

Newsletter - 1926

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ACTIVITIES AFFECTING WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

Massachusetts

Factory Law Amended.

Action of the Legislature of 1926 amended the law requiring proper ventilation in factories as protection from dangerous vapors, gases, dust or fumes to apply to all factories and workshops irrespective of the number or sex of the employees. Previously the law applied only to factories where five or more persons were employed and to workshops where five or more women or children were employed.

New Minimum Wage Set.

A minimum wage of \$14.40 a week has been set by the Minimum Wage Commission for women of ordinary ability engaged in the manufacture of jewelry findings, silver novelties, optical goods, watches and clocks. For inexperienced workers the minimum is to be \$12 a week. The decree which becomes effective January 1, 1927, provides that a woman shall be considered of ordinary ability who has reached the age of 20 years and has had six months' experience in the occupation.

The investigation of the wages of women employed in the manufacture of jewelry and related lines, made by the Minimum Wage Commission preliminary to fixing a minimum wage, showed that 35 per cent of the women in the industry earned less than \$14 a week, and 21 per cent earned \$20 or over. Earnings by occupations showed a marked contrast for the workers engaged in different processes. Of the largest group, the packers, two-thirds received less than \$14, and only 3 per cent earned \$20 or over. Bench workers and press operators, other large occupational groups, showed a similar situation with two-thirds of the bench workers earning under \$14 and only 3 per cent \$20 or over. Of the press operators, two-thirds earned under \$14 a week and only 2 per cent had earnings as high as \$20. On the other hand, less than one-tenth of the chain makers received less than \$14 while 46 per cent received \$20 a week or over. Of all the women for whom earnings by occupations were tabulated, 48 per cent received under \$14 a week and less than 13 per cent \$20 a week or over.

New Wage Board Organized.

A wage board to recommend a minimum rate of wages for women employed in the manufacture of toys, games and sporting goods was organized in October. An investigation made by the Minimum Wage Commission of the wages paid in this industry showed that 44 per cent of the women received less than \$13 a week, and approximately 66 per cent less than \$15, while not quite 15 per cent received \$18 a week or over. Considering earnings by occupation it was found that of the bench workers, the biggest group, three-fifths earned less than \$13 a week, nearly four-fifths earned less than \$15 a week, and less than 7 per cent earned \$18 a week or over. Of the cementers, however, the next largest occupational group, less than one-fifth had earnings under \$14, more than two-fifths more than \$14, and one-third earned \$18 or over. The painters and stitchers also had a considerable proportion, nearly one-third, in the highest wage group. In the case of assemblers and miscellaneous workers, however, earnings are similar to those of the bench workers.

Salaries of Office Employees in Massachusetts Establishments.

The Massachusetts Department of Labor and Industries is preparing for early release a brief mimeographed summary of the results of the survey of salaries of office employees in Massachusetts establishments, as of May 1, 1926. The complete returns, which may appear later in printed form, include reports from 1,075 establishments employing 22,427 office workers (about one-eighth of all persons so engaged in this State), 8,182 (36.5 per cent) of whom were males and 14,245 (63.5 per cent) of whom were females.

Returns from similar types of offices were combined in order to better illustrate the occupational and salary data, and eight "Office groups" were decided upon. The returns were also tabulated so as to show the data separately for Boston and for four other "districts" in the State. By means of "salary groups" the salaries paid both males and females employed at each of 38 occupations are indicated, and the number of each sex coming within each group is shown.

In brief, the survey shows that for every four males employed in office work, there were seven females; that about one-half of all persons reported for were engaged at clerical occupations; that the stenographic positions were almost altogether filled by females, representing slightly more than one-fifth of the total number of office workers of both sexes combined; and that in the accounting and bookkeeping section, similar in size to the stenographic section, nearly two-thirds of those employed were females.

The two largest occupational groups, both sexes combined, were composed of bookkeepers or cashiers, and junior clerks. There were three especially large groups of males—junior clerks, senior clerks, and bookkeepers or cashiers. Of the females, there were two very important groups—bookkeepers or cashiers, and stenographer-typists.

