

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

JAMES J. DAVIS, Secretary

WOMEN'S BUREAU

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

FOR

THE FISCAL YEAR  
ENDED JUNE 30

1923



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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR,  
WOMEN'S BUREAU,  
*Washington, August 31, 1923.*

SIR: The Fifth Annual Report of the Women's Bureau, for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1923, is submitted herewith.

The fifth year of the Women's Bureau, which was created as a war service in 1918 and made a permanent bureau of the Department of Labor in 1920, has seen a considerable development of its interests and activities. The duties of the bureau are "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." In fulfilling these duties the bureau necessarily engages in many different types of activity, and the close of the past year shows a most encouraging development of interest and support for the work that is being done.

Not only have the activities of the bureau increased in type and scope, but the cooperation and interest of the women of the country have developed to a marked degree, with the result that the standards and information which the bureau constantly formulates and disseminates have been given to a broad field of interested organizations which are increasingly asking the bureau's guidance in matters relating to the welfare of wage-earning women.

**The Women's Industrial Conference.**

The outstanding activity during the past year was the Women's Industrial Conference, which was called by the bureau for a three-day session in Washington, January 11, 12, and 13. The object of this conference was to place before the women of the country an outline of the extensive and steadily increasing problems attending the employment of women in industry and to indicate some of the methods and standards which are being adopted in order to meet these problems.

With that end in view, representatives were invited from all women's organizations which are national in scope and from all other national organizations interested in the subject of industry which include women in their membership. The program of the conference was so planned that important topics of industry and its relation to women should first be presented by experts in each field

and the subject then thrown open for discussion. The following topics and speakers comprised the program: Welcome and introductory remarks, Hon. James J. Davis, Secretary of Labor; What women workers mean to industry, Mr. Charles Cheney, of Cheney Bros., South Manchester, Conn., representing the National Association of Manufacturers, and Miss Mary Gilson, superintendent of employment and service department, the Joseph & Feiss Co., Cleveland; What industry means to women workers, Miss Mary Van Kleeck, director department of industrial studies, Russell Sage Foundation and former Director of the Women's Bureau, United States Department of Labor, and Mrs. Raymond Robins, president of the International Federation of Working Women; Health standards for women in industry, Dr. R. A. Spaeth, associate professor, department of physiology, school of hygiene and public health, Johns Hopkins University; Home work, Mrs. Florence Kelly, executive secretary National Consumer's League; Women's wages, Mrs. Maud Swartz, president National Women's Trade-Union League, and Miss Sophonisba P. Breckinridge, dean of women, University of Chicago; Labor legislation for women, Miss Melinda Scott, United Textile Workers of America, and Miss Merica E. Hoagland, director mutual service division, Diamond Chain & Manufacturing Co., Indianapolis; The need for women to enforce women's labor laws, Miss Tracy Copp, special agent, Federal Board for Vocational Education; Miss Agnes Nestor, vice president National Glove Workers of America; Mrs. James J. Devitt, chairman of the department of social and industrial relations of the Iowa State Federation of Women's Clubs and member of the State Board of Education of Iowa; and Miss Mary McDowell, University Settlement, Chicago.

The conference was well attended, 326 women from 40 States being registered as delegates. In addition there was a large attendance of interested persons who were not delegates. One result of this conference has been that many groups of women who hitherto had not known of the large number of women in gainful occupations and who had not appreciated the importance or the significance of the conditions under which women are employed in the industries of this country have received from their delegates to this conference a reliable and understanding outline of the subject. More important still—and perhaps the outstanding achievement of the conference—has been the understanding developed between different groups which formerly acknowledged no common interests. The result of this understanding has been a cementing of the ties of interest and a common purpose between groups whose knowledge of each other and of each other's work had been only fragmentary and in many cases prejudiced.

At the opening session of the conference a special message from the President of the United States was brought to the delegates by the Secretary of Labor. In this message the President said:

Long before women were called to that broader participation in public affairs which is now both their duty and the public's advantage I was personally strongly convinced of the great benefits which would be derived from a more insistent expression and more general consideration of women's point of view in relation to social and industrial concerns. The revolutionary change that has taken place in the status of women in the world of business and affairs has not only justified but necessitated that broader and more intimate activity of

women in behalf of the particular phases of public and social interests which especially appeal to them. Conferences and continued organized activities of the kind represented by the present gathering are certain to be of very definite public benefit.

Because the delegates to the conference did not carry instructions from their organizations and because the object of the conference was an interchange of ideas and experiences rather than the promulgation of definite policies there were no formal recommendations made by the conference. At the closing session, however, a resolution was unanimously adopted outlining general principles which might be followed by all organizations interested in developing higher standards in industry. The resolution read as follows:

The members of the Women's Industrial Conference assembled in Washington, D. C., January 11 to 13, 1923, representing 67 organizations in 40 different States, believe that the work of women in industry must be made truly an opportunity to develop to the fullest their powers as workers, both for their own happiness and for the service of society. To this end they must have adequate schooling before entrance into industry and be free to choose their occupations, to secure training for them, to enlarge their opportunities as their experience grows, to receive fair compensation, and to work under safe and wholesome conditions.

But it should not be forgotten that industry includes both skilled and unskilled tasks, and without the unskilled worker no opportunity would be possible for the skilled. A large number of wage earners are in unskilled and semiskilled occupations, and the training and promotion which are possible in more intricate processes have no meaning for them. The conditions of employment of those who do the hardest and the most unskilled work, which is a necessary part of our whole industrial system, should be our first concern.

