

Resource Sheet#15

Document N-*Secondary Commentary on J. Edgar Hoover's article titled, "Mothers...Our Only Hope"*

In a 1944 article entitled "Mothers... Our Only Hope," [J. Edgar Hoover] pointed to "parental incompetence and neglect" as the causes for "perversion" and "crime." War jobs were not appropriate for mothers, Hoover claimed. "She already has her war job. Her patriotism consists in not letting quite understandable desires to escape for a few months from a household routine or to get a little money of her own tempt her to quit it. There must be no absenteeism among mothers... Her patriotic duty is not on the factory front. It is on the home front!"

Source: May, E. T. (1999). *Homeward bound: American families in the Cold War era*. Perseus Books
Group: Basic Books.

Background Information: J. Edgar Hoover served as Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (F.B.I.) at its inception in 1935. Before his time as head of the F.B.I., Hoover was instrumental in aiding A. Mitchell Palmer during the Palmer Raids of 1919, which resulted in the deportation of immigrants suspected of having radical political views. Hoover would continue his crusade to put an end to the spread of communist views during the second Red Scare of the late 1940s and 1950s. When Hoover wrote this article in 1944, there was a nationwide propaganda campaign pushing women to give their war jobs back to the soldiers and return home to their children. Some propaganda posters read "Your Baby or Your Job" picturing a lonely infant without a parent. A film produced in 1944, titled "Too Young To Know" insinuated that young boys and girls whose mother was away at work in factories would regularly exercise delinquent behaviors. In the film, a young, unsupervised boy behaving delinquently accidentally killed a soldier home on leave. J. Edgar Hoover is providing his insights into this new concern over the rise of juvenile delinquency.

Guiding Questions:

1. What is the date of this quote and what is the occupation of the speaker?
2. According to J. Edgar Hoover, what issues arose as a result of mothers working?
3. To what extent does J. Edgar Hoover value working mothers?