The predominating salary groups, without respect to sex, were "\$20 but less than \$25"—including 24.6 per cent of all persons reported for, and "\$16 but less than \$20"—including 18.4 per cent. The largest group of males was one of 27.7 per cent receiving "\$30 but less than \$40," and the next largest, one of 18.3 per cent receiving "\$50 or over." Of the females, 32.0 per cent received "\$20 but less than \$25," and 24.7 per cent received "\$16 but less than \$20."

The mimeographed report refers principally to the complete returns and includes the following indicated tabular presentations:

I Summary showing the number of males, of females, and of both sexes combined, in each of the office groups and districts covered.

II Summary showing the number, with percentages, of males and females coming within each salary group.

III Classification of these same data in detail by occupations.

IV Principal occupations.

V Principal salary groups.

VI Representation of males and females by office sections and by sex.

New York

There has just been issued a 16 page summary of a brief presented to the Industrial Survey Commission by the Joint Legislative Conference in support of a 48-hour law for women.

Organized Labor Again Advocates a 48-Hour Week.

In its legislative program for 1927 organized labor of New York State includes the 48-hour week for women and minors.

Virginia

The 10-hour law for women was amended by the 1926 legislature to cover restaurants as well as factories, workshops, laundries, mercantile and manufacturing establishments. Further amendments provide for posting a copy of the law and the schedule of hours in each workroom and for increasing the penalties for violation of the law. For a first offense the fine specified is from \$10 to \$25 and for a second and subsequent offenses from \$25 to \$50. The commissioner of labor is charged with the enforcement of the law and the prosecution of all violations.

Canada

British Columbia.

Weekly Half Holiday in Stores Attacked.

The Chamber of Commerce at Victoria, B. C., has requested the Provincial Government to secure the repeal or amendment of the act requiring a weekly half holiday for shop employees in the province. This act was passed in 1916, providing that premises where any wholesale or retail trade or business is carried on must be closed not later than one o'clock in the afternoon on one day in each week, the day to be fixed by a referendum to the municipal electors. Certain classes of stores, however, such as bakeries, cigar stands, drug stores, restaurants, etc., are exempt from the operation of the act, unless the council of the municipality declares by by-law, that they are to be included.

The Chamber of Commerce declares that the act hampers business and should be repealed, and suggests further that another measure should be enacted providing that the shop employees should individually retain the privilege of a weekly half holiday, but that the half holidays should be spread over a week, allowing the establishments to remain open every week day. It is stated that the action of the Victoria Chamber is likely to be followed by similar movement in Vancouver and other cities in the province.

On the other side the retail clerks have declared themselves strongly opposed to such a change in the existing holiday system, fearing that it might eventually deprive them of their present privileges; and an organization has been formed at Victoria to resist any attempt to amend the act as proposed by the Chamber of Commerce. (Labour Gazette, Canada, October 1926.)

Minimum Wage in Fruit and Vegetable Industry Increased.

The Minimum Wage Board of British Columbia issued an order on September 3, increasing the wages paid in the fruit and vegetable industry and replacing the orders of February 28, 1920, and July 4, 1922. Following a petition to the Board by the employees, asking for a reopening of the question of the minimum wage and hours of labor in this industry, a conference of representatives of all persons interested was duly held, and the new order was issued in consequence of the recommendations of this conference, which were reviewed and approved by the Board.

By the new scale the minimum wage of an experienced female employee is increased from \$14 to \$14.40 for a week of 48 hours. Inexperienced female employees formerly received \$10 a week for the first month, \$11 a week for the second month, and \$12 a week for the third. Under the new order they receive \$11 a week for the first two months, and thereafter rank as experienced workers.

The order becomes effective 60 days after the date of issue. (Labour Gazette, Canada, October, 1926.)

Minimum Wage for Men in Lumbering Industry.

