

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

W. B. WILSON, Secretary

WOMEN'S BUREAU

SECOND ANNUAL REPORT OF THE  
DIRECTOR OF THE  
WOMEN'S BUREAU

FOR

THE FISCAL YEAR  
ENDED JUNE 30

1920



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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR,  
WOMEN'S BUREAU,  
*Washington, August 14, 1920.*

SIR: The second annual report of the Women's Bureau for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1920, is submitted herewith:

The Women's Bureau was established as the "Woman in Industry Service" in July, 1918, during the war emergency to serve as a policy forming and advisory body whose special duty, in the words of the Secretary of Labor, was to "develop in the industries of the country policies and methods which will result in the most effective use of women's services in production for the war, while at the same time preventing their employment under injurious conditions. Its large and very necessary aim will be to focus attention on the national importance of the conditions of women's work as influencing industrial standards and as affecting the welfare of the entire Nation." As the coming of peace showed no decrease in the need for a clear policy and definite information about the conditions under which women should be employed in the industries of the country, the "Woman in Industry Service" was continued for the fiscal year 1920 through the appropriation by Congress of \$40,000 "to enable the Secretary of Labor to continue the investigations touching women in industry." This means of continuation, however, did not provide a permanent future for the service, as the granting of the appropriation was dependent entirely upon Congress, the work of the service being classed as a special activity, and the service itself not having been made statutory and therefore permanent.

On June 5, 1920, however, after hearings had been held by a joint committee of the Senate and House, at which many people testified to the need and the demand for a permanent bureau in the Department of Labor to deal with questions relative to the employment of women, a bill was passed by Congress establishing a Women's Bureau in the Department of Labor<sup>72</sup> to formulate standards and policies which shall promote the welfare of wage-earning women, improve their working conditions, increase their efficiency, and advance their opportunities for profitable employment. The said bureau shall have authority to investigate and report to said Department of Labor upon all matters pertaining to the welfare of women in industry."

The purpose of the Women's Bureau now is the same as that for which it was originally organized, and as it was stated in the first annual report of the Director of the Woman in Industry Service:

1. To consider all general policies with respect to women in industry and to advise the Secretary of Labor as to the policies which should be pursued.
2. To keep informed of the work of the several divisions of the department in so far as they relate to women in industry and to advise with the divisions on all such work.

3. To secure information on all matters relating to women in industry and to collate such information into useful form.

4. To establish useful connections with all governmental departments and divisions on this subject and with voluntary agencies and societies.

With these purposes in view the work of the Women's Bureau during the past year has been threefold—first, to secure information which was not already available but which was needed to throw light on special problems which seemed urgently in need of consideration; second, to search out and arrange such other material as was already available but which was not in such form as to make its significance readily appreciated or to permit of its full use; and, third, with the results of the information thus gained to cooperate with other agencies in the recommendation and establishment of certain standards which had been shown to be necessary for the protection of women in industry and for their advancement. The Bureau of Labor Statistics has cooperated with the Women's Bureau in outlining and preparing the statistical material included in its reports.

### WOMEN IN THE GOVERNMENT SERVICE.

The Federal Government itself is the greatest employer of women in the country, and the standards which are established for Federal employees can not fail to affect conditions for women employed throughout the country. Regulated by the strict code of the civil-service law, employment policies for this large group of men and women must necessarily be rather slow in changing and making the adjustments which in the business world are often brought about so rapidly.

The records of the Civil Service Commission do not show what proportion of the multitude of Federal employees is women, but a conservative estimate made by the commission placed the number in the District of Columbia at about 50,000 early in 1920. For the benefit of these women, as well as for all others who might plan to enter the Government service, it seemed important that information should be made available showing the positions and salaries which were open to women and their chances of advancement as Federal employees.

In September, 1919, the Women's Bureau accordingly made a study of the civil-service examinations which were open to women during three months of 1919 and of the salaries at which men and women were appointed during a similar period. This study, the findings of which have been published in a report entitled "Women in the Government Service," showed 60 per cent of the examinations were closed to women, and that the prevailing entrance salary paid to women was very much lower than for men in the same grade. It was also found that a very much smaller proportion of women than of men received appointments for the higher salaried positions, although the proportion of women passing the examinations (when they were permitted to take them) for the higher salaried positions was frequently as large and sometimes larger than the proportion of men. The fact that women, for no apparent reason, were barred from such a large number of examinations was brought to the attention of the Civil Service Commission before the entire report was completed, with the result that in

two weeks' time that commission issued a ruling that henceforth all examinations should be open to men and women alike, leaving it to the discretion of the appointing officer to specify the sex desired.

