

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

JAMES J. DAVIS, Secretary

WOMEN'S BUREAU

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



FISCAL YEAR  
ENDED JUNE 30

1928



UNITED STATES  
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE  
WASHINGTON

1928



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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR,  
WOMEN'S BUREAU,  
*Washington, July 15, 1928.*

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

SIR: The tenth annual report of the Women's Bureau, for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1928, is submitted herewith.

### INTRODUCTION

During the year 1927-28 the Women's Bureau has carried on the duties with which it is charged and in connection with which it was authorized by the Congress "to investigate and report \* \* \* upon all matters pertaining to the welfare of women in industry."

It is the purpose of the bureau to collect, correlate, and make available for reference a mass of information that shall be accepted by employers, employees, health authorities, women's organizations—in fact, all interested persons—in their combined efforts to insure to all employed women good working conditions and satisfactory employment relations.

The important findings of the study of the effects of special legislation on the employment opportunities of women are finally in press.

In connection with this survey the development of labor legislation in three industrial States—California, New York, and Massachusetts—has been studied intensively to show how such legislation originated, the forces working for and against it, and the factors that made for its passage.

To round out still further the survey having to do with special labor laws, a concise record and interpretation of the laws for women in all the States, with the changes from the originals to date, has been prepared.

A most interesting and informative study of foreign-born women in industry in Philadelphia and the Lehigh Valley is in process of checking and editing for publication, and other reports will shortly be ready for the editorial department.

Interviews and correspondence have been conducted with certain State departments of labor for the purpose of securing their cooperation for the future use by the Federal bureau of data concerning wage-earning women collected by the States.

## MARRIED WOMEN GAINFULLY EMPLOYED

The subject of married women gainfully occupied, especially mothers so employed, is one of increasing interest, and the bureau makes every effort to keep informed of the extent and status of their employment and the reasons for their going to work.

There has been a tremendous increase since 1890 in the number of married women gainfully occupied in the United States. The census of 1890 reported as gainfully employed about 5 of every 100 married women and the census of 1920 reported as so occupied 9 of every 100 married women. In other words, in 1890 the married women gainfully employed constituted 1 in 22 and in 1920 they constituted 1 in 11 of all the married women reported by the census.

What has developed since 1920 there is no means of knowing. And the fact must not be overlooked that the census returns quoted refer only to married women living with husbands, since the census classes with single women those who are widowed, separated, or deserted.

Much has been said by the Women's Bureau and other organizations in regard to the numbers of widows and other women carrying the burden of family support without a male breadwinner. Omitting for the moment this phase of the problem, attention will be given here to the subject of the adequacy or inadequacy of the earnings of the husband in the cases where he is living at home and is employed.

Granted that a few married women leave the home because they desire a career or dislike housework; granted that a small proportion are gainfully employed though their husbands' earnings are adequate for the support of the family; the fact remains that the vast majority of married women seek gainful employment for economic reasons, that is, because the husband's earnings are not sufficient for the support of the family at anything like the American standard of living.

The Women's Bureau surveys repeatedly disclose this fact, and the bureau has abundant evidence of the needs that drive the mother into gainful employment. For the costs of living and for statistics on men's earnings, however, various authorities are consulted, notably the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics but including other reporting agencies as well.

In 1918-19 the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics made a cost-of-living survey of more than 12,000 families of wage earners and small salaried men in 92 cities and towns. The families averaged 4.9 persons—for all practical purposes the hypothetical five used in social studies. The average of the year's expenses for the 12,000 families was \$1,434. The husbands in these families had average earnings for the year of \$1,349, failing to meet the family's expenses by an average of \$85.<sup>1</sup>

In March, 1923, the cost of living for workingmen's families in Philadelphia, a "minimum health and decency standard" for a

<sup>1</sup> U. S. Department of Labor. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Cost of living in the United States. Bul. 357, 1924, pp. 1, 4, and 5.

family of five persons, was found by the Bureau of Municipal Research to be \$1,854.<sup>2</sup>

Prof. Paul H. Douglas, of Chicago University, has estimated that in the larger American cities a family of five requires between \$1,100 and \$1,400 a year to live at even the minimum-of-subsistence level—shelter, food, and clothing, of a sort, but no surplus for other things; to reach the level of all necessary expenses plus “a modest balance” for recreation and sundries requires from \$1,500 to \$1,800; and the level commonly considered as the “American standard” costs between \$2,000 and \$2,400.<sup>3</sup>

A study of the National Industrial Conference Board reached the conclusion that the year's cost of maintaining an industrial worker's family of five in New York City in 1926, exclusive of vacations, unemployment, savings, ranged from \$1,841 in Brooklyn to \$1,908 in the Bronx.<sup>4</sup>

At these costs of keeping a family—\$1,434 in the Bureau of Labor Statistics survey, \$1,854 in that of Philadelphia, \$1,841 to \$1,908 in New York City, and \$1,500 to \$1,800 according to Professor Douglas—what weekly wage would be required by the head of the family and what do surveys show the actual weekly rates to be?

To earn \$1,400 or \$1,500 in 50 weeks a man must receive \$28 or \$30 a week, with no loss of time; to earn \$1,800 he must receive \$36 a week, and to earn \$1,900 he must receive \$38. To maintain his family even at Professor Douglas's minimum-of-subsistence level a man must earn \$25 a week.