We recognize with appreciation the standards already established by progressive management and urge their more general adoption. We recognize also the important influence of constructive agreement between employers and wage earners which has played so large a part in establishing standards. By these means and by the action of the community we ask freedom of choice of occupation, and that provision for training and wage rates be determined without prejudice because of sex. These things we ask in justice to women, and because we believe that upon them depend the health, happiness, and spiritual development of women themselves, and through them the development of children and the protection of the life of the family.

Industrial problems are realities. No permanent improvement can be achieved except through knowledge of facts about industry and understanding of their meaning for human lives. Therefore, in response to this call of the National Government to us as citizens to counsel together about women in industry, we pledge ourselves to earnest and thorough study of conditions in our own communities. We look to the Women's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor for leadership in describing the realities of industrial life as women have seen and experienced them and in formulating policies and standards.

We urge that organizations represented here give support to the Federal and State agencies through which facts are collected and given to the public, and that on the basis of these facts we build up a program for the intelligent share of women in humanizing industrial processes.

The program which is outlined in this resolution to provide real opportunity for women workers through schooling, a free choice of occupation, training for that occupation, adequate wages without prejudice because of sex, and safe working conditions is one which will have the earnest indorsement of every thinking person. Especially important is the fact that this large group of women appreciated the significance of a well-rounded program which should cover the entire theory of women's employment in industry, rather than a set of resolutions dealing with certain specific conditions. The recognition of the importance of a basis of facts upon which to

build any program is also of great promise for the development of the ideals set forth in the resolution.

Since the close of the conference the bureau has been in close touch with many of the women who served as delegates, and the interest displayed by them in the work of the bureau has been an encouraging result of the contacts made during the three days of the conference sessions.

#### **Standards for the administration of labor laws affecting women.**

Another conference in which the Women's Bureau took part and which is an important example of the development of the policy-making function of the bureau was the meeting called by the newly elected Governor of Pennsylvania to consider and recommend an industrial program for that State. The Women's Bureau was asked to prepare a memorandum on suggested standards for the administration of labor laws affecting women. This memorandum was submitted and discussed at a conference of experts called by Governor Gifford Pinchot and held at Milford, Pa., in December, 1922.

The standards suggested were based on a careful survey of methods of administration in force in several States and outline a very definite policy for the administration of certain laws affecting women. The most important sections of these suggestions are outlined in the following paragraph:

#### **Subjects covered by laws for the protection of women.**

With large groups of women gainfully employed in each State, the regulations affecting their employment inevitably show great variety. There are, however, certain general groupings into which these regulations fall, and these groups show common problems of administration and enforcement. The subjects which are usually covered by laws for the protection of women workers are hours of work, wages, working conditions (including posture at work, comfort, and sanitation), prohibited occupations, and home work.

#### **Special difficulties in enforcement of laws affecting women.**

Many of these laws show no immediate results. It may be necessary to wait until the next generation to find out their beneficial features, as far as the health and well-being of the women workers are concerned. This fact and certain necessary details of enforcement give rise to unusual problems in the administration of these laws. This administration can not be entirely similar to the administration of safety laws, for we have reached a point in our development where the subject of safety appliances and safety for workers on dangerous machinery is no longer a debatable question, and, through compensation laws and educational campaigns, it has been made unprofitable for an employer to have dangerous machinery unguarded. It is also comparatively simple to prove violations in this regard.

The proof and the unprofitableness of violation of the special provisions to safeguard the employment of women, unfortunately, are not so easily made evident.

In enforcing hour legislation it is frequently very difficult for an inspector to furnish proof in a disputed case, as it is usually necessary to supply the worker's own testimony as proof of violation, and the judges sometimes require that the inspector must have seen the

woman at work every minute during the day or week on which the violation occurred. Irregular working hours, as the broken shifts in restaurants and telephone exchanges, and the reluctance of a worker to testify against her employer for fear of losing her job also complicate the enforcement of such laws.

The establishment and enforcement of minimum-wage rulings present problems that are unique. In order to arrive at a minimum standard of wages for a woman it is necessary to formulate budgets and to ascertain the actual cost of women's wearing apparel and of room and board, taking into consideration living conditions as well as price. Incidentals necessary for women must also be made a matter of study. To secure such information obviously requires a special type of investigation and knowledge quite different from that required for factory inspection.

In enforcing regulations regarding working conditions special difficulty is met in securing information concerning the actual conditions and violations. For example, an inspector can not, simply by counting the chairs supplied, find out whether a seating law is really being carried out. Instead, the confidence of the workers must be secured and their testimony carefully considered on such questions as whether the seats provided are practicable for use while at work and whether the workers are encouraged or permitted to use them. In matters of comfort and sanitation difficulties of inspection arise because of the requirements of privacy and the need for cooperative efforts on the part of both workers and inspector.

#### **Administration.**

As the enactment of laws providing for special provisions where women are employed is of such paramount importance, it is plain that the effective administration of those laws must be a matter of vital need and constant concern. Both play an essential part in the progress of the State.

In formulating standards and planning the administrative machinery for the enforcement of laws, it is not always possible to arrange for an organization which will make possible the best administrative machinery because of the necessity to fit the machinery for the enforcement of such laws into the organization policy in practice in the State. Often the States are handicapped not only because of lack of appropriation but because of a lack of freedom to institute an effective administration, because of legislative restrictions, and because of frequent changes in personnel in administration and inspection.

In a number of States both men and women factory inspectors are delegated to enforce all laws which come under the jurisdiction of the labor inspection service. After inquiry into this matter and after talking to many men and women experienced in this field of service, the consensus of opinion is found to be that for effective enforcement it is advisable to have inspectors specialize on certain laws.