The matter of salary discrimination could not be so readily settled, but the opening of all examinations to both men and women, if combined with the recommendations of the Joint Congressional Commission on Reclassification of Salaries regarding equal rates of pay for men and women, will eliminate the present massing of women in the low-salaried positions in the Government service.

The work of the reclassification commission has had a very important bearing on the great multitude of women workers in Federal employ, and the Women's Bureau, at the request of the commission, detailed a member of its staff to work on the committee on employment policies of this commission. The bureau's report of women in the Government service, just described, was used by this committee to illustrate certain conditions and was included in the committee's final report to the commission.

In addition to the consideration of these more general policies regarding the employment of women in the Federal service the Women's Bureau, at the request of the War and Navy Departments, has made studies in certain arsenals and navy yards, giving advice on such matters as seating and other working conditions, representation of women on shop committees, and rates of pay for women where such matters were under dispute.

The women who are employed by the Federal Government as charwomen in the Government buildings in Washington requested the Women's Bureau to study the conditions under which they were working, and a short survey was made of the women they employed in several different departments in Washington. Lack of organization of the work and insufficient working equipment was found to exist in certain departments, although in other departments the work was well arranged and definitely assigned and the equipment ample. The existing conditions and recommendations for certain rearrangements of hours and other improvements were embodied in a short report which was submitted to the chief clerk of each department as well as to the group of women who had asked for the investigation.

## **WOMAN'S PART IN AMERICAN INDUSTRIES DURING THE WORLD WAR.**

The lack of exact information as to the numbers of women employees and their distribution in the various occupations of the Federal Government is duplicated for the women employed during the war in almost every industry in the country. Everyone acquainted with the industrial situation during the war knows what a tremendous change came in the occupations of the women of the country at that time. The great question which everyone has wanted answered has been whether this change was a lasting one or whether it was to be evanescent and would result in the resumption of a pre-war status for women as soon as the crisis was over. In the last annual report of the Women's Bureau it was stated that the need for statistics on this subject being a vital one, and the appropriation

of the Women's Bureau insufficient to undertake a comprehensive inquiry, the war work council of the Young Women's Christian Association had undertaken such an inquiry into the status of women employed in the war industries six months after the signing of the armistice and the probability of continued opportunities for them in a wider range of occupations following the war. The Director of the Women's Bureau was to serve in an advisory capacity in connection with this work. The study has been completed and is now being printed as one of the publications of the Women's Bureau.

This survey of woman's part in American industries during the World War was a very extensive one and was based on data covering for the prewar period nearly 9,000 firms employing over 3,000,000 workers, for the war period nearly 15,000 firms employing approximately 2,500,000 workers, and for the post-war period over 1,300 firms employing nearly 700,000 workers.

The facts drawn from this large field show a very significant movement of large numbers of women into fields of occupation where heretofore the number of women employed has been almost insignificant. The main findings of this report are brought out in the summary which states:

First. The popular belief that women in industry rendered real service to the Nation during the war is sustained by the figures showing the numbers of women employed both in the war agent and implement industries and in war food and fabric industries; by the preponderance of evidence from employers holding important Government contracts; and by the official statement of the Assistant Secretary of War, acting as Director of Munitions.

Second. The labor shortage and excessive demands on industries essential to the production of implements and agents of warfare resulted during the war in—

(a) A sharp increase in the number of women workers in these industries during the war.

(b) A marked decrease in the number of women in the traditional woman-employing industries resulting in the relief of the long-standing congestion of woman labor in these pursuits and in part contributing to a marked increase in the wage scales of the women remaining in these industries.

(c) The employment of woman labor in other skilled crafts from which women had been practically debarred before the war.

Third. When the managers of private, Government, and Government-controlled plants were confronted with the necessity of employing women in skill-exacting positions there were practically no trained women available, because—

(a) Public and private vocational institutions had given little encouragement to the training of women in mechanical occupations.

(b) Organized labor policies in fact, although not always in official regulations, discouraged apprentice work for women in skilled occupations.

Fourth. The training of women employed in skilled occupations during the war was provided principally by the employing firms.

Fifth. The success attending the emergency employment of women in occupations requiring a high degree of skill, together with the continuous curtailment of the supply of immigrant labor and the expansion of commercial trade, has resulted in the retention of women in most of these crafts and industries since the close of the war, and bids fair to encourage a larger use of woman labor in the future.