A few surveys show these conditions:

The National Industrial Conference Board has made public the hours and earnings of 129,000 unskilled male wage earners in 23 major manufacturing industries in June, 1923. The average of their week's earnings was \$23.14, at which rate a year of 50 weeks' work—and workers can seldom be assured of 50 weeks' work in manufacturing—would produce \$1,157. At the same time the board made public the hours and earnings of 393,000 *skilled* male wage earners in the same manufacturing groups. The average of their week's earnings was \$30.90, at which rate a year of 50 weeks' work would produce \$1,545.<sup>5</sup>

About 94,000 men employed in factories were reported by the Department of Labor of the State of New York in 1923 as in groups averaging \$23 and under \$30—\$1,150 and under \$1,500 for a year of 50 weeks.<sup>6</sup>

In regard to common labor, the Department of Commerce is authority for the statement that in February of 1928 the hourly wage of road labor in the United States was 38 cents, at which rate a 50-hour week for 50 weeks of the year—and road laborers ordinarily can not work the year around—would yield \$950;<sup>7</sup> and the

<sup>2</sup> Philadelphia. Bureau of Municipal Research. The cost of a workmen's standard of living in Philadelphia at March, 1923, prices. Citizens' Business, April 5, 1923. No. 567, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Douglas, Paul H. Wages and the family. The University of Chicago Press. 1925, pp. 5, 6.

<sup>4</sup> New York. National Industrial Conference Board. The cost of living in New York City, 1926, pp. 86-88.

<sup>5</sup> New York. National Industrial Conference Board. Wages, hours, and employment in American manufacturing industries, July, 1914-July, 1923. Research report No. 62, 1923, pp. 20, 28, and 29.

<sup>6</sup> New York. Department of Labor. Employment and earnings of men and women in New York State factories, 1923-1925. Special Bul. 143, June, 1926, pp. 159, 169.

<sup>7</sup> U. S. Department of Commerce. Survey of current business. Bul. 80, 1923, p. 44.

Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that in January of 1928 the average entrance rate for 121,000 men doing common labor in 13 important industries in all parts of the United States was 43 cents an hour, at which rate a 50-hour week for 50 weeks of the year would yield \$1,075.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, to refer again to the survey of more than 12,000 families of wage earners and small-salaried men by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in 1918,<sup>9</sup> which reports whether or not the wife and mother was in gainful employment, this condition is found:

In cities where the husbands' average earnings were equal to or fell only slightly below the average expenses, 6 per cent of the wives were at work;

In cities where the husbands' average earnings fell below the average expenses by \$50 and under \$150, 9 per cent of the wives were at work;

In cities where the husbands' average earnings fell below the average expenses by \$150 and under \$250, 10 and 12 per cent of the wives were at work; and

In cities where they fell below by as much as \$250 or \$300, 20 per cent of the wives were at work.

At the present cost of food, shelter, fuel, and other essentials, it would appear that a man whose employment yields him less than \$35 or \$40 a week for 50 weeks of the year can provide only the minimum of subsistence for his family, and the necessity of rising above such level must be met by other resources.

## STANDARDS FOR THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN

The bureau continues to recommend its reasonable standards of hours, wages, working conditions, and employment relations, and feels a growing confidence in its ability to furnish guidance and be of genuine assistance in putting such suggestions into practice. These standards, agreed upon for the employment of women on Government contracts during the war, and indorsed by representative employers and working women alike, are briefly as follows:

### Hours.

A day not longer than eight hours.

A half holiday on Saturday.

One day's rest in seven.

At least 30 minutes allowed for a meal.

A 10-minute rest period in the middle of each half day without lengthening the day.

No employment of women between midnight and 6 a. m.

### Wages.

Rates based on occupation and not on sex nor race, the minimum to cover cost of healthful and decent living and to allow for dependents.

### Working conditions.

Cleanliness.

Good lighting, ventilation, and heating.

Machine guards, handrails, safe condition of floors, devices for drawing off dust and fumes.

<sup>8</sup> U. S. Department of Labor. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Monthly labor review. April, 1928, pp. 116, 118.

<sup>9</sup> U. S. Department of Labor. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Cost of living in the United States. Bul. 337, 1924, pp. 7-68 and 76-107.



Fire protection.

First-aid equipment.

A chair for each woman. Change of posture—neither constant standing nor constant sitting.

Prevention of overstrain and of overexposure to dust, fumes, poisons, extremes of temperature.

Sanitary drinking and washing facilities.

Dressing rooms, rest rooms, lunch rooms.

Adequate toilet arrangements—one toilet to each 15 workers.

#### General.

A personnel department, responsible for the selection, assignment, and transfer or discharge of employees.

Women in supervisory positions and as employment executives where women are employed.

Provision for workers to share in control of conditions of employment.

Opportunity for workers to choose occupations for which best adapted. No prohibition of women's employment except in occupations proved to be more injurious to women than to men.

No work to be given out to be done at home.

Application to and cooperation with Federal and State agencies dealing with labor and conditions of employment.

### LABOR LEGISLATION DURING THE PAST YEAR

Very few State legislatures were in session during the winter of 1927-28, and of these only New York made any change in the labor laws for women. In that State an amendment was passed exempting women licensed pharmacists from the night-work prohibition for mercantile stores.