When an inspector is looking for protruding screws or for guards on machines it is necessary to concentrate on these matters, and the questions of hours, wages, comfort and sanitation, and prohibited occupations for women must necessarily be left in the background. Experience has shown that persons excel in certain kinds of inspections and fail in others, and experience has also brought out the

fact that the effective enforcement of laws pertaining to hours, wages, seats and posture at work, working conditions in the establishments, and the regulation of home work requires special attention and different methods.

Because of the many special problems and difficulties accompanying the enforcement of laws regulating the conditions of women's employment and the distinct difference of enforcement between these and other labor laws, it has been deemed a good practice to establish a separate and distinct bureau to administer these laws. This bureau should have a qualified woman in charge, who should be directly responsible to the chief executive or agency administering the labor laws of the State.

#### **Qualifications and responsibility of chief of women's bureau.**

The woman in charge of a State women's bureau should, first and foremost, have a thorough knowledge of the various industries and their occupational hazards for women. She should be well versed in the laws regulating the conditions of employment of women not only in her own State but in other States, so that she may be competent to formulate the best legal standards and policies for the employment of women in her State. She should be experienced in legislative work so that she can assist in the progress of proposed legislation. She should have tact, tolerance, and understanding of the difficult problems which confront employers and employees, as well as inspectors, and should be a good executive.

To insure efficient and effective administration in a women's bureau it is necessary not only to have a qualified woman in charge but to make provisions for a sufficient number of qualified women inspectors to enforce the laws affecting the employment of women. There are required for the effective enforcement of such laws attention to details, visits to homes, and other personal contacts necessitating the service of women inspectors, for naturally the right kind of woman readily comprehends women's problems, and because of her sex and her understanding the women employees will feel free to discuss their problems with her.

The inspectors should know industry as a whole and the problems peculiar to various industries and occupations; they should be competent to pass on conditions and give advice even when there is no measurement of requirements set by law. They should have knowledge and understanding not only of the working of the State laws but of their purpose and intent. They should be versed in the standards and practices in the State. Efficient and effective work can not be done without the cooperation of the employers, and this depends to a great extent upon the personality of the inspector, her understanding of the special problems under consideration, and her ability to discuss such problems and to explain the law and its purpose. Inspectors should have had such training and experience as would qualify them to investigate and study the special problems which arise. They should be competent and encouraged to make recommendations and to take part in formulating policies and standards for the employment of women. Finally, too much emphasis can not be placed on the importance of understanding and sympathy which will invite and secure the confidence of the employers and of the women workers.



The Women's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor, in suggesting these standards, does not intend in any way to intimate that existing methods of administration which do not conform with the standards are unsuccessful. Before formulating a policy regarding this matter, however, consultations were held with the administering officials under various systems, and it was with their cooperation, after a careful consideration of their problems and difficulties, that the conclusions just given were reached.

#### **Labor legislation for women in industry.**

During the past winter there have been legislative sessions in 42 States. The interest of women's organizations in improving standards for wage-earning women is reflected in the attempts which have been made, some of them successfully and some unsuccessfully, to secure legislative indorsement of certain standards. Whatever success may have attended the efforts of those who have attempted to secure special labor legislation for women, there can be no doubt of the educational value of their work. Sometimes bills are introduced year after year with little hope of their becoming laws, because their proponents know that no law can be successfully enacted and enforced if it has not the support of public opinion and enthusiasm for the principles on which it is based. Therefore, although many of the efforts made have had no tangible results, they have contributed in large measure to the development of standards for women in industry. Such contributions are an indication of the trend of public thought and interest, and should be reckoned with in any account of the situation affecting wage-earning women.

In a number of States the legislation introduced for the benefit of women wage earners has met with unfortunate opposition from those who have felt that any legislation dealing solely with women was an unjust discrimination against the freedom and equality of that sex. This theory led to the attempt in several States to substitute the word "persons" for "women" in the bills introduced. It is obvious that such a substitution would make any proposed legislation broad enough to include men; with the result that the avowed intentions of the bills—to relieve conditions which were known to be an especial handicap to women—would be nullified. In effect this method was an attack on the whole theory of special legislation for women, a theory which is indorsed and actively supported by almost every important organization of working women and of women who are interested in improving industrial conditions. The legislative activities of the past winter indicate, however, that these proposed amendments to the bills did not win sufficient support to materially affect the fate of the legislation.

The chief interest in the various States has been directed toward securing a legal limitation of hours of work for women. Bills for regulating hours were introduced in the legislatures of 18 States. These bills were of many different types, but most frequently the standard sought was the 8-hour day or the 48-hour week. In Illinois, Indiana, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, West Virginia, and Wisconsin, 11 States in all, the standard under discussion was either an 8-hour day or a 48-hour week. In Iowa and Connecticut a 9-hour day and 50-hour week, and in South Dakota a 10-hour day and 54-hour week,

were the goal. In a few other States, such as Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, North Dakota, and Wisconsin, effort was also directed toward the extension or modification of the existing law.

The result of all this activity has not been very great, but in some cases definite action was taken. In South Dakota a law was passed, and went into effect on July 1, 1923, limiting hours for women, except telegraph and telephone operators, to 10 hours a day and 54 hours a week. In Wisconsin a law was passed reducing from 10 hours a day and 55 hours a week to 9 hours a day and 50 hours a week the hours of women employed in manufacturing, mechanical, or mercantile establishments, laundries, restaurants, confectionery stores, telegraph and telephone offices or exchanges, and express or transportation establishments. The hours of women in hotels were limited to 10 hours a day and 55 hours a week. In Minnesota the 9-hour day was changed to 9½ hours, and with the 54-hour week was extended to include, in all localities, all women workers except domestics and nurses, and telephone operators in towns of less than 1,500 population.