The first order under the Male Minimum Wage Act of 1925 establishes a minimum of 40 cents an hour for employees in the lumbering industry in British Columbia. This act, which becomes effective November 1, 1926, is administered by the Board of Adjustment established under the Hours of Labour Act, 1923, and applies to "all occupations other than those of farm laborers, fruit pickers, fruit and vegetable canners and domestic servants." Accordingly the Board having dealt first with the largest industry in the province will now proceed to study conditions prevailing in other industries for the purpose of fixing a minimum rate suitable for each industry. The "Vancouver Province" states that soon the act will affect the wages of every male worker in the province, including hundreds of store clerks, office employees and laborers. By the early part of next year it is expected all branches of business will be covered by minimum wages regulations, the scale in each case depending upon individual conditions.

Prior to the publication of the order governing the lumbering industry, a large delegation of lumbermen presented to the Provincial Government a memorandum making a final protest against the enforcement of the Male Minimum Wage Act, and outlining an alternative scheme that would enable them to accomplish voluntarily what was considered to be one of the chief objects of the act, namely, the reduction of Asiatic labor. Under this alternative plan 25 per cent of the orientals now employed would be dismissed during the first year of the new law's operation; 25 per cent the second year and so on until only a few orientals were left in jobs which white men refuse to fill. The scheme would require the addition of 600 new white men to the lumber pay roll of the province in the first year in place of orientals, the lumbermen stated. The delegation was informed that the order of the Board must take effect but that if the act should prove too difficult to administer it might be amended by the Legislature. (Labour Gazette, Canada, October, 1926.)

Trades and Labor Congress Asks Minimum for All Men.

The Trades and Labor Congress at its 42d annual convention, held in Montreal in September decided to request that all Provincial legislatures pass legislation to provide for a minimum wage for all male workers, "such minima to be not less than the standard of living, the wage to be based on an eight-hour day." (Labour Gazette, Canada, October, 1926.)

A Minimum Wage for Fruit Pickers.

The General Superintendent of the British Columbia Employment Service, in his report for 1925, suggests that the minimum wage act of the province should be extended to include berry pickers. At present the work of picking in the fields and orchards is excluded, only employees in jam and vegetable canneries, or in fruit packing and shipping houses, being covered by regulation. From the experience of the Employment Service offices with the fruit-picking problem, it appears as though the only solution, in the interests of the growers who offer

the highest rates and best living conditions, is to apply the minimum wage law to this industry. This would discourage the practice of engaging help in advance of the time the fruit is ready to pick and hiring more pickers than can earn the minimum wage at the piece work rates offered, on account of insufficient fruit ready for picking. The money spent by growers for newspaper advertising and in providing special attractions would go a long way towards meeting any additional cost incurred under this plan, and the knowledge that a minimum wage would be paid would attract an older and more satisfactory class of women as pickers, with a reduction in loss of fruit and a decrease in expense for supervision. Another suggested scheme is for the growers to fix a minimum wage through their associations, and if the organizations are sufficiently strong to enforce discipline among the members, this plan is said to be as effective as the application of the statute. The Farmers' organizations in the Prairie Provinces have been following it for several years past, and if a member pays below the minimum agreed upon, he has difficulty in obtaining help and is taken to task by other members in the district for bringing the district into disrepute and adversely affecting their labor supply. The Employment Service has forwarded 30,000 men under this arrangement and the total complaints in four years have not exceeded 20 in number. (Labour Gazette, Canada, September, 1926.)

Manitoba.

Minimum Wage for Women Employed in Brickyards.

A minimum wage rate of \$12 a week and 30 cents an hour has been fixed by the Minimum Wage Board for women employed in brickyards and in seasonal and casual industries not already covered by other regulations. Wages are to be paid weekly, within three days after such wages have been earned. The hours of labor must not be more than nine in any day or forty-eight in a week. Employment between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. and Sunday work are forbidden. Between the close of one day's work and the beginning of another there must be an interval of at least eleven hours. In case of exceptional emergent conditions arising, overtime may be worked on permit from the Bureau of Labor. There will be extra pay at not less than the regular rate for all overtime work. One hour must be allowed for lunch and employees required by the employer to spend time on the premises must be paid therefor. (Labour Gazette, Canada, August, 1926.)

