

Report of the National Conference  
on  
**EQUAL PAY**

March 31 and April 1, 1952

*Bulletin of the Women's Bureau, No. 243*

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
Maurice J. Tobin, *Secretary*

WOMEN'S BUREAU  
FRIEDA S. MILLER, *Director*

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## LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR,  
WOMEN'S BUREAU,  
*Washington, August 29, 1952.*

SIR: I have the honor of transmitting a report on the National Conference on Equal Pay held by the Women's Bureau on March 31 and April 1, 1952. The conference brought together about 100 men and women representative of national women's organizations, trade unions, employer associations, civic groups, and administrators of State equal-pay laws.

This report is being published because of the request of the conference body to make the information presented at the meetings available for public use.

Conference plans were developed and implemented under my direction by Mrs. Adelia B. Kloak, Chief of the Special Services and Publications Division of the Bureau and the report written by Mrs. Helen J. Robison.

Respectfully submitted.

FRIEDA S. MILLER, *Director.*

HON. MAURICE J. TOBIN,  
*Secretary of Labor.*

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## Foreword

Sponsored by the Women's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor, a National Conference on Equal Pay was held in Washington, D. C., on March 31 and April 1, 1952. The conference had been suggested by the Women's Advisory Committee on Defense Manpower at its meeting on November 13, 1951. The committee recommended that "the Women's Bureau explore the possibility of sponsoring a meeting of organizations interested in the question of equal pay for comparable work for the purpose of considering equal-pay problems and that the Bureau call such a meeting if desirable."

A program for the conference was developed with the aid of a 15-member planning committee. It represented a variety of groups having an active interest in equal pay, and assured participation of these groups in the subsequent conference.

It was determined through committee consultations that this was to be a "working conference." Conference members were selected so as to assure a diversity of viewpoints and a great variety of experience. They reflected the thinking of trade unions, management groups, women's organizations. They came as workers, employers, State and Federal administrators, church groups, and writers. They hailed from all sections of the country.

The reports which were made to the conference by many of the participants gave evidence of progress, slow progress to be sure, on all fronts.

Testifying to how seriously the problem affects women personally as well as the economic health of the country, Maurice J. Tobin, Secretary of Labor, opened the conference. The keynote presentation by Arthur S. Flemming, Assistant to the Director (Manpower), Office of Defense Mobilization, emphasized the need for industry to train and upgrade women in particular skills and categories now, when the urgency of the mobilization effort calls for all available manpower and its fullest utilization. Dorothy S. Brady, Bureau of Labor Statistics, presented a penetrating analysis of the relationship of women's earnings to men's at the present time.

A panel of distinguished speakers offered their views as to ways of strengthening women's status as workers.

There was a clear and fair interchange of ideas. Conference members were not all in agreement on method. The weaknesses in some of the programs were recognized; opposing viewpoints were freely expressed. But the conference ended with purpose renewed and sharpened to strive for equal pay.

FRIEDA S. MILLER,  
*Director, Women's Bureau.*



AT THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EQUAL PAY

(Left to right) Frieda S. Miller, Director of the Women's Bureau; Hon. Maurice J. Tobin, Secretary of Labor; Mrs. Mary T. Norton, Vice Chairman, Women's Advisory Committee on Defense Manpower.

***Purpose of the Conference***

To bring together, as individuals (not as representatives authorized to commit their organizations), persons associated with agencies and organizations that have an active concern with equal pay in the United States for the purpose of:

1. A presentation of their experience and objectives;
2. A full discussion of problems and potentials raised by such presentation and of suggestions for improved programs;
3. A statement of areas of agreement and of points of difference.

# REPORT OF THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EQUAL PAY

## Facts on Equal Pay, Leading Up to the Conference

The fight for equal pay, i. e., "the rate for the job without regard to sex" lacks the glamor of the battles waged in the United States by the feminists earlier in the century which finally won women the vote. No "equal pay" parade has yet taken place. No newspaper has reported a single brick thrown through a window, nor the name of one woman worker willingly dragged off for a night in prison to dramatize economic injustice to women.

Yet the equal-pay idea is as old as the concept of justice. It is not a new program for the Women's Bureau, which has earnestly worked for the general adoption of the practice over the years. Official and private agencies responsible for determining basic wage policies support the principle. Nevertheless, it is a fact that, in spite of announced acceptance of equal-pay principles by virtually all leading elements in public and private life, many women are paid less than men when performing comparable work.

This is not only costly to the millions of working women, but is a serious drag on the earnings of men and a continuing threat to the health of the total economy. In 1910 only 7,788,826 women were in the labor force. Occupational classifications of that day group these women as follows: 25 percent household employees, 28 percent semi-skilled workers, 16 percent farm laborers, and 14 percent clerks. It was, of course, important to the economy then that these almost 8 million women workers should receive equal pay for comparable work, but the records—or lack of them—indicate that the matter was given little attention.

Now, however, with nearly 19 million women workers, almost a third, that is, of the labor force in the United States, it is a matter of grave concern and more should and will be heard of a rate for the job without regard to sex. If we have learned anything from the dis-

turbed business cycles of the past two or three decades it is that a high living standard and prosperous business conditions cannot exist if the worker cannot buy the products of his or her labor. Yet if large numbers of women can be hired at less than the prevailing rates for men their competition is likely to result either in the displacement of the men, or in men's acceptance of lower rates. The eventual result is reduced purchasing power and lower standards of living for all workers.

These are the broad economic facts faced by the Equal Pay Conference, of which the following pages provide a report. At this point, some paragraphs devoted to a summary of the background material, familiar to all members of the conference, but perhaps unknown to new students, may prove useful.

### ***State Policy***

Montana and Michigan, pioneers in equal-pay legislation, passed the first laws applying to private employment in 1919. Now, Alaska and 13 States have equal-pay laws: California, Connecticut, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey (passed in 1952), New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Washington. This is progress. The laws vary widely in coverage. The laws of Illinois and Michigan are limited to manufacturing; those of other States are generally applicable to most types of private employment. The majority of State laws provide for employee suits to recover differences in wages which may be due because of sex discrimination.

Sixteen States and the District of Columbia have laws requiring that men and women teachers receive the same compensation for comparable services. About half of the States have civil-service systems generally applicable to all branches of the State government. In such systems it is customary to set a rate for the job irrespective of sex.

### ***Federal Policy***

No Federal equal-pay law has as yet been enacted. An equal-pay bill was introduced for the first time in the Seventy-ninth Congress in 1945