In Massachusetts, although no new law was passed, attempts to repeal the 48-hour law in favor of a 54-hour law and to repeal the prohibition of night work were unsuccessful.

In New Hampshire the 48-hour-week bill was defeated, but a joint resolution was passed by the house and senate asking the general court to investigate the question.

In Maine the governor has called a special election, under the initiative and referendum law, on the 48-hour measure which was initiated during the past winter.

New Jersey has to its credit a law which has been hotly contested through several legislative sessions—the prohibition of night work for women. This law does not go into effect until December, 1924, but even with such a delay its passage has been hailed as a real achievement for the organizations which have backed it and fought for it for years.

Working conditions in industry have received scant attention from legislatures during the past year, probably because many States have already established excellent standards in this regard. According to the latest available information Vermont was the only State considering this subject. In that State a bill calling for standardization of the seating law passed the house but was defeated in the senate.

In Minnesota an unsuccessful attempt was made to secure a law requiring the appointment of a woman on the industrial commission.

In Vermont an attempt was made to repeal the laws requiring the appointment of a woman factory inspector. This attempt was not successful.

Minimum-wage laws have been the subject of discussion in 11 States—Arizona, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, and Texas. In South Dakota a minimum-wage law was passed, and in Arizona the minimum amount was raised from \$10 to \$16 a week.

In Massachusetts effort was made to secure the repeal of the minimum-wage law. This effort was not achieved, and attempts to amend the law to make it mandatory were also unsuccessful.

### The minimum-wage decision.

The decision of the Supreme Court of the United States declaring unconstitutional the minimum-wage law for women in the District of Columbia has had a most far-reaching effect upon the activities of those who have for years been attempting to secure or to improve the regulation of women's wages by this method. The opinion of the court, although the decision applied only to the law of the District of Columbia, indicates that the success of this method may hereafter be doubtful. Nevertheless, the States which have been working under laws similar to that which Congress enacted for the District of Columbia, seem to be unanimous in their intention to continue to enforce their respective laws as in the past. Some States have done more than merely stand their ground and have assumed an attitude of active support of constitutional changes which would put the legislation already existing on a more secure basis. The California Legislature has gone so far as to adopt a resolution memorializing Congress to amend the Constitution so as to permit of a minimum-wage law for women. Not only the legislature but also the industrial commission of the State has shown its intention to continue with the present legislation through its action in handing down a new wage award after the Supreme Court had issued its decision for the District of Columbia. The Governor of Washington has shown his belief in such laws by suggesting a conference of the governors of the various States to consider a nation-wide campaign for a constitutional amendment validating minimum-wage legislation.

In Arizona the officials of the State have announced their intention to support the new wage law, which raised the minimum from \$10 to \$16 a week, quite as they would have done if no minimum-wage decision had been rendered by the Supreme Court.

While these agencies which are interested in maintaining the advantages of the minimum wage for women have been considering plans for the future, the opposition has not been inactive. Test cases have been started in both Arizona and Wisconsin, in each case the contestant announcing his willingness to carry the issue on to the last court. Even in Massachusetts, although the validity of the act itself is not being questioned, the publicity method of enforcement has been brought up for settlement in the court.

Organizations which have more than a local interest in the minimum-wage situation have also been marshaling their forces that they may be ready to render the greatest service to the women workers wherever needed. The Director of the Women's Bureau has been in frequent consultation with these organizations, and the information in the files of the bureau has been made available to them when requested. The National Consumers' League was the first organization to recognize the need for consideration of the situation with which the country was confronted and called a conference on April 20 of individuals interested in the welfare of working women. It was clearly demonstrated that much serious thought and study would be necessary before any definite program could be formulated, and in that realization lay the chief value of this first meeting. It is expected that the league will be ready to announce a definite program at the national meeting in the fall.

The American Federation of Labor, after the decision of the court, also called a conference which met in Washington the latter part of April. At that meeting a permanent conference for the protection of the rights and interests of women wage earners was organized. Plans were also inaugurated for a campaign of union organizations to be started immediately among women workers in the District of Columbia.

The Women's Trade Union League called a conference in Washington on May 15 and 16 to consider the situation of the woman worker so far as legal guaranties were concerned in the light of the decision of the Supreme Court. Twenty-seven organizations were represented, including trade-unions, religious organizations, welfare organizations, research bureaus, and other groups interested in the industrial women's problem in particular and the broader field of labor legislation in general. A committee was appointed to consider the legislative proposals which had been discussed at the conference and to recommend a program which might be acceptable to all of the groups represented. Support of the women workers in their attempt to obtain protection through organization was also asked.

Especially significant for the future of wage standards in the States which have minimum wage commissions has been the attitude of the employers in some of those States. In Oregon the Manufacturers & Merchants' Association of the State issued a statement to all of its members which showed a very public-spirited recognition of the need for maintaining standards. To quote from the statement, the stand taken by this state-wide group of employers was to—

plead with all employers of Oregon to still acknowledge the authority of the industrial welfare commission's rulings, and in no case deviate from them, nor in any instance where a higher wage than the prescribed minimum is now being paid, to reduce such wage to the minimum; but, on the contrary, where production and efficiency justifies it, rather to increase the wage.