In several States attempts to enact legislation were made. A bill for a 48-hour week was introduced in South Carolina but no action was taken on it. In Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York various attempts were made to amend the existing hour and night-work laws. In Massachusetts the bills introduced again sought to allow women in textile mills to work as late at night as women in other manufacturing industries and to permit overtime beyond the 48-hour weekly limit. New Jersey once more tried to provide a penalty for infringement of its night-work law. The purpose of some of the bills introduced in New York was to strengthen the 8-hour law that went into effect January 1, 1928; the purpose of others, to weaken or repeal it.

### SPECIAL STUDIES

During the past year the bureau has developed or completed several special studies. In addition to the studies described as research, the following reports are in various stages of preparation:

**The effects of labor legislation on the employment opportunities of women.**

This report, a presentation of the facts obtained in an intensive field survey made in 1926, ranks foremost of the studies prepared this year for publication. It originated in a resolution of the Women's Industrial Conference early in 1926 asking the bureau to make "a comprehensive investigation of all the special laws regulating the employment of women to determine their effects."

The work in connection with the writing of this report continued far into the fiscal year, but the bulletin is now in press. It furnishes

a series of studies—all in one volume, in the interest of economy and to discourage the discussion of one of its parts without considering its relation to other parts—on the following aspects of the subject:

The occupational and geographic distribution of women.

The effects of legislation in five manufacturing industries—boots and shoes, clothing, electrical products, hosiery, and paper boxes.

Night-work laws in manufacturing; and in newspaper offices.

Women employed as elevator operators; as street-car conductors and ticket agents; as waitresses in restaurants; in mercantile establishments; in pharmacy; in the metal trades; and in occupations prohibited in some States—grinding, polishing, and buffing; electric and acetylene welding; taxicab driving; and gas and electric meter reading.

The investigation by the agents covered 179 cities and towns in 11 States, besides the questionnaire method of inquiry that elicited replies from 38 States in the pharmacy study and from 44 employment offices in regard to night work, prohibited occupations, and other subjects. Schedules were secured from 1,600 establishments, employing as many as 660,000 men and women. More than 1,200 working women were interviewed in regard to personal experiences of the effects of labor legislation on their employment, and these experiences form an important part of the study.

The report states that laws limiting hours of work apply to about a third of the 8,500,000 women reported by the census of 1920 as gainfully occupied in the United States, and that laws limiting or prohibiting night work are an additional regulation applying to slightly more than two-fifths of those whose hours are restricted. Laws prohibiting only certain occupations are in force for very small numbers of women, while laws requiring certain working conditions and sanitary facilities for women are more general in their application. The women to whom these laws apply are engaged in many forms of activity throughout the United States, and it has been the object of this study to discover what effects such legislative regulations have had on their opportunities and conditions of employment.

To quote from the foreword by the advisory committee, composed of Mary van Kleeck, chairman, Lillian M. Gilbreth, and Charles P. Neill—

“These laws have been directed toward the control of conditions in industrial, mercantile, and factory occupations. When applied to certain occupations which differ from those for which they were drawn, such as street cars, labor laws have proved to be a handicap in a few instances. But the findings seem to show that the instances of handicap, which have been diligently sought by the investigators, are only instances and should be dealt with as such, without allowing them to interfere with the development of the main body of legislation.

“The first caution in the reading of the report, which is demonstrated again and again in the material, is the impossibility of generalization, the necessity for recognizing differences in different occupations, different industries, and different localities. As to night work, laws prohibiting it were found to be ‘chiefly a reflection of the usual attitude of employers regarding such practice, but occa-

sionally they result in a limitation of women's employment. When applied indiscriminately to special occupations that are professional or semiprofessional in type, night-work prohibition or regulation has resulted in restrictions of women's employment.' In general, however, the report concludes that regulatory hour laws as applied to women engaged in manufacturing processes do not handicap them, but 'serve to regulate employment and to establish the accepted standards of modern efficient industrial management.'

"Very important in any consideration of enlargement of women's opportunities is the conclusion of the report, that 'in almost every kind of employment the real forces that influence women's opportunity are far removed from legislative restriction of their hours or conditions of work. In manufacturing, the type of product, the division and simplification of manufacturing processes, the development of machinery and mechanical aids to production, the labor supply and its costs, and the general psychology of the times, all have played important parts in determining the position of women. \* \* \*

"In other occupations other influences have been dominant in determining the extent of women's employment. In stores a more liberal attitude and successful experimentation with women on new jobs; in restaurants the development of public opinion as to the type of service most suitable for women; in pharmacy a gradually increasing confidence in women's ability on the part of the public; in the metal trades a breaking down of the prejudices against women's employment on the part of employers and of male employees and demonstration of women's ability along certain lines—these are the significant forces that have influenced and will continue to determine women's place among wage earners. Such forces have not been deflected by the enforcement of legislative standards and they will play the dominant part in assuring to women an equal chance in those occupations for which their ability and aptitudes fit them.'

"The value of this study, however, lies not in its conclusions so much as in its portrayal of conditions in such detail that the reader may see and judge for himself. The setting up of the problem, which is the essence of method, and the technique of procedure, seem to the advisory committee to have been designed to safeguard the objective character of the results. It is unnecessary for the committee to prove this point, since again the reader can judge for himself by studying the report itself. All that the committee seeks to do is to bring together in brief compass what seem to its members to be the outstanding characteristics of the method adopted. It is with satisfaction that we have participated in the carrying forward of this investigation, because it represents an effort to approach a controversial issue by the objective method and spirit of science and as such it should be a safe guide for action in the public interest."

