

## FOREWORD

We are at the crossroads of two historic events—International Women's Year in 1975 and the U.S. Bicentennial in 1976. This handbook on women workers serves as a contribution to both of these highly significant occasions. 1975 also marks the 55th year of the Women's Bureau's existence and thus of its work to promote the welfare of women and advance their opportunities for profitable employment.

Significant advances have been noted since the Bureau issued the last handbook over 5 years ago. In terms of their relative position in the workplace, women have made progress. The results of equal opportunity laws, several of which were enacted more than a decade ago, became more visible as the affirmative action process became more productive with increased compliance efforts.

Consider these facts: Just 5 years ago there were 31 million women in the labor force; in 1975 there are more than 36 million. Occupationally, the proportion of employed women in professional and technical jobs increased from 14 percent in 1969 to 16 percent in 1974, and in managerial and administrative jobs from 4 to 5 percent. In 1974 millions of women were brought under coverage of the minimum wage and overtime pay provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act, and extensions of the Equal Pay Act in 1972 and 1974 applied to millions of women workers. Other laws enacted since 1970 provide for equal opportunity in training and employment, in obtaining credit, and in gaining access to education programs and activities. All of these are signs of progress.

On the other hand, barriers to women's progress remain in some areas of employment. As we go to press, the Equal Rights Amendment still lacks ratification by four States needed to make the proposed amendment part of the U.S. Constitution. So it might be well to consider these facts also: The earnings gap between women and men continued to widen. While women improved their earnings, so did men—and at a greater rate. Thus, in 1973 the earnings of women who worked full time throughout the year were only 57 percent of men's; they were 61 percent in 1969 and 64 percent in 1955. Day care is still vitally needed. There were 26.8 million children with working mothers in 1974; 6.1 million of these children were under the age of 6. The estimated number of licensed day care slots is only 1 million. In 1975 no women serve in the

U.S. Senate; a decade ago there were two women senators. These facts indicate a need for renewed action.

In this handbook you will find facts relating to the present economic, civil, and political status of women. You will also find bases for an encouraging outlook. Part I deals with women's economic status and presents data on their participation (or nonparticipation) in the work force, the occupations they hold, their income and earnings, and their education and training. Part II is concerned with Federal and State laws governing women's employment and civil and political status. Part III describes State, national, and international machinery at work to advance the status of women.

As we focus on the special concerns of women throughout the world during International Women's Year, the Women's Bureau hopes this handbook will provide information which other countries may find relevant as they seek to fully integrate women into all areas of their national development. In our own Nation, we hope it will be a valuable sourcebook for organizations and individuals as they continue cooperative efforts and seek new ways to address the concerns of women. And as our Nation embarks on its 200th birthday observance, perhaps this handbook will serve as a witness that the status of women should rightfully be included among the Nation's top priorities. We hope the information included here will help to chart the future course of national efforts to make women and men equal partners in contributing to national growth.

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