To accomplish this end the organization passed a resolution that—

Whereas the experience of a great majority (if not all) employers of Oregon who employ women is that the minimum wage law of this State has been of such material benefit to both employers and employees (aside from the humanitarian side of the question) that it would be most unfortunate as well as a disgrace to the State to disturb the equitable and harmonious relations now existing where women are employed in our industries. Therefore be it

*Resolved*, That the Manufacturers & Merchants' Association of Oregon pledge to the industrial welfare commission their support and cooperation in maintaining the present status of the Oregon law, and that we will use every effort to discourage anyone from testing the validity of the law in the courts, and will also use every effort to prevent the repeal of the law by the legislature, should such a thing be attempted, and as an evidence of our sincerity we hereby pledge ourselves to be governed in the future as we have in the past by the rulings of the industrial welfare commission.

Broadly speaking, the decision has brought about two types of reaction. There are those who, remembering the previous defeat of two national child labor laws and of other welfare legislation, are questioning the necessity and desirability of the existence of a court which is in a position to invalidate legislation which has been passed on by representative bodies. Consequently, various methods of limiting the power of the court are being suggested, notably a requirement of a 7 to 2 or 6 to 3 vote in the court in order to override

any State or Federal law, or provision for an amendment of the Supreme Court decision if the act were again passed in Congress by an increased majority.

On the other hand, there are those who are turning their attention to a type of remedy which would not alter the force of the Supreme Court but which would so change the situation that minimum wage laws would have to be upheld by that body. Some of these would work for an amendment to the Constitution which would be broad enough to permit the enactment of all welfare or social legislation, while others would be content with a constitutional change which would make possible only minimum-wage legislation for women workers.

Which type of change would be the more desirable is a question which might keep political philosophers interested for some time, yet the serious consideration of the possibilities involved in each line of attack is of practical importance to those who would advance the position of underpaid wage earners. The really interesting and hopeful side of the whole situation is the very considerable interest which has manifested itself in the whole matter, an interest shared by labor, welfare and civic organizations, churches, those connected with the Government, and—most important of all—the women themselves through their organizations. The development of such an active public opinion is bound to have an effect of some sort, even though it does not come so rapidly as some might desire.

#### **Women's earnings.**

After five years spent in more or less continuous investigations of the conditions affecting women in industry the bureau has come to one inevitable conclusion—the fundamental importance of the question of women's earnings. The intimate relation between earnings and standards of living, of health, and of family and community life brings the matter of earnings to the fore, no matter what general problem of industrial or community standards is under discussion. For this reason the bureau has continued and will continue during the years to come to collect data showing the actual economic situation as it applies to women in industry.

During the past year the bureau has made two wage investigations which are larger in scope than any before undertaken. In Ohio a survey of wages and hours of women in industry was made during the months of September, October, and November, 1922. This survey was state-wide in scope, and data were secured from 302 establishments, employing 32,000 women. A similar survey was made during the same period in New Jersey, this study including data for 300 establishments, employing nearly 35,000 women. The outstanding facts secured from the preliminary tabulations of the statistics gathered during these two surveys were as follows: (1) The median earnings of the women for the week for which wage records were secured were \$13.80 in Ohio and \$14.95 in New Jersey. (2) The median earnings for the women who had worked practically full time (48 hours or more during the week investigated) were \$14.75 in Ohio and \$15.70 in New Jersey.

With one exception (Rhode Island, where the median earnings for a week in 1920 were \$16.85) these wage figures are higher than those in any of the 10 States in which the bureau has conducted

wage investigations. Nevertheless, there were many thousands of women in these two States who were earning very meager sums, which could hardly be considered adequate for the maintenance of desirable standards of living. Considering in one group all of the 122,000 women for whom the bureau has secured wage figures during the past year, it appears that less than one-third of them (32.1 per cent) earned as much as \$16 during the week for which their wage records were secured. Of course this figure includes many different kinds of workers in many different localities and the data were secured for different periods, but, roughly speaking, when thus combined the resulting figure gives a fairly dependable portrayal of the economic condition of women in industry.

#### **Women's hours of work.**

In the two State investigations already mentioned, New Jersey and Ohio, a large body of information was also collected showing the standards of the various establishments investigated in regard to scheduled hours of work. It was found that in both States the scheduled hours of work were considerably less than the standard set by law. In New Jersey, where the hours permitted by law are 54 a week and 10 a day, only one-fifth of the women were scheduled to work more than 9 hours a day or 50 hours a week; in Ohio, where the law permits only 9 hours a day and 50 hours a week, only 40.9 per cent of the women worked a scheduled week as long as 50 hours, and 54.3 per cent on daily schedules as long as 9 hours. The extensive material showing scheduled hours of work for women which the bureau has collected during the past five years from more than 2,000 establishments in 13 States, has shown very different standards according to locality and industry. Certain industries have shown consistently short scheduled hours, no matter in what State they were located or with what other industrial hour standards they were competing. Other industries have appeared with consistently long hours in whatever State they were operating. In some States the great majority of the industries were operating under scheduled hours much shorter than required by law, and in other States the industries were practically all running on as long schedules as were permissible.

The data on hours secured by the bureau are spread over a period of four or five years, with the result that for only a few States is comparable material available. Realizing the value of having comparable material for as large a territory as possible, the bureau has undertaken to bring up to the same date all of the information which it has gathered to show hours of work for women in the States where it has conducted investigations. To secure wage figures for one date from such a large field would not be possible, but the information on scheduled hours is more easily gathered and may be brought up to date with comparatively little difficulty. Accordingly a form letter was sent to each establishment included in any hour-study investigation made by the bureau. This form letter asked for definite information as to the hours in force on September 15, 1922, and the number of women employed on that date, and also gave the hours and number of employees shown by the bureau's record at the time of the investigation. Very complete response was made to these letters and the information received is now being

compiled and will be issued in bulletin form, showing not only the hours prevailing for a large number of women in many sections of the country, but the changes which have occurred since the dates of the original investigations made by the bureau.