#### Foreign-born women in industry.

According to the census of 1920, one in five of all women in the manufacturing industries of the United States are foreign born. To ascertain how and to what extent these women are fitting into American industrial life; how necessary such employment is for the women and what it means to them and to their families; and how much of their time and strength is given to industry was the purpose of a survey of immigrant women in Philadelphia and the

Lehigh Valley made by the Women's Bureau in 1925. This report is now in process of checking and editing.

The peculiar difficulties of these women in adjusting themselves to industry, since most of them speak little or no English on their arrival here and have had no factory experience; their courage in seeking and holding jobs; their earning ability and economic responsibilities; the causes of their unemployment—these are matters of interest and importance and in harmony with the purposes and duties of the Women's Bureau.

*Scope of the survey.*—Philadelphia and the Lehigh Valley were selected for study as fairly representative of the country as a whole.

One-fifth of all the employed women in Philadelphia are of foreign birth, and most of them are in textiles and clothing, the industries employing almost one-half of all the foreign-born women reported as in manufacturing by the census of 1920.

In the Lehigh Valley, about 50 miles to the north of Philadelphia, are Bethlehem with its great steel works, Allentown with varied industries, and several communities in the cement and zinc sections that provide employment for thousands of foreign-born men.

Something more than 1,100 women were interviewed in Philadelphia and something more than 1,000 in the Lehigh Valley.

*Employment in the Old Country.*—One-half of the women had worked on farms before coming to the United States, one in five for wages, and the others on the home farm. Fewer than 200 had done no work of any sort.

*Country of birth.*—Of the 2,100 women reporting on nativity, 22 per cent were born in Poland, 15 per cent in Austria and 15 per cent in Hungary, and 6 to 9 per cent each in Czechoslovakia, Russia, Yugoslavia, and Italy. One in five considered themselves German and one in ten were of the Jewish race, mainly from Russia. In all, 94 per cent were of non-English-speaking races.

*Years in the United States.*—More than a fifth of the women who reported year of arrival had come to the United States between 1920 and 1925, and twice their number came before 1910. The war period had brought practically none.

One in five of the women interviewed were citizens of the United States.

*Age.*—More than a third of the women were 30 and under 40 years of age. Less than 2 per cent were as much as 60, and 13 per cent were under 20. Two-fifths of the women had come to the United States alone, and of these more than one-half were less than 18 years of age at time of coming. Two of every three had begun work within a year of their arrival, large numbers within a few days or weeks.

*Ability to speak English.*—Only 60 per cent of the women were able to speak English. The recent comers more than the earlier immigrants had a knowledge of English. One in five of the women had been in the United States as much as 20 years, but of these one-third could not speak the language of their adopted land.

Less than a third of the women could read English, and one in seven could not read at all.

*Extent of schooling.*—Nine in ten of the 1,500 women who were at least 14 years old when they arrived had never attended school in the United States, and more than one-seventh of those who came before

they were 14 had not been to school here. More than 200 had never attended any school, even in the Old Country. Of these a number described the political or religious prejudice that had prevented their attending school in their country of birth.

Late hours in certain lines of employment and home duties very generally prevented the women from taking advantage of night classes. In numerous cases the day's employment made no contribution to Americanization. "Everybody not talk English in factory. Never hear English only by the school."

*Women in Philadelphia evening schools.*—Simple questionnaires distributed among the pupils in evening schools in Philadelphia, more than three-fourths of the 730 being Germans and Jews, showed that 9 in 10 had attended school as much as seven years in the Old Country. Two-thirds of those answering the questionnaires were at least 21 years of age and there were several whose age was 40 and under 50 years.

Of 712 who reported their present employment, 348 were in clothing manufacturing, 98 in textiles, 78 in miscellaneous manufacturing, and 89 in domestic and personal service.

*Marital and family status.*—Well over one-half of the women in the entire survey were married and living with their husbands. Slightly more than one in four were single. Only 139 were living independently, away from their homes and relatives.

The average size of the family was 4.5 persons; almost 1 in 10 had 7 or more persons, and a few had 10, 11, and 13.

Two in five of the families had three or more children; a small per cent—67 families—had six to nine children. Four in five of the mothers reporting the children's ages had children 7 and under 14 years, and two in five had little tots not yet 5 years old. Forty-six of these employed mothers had children less than a year old.

Of the more than a thousand children under 8 years of age, 101 were left at home with older children, 417 with fathers or other relatives, and 9—including a child of 2 and a child of 3 years—were left to shift for themselves. About 500 of the children were cared for outside the home, in school or with relatives or neighbors.

One mother explained that the 6-year-old girl had taken care of the 10-month-old baby. Another had been in the habit of locking the child of 6 alone in the house and requiring the boy of 8 years to play outside after school until the mother came home from the mill.

*Number of breadwinners.*—In 156 cases the woman interviewed was the sole breadwinner in her family. In most cases, however, the husband and wife were sharing the responsibility. In 10 per cent of the cases the families had four or more wage earners.

As many as 200 of the husbands were not contributing at the time of the interview. An astonishing number had not been employed for more than a year. Seasonal employment, such as the building trades, had its effect also.

Earnings were reported for 456 of the chief male breadwinners. The medians of the week's earnings in the various industries ranged from \$22 to \$28, the average for all being about \$25. Only one in four earned as much as \$30. On the whole, earnings for the men reported were higher in the Lehigh Valley than in Philadelphia.