New Wage in Certain Manufacturing Industries.

A new order of the Minimum Wage Board applies to women employees in the following industries: Artificial flowers, bedding, ladies' wear, hats, caps, embroidery, jewelry, regalia and garments which include all clothing trades—except dressmaking, millinery, custom tailoring and furriers—in all portions of the Province of Manitoba.

The weekly minimum rate set for experienced employees 18 years of age or over is \$12. No inexperienced employee, except those employed in garment factories, shall be paid wages at a less rate than \$9 a week for the first four months after entering the industry and \$10 a week for the second four months, and \$11 per week for the third four months, after which period of twelve months she shall receive the minimum wage of \$12 a week. No inexperienced garment worker shall be paid wages at a less rate than \$9 a week for the first three months, and \$10.50 for the second three months, after which period of six months she shall be considered an experienced employee.

No reduction shall be made from the minimum wage of time workers for statutory holidays. The number of inexperienced employees in any factory shall not exceed 25 per cent of the total experienced female employees. (Labour Gazette, Canada, September, 1926.)

Saskatchewan.

The Minimum Wage Board of Saskatchewan has reissued its orders applying to shops and stores, laundries and factories, and mail order houses. The order governing shops and stores was amended in 1925 in the section dealing with the rates of learners, the learning period having been extended from 18 months to 2 years. The orders now published provide an increase of \$1 in the minimum wage of adult employees in the three groups; the increase being from \$14 to \$15 in shops; and from \$13 to \$14 in laundries and factories and in mail order houses.

In the shops and stores group the learners' weekly rates are increased from \$7.50 to \$10 during the first six months of employment; from \$9 to \$12 during the second six months; and from \$12 to \$13.50 during the third six months. New provisions are made in regard to the payment of overtime work beyond 50 hours in any week. The working hours are reduced from 51 to 50 in the week, but special permits may be obtained under certain circumstances for a week of 56 hours, or for 59 hours during the Christmas season.

In laundries and factories the working week remains at 48 hours. A new clause provides for the payment of overtime wages beyond that limit. The same rule also applies to mail order houses.

In the order governing mail order houses the learners' rates are increased from \$8 to \$9 per week during the first six months, and from \$10 to \$11 during the second six months. (Labour Gazette, Canada, September, 1926.)

India

The Madras Labor Union conducted some time ago, with the help of the Women's Indian Association, an inquiry into the conditions of life and service of the women workers in the textile mills in Madras. These inquiries showed that 90 per cent of the women workers were in heavy debts—the common rate of interest being 150 per cent; that they toiled from 4 a.m., until about 10 p.m., i.e., about 16 hours a day; and that their treatment inside the mills left a great deal to be desired. (All-India Trade Union Bulletin, July, 1926.)

Italy

In an article published in the American Federationist for October, 1926, Laura Cabrini Casartelli describes the legislation existing in Italy for women industrial workers. Work between 10 p.m., and 5 a.m., is prohibited for women of whatever age and they are also excluded from underground work and from certain specified occupations which are either too fatiguing or injurious to the health. Women under 21 may not be employed at the cleaning of motors, transmission apparatus, or machines in motion. A weekly day of rest is required of all workers and for women rest periods totaling one hour are obligatory if they work over six and not more than eight hours, and one hour and a half is required if they work over eight hours.

Italy also regulates the labor of working mothers and provides by law for maternity insurance. In 1924 three and a half million lire were disbursed for maternity benefits to 36,000 women workers. In factories employing at least 50 women a nursing room must be provided within the factory. Women who nurse their children may also be permitted to leave the factories for fixed periods.

The legal provisions relating to the contract of employment of private salaried employees and dealing with discharge, resignation, indemnities, and annual leave cover both men and women.

Professional women workers and women in public employment, as well as women teachers in the elementary and secondary schools receive the same salaries as men, discrimination no longer being made. For the same work they receive the same pay. The contract of employment of State or public employees is based on the principle of equal treatment for men and women. In some administrative branches there is some discrimination in that women are obliged to resign when they marry.