## INDUSTRIAL TRAINING FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS.

The enlarged industrial opportunity for women which was indicated by the report on "Woman's part in American industries during the World War," together with the scarcity of trained women which was found to have existed at the time when this opportunity was first available, indicated the need for a careful survey of the industrial

training courses which were open to women and girls. Such a survey was made by the Women's Bureau in the early part of 1920. It included a study of the classes open to women in over 100 schools in 20 States, and also an analysis of the chief industries in those States for which industrial training would most successfully fit women. Although public vocational training facilities for occupations in those industries were found to exist in most of the States and cities, very few of the facilities were used by women either because they were not admitted or because they were not encouraged to attend these classes. The greater number of industrial training courses in which women were enrolled were courses in dressmaking and sewing, although these trades were not necessarily the ones which employed the greatest number of women in the communities supplying the training.

From the facts given in this report it seems essential that a definite program should be immediately undertaken to open all vocational classes to girls as well as boys, and to encourage the girls to take those courses which will fit them for work in the various industries of their communities.

#### **EFFECT OF LAWS REGULATING THEIR HOURS OF WORK ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN.**

The employment of women in many new occupations and efforts to protect them from the ill effects of long hours have resulted in a certain amount of conflict between those who would have no special laws for women and those who feel that a certain amount of protection is absolutely essential if women are not to suffer from industrial exploitation with accompanying injury to themselves and future generations. This conflict has resulted in some instances in assertions from the former group that special legislation was resulting in the shutting out of women from many occupations where they had a right to work and where they could be employed at great advantage both to themselves and to the industry. The attitude of this group was reinforced by the action of street railway companies in New York City and Brooklyn who dismissed all of their woman employees because they said they could not employ them and conform to a law which had recently been enacted limiting their hours to 9 consecutive hours a day and 54 a week, and prohibiting their employment after 10 p. m. or before 6 a. m.

At the time of this occurrence, May, 1919, the Women's Bureau offered its assistance to the industrial commission of New York State, and while that commission, through its bureau of women in industry, was making an investigation of the facts in New York and Brooklyn, the Women's Bureau undertook to study the methods of employing women in transportation in Boston, Chicago, Kansas City, and Detroit to discover local adjustments which were being made in order to reconcile the conditions of employment for women with the requirements of the law or local custom. This study covered a long period, from June, 1919, to January, 1920, as during the summer of 1919 laws were passed changing the hours which were permissible for women employed in transportation in both Boston and Detroit, and it was necessary to extend the period of the

investigation to cover some months after these laws went into effect in order to arrive at a just conclusion as to their results. It was found that women ticket agents were being employed in Chicago and Boston under conditions far in advance of the local legal requirements and of the requirements in New York, which, according to the statements of the employers, it had been impossible to meet. The eight-hour day was in force in both of these cities, and in Chicago night work was eliminated for women ticket agents by voluntary action of the company, as the law did not prohibit it. A law limiting the hours of women conductors in Detroit to 10 a day and 54 a week had resulted in shorter hours for the women but not in their dismissal. The Kansas City women street-car conductors were working less than the 9 hours permitted by law and their runs were arranged so that they did not work at night. From the facts secured in this investigation the conditions found in these four cities indicate that legislation carefully drawn, with the different duties of the conductor and ticket agent taken into account and special consideration given to local requirements, will not militate against the successful employment of women in transportation.

The work of women in transportation was of such a very specialized nature that conditions under which it could be done could hardly be considered to have a particularly significant bearing on other occupations. In order to throw more light upon the subject of the effect of special legislation on women in industry it seemed important to carry on further investigations. A study was made, therefore, beginning in February, 1920, of the women employed in representative rubber, electrical, and textile plants in Massachusetts and New Jersey. Figures were secured in both States of the number and proportion of women employed in April and October, 1919. Because during the period between April and October, 1919, a law limiting the employment of women to 48 hours a week went into force in Massachusetts, while the New Jersey law still permits the employment of women for 60 hours a week, it was possible to make a very significant comparison of the demand for women workers in comparable industries in these two States.

Although additional facts will have to be gathered from a wider field before adequate material is assembled upon which to base an accurate interpretation of the effect of the law shortening the hours of work for women, the findings of this brief survey are important. A preliminary report of it is now being prepared. The facts obtained show that even with the restriction of hours the number of women employed in Massachusetts increased considerably during the six months from April to October, while in New Jersey there was a slight decrease in their number.