#### SPECIAL STUDIES.

During the first four years of its existence the bureau emphasized through its investigational work the collection of data showing general conditions under which women were employed in the various States. In the past year, however, because of the amount of general information secured and because of increases in the appropriation and staff of the bureau, it has been possible to develop, in addition to the studies of general conditions, the collection of information dealing with special problems relating to the employment of women. These special studies promise to make definite contributions to the solution of several problems which are engaging the attention of employers, industrial experts, and other persons interested in the development of opportunity for wage-earning women.

#### Development of census material.

*The occupational progress of women.*—As soon as the preliminary figures from the census of 1920 showing the occupational distribution of gainfully employed persons were available, the bureau made a study of these figures showing the principal trend of women's employment during the past decade and comparing the present lines of development with those of former decades. Certain of the changes which were apparent after a careful study of the facts indicated decided upheavals in the traditions of women's employment; there was a decrease of 13.6 per cent (344,297) among women engaged in domestic and personal service, an increase of 140.4 per cent (832,892) among women in clerical occupations, an increase of 38.5 per cent (282,607) among women in professional service, an increase of 99.8 per cent (106,429) among women engaged in transportation, and—contrary to general impression—an increase of only 6 per cent (109,771) among women in manufacturing and mechanical pursuits. On the whole, the great change seems to have been a decrease among women working in or for the home and in personal-service occupations, and a corresponding increase in clerical and allied occupations, in teaching, and in nursing. Studying the figures for manufacturing and mechanical industries, it was apparent that women had not gone into absolutely new occupations to any great extent. They had, however, enlarged their field of work by entering, in greater number, occupations in which formerly they had but scant representation.

*The family status of breadwinning women.*—In the bureau's report for the year ended June 30, 1922, mention was made of a study which had been conducted with the cooperation of the Bureau of the Census to discover as far as possible from the census schedules for a selected locality the data which were available to show pertinent social facts regarding breadwinning women. This study has created much interest not alone for the illustration it offers of the tremendous value of much of the information available in the census schedules and not made public because of limited funds but for the clear-

cut picture of the problems of the working women in an industrial community. Because of the significance of the picture thus made available and because of the general demand for information along the same lines for other typical communities, the Women's Bureau has extended this study to include similar facts for the breadwinning women of Wilkes-Barre, Pa.; Butte, Mont., and Jacksonville, Fla. Those cities were selected because they are located in different sections of the country, because their industrial activities are representative of certain typical situations, and because their size is not so small as to be unimportant nor yet so large as to make the handling of the census schedules prohibitive in cost.

#### **Women's inventions as shown by the records of the United States Patent Office.**

The development of occupational opportunity for women has made marked progress during the last two or three decades, but this progress has not been achieved without constant pressure and study of conditions on the part of those interested in developing a better understanding of the economic importance of the part played by women in the industries of the country. This recognition is gradually being brought about, but there are still certain fields in which popular opinion would deny women a place. With this fact in mind the bureau undertook to study any available records which would show the development of women's achievements in the field of creative work, to find out whether women had made material contributions to the sum total of creative achievements; whether their contributions were comparable with men's contributions in the same field; and what progress or retrogression in comparative opportunities and achievement had marked the decades that stretch from the early eighteen hundreds to the current year. The most obvious source of information on this subject were the records of the United States Patent Office, and with the cooperation of that office a study was made of its records, including a detailed study of more than 5,000 patents granted to women during 10 selected years.

The results of this research showed, first, that the actual number of patents granted to women inventors is still small, but the rate of increase from decade to decade is conspicuously high; second, that the range of women's increasing activity in the field of invention extends from the home into most of the important branches of industry, commerce, and science; and, third, that the inventions are not confined to the minor accessories in each field of activity, but in many cases are contributions to basic processes and substances.

Based on these facts the conclusion was arrived at that, in view of the handicaps under which women inventors have always labored, the rate of increase in the number of inventions patented by women and the range and quality of their inventive achievements furnish an argument for expanding women's opportunities for research and experiment and for securing to women easier access to facilities essential in patent procedure. It was also found that women inventors, even more than men, are in need of facilities for marketing or promoting their patented creations, because women are generally more restricted in funds and less informed concerning the methods of profitable patent disposal. The Patent Office records, on the whole, furnish a reasonable guaranty that with a reduction in the



excessive discouragements due to frequent failures to realize money quickly on patents, with an expansion of opportunities for research, and with easier access to the facilities essential to patent procedure the Nation will be rewarded by the increased measure of inventive service from women of creative abilities, and capable women will find constantly enlarging opportunities in this branch of the field of creative labor.

#### **Domestic workers and their employment relations.**

Another study which has taken the Women's Bureau into a new field where there is an undoubted need for research and the formulation of standards has been a study of domestic workers, based on information secured from the records of the Domestic Efficiency Association of Baltimore. This association, formed for the purpose of putting domestic service on a better and more standardized basis and trying to get at the causes of the high labor turnover among domestics, to improve the standards in the service, and to effect greater cooperation among employers, requested the Women's Bureau to examine and analyze its records, which contained fairly complete data for 2,293 women and 672 men. This was done, and although no definite or far-reaching recommendations can be made on the basis of so limited a study, from the facts disclosed it would seem that there is urgent need for careful consideration of this problem by the employers of domestic workers. It is especially urgent that an effort should be made to standardize the requirements of the work so that an employee engaged for a position may be reasonably sure of what she is expected to do. The records also showed that domestic work is to a large extent seasonal, which throws an added burden on the employee who is left to shift for herself when families leave town for the summer and houses are closed. The matter of references was found to be a serious handicap in the placement of applicants, for there seems to be no common ground or standard for the judgment of work or personality, and a worker well recommended by one employer may have an entirely contradictory reference from another.