Practically all the women did their own housework in addition to their employment outside the home, and one in eight had boarders or lodgers. In the Lehigh Valley, group housekeeping was found, or, more exactly, the renting of rooms to perhaps several families with the use of the kitchen in common. Crowding was not the usual condition, though examples were found—one schedule in particular reporting 9 adults and 6 children in 6 rooms. Sanitary facilities were few, but tenants found it hard enough to meet the rent of shelter that lacked the barest essentials of sanitation.

*Women's employment and earnings.*—In the Lehigh Valley, silk manufacturing, to provide employment for the women whose husbands were in the principal man-employing industries, had been introduced as early as 1880. A few small cigar factories, also to take advantage of the surplus woman labor, were established before 1905, but the 10 or 12 large cigar factories were of more recent date.

The more than 1,000 women interviewed in the Lehigh Valley were distributed industrially as follows: Cigars and cigarettes, 64.1 per cent; textiles, 34.6 per cent; and other, 1.3 per cent.

In Philadelphia the industries were varied. The more than 1,100 women interviewed were 39.5 per cent in textiles, 18.3 per cent in clothing, 5 to 7 per cent each in the manufacture of tobacco products, food products, and miscellaneous products, in clerical work, and in office cleaning and laundry work; while the others were sewing, sorting rags, working in hotels and restaurants, and employed in smaller groups.

A considerable number of women had been out of employment three months or more, and another group had been idle for one to three months. Furthermore, a number of industries employing women had been running short time—two or three days a week.

The earnings of the women interviewed, like those of their husbands, were higher in the Lehigh Valley than in Philadelphia; 29 per cent of the women in the Lehigh Valley, in contrast to 17 per cent of those in Philadelphia, earned as much as \$20 a week. Ten per cent of those in the Lehigh Valley and 11 per cent of those in Philadelphia received less than \$10 a week.

The median of the week's earnings for all women reporting on this was \$15.35 in Philadelphia and \$16.75 in the Lehigh Valley.

*Home work in Philadelphia.*—About 160 women interviewed in Philadelphia were doing factory work in the home. Approximately two-thirds of these women were Italians; they were sewing carpet rags at 50 cents a bushel of uncut mill-ends of material; finishing men's coats—felling the seams and doing other hand work—at 17 cents a coat; putting safety pins and snaps on cards, 12 to a card, at from 8 to 15 cents a hundred cards; embroidering a simple design, in four colors, on children's dresses at 50 cents a dozen dresses; and stringing tags—that is, threading and knotting the string for attaching tags—at 10 cents a thousand.

The other home workers were Germans, who generally were putting pockets, cuffs, etc., on sweaters, with a neat and machine-like stitch, at 40 cents a sweater, and Slavs, who were covering curtain rings, using a crochet hook and cord, at 40 cents a gross. The week's earnings, even with the entire family assisting, were pitifully small. The children pulled basting threads, strung tags, carded pins and snaps, and were of help in other ways.

The men in some of these families were reported as "digging in the street," "sweeping the street," "wheeling coal to furnace room," "loading boxes," and so on. Most of them were in seasonal trades or had other irregular employment. The median of the earnings reported for 51 men was \$24.25. One of these men earned less than \$10 and one earned as much as \$38.

The universal comment of the women was that home work offered a means of supplementing the family income without leaving the small children unattended.

A number of the women seemed to recognize the ill effects of home work—"we ask God to give us work and then we get so tired; more curses go on the cards than pins"—and spoke of the low rates paid by the factories. However, "some women would take the work if they paid only 2 cents; now work all day hard—50 cents all can earn by pins."

It is not surprising that they failed to think of the consumer or of the unfair competition for employers having higher standards of business.

#### **The employment of women at night.**

A report on the employment of women at night will shortly be issued from the press. This study gives the findings on night work in the State surveys by the Women's Bureau; medical, social, and economic testimony as to the effects of night work; the foreign experience; the Bern and Washington conventions, and the extent to which the various countries have ratified them; the principal night-work legislation of foreign countries, and the laws of the 16 States in the United States that prohibit the employment of women at night.

#### **Negro women in industry.**

Notwithstanding the importance of the subject and the interest it evokes, the bureau, in the 10 years of its existence, has been able to make but one study of the employment of negro women—its Bulletin 20, *Negro Women in Industry*. With this great deficiency in mind, all the data concerning negro women in the reports of State surveys made by the Women's Bureau are being assembled and correlated. A report on negro women in manufacturing industries, covering more than 10 per cent of all negro women reported by the census of 1920 as employed in manufacturing and mechanical industries, illustrated by a number of wall charts, will be supplied to the National Interracial Conference to be in session in December of the present year.

#### **Wages in 13 States.**

In the same way the data on women's earnings secured in the 13 State surveys have been assembled and are being correlated and compared. These include information on the earnings of 107,087 women, 82,303 of whom were in manufacturing, the remainder in stores and laundries.

#### **Domestic service in Philadelphia.**

The Women's Bureau has been asked to participate in a study of household employment in Philadelphia under the auspices of the Women's Problems Group of the Social Order Committee of the

Society of Friends and preparatory to the organization of a bureau of household occupations in that city.

Almost 1,000 housewives have returned the questionnaires, which are concerned with the occupations, hours, wages, and working and living conditions of domestic employees, and such personal data and family responsibilities as are known to the employer. Tabulation of these schedules is in progress.

#### **Conditions for women in laundries.**

Field work has been completed and tabulation is in process of a study of the hours, earnings, and working conditions in laundries. This survey, which was conducted with the cordial cooperation of the Laundryowners National Association, covered 290 establishments in 16 States.