More significant still was the change in the proportion of women employed, as a change in actual numbers may only indicate a stimulation or curtailment of activities in the industry itself. The proportion of women employed decreased in both States, but in New Jersey it decreased 3.1 per cent, while in Massachusetts the decrease in proportion was only nine-tenths of 1 per cent. Although there had been no legal restriction of hours in New Jersey, some of the plants had reduced their hours for other reasons, and it was found that hours had been shortened for nearly half of the women included



in the survey in New Jersey. A particularly important aspect of the reduction of hours for women was emphasized by figures showing that the hours for men also were shortened in 21 out of the 24 plants which shortened hours in Massachusetts and in 6 out of the 8 plants which shortened the hours in New Jersey. A very general increase in rates took place at the same time as the reduction in hours, and although an extensive study of production under the different hours could not be made, what material on this subject was collected showed that production increased or was maintained when hours were shortened in 13 out of 16 establishments in New Jersey and in 9 out of 21 in Massachusetts.

### THE RESPONSIBILITY OF WAGE-EARNING WOMEN FOR THE SUPPORT OF OTHERS.

The need for careful consideration of any law or regulation which might hamper the employment of women or result in a reduced wage for them becomes particularly important when the many families or other dependents who have looked to these women for either entire or partial support are taken into account. Wage-earning women have long suffered from a discrimination in the rate of their wages as compared with the rate paid to men in spite of the fact that many investigations are continually showing that a very large proportion of women are responsible for the support of dependents, and that this wage discrimination is a very serious handicap to the women who are the chief breadwinners in many families. No general authoritative figures have ever been collected, however, to show to what extent this condition exists. Realizing the importance of such information the Women's Bureau, in the fall of 1919, invited the State departments of labor to cooperate in making a survey of certain factories in each State to find out what percentage of the women employed in those factories were supporting dependents. This plan was greeted with commendation, but in many cases the States regretted that insufficient funds and workers prevented participation in the work. Other States sent in their reports to the Women's Bureau for compilation. The State of New Hampshire was unable to collect the desired information, but offered to cooperate with the Women's Bureau in conducting such a study in the State. Manchester was selected as the most important industrial center in the State and an investigation was started there by the Women's Bureau in April, 1920. The field work in this investigation has been completed and the report is now being prepared. The information gathered included the wage received and amount contributed to the support of others for all the employees, both men and women, in certain factories. An intensive study of a limited number of families was also made showing the yearly and weekly wage of each wage earner and the amount of his or her contribution to the family budget. This material, when combined with the nation-wide material from the cost of living schedules which have been made available by the Bureau of Labor Statistics for this study, will be of great significance in determining the justice of the woman's demand for a wage rate based on the cost of living for dependents and not merely for the individual.

**GENERAL INDUSTRIAL CONDITIONS FOR WOMEN IN THE STATES:**

In all investigations made in the States the Women's Bureau has worked in conjunction with and many times at the request of the State departments of labor. The work done by the Women's Bureau under these circumstances has been in no way a duplication or usurpation of the work of a State department. The primary function of a State department of labor is law enforcement, and this must be its first and most important task. Charged with the duty of administering and enforcing the labor law of the State, and frequently hampered by funds inadequate for the satisfactory accomplishment of this one function, the average State department of labor has neither the time nor the equipment for intensive investigations. The Women's Bureau can and has furnished the State departments with a consulting service based on a knowledge of conditions in more than one locality. In their investigations in the States the agents of the Women's Bureau have supplemented the law-enforcement work of the State inspectors by furnishing special reports on many plants. At the same time the State inspectors have frequently joined with the representatives of the Women's Bureau by making intensive investigations of the plants they would normally have inspected only for the infringement of the labor law.

In October, 1919, at the request of the governor of Virginia, the Women's Bureau started a survey of the hours and conditions of work for women in industry in that State. This survey covered the entire State, including 144 plants, employing 18,000 women, and a report, with specific recommendations for the improvement of hours and working conditions, was made to the governor in January, 1920. The title of this report is "Hours and Conditions of Work for Women in Industry in Virginia."

A similar but more intensive investigation is now being made in Kansas at the request of the industrial commission of that State. This investigation, the field work for which is still going on, will include wages as well as hours and working conditions for women, and the material gathered will be used by the industrial commission in making its rulings for the different industries of the State.

In Atlanta, Ga., an investigation was started in May, 1920, at the request of certain prominent citizens interested in industrial conditions for women in that city. Thirty-two establishments, employing nearly 3,000 women, were included in this survey, and information was gathered as to wages, hours, and working conditions. The report is now being prepared.

