

And a study in New Jersey in 1925 found that in 628 homes 63 per cent of the workers were children under 16, almost one-fourth of these being under 10 years.²¹

Reasons for doing home work.

The causes that induce women to undertake industrial work in their homes are of the sort that take other women into factories, chiefly the pressure of family needs that can not be met from other family income.²² Inadequate earnings of the husband, illness, unemployment, all play their part. Often family convenience keeps the woman at home rather than in factory work, in order to care for young children or old or disabled members of the household. Custom and habit have a very important part, for in many cases industrial home work is the accepted thing while factory work appears strange, unsuitable, and repugnant. Some home workers are handicapped by age or physical disability and find in work at home an occupation and source of income, but they are in the minority.

The recent study of the Bureau of Women in Industry in New York is illuminating on these points.²³ Of 670 home workers interviewed 83 per cent worked to supplement inadequate family income and 13 per cent for extra spending money, while in 4 per cent of the cases the earnings from home work were the sole source of support. The women reported also as to why they took home work rather than factory or other employment outside their homes. Care of the children was given by 56 per cent of the women as their reason for working at home, care of the home by 20 per cent, and physical disability or old age by 20 per cent. Other women worked at home because it meant freedom to regulate their own work, because it was more in line with the social tradition of their group, because of lack of experience or inability to speak English, because of inability to secure outside jobs (investigation was made during a period of widespread unemployment), or because of other duties that kept them at home.

EARNINGS

Several studies give evidence on home workers' earnings. These usually are the earnings of the family group, since ordinarily the work of individuals is not separated. The 1924 report of the New York State Commission to Examine Laws Relating to Child Welfare contributes the following:²⁴

Granting, for the sake of argument, that the income from home work is necessary by reason of the economic status of these families, we properly may seek information as to the amount of earnings obtained from this source. It may be surprising to those uninformed on the subject, to find that 1,520 families visited, or 85 per cent, received less than \$500 a year from home work, while

²¹ U. S. Department of Labor. Children's Bureau. Child Labor in New Jersey, part 2. Children engaged in industrial home work. Bul. 185, 1928, pp. 4 and 58.

²² Pennsylvania. Department of Labor and Industry. Labor and Industry, April, 1927, pp. 10-13; and U. S. Department of Labor. Children's Bureau. Child Labor in New Jersey, part 2. Children engaged in industrial home work. Bul. 185, 1928, pp. 51-55.

²³ New York. Department of Labor. Some Social and Economic Aspects of Home Work. Special bul. 158, February, 1929, pp. 6-7 and 12-13.

²⁴ New York State Commission to Examine Laws Relating to Child Welfare. Third annual report, Apr. 9, 1924, p. 70.

1,074 families, or 60 per cent, earned less than \$300 annually from tenement manufacturing. Does the addition of six to ten dollars a week to the family income compensate for the attendant evils of the home-work system?

The New York State Department of Labor found that in the men's clothing industry in New York City for the year ended June 30, 1925, home workers averaged weekly earnings of over \$10, about one-third the earnings of factory workers.²⁵ In the more recent report from New York the median earnings of individual home workers in a usual week were \$6.19 for all industries and ranged from \$12.50 in the men's neckwear industry down to \$3.88 in the making of powder puffs.²⁶ The Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry in 1924 found that among 599 families with children working illegally 86 per cent of the families earned less than \$10 a week, while one of every three families earned under \$4 a week.²⁷ Another study, in 1928, reported on hours and earnings of 820 home-working families in Pennsylvania. The report concluded as follows:

Industrial home work was rarely a full-time occupation, but it was as much the irregular receipt of the work as the demands of household responsibilities which determined its part-time nature. The earnings from home work were low. The median hourly rate of pay for all workers was 16 cents; it was only 6 cents in one industry and never above 21 cents in any industry. The median weekly earnings for adult individual workers were \$4.40. Where the weekly earnings were the result of the combined efforts of more than one member of the family, the median was \$5.25. The irregular hours of work and the earnings as reported in this study show conclusively that industrial home work is not making any important contribution to the economic stabilization of home-working families.²⁸

The United States Children's Bureau, in its study in New Jersey in 1925, secured information on annual earnings from home work from 334 families. Less than 5 per cent of the families earned \$500 or more, while 46 per cent earned less than \$100 and 23 per cent less than \$50.²⁹ The report sums up the problem in the following words.³⁰

Whether the earnings from home work were more necessary in the families interviewed than in others in the same locality in which the children did not work there was no way to determine, but it is apparent, if the families visited can be taken as a fair example, that the great majority of the industrial home workers are very near the border line of economic dependence and that in many families the pressure of unemployment, ill health, and low wages is sufficiently great to cause parents to turn to home work. But home workers earn so little as a rule that home work offers no solution of the problem of family dependency. Bearing in mind the fact that the burden of the work falls very often upon the mothers of young children and on the children themselves, it could not be regarded as offering an adequate solution even if the earnings added appreciably to the family income. More adequate relief measures are needed in cases where the father's earnings are insufficient to support the family or where illness, widowhood, or desertion creates a special need, while persistent thought is given to the solution of unemployment, a living wage for unskilled work, and other economic problems.

²⁵ New York. Department of Labor. *Home Work in the Men's Clothing Industry in New York and Rochester*. Special bul. 147, August, 1926. p. 36.

²⁶ *Ibid.* Some Social and Economic Aspects of Home Work. Special bul. 158, February, 1929, p. 24.

²⁷ Pennsylvania. Department of Labor and Industry. *Industrial Home Work and Child Labor*. Special bul. 11, 1926, pp. 5 and 22.

²⁸ McConnell, Beatrice. *Hours of Work and Earnings of Women Employed in Industrial Home Work*. Labor and Industry, June, 1929, p. 10.

²⁹ U. S. Department of Labor. Children's Bureau. *Child Labor in New Jersey*, part 2. Children engaged in industrial home work. Bul. 183, 1928, pp. 4 and 46.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.