#### **Humidity and absence records in cotton mills.**

A number of textile manufacturers have cooperated with the Women's Bureau by keeping records of temperature and humidity and also employment records, with details on cause of absence, in order to furnish information on differences in causes of absence by sex and by department. Only the original data have been furnished by these firms, the staff of the bureau compiling and analyzing the material.

#### **Women in the meat-packing industry.**

A project recently begun is a survey of the conditions of employment and the economic status of women employed in meat-packing establishments.

#### **Cooperation of States.**

The bureau has always worked in close cooperation with certain States. It has been handicapped, nevertheless, by the lack of personal contact with officials of State departments of labor, except at such times as agents of the bureau have been in the States in connection with specific projects. Each year has brought evidence of the increased value of personal contact with such organizations. During the past year, therefore, a special effort has been made to establish contact with State departments of labor for the purpose of making a practical working arrangement for the use by the bureau of information about wage-earning women collected by the States.

Sixteen States were visited for this purpose during the year. Splendid response resulted in a number of cases and a real beginning has been made in the more extensive cooperation desired by the bureau.

While the majority of States collect and publish a considerable amount of labor statistics, each prepares its material for local use only and does not present figures intended to have special value as a basis of comparison with other States publishing information on the same subjects. For example, many States fail to separate by sex or even by age any of their published data about wage earners, while in other cases tabulations include minors with adult women.

*Standard reporting of statistics.*—It is highly desirable that a more uniform method be devised for presenting information on hours and nature of industrial accidents. State departments of labor could and conditions of work, fluctuations in employment, and the extent



render great service in the field of social statistics by presenting their figures on wage earners by sex and age—always separating those under 16 from the older workers; in fact, a third group of those 16 and under 18 years would have great significance.

*Accident statistics.*—The bureau feels greatly encouraged also in regard to securing information on the number of women injured in industrial occupations. One State has furnished the bureau with unpublished data concerning accidents to women in 1926-27, and a number of States have offered to cooperate with the bureau and classify by sex and age the accident data they make public from time to time. Though the development of the project will be slow and comparable results may not be achieved for two or three years, all such information will be a valuable contribution to the knowledge on this important subject.

In the past very little has been done. Only a few States have presented accident statistics by sex. A few have done so intermittently, and New York has, in addition, published two special bulletins on the subject of accidents to women.

The fact that the great majority of accidents occur to men probably explains why there has been so little consideration of the problem of accidents to women. The bureau has brought to the attention of the committee on standardization of accident statistics the fact that the standard code under consideration for the recording of accident data does not list separately the industries in which women predominate in numbers but allows them to be lost sight of in the residual group "other."

*Cooperation along other lines.*—The bureau is pleased to report still another cooperative undertaking—the collection of information about married women who seek employment by agencies especially concerned with employment problems. The personnel officers of two large stores in different States and one employment agency are gathering information to be turned over to the bureau for compilation and analysis. The schedule forms have been furnished by the bureau and the material from the several sources should be comparable. In the event that the bureau secures an appropriation for a study of married women, one State has promised to assign one worker and another State to assign two or three workers to assist the bureau if such surveys are made there.

### LIBRARY RESEARCH

In the development of the Women's Bureau considerable attention has been paid to material that has been published elsewhere. It is the desire of the bureau to make accessible any valuable material on women workers that can be obtained from printed records or from factual studies made by other agencies. Such sources as the labor laws of the various States, the records of the Bureau of the Census, and reports of the International Labor Office have been studied and used in a variety of ways.

It is obvious that research is necessary in connection with every project undertaken by the bureau. Furthermore, a large part of the research work always consists in answering special inquiries. Among the multitudinous inquiries that come to the bureau, an

unusually large number this year have been concerned with foreign labor laws and married women in industry. The increasing interest in foreign labor standards probably is due to the fact that practically every European country forbids night work by women, though most of the States of the United States permit it, and that the legal 8-hour day is far more prevalent in Europe than in the United States. The work of collecting and analyzing foreign labor laws is being carried on with the help of the International Labor Office, and it will enable the bureau to meet adequately the requests that it is receiving.

The bureau has continued to issue the News Letter at intervals throughout the year. This small publication, which gives current information relating to working women, is meeting a real need, and the bureau is constantly receiving expressions of appreciation from persons who use it and requests from others who wish to receive it.

Two important reports have been completed during the past year—the history of labor legislation in three States and the chronological development of labor legislation for women in the United States.

#### History of labor legislation in three States.

An entirely new and most interesting type of study has been made during the past year to show the forces at work to bring about the adoption of labor legislation for women. The development of such legislation has been studied intensively in three important industrial States, California, Massachusetts, and New York, with the thought that the history in these States would be typical of a large part of the country. Briefly the report considers how such legislation originated; the forces working for and against it; the factors that made for its final passage.

In all the States roughly the same forces appear working for the laws, but the particular group that played the most important part in securing the legislation varied from State to State. Organized labor, men and women; the factory inspectors and other officials charged with enforcing the labor laws; the bureaus of labor statistics; the various special legislative committees or commissions appointed for the study of labor conditions; many governors, liberal-minded employers, and citizens organized in social, civic, philanthropic, and church groups have worked long and hard to improve the conditions under which women work by securing remedial legislation. Different methods have been used at different times and places. Sometimes one group was particularly interested in a certain bill and did the major share of the work; sometimes another group came to the front. Joint committees from all the interested groups frequently have been appointed to push legislation.