At the request of the Minimum Wage Commission of the District of Columbia, members of the staff of the Women's Bureau have been detailed to assist that body in gathering information on the cost of living and housing which could be used in determining the rates of pay which were being established for the various industries employing women in the District.

**DEMAND FOR INFORMATION CONCERNING WOMEN IN INDUSTRY  
IN THE UNITED STATES.**

An important part of the work of the Women's Bureau during the past year has been to arrange and supply information on special matters for the use of the various national and international con-

ferences which met in Washington. For the International Labor Conference special bulletins were prepared on the daily hour laws and prohibition of night work for women in Federal and State legislation and on the legal regulation of the employment of women in hazardous occupations in the United States. Summaries of State laws regulating hours of work and minimum wages for women and mothers' pensions were prepared in chart form and were made available for general use at the conferences and elsewhere. The standards for the employment of women in industry which were formulated and published by the Women's Bureau in October, 1918, have been in constant demand during the past year, 90,000 copies having been distributed, on request from individuals only, since their first circulation.

### **PARTICIPATION IN NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL INDUSTRIAL CONFERENCES.**

The simultaneous meeting in Washington of two international congresses for the consideration of standards and policies to be established for industries throughout the world was an epoch-making event which aroused great enthusiasm in the heart of everyone interested in the important questions of industry. Although the Women's Bureau had no official connection with the International Labor Conference, much information was supplied in response to inquiries from participants in that conference, and representatives from each country were interviewed by members of the staff of the bureau and a very valuable mailing list was obtained of persons in foreign countries who would like to give or get information about special subjects relating to women. The First International Congress of Working Women was even more intimately in touch with the Women's Bureau. A very definite and constructive program was undertaken by this congress of women, whose delegates from 19 countries had met partly in protest against their lack of representation in the International Labor Conference established under the League of Nations, but mainly that they might inaugurate an international program and join forces for the improvement of all conditions throughout industry.

For the two industrial conferences called by the President which were held in Washington the Women's Bureau furnished material on standards recommended for the employment of women, and the director of the bureau was one of those who testified before the second conference.

### **RELATION TO STATE DEPARTMENTS OF LABOR.**

The information which the Women's Bureau has compiled regarding standards and the status of legislation for women in the various States has been of especial value in the bureau's relation to the State departments of labor. Their relationship has been a cordial and mutually helpful one. In preparation for the annual convention of the Association of Governmental Labor Officials, held July 12, 1920, the Women's Bureau worked in cooperation with this association in outlining the program for questions touching women in

industry, and for a preliminary conference called by the women members of this association representatives of the Women's Bureau were asked to participate in outlining the program of work.

### EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL.

In addition to the reports of investigations and the charts and pamphlets on labor laws for women which have been printed and furnished on request to organizations and persons desiring them, the Women's Bureau has had a limited amount of educational material to lend for use at meetings and other gatherings considering industrial standards. This material consists of a 16-panel exhibit showing good and bad standards of working conditions for women, stereopticon slides illustrating the same subject, and colored maps showing the status of the different States in their legal regulations of hours and conditions of work for women. The panel exhibit has received the widest circulation and has been used all over the country by State departments of labor, women's clubs, universities, chambers of commerce, consumers' leagues, and other such organizations. The demand for this exhibit has been so constant as to keep the few existing sets of it almost permanently on the road, while many requests for its use had to be refused. Such material, however, quickly becomes out of date, and when in the spring of 1920 a questionnaire was sent to all those who had used the exhibit and to others who might wish to use it, asking what sort of educational material would be of the greatest assistance, the reply almost universally was a request for a motion picture showing standards for the employment of women in industry. Therefore a two-reel film has been arranged for and will be ready for distribution in the fall. A collection of photographs of women working on different processes has been added to during the past year and many photographs have been furnished to magazines and newspapers wishing to illustrate different phases of women's work.

In addition to the educational material loaned on request, members of the staff of the Women's Bureau have participated in many conferences and meetings at which the standards were discussed and explained to interested groups.

In the course of several investigations made in different States there was found to be a very frequent desire for information as to special types of factory equipment and arrangement. A short study was made, therefore, of the different articles of factory equipment, such as lockers, chairs, cafeteria furnishings, and wash-room facilities, and, although the material gathered will not be issued in the form of a report, it will be available for those who come to the bureau or its representatives wishing to know the best type of such equipment.

Respectfully submitted.

MARY ANDERSON,  
*Director Women's Bureau.*

HON. W. B. WILSON,  
*Secretary of Labor.*

