

clearly formulated as such in the minds of the employer. Occasionally, the rapid growth of business in an establishment temporarily forced work out into the homes. Finding that it could be carried on satisfactorily in this way the employer had no particular urge to add to his investment by providing more factory space.

The New York State Department of Labor in its study of home work in the men's clothing industry also emphasizes these points. In New York City about two-thirds of the men's clothing is produced by manufacturers who cut the goods and market the finished product but farm out to contractors the actual making of the garment. Furthermore, manufacturers who themselves make garments usually give out some work to contractors. In fact, the system of giving out garments to home workers for certain operations is used extensively by both manufacturers and contractors. This complex system of production is characterized as follows:<sup>13</sup>

Divorcing the making of the garment from the marketing has relieved the manufacturer of the necessity of carrying a large overhead and of providing stable employment for a large working force and has put the burden of expansion and contraction upon the contractor. Carrying on production by means of small shops tends to keep the industry in a fluid state. \* \* \* The system of small shops together with a large reserve of labor allows for quick expansion of business. \* \* \* Firms manufacture to order rather than for stock and the market is organized to make quick deliveries on large orders. This results in sharp expansion and contraction of business producing a markedly seasonal industry. Business is carried on under highly competitive conditions.

The industries that use the home-work system vary in their details, but they are alike in using, to quickly expand the labor force when a rush of work comes, the labor available in the home. Thus the industries need not provide factory space and pay rent and other overhead for this part of their production. Under the pressure of competition, the employers avoid these costs as far as they can. The burden of expansion and contraction, instead of being carried as one cost of the industry, is passed on to the home workers in the form of irregularity of employment and earnings. Inevitably questions arise as to the soundness and the social ethics of such a system of production. From the standpoint of the industry itself, it is questionable whether the instability and unregulated competition of this system is advantageous; whether such an organization of production is efficient. From the standpoint of the public there is a clear case for regulation, if not the more drastic measure of prohibition, to set limits to the conditions that this highly competitive type of production imposes upon a group of workers who are, by the nature of the case, in poor position to protect themselves.

### THE WORKERS

Home workers are largely women, aided all too frequently by children. They are chiefly unskilled or semiskilled. Recruited largely in tenement neighborhoods, often from recent immigrants or other groups with little or no industrial experience, they have limited knowledge of job opportunities. Of 642 women reporting on previous work in a recent New York study, 51 per cent had never worked outside their own homes; 15 per cent had worked in completely

<sup>13</sup> New York. Department of Labor. Home Work in the Men's Clothing Industry in New York and Rochester. Special bul. 147, August, 1926, pp. 9 and 10.

dissimilar occupations, such as domestic service, mercantile or clerical work, or dressmaking; 19 per cent had worked in factories but at different work; and only 18 per cent had been employed in factories at work similar to that which they were doing at home.<sup>14</sup> A large proportion of these workers, therefore, are not helped by past industrial experience to know the opportunities for employment and to make the best use of them.

In many cases language difficulties handicap these people in the job market. Moreover, working as individuals they inevitably are in poor position to bargain for their labor. Their competition for work, in industries of very irregular employment, makes low rates of pay possible, while long hours of work and the illegal employment of children are evils all too often found as accompaniments.

Industrial home work flourishes chiefly in the tenement districts of the great cities, among foreign families or other unskilled, low-paid groups. Numerous studies have found the largest groups of home workers to be Italians, while many other foreign workers, white Americans, and negroes also are engaged in industrial work in their homes. Of approximately 21,500 home workers in New York State in 1926-27 about 11,000 were reported to be Italian, 4,800 Jewish, and 2,400 "American," no other group having as many as 900.<sup>15</sup> Of 670 home workers studied in New York State in 1928 the foreign born constituted 62 per cent and three-fourths of the native born were of foreign parentage.<sup>16</sup> In Pennsylvania in 1924, of 618 fathers of children engaged in industrial home work more than half were Italians. Nearly a third of the 618 were native born.<sup>17</sup>

Much industrial home work consists of very simple processes or can easily be subdivided into simple processes. As a result it is feasible for members of the family of all ages and degrees of skill to take part, and the illegal employment of child labor is found frequently and is very difficult to prevent. New York inspections in the year 1926-27 disclosed 175 children under 16 illegally employed on home work, 57 of them ranging from 10 down to 4 years.<sup>18</sup> In 1923 an investigation of 2,169 New York home-workers' families found children engaged on home work in 22.6 per cent of the 1,591 families reporting children of over 5 and under 16 years; 93 per cent of the children were illegally employed, 79 per cent being under 14 years and 35 per cent 10 years or under.<sup>19</sup> In Pennsylvania violations of the child labor law were found in one-fourth of the 1,230 home-working families with children under 16 inspected in 1927.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29. See also U. S. Department of Labor. Women's Bureau. *The Immigrant Woman and Her Job*. Bul. 74, 1929, pp. 138-158.

<sup>15</sup> New York. Department of Labor. *Annual Report of the Industrial Commissioner for the 12 Months Ended June 30, 1927*. Report of the division of home-work inspection, 1927, p. 252.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* Some Social and Economic Aspects of Home Work. Special bul. 158, February, 1929, pp. 8 and 10.

<sup>17</sup> Pennsylvania. Department of Labor and Industry. *Industrial Home Work and Child Labor*. Special bul. 11, 1926, pp. 5 and 11.

See also 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. 15 and 58; and Colson, Myra Hill. *Negro Home Workers in Chicago*. In *Social Service Review*, September, 1928, pp. 385-413.

<sup>18</sup> New York. Department of Labor. *Annual Report of the Industrial Commissioner for the 12 Months Ended June 30, 1927*. Report of the division of home-work inspection, 1927, p. 254.

<sup>19</sup> New York State Commission to Examine Laws Relating to Child Welfare. *Third annual report*, Apr. 9, 1924, pp. 35 and 52.

<sup>20</sup> Pennsylvania. Department of Labor and Industry. *Labor and Industry*, March, 1928, p. 15.

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.<sup>21</sup>

### 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.<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup> 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:<sup>24</sup>

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

<sup>21</sup> 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.

<sup>22</sup> 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.

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

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