Formerly the State did not attempt to regulate the labor contract of women workers in industry and agriculture, leaving it to the free agreement of the parties interested. Now, however, there have been created industrial courts which concern themselves with labor especially in industry and agriculture. The wage rates of women industrial workers are regulated by collective agreements which provide for minimum rates for each kind of work. These minimum rates are as a rule lower than the rates paid to men. When, however, the work performed by women and their output are the same as the work and the output of the men, they receive the same pay. Piece work rates, are, of course, the same for men and women, as they are based on output.

No legislation on the contract of labor of women home workers and domestic servants exists and there are no collective agreements covering these classes of workers. Female home workers may demand the legal minimum wage rates fixed by wage boards (commissioni di salario).

Legislative provisions for the protection of female domestic servants are nonexistent and no legal, economic, or judicial recognition is given manual or educational work within the household. Domestic servants, are, however, required to insure against invalidity and old age.

Japan

A law effective July 1, 1929, limits the workday of children under 16 and women in factories to 11 hours and prohibits their employment between 10 p.m., and 5 a.m. The law also provides for these employees two days' holiday in each month, and 30 minutes' recess after six hours of work, this to be increased to one hour if the workday exceeds 10 hours.

According to detailed regulations issued by the Minister of Home Affairs, under the factory law, women operatives may request suspension from work four weeks or less before childbirth, and they are prohibited from resuming work before six weeks have elapsed after childbirth. Those women who are nursing children less than one year old are to be given two additional recess periods of 30 minutes each.

PERSONNEL

Massachusetts

Miss Ethel M. Johnson has been reappointed Assistant Commissioner in the Department of Labor and Industries. Her term expired July 27, 1926, her appointment was reaffirmed by the Executive Council on September 8, and took effect September 25.

NOTES

Are Women Stable Workers?

That women do stick to their jobs, in spite of a popular belief to the contrary, is shown in the results of a survey made by H. B. Bergen and reported in the Journal of Personnel Research for July, 1926. Mr. Bergen's study covered 400 "white collar" workers who resigned consecutively during 1923, 1924, and 1925 from a large financial house in New York. The group included the regular force of office boys, junior clerks, senior clerks, ledger clerks, file clerks, bookkeepers, correspondents, typists, stenographers, secretaries, etc., but excluded a comparatively large number of temporary clerical workers who were hired for emergency jobs of short duration.

Although in 1923 the percentage of resignations was greater among women than among men, in 1924 the difference decreased, and in 1925 there were proportionately fewer resignations among the women than among the men, the ratio being 68 to 100. This increase in steadiness may have been due, Mr. Bergen says, to the development of better methods of personnel administration which may have made the positions of the women more attractive and increased the tendency to hold them longer. However, conditions similarly favorable to men have prevailed for some time and therefore it would seem that when men and women are placed on the same status in this type of organization, the women resign less frequently than the men.

From the standpoint of length of service the women appear in a still more favorable light. In 1924 and 1925 they served on an average a longer time than the men, with a ratio of 150 to 100.

In conclusion Mr. Bergen says, "In explanation of the main findings of this investigation, that women are not less stable than men, it might be observed that the circumstance that was formerly regarded as woman's chief barrier to long service in business, marriage, is no longer acting as a barrier. Women in business get married, but they do not necessarily resign afterwards. They keep working. Accordingly, when measured by the two indices used in this investigation, frequency of resignation and length of service, they appear even more desirable than men."

Men to Replace Women.

The Union Pacific Railroad announced in August that hereafter as vacancies occur men will be employed to replace women, except in the case of stenographers and comptometer operators. The order which is to affect the entire Union Pacific system from Omaha to Ogden, Utah, was to be applied first in the headquarters building in Omaha, where 600 women were employed, one-third of them being stenographers and comptometer operators. This means a reversion to the railroad's pre-war employment policy. The explanation given for discrimination against women is that young men can be trained to fill more important positions while girls are constantly disrupting the organization by marrying.