# STANDARDS
## *for the Employment of*
# WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

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*THE WOMEN'S BUREAU is charged with the responsibility of developing policies and standards and conducting investigations in the industries of the country which shall safeguard the interests of women workers and thus make their service effective for the national good. It represents and advises the Secretary of Labor in all matters concerning women in industry and is charged with maintaining close contact with other agencies which deal with special phases of the problem, including other divisions of the Department of Labor. It works with and through State departments of labor.*

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# STANDARDS FOR THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN IN INDUSTRY.

The words "women in industry" are becoming more and more a familiar phrase as the number of women in industrial pursuits is growing larger year by year and becoming a more important factor in the development, in the very life itself, of the American people.

When the spinning, the weaving, the making of clothes and shoes, and all the other industrial pursuits once followed in the home were taken away and developed into factory industries, women were called upon still to conduct many of the operations, and thereby became part of the army of those gainfully employed. Naturally they have not been restricted to these transplanted industries, but have entered other avenues of employment as occasion offered.

The public is inclined to forget this gradual development, and to think that women entered industry in large numbers only during and since the war. It is because women wage earners have become so numerous, and are being relied upon more and more to supply the working force of the factories, that we have come to realize the importance of women in industry.

The number of women gainfully employed increased in the decade ending in 1910 from



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five million to eight million. Two and one-half million of these women were in manufacturing, trade, transportation, and public service. Since that time indications are that in number and proportion women have become increasingly important in industry. The large number of women in industrial pursuits therefore present a special problem of their own.

The greater necessity for control of the standards of women's employment is due to the fact that women have been in a weaker position economically than have men. Therefore it is necessary to give an opportunity for the upbuilding of safeguards to conserve alike the industrial efficiency and the health of women and to make it impossible for selfish interests to exploit them as unwilling competitors in lowering those standards of wages, hours, working conditions, and industrial relations which are for the best interests of the workers, the industries, and society as a whole.

During the war, by vote of the War Labor Policies Board, all contracts of the Federal departments contained a clause requiring full compliance with State labor laws, and in each State an official of the State labor department was deputized by the heads of the contracting departments of the Federal Government to cooperate with Federal agencies in enforcing these provisions of the contracts. This afforded a basis and a precedent for continued relations between State and Federal agencies in the upbuilding of standards for women's labor. After the war closed the Government contracts became fewer and fewer and therefore the responsibility of the States increased. But the



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recognition of the national and international importance of the standards of labor conditions is still paramount, since the Nation depends for its prosperity upon the productive efficiency of its workers. No other foundation for commercial success will be so sure as the conservation of those practices in industry which make for the free and effective cooperation of the workers. Protection of the health of women workers is vital as an economic as well as a social measure.

Therefore at this time, in recognition of the national importance of women's work and its conditions, the Federal Government calls upon the industries of the country to cooperate with State and Federal agencies in maintaining the standards herein set forth as a vital part of the industrial program of the Nation.



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## STANDARDS RECOMMENDED.

### I. HOURS OF LABOR.

1. **Daily hours.**—No woman should be employed or permitted to work more than eight hours in any one day. The time when the work of women employees shall begin and end and the time allowed for meals should be posted in a conspicuous place in each workroom.

2. **Half holiday on Saturday.**—The half holiday on Saturday should be the custom.

3. **One day of rest in seven.**—There should be one day of rest in every seven days.

4. **Time for meals.**—At least 30 minutes should be allowed for a meal.

5. **Rest periods.**—A rest period of 10 minutes should be allowed in the middle of each working period without thereby increasing the length of the working day.

6. **Night work.**—No woman should be employed between the hours of midnight and 6 a. m.

### II. WAGES.

**The basis of determination of wages.**—Wages should be established on the basis of occupation and not on the basis of sex or race. The minimum wage rate should cover the cost of living for dependents and not merely for the individual.



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## III. WORKING CONDITIONS.

1. **Comfort and sanitation.**—State labor laws and industrial codes should be consulted with reference to provisions for comfort and sanitation.

Workroom floors should be kept clean. Lighting should be without glare and so arranged that direct rays do not shine into the workers' eyes. Ventilation should be adequate and heat sufficient but not excessive.

Drinking water should be cool and accessible, with individual drinking cups or sanitary bubble fountain provided. Washing facilities, with hot and cold water, soap, and individual towels, should be provided in sufficient number and in accessible locations to make washing before meals and at the close of the workday convenient. Dressing rooms should be provided adjacent to washing facilities, making possible change of clothing outside the workrooms. Rest rooms should be provided. A room separate from the workroom should be provided wherein meals may be eaten and whenever practicable hot and nourishing food should be served. Toilets should be clean and accessible and separate for men and women. Their number should have a standard ratio of one toilet to every 15 workers employed.

2. **Posture at work.**—Continuous standing and continuous sitting are both injurious. A chair should be provided for every woman and its use encouraged. It is possible and desirable to adjust the height of the chairs in relation to the height of machines or work tables, so that the workers may with equal conveni-



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ence and efficiency stand or sit at their work. The seats should have backs. If the chairs are high, foot rests should be provided.

3. **Safety.**—Risks from machinery, danger from fire, and exposure to dust, fumes, or other occupational hazards should be scrupulously guarded against. First-aid equipment should be provided. Adequate fire protection should be assured. Fire drills and other forms of education of the workers in the observance of safety regulations should be instituted.

4. **Conditions needing correction.**—Work is more efficiently performed by either men or women if healthful conditions are established. It is usually possible to make changes which will remove such hazards to health as the following:

(*a*) Constant standing or other posture causing physical strain.

(*b*) Repeated lifting of heavy weights, or other abnormally fatiguing motions.

(*c*) Operation of mechanical devices requiring undue strength.

(*d*) Exposure to excessive heat, humidity, or cold.

(*e*) Exposure to dust, fumes, or other occupational poisons, without adequate safeguards against disease.

5. **Prohibited occupations.**—Women should not be prohibited from employment in any occupation except those which have been proved to be more injurious to women than to men, such as certain processes in the lead industries.



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## IV. HOME WORK.

No work should be given out to be done in rooms used for living or sleeping purposes or in rooms directly connected with living or sleeping rooms in any dwelling or tenement.

## V. EMPLOYMENT MANAGEMENT.

1. **Hiring, separations, and determination of conditions.**—In establishing satisfactory relations between a company and its employees a personnel department is important, charged with responsibility for selection, assignment, transfer, or withdrawal of workers and the establishment of proper working conditions.

2. **Women in supervisory positions.**—Where women are employed, a competent woman should be appointed as employment executive with responsibility for conditions affecting women. Women should also be appointed in supervisory positions in the departments employing women.

3. **Choice of occupation.**—The opportunity for a worker to choose an occupation for which she is best adapted is important in insuring success in the work to be done.

## VI. COOPERATION OF WORKERS IN ESTABLISHING STANDARDS.

The responsibility should not rest upon the management alone of determining wisely and effectively the conditions which should be established. The genuine cooperation essential to production can be secured only if provision is made for the workers as a group, acting



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through their chosen representatives, to share in the control of the conditions of their employment. In proportion to their numbers women should have full representation in the organization necessary for collective bargaining.

## VII. COOPERATION WITH OFFICIAL AGENCIES.

The United States Government and State and local communities have established agencies to deal with conditions of labor, including standards of working conditions, wages, hours, employment, and training. These should be called upon for assistance.

Inquiries regarding the employment of women may be addressed to the Women's Bureau, U. S. Department of Labor, Washington, D. C., and these will be dealt with directly or referred to the Federal or State agency best equipped to give the assistance needed in each instance.

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