#### **Absenteeism among women in textile mills.**

Of the studies which are at present under way in the bureau and which will not be completed for some months one of the most important is an investigation to discover the extent and causes of absenteeism among women employed in textile mills. This investigation involves very great problems of technic and interpretation and must be carried on over a considerable period of time if careful and scientific findings are to be achieved. The bureau has received most cordial and helpful cooperation from manufacturers in all parts of the country, and the study has awakened considerable interest among employers and industrial experts. Textile mills have been visited, their records inspected, and their employees interviewed in Alabama, Louisiana, Georgia, South Carolina, Maryland, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Vermont. It is planned to visit other textile centers within the next few months. From experimental compilations of the data already gathered there seems to be an excessive amount of absenteeism, but sufficient analysis of the mate-

rial has not yet been made to discover to what extent these absences are voluntary or enforced by conditions in the plant or the industry. It seems likely that the findings may comprise also a contribution to the subject of labor turnover.

#### **Industrial accidents among women.**

The increase of 110,000 women in manufacturing and mechanical industries during the past decade and the developing there of new fields of employment for them, has drawn considerable attention to the accident hazard for women employed in industrial establishments. Unfortunately there has been available only a very limited amount of information on this subject, as in the majority of cases accident statistics have not been compiled separately for the sexes, and even when compiled separately the figures for women have been of little value because of the absence of current figures showing the extent of women's employment in the various occupations from which dependable accident rates could be computed. The 1920 census has afforded this base of complete figures by occupation and sex, and it seemed therefore that the time was opportune for a careful study of the accident records in certain States in order to see whether there were any industries or occupations peculiarly hazardous to women. Such a study is now being made in cooperation with the department of labor of the State of New Jersey. This State has made available to the Women's Bureau records of all accident cases which come under the scope of the workmen's compensation law, and the bureau is securing not only the facts as to the number and kind of accidents but also correlations which show the earnings, hours, and living conditions of the women injured, the treatment given them, and their industrial history before and after injury. This study will be extended to include several more States where accident records are complete and comparable. It is hoped that when the material is assembled it will provide a basis for the establishment of very definite standards of protection and care for women employed in hazardous occupations in the industries of the entire country.

#### **Conditions of employment in the canning and preserving industry.**

A field survey is being made in conjunction with the Children's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor of the conditions under which women and children are employed in the canning and preserving industry in the State of Washington. This study involves an inspection of the living and working conditions of the women and children working in the fields and canneries—picking, packing, and preparing fruits and vegetables. Fish canneries also will be included. The problems of employment in the canning and preserving industry, which is necessarily seasonal, are very acute and difficult to solve and are complicated by the fact that the labor supply is more or less migratory, and living conditions, with large numbers of employees to be housed by their employer on the ranch or farm, present unusual situations. It is expected that the field work on this survey will be completed by the fall, and it is hoped that before the next season opens a constructive standard may have been developed for the employment of women in these occupations.

**Operation and administration of minimum-wage laws.**

In view of the recent decision of the Supreme Court of the United States declaring unconstitutional the minimum-wage law in the District of Columbia, it was felt that the time was ripe for a careful study of those laws which are in operation, so that the experience of the various administrative bodies might be made available for those who are seeking to establish some method of enforcing wage standards for women. Accordingly a research study is being made of the history, operation, and administration of minimum-wage laws. This study is being conducted in a few of the States where such laws are in operation and where the records make possible a careful analysis of methods and results. Copies of and methods of using all forms and schedules are being secured from the States where the study is carried on. The files of the State minimum wage commissions are gone over and methods of recording data are reported on, and where the records are in such form as to give pertinent data on the actual effect of the law these records are copied, with the intention of summarizing them when the study is completed. The study has already been carried on in California, Washington, and Oregon, where the State officials gave the fullest and most helpful cooperation to the representatives of the bureau. It is expected that Massachusetts, because of its unique minimum-wage law, will also be included in the study, as well as one or two States in the Middle West where differences in locality and methods of administration will afford additional examples of the way in which regulation of women's wages can be achieved.

**Research and educational work.**

As the Women's Bureau has become a better-known source of information regarding industrial problems and conditions, there has been a steadily developing demand on the work of the research department. During the past year, in addition to the special study of minimum wage laws already outlined, the research department has kept in touch with current changes in legislation affecting wage-earning women; it has revised and brought up to date the bulletin issued in 1921 showing, through charts and maps, the State laws affecting working women; it has issued a monthly news-letter outlining national and international activities affecting working women; it has compiled a considerable amount of information secured from the Census of Manufactures to show the development of the employment of women in certain industries and States; and it has maintained what has amounted practically to an information service for those persons and organizations which have come to the bureau with inquiries on many different subjects.

The educational and publicity work has also developed considerably during the past year. Two new exhibits for general circulation have been prepared. One of these exhibits was planned as an appeal for general recognition of the importance of women in industry and the social significance of their hours of work and their earnings. This exhibit has been used successfully at several large conferences and exhibitions and was especially appreciated at the Women's Industrial Conference.

