the men required to write their own letters (which now means long over time work for them); and many other ways of economizing in work too numerous to mention. As a result, the few remaining girls are so crowded with work that they have to rush at top speed all day long. In many places, too, the stenographers' salaries were then cut to the minimum NRA salaries.

Also, many firms have had to go out of business because of increased NRA expenses, leaving all their office workers out of employment -- and shop workers as well.

And all these in addition to the many thousands who have been gradually let out during all the years of depression!

I'm not trying to be dramatic when I say that our situation is desperate and that some of us are desperate also. We had remained hopeful through it all until this winter, when we found how terribly this NRA is hurting us. And now, if it is to be kept on, how can we ever again have any reason for hope? We cannot understand why we women and girls (and some men too) have to lose our jobs (for life, it seems, for the older ones) and half starve – many of us, and our families as well – to provide jobs for men; many of them at high wages too. And they do not even appreciate it, many of them, for they continue to strike for more money and less work, which will make it that much more of a burden for the office people to bear. We would be so grateful if we could only get work at any price. It seems to us the NRA was designed mostly to help one class of people, the labor union men, and their every request is carefully considered. Everybody else seems to be ignored. We think it is so very unfair. Surely as many people have lost their work because of the NRA as have secured work (though these things never get in the newspapers); otherwise, things would not have been so bad ever since last August until this January. Even now, with mills fairly busy, there are practically no calls coming in to employment offices for office help.

And the higher NRA prices in most things make our plight still more bitter -- and more bitter, too, for the vast multitude of impoverished people (the so-called middle class), who do not come within the scope of NRA employment. Even those of us who are working are making barely enough to exist. What possible future hope can we have if we are always to be sacrificed in the above ways in order to give shop men more money? Almost every one we talk to is having the same terrific struggle to keep on living that they have been having for so long, only getting worse as time goes on.

It's such a terribly serious thing to sacrifice human welfare -- and sometimes human lives! - in order to make over the whole country and its millions of people to the special liking of a few governing people. We can't think it is worth the tragic price that some of us have to pay. And everything now seems mixed up in such jig-saw style that the puzzle seems constantly and swiftly to be getting farther apart instead of being put together.

Won't you please make the laws back to normal again and eliminate all these evils, so that business may go on as before? Some of us feel sure that business would be good by this time if only it had been allowed to go on in a regular business way (and then, too, men would never have found out how easy it was to get along without some of their stenographers). For it was the coming of the NRA that caused so many of us so much trouble in the loss of our positions and our hope - and our faith in God (almost), who is supposed to govern our America in humane fashion.

As a Supreme Court Justice is so remote from the common people, we thought you probably would not know of all these conditions, for they don't get in the newspapers. General Johnson is of course not interested in anybody but labor union men, so there is no use in writing to him. And so I'm pleading the case of the "forgotten women" at the highest court. Won't you please help us before it is too late -- for some of us?

Very respectfully yours

Nora McGary

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