At times, long campaigns of education to prove the need of laws have been undertaken. Factory inspectors and other labor officials have reported on bad conditions and means of correcting them, year after year. In many cases the proponents of remedial legislation have secured authoritative factual studies to show the sore spots in industrial life, and have patiently presented these facts until public and legislators agreed to try to correct them through legislation. In spite of long delays, of some final refusals to act on the part of the legislatures, of attacks on hard-won laws to amend or repeal them,

the struggle for comprehensive and effective labor legislation has been carried on without rest.

Leaders and organizations have left their stamp upon specific pieces of legislation, but behind these leaders and organizations are discernible always the social forces pushing on toward a better economic order. The overpowering urge toward social justice accounted for the flood of industrial legislation during the years 1911 to 1914. More important legislation affecting women's work was put on the statute books of each of the three States in that three-year period than in any other period of corresponding length. Massachusetts shortened hours for almost all groups of women workers and passed the first minimum wage law in the United States. New York shortened hours for women workers, prohibited night work, and passed a number of other statutes safeguarding the work of women. California enacted a comprehensive eight-hour law and then set up a commission to secure for women workers a living wage and proper working conditions.

In some cases legislative action has been followed by reaction, but the wage earners have opposed repeal and the work accomplished seldom has been undone. The laws passed may be considered representative of the spirit of the times that played its part in making their enactment possible.

#### Chronological development of labor legislation for women in the United States.

To complete the survey of the development of labor legislation in the United States, the changes in all the labor laws for women in all the States have been traced, from the time the first labor law was passed to the present time. No attempt has been made in this report to discuss the forces effecting these changes, but each step in the development of the present code of labor laws has been recorded. When this report is published it will be possible for the first time to see quickly and clearly how extensive are the labor laws for women in each State and how long they have been in process of development in the various cases.

Special labor laws for women are found in well-defined fields. By far the greatest number of laws and those covering the most women limit hours of work. Laws requiring that seats be provided for the use of women workers are found in almost every State, but in many cases they cover relatively few women. Laws prohibiting the work of women at night and laws regulating or prohibiting their work in selected dangerous occupations also are quite common. The report traces, separately, the development of each of these types of laws. Moreover, in summarizing the laws it not only notes changes in substance—for example, by showing when the daily hours a woman is permitted to work have been shortened—but it gives the most important enforcement provisions, including the penalties for non-compliance.

Even in the brief form in which these laws are presented, the report paints a very complete picture of all labor laws for women. It shows waves of legislative activity rising and receding, pushed by the forces described in the accompanying "History of labor legislation in three States."

**State laws affecting working women.**

A revision to August 1, 1927, of the bureau bulletin on State laws affecting working women has been prepared and published.

**PUBLIC INFORMATION**

It has been the desire of the bureau to make its material available in as many forms as possible so that it would reach the widest range of interests throughout the United States. Following this desire, an office on public information was added to the staff during the past year and a regular news and magazine service was inaugurated. Information has been furnished to correspondents upon request, and special articles on the work and interests of the bureau have been written for magazines.

Several new graphic exhibits have been developed. A two-reel motion picture, *Within the Gates*, shows the distribution of women throughout the occupations listed by the census of 1920 and their importance to industry in general, while using the textile industry as a specific example. A poster series called "The Woman Who Earns," done in black and white, pictures the problems of the wage-earning woman and the standards advocated by the bureau for her employment. A poster lithographed in colors, showing girls in a factory workroom, with the text, "Daughters of America—nearly 2,000,000 girls under 20 at work—They have youth, Have they opportunity?" has been sold through the Government Printing Office. Three chart series have been prepared from bureau publications—one on industrial accidents to women in Ohio, New Jersey, and Wisconsin, one on lost time and labor turnover in 18 cotton mills, and one, now in press, on married women in industry. A small illustrated folder, "The Women's Bureau—what it is, what it does, what it publishes," is in its second edition. A group of seven miniature stage sets, with cut-out figures in color, illustrating respectively: Agriculture, Transportation, Manufacture, Trade, Professional Service, Clerical Work, and Domestic and Personal Service, has been made for the Iberian-American Exposition at Seville, Spain, which is to open in March, 1929, and a copy has been prepared for use in this country. Other material to be sent to Seville, where the bureau will have a room of its own, includes the translation into Spanish of the folder on standards and an article by the director, written originally for the Pan-American Sanitary Bulletin and covering the work of the bureau; copies in Spanish of the motion picture, *The Woman Worker Past and Present*; several charts, posters, and maps; and a displayor with approximately 90 photographs of women at work on various tasks.

Since June of last year 512 exhibits of various kinds have been sent out to 36 States and 5 foreign countries.

During the year the director and certain members of the staff have attended a number of conferences, made many addresses, and contributed articles on the subjects with which the bureau is concerned.

A little time has been spent on the index of the bureau publications that is being prepared for purposes of reference, but owing to pressure of other work it is far from up to date.

An assortment of the publications of the bureau was sent to the international press exhibit in Cologne in the spring of this year.

## PUBLICATIONS

During the year the following bulletins have come from the press:

- No. 60. Industrial Accidents to Women in New Jersey, Ohio, and Wisconsin.
- No. 62. Women's Employment in Vegetable Canneries in Delaware.
- No. 63. State Laws Affecting Working Women. (Revision of Bulletin 40.)