The other exhibit is a smaller one designed for use by groups who wish to have a popular presentation of the problems connected with the employment of women in industry. It is in the form of six miniature theaters with the backgrounds showing typical factory conditions and with several figures indicating the application of certain standards.

A third display of a different type is now being prepared as the Department of Labor's contribution to a permanent health exhibit which is being installed in the Smithsonian Museum in Washington. This exhibit represents a miniature factory showing models of men and women at work and illustrating in great detail the equipment and standards necessary for insuring adequate health protection in industrial establishments.

The film *When Women Work* is still a popular form of exhibit and has been used considerably during the past winter, although after three years' circulation the demand for it is somewhat slackening. Charts and maps showing the occupational distribution of wage-earning women, their hours and earnings, and the various State laws regulating their employment have been prepared and circulated in considerable number.

A new development of the educational work of the bureau has been the broadcasting of short talks by radio once a week from October until June. The talks prepared for this radio service have also been released to the newspapers and the returns have been very satisfactory.

News releases on the bulletins and special activities of the bureau have been issued, and preparatory to and during the Women's Industrial Conference an extensive information service was carried on.

#### Publications.

During the year the following bulletins have been published:

No.

26. Women in Arkansas Industries.

27. The Occupational Progress of Women.

28. Women's Contributions in the Field of Invention.

29. Women in Kentucky Industries.

30. The Share of Wage-Earning Women in Family Support.

31. What Industry Means to Women Workers.

Bulletin No. 32, *Women in South Carolina Industries*, is in press, and the following bulletins will be ready to go to press within a few weeks:

*Women in Alabama Industries.*

*Women in Missouri Industries.*

*Domestic Service.*

*Proceedings of the Women's Industrial Conference.*

*Radio Talks on Women in Industry.*

A preliminary report has been prepared and a final report is now being written on women in New Jersey industries. A preliminary report has been issued and the final tabulations are now being made for the investigation of women in Ohio industries. Tabulations are also under way for the study of women's hours in 11 States. Preliminary and experimental tabulations are being made of the extent and causes of absenteeism among women employed in textile mills.

**The coming year.**

The bureau's program for the coming year is a very full one. The slight increase in the appropriation, from \$100,000 for the fiscal year just ended to \$105,000 for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 1923, will not permit of a great enlargement of activities. Nevertheless it is hoped that to a considerable degree the bureau will be able to meet the requests that have been made for special information, while at the same time carrying on the work which has been started and developing certain new lines of research which seem to be urgently in need of attention.

The study of absenteeism, accidents, and minimum-wage laws will be continued. Requests have been made for studies of conditions affecting women in industry in Illinois, North Carolina, and Oklahoma. While it does not seem likely that all of these requests can be met, effort will be made to undertake studies in States most urgently in need of such assistance in order to secure information of this nature.

A request has also been made that the Women's Bureau shall undertake a study of the employment records of certain States where adequate statistics are compiled, with a view to determining whether or not the unemployment problem among women presents any unusual aspects which should make it a subject to be considered separately from that of men.

It is hoped that further studies based on census records may be undertaken in the near future. An intensive study of the occupational data secured by the census for foreign-born women to show the occupational conditions and opportunities for women of different nationalities in the various sections of the United States has been asked for by a group of persons interested in the establishment of a better understanding of American life and opportunity among the foreign-born population of the United States. It seems that information compiled with this end in view would be a definite contribution to the body of facts upon which can be based a satisfactory policy for the education and treatment of the foreign born. A careful examination and selection of census material as it applies to women in industry and the issuance of such material in popular form would also be of considerable value in outlining to the general public the scope and the details of the problem of the employment of women in industry.

The great interest which the past year has witnessed in the methods and results of legislation to regulate conditions for women points to the need for an authoritative study and discussion of these matters, and the growing desire for information pertaining to women in industry has emphasized the need for a critical bibliography on this subject. It is hoped that a study of legislation affecting women may be arranged for and that through a cooperative arrangement with the librarian of the department a bibliography may be compiled. \*

A request has been received for a study of health conditions for women employed in telephone exchanges. As such a study would necessarily involve medical as well as industrial knowledge and experience, it is hoped that a cooperative arrangement may be made between the Public Health Service and the Women's Bureau, so that

both interests may be represented in any investigation which may be undertaken.

Finally, it seems that for the coming year there is an urgent need for development of the educational work done by the bureau. There is a very insistent demand for popular articles in magazines and newspapers, dealing with the subject of women in industry. The radio service carried on during the past winter has been the outstanding development along these lines for the past year. Its success has led to the feeling that considerably more time should be devoted to popularizing the valuable material which is collected and published by the bureau.

From an administrative point of view the past year has been a successful one. Throughout the year and especially during the time of the Women's Industrial Conference the bureau has received the fullest cooperation from the other bureaus and divisions of the department. The staff of the bureau has increased from 39 to 47. There have been 24 new appointments and 16 separations from the service. Several of these separations were the result of the restriction of salaries under which the bureau operates. With this restriction to \$1,800 a year it is not possible to hold agents who have far more advantageous offers for similar employment outside of the Government service.

Problems of administration will center in the future, as they have done in the past, mainly around the proper classification of the employees in the bureau. So far as it has gone, in most particulars the classification of the staff of the Women's Bureau promises to be satisfactory. Upon the successful application of this reclassification depends much of the future work of the bureau, and it is with the keenest concern that we await the final allocations that will be made.

MARY ANDERSON, *Director.*

HON. JAMES J. DAVIS,  
*Secretary of Labor.*