The following bulletins are in the Printing Office:

- No. 61. The Development of Minimum-Wage Laws in the United States, 1912 to 1927.
- No. 64. The Employment of Women at Night.
- No. 65. The Effects of Labor Legislation on the Employment Opportunities of Women.

The following bulletins are in process of preparation for the printer:

- No. 66. History of Labor Legislation in Three States and Chronological Development of Labor Legislation for Women in the United States.
- No. 67. Women Workers in Flint, Mich.

## COMMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The inadequacy of the bureau's appropriation to the tremendous task which it is the bureau's privilege to have been assigned seriously retards the progress of the work and closes the door on opportunities for great service to women.

The work is stimulating and inspiring, the staff is efficient and hard working, and it is unfortunate that each year the bureau must postpone important studies and decline requests for assistance in problems connected with wage-earning women asked for by employers and employees, public and private organizations, and many persons interested in women's employment.

The appropriation of 1929 carries an increase of \$2,000 granted because of the larger per diem allowed to field agents by the subsistence act of 1926. This additional \$2 per day per person in the field went into effect July 1, 1926, and from that time until the \$2,000 was granted in the appropriation for 1929 the bureau had no increase in appropriation to meet the added expense.

In spite of this increase, the funds are not sufficient for any one of several studies that the bureau is eager to make and has frequently been asked to undertake.

### Occupational hazards.

There should be a comprehensive study of women's employment in plants using poisonous substances. An investigation of this subject, requiring careful and scientific study, can not much longer be postponed, and an increased appropriation is requested for this purpose. The special problems arise because of fundamental changes that have been initiated in industrial processes within recent years and that have brought in their wake hazards to the health and well-being of hundreds of thousands of women workers. The bureau has had many requests for such information, but has been unable to supply it. It feels that it must undertake technical studies of these problems that will furnish information in regard to the relation between certain conditions of employment and impaired health conditions of women workers, in this way increasing its watchfulness in behalf of better standards for working women.

Not only is the work fragmentary that is being done along the line of hazards, but the studies undertaken in the States and by public and private agencies up to the present time have pertained almost exclusively to the occupational hazards of men. As a Government agency charged with the duty of formulating standards and policies that will promote the welfare of wage-earning women, the bureau should make an all-around investigation that would give, on this very important subject, facts that would be helpful to employers and to workers alike. For this service the bureau requires experts specially trained to handle this type of scientific investigation.

#### **The piecework system.**

Another subject that should be carefully considered is the piecework system, by which wages are based on output rather than on time at work. The question is so clearly related to matters of health and efficiency and is of such paramount importance to the worker and to the employer that a scientific analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of the system and a comparison of this method of work with that of timework should be made.

#### **Married women in industry.**

There exists in many quarters of the United States a strong feeling against the gainful employment of married women, a prejudice due largely to the failure to understand the problems of this type of wage earner, to the belief that married women take the jobs that should go to single women or to men, and to the fear that the employment of married women will tend to break up the home. There is a great need for authentic information—facts that are gathered and presented wholly without prejudice.

The increase in the numbers of married women in industry would seem to call for additional information on the subject. The census of 1920 reported almost 2,000,000 married women in gainful occupations and in some places women occupy a larger place in industry to-day than they did in 1920. The subject of the gainful employment of married women is extremely complex, linked so closely, as it is, with the welfare of the home and the family, and related so definitely in the long run to the health of the race and the progress of the Nation. That injustices may not be worked in any direction, a comprehensive study of this problem should be made.

Information gathered by the Women's Bureau shows that most women are at work to supplement the family income, and all the material collected on the subject points to the fact that large numbers of married women must share, and widowed or deserted women must assume, the fathers' responsibilities. Mothers must toil outside the home and away from the children who should have their care, and there is need of further data, gathered at first hand, giving current information on all phases of the problem. Such a study would require considerable field work, since it would be extensive in scope, but it would reflect great credit on the Department of Labor by presenting truths of vital importance to the American people.

The bureau believes that it should be given a special appropriation that would enable it to make a current study of the subject, furnishing comparable information for several places. This appropriation should cover the cost of a number of simultaneous studies

in industrial centers and the sending of supervisors into the field to organize the collection of data by other interested agencies. Special attention should be given in these studies to the problems of employed mothers and their children, including information on the occupations and earnings of the fathers as well as the mothers.

#### **Posture at work.**

Another study of significance that should be made by the bureau is the problem of posture—the combining of comfort and efficiency in a work chair of practical design and inexpensive construction. This very general difficulty is a detriment to the health of the workers. The bureau has been requested by the Association of State Departments of Labor to undertake such a study, and a number of firms have again and again urged it to do so. It is unfortunate that workers can not be given a service that would contribute to their health and efficiency and to the perfection of the product upon which they are employed.

#### **Other recommendations.**

In addition to the projects recommended, there is an aspect of women's employment that the bureau has had neither time nor funds to inquire into—that of the employment of women in semiprofessional and professional pursuits. The bureau is continually being asked for information along such lines, and it is serving to the best of its ability. If the bureau is to function successfully in this direction it should have an addition to its staff conversant with the aspects of this type of employment for women.

In the editorial division there should be an increased force to expedite the writing and editing of the reports and the preparation of bulletins for the press. It is imperative that reports on current matters be published as quickly as possible in order that they may be of greatest value to the persons interested, and the delays in connection with the preparation and publication of the reports should be eliminated.

Respectfully submitted.

MARY ANDERSON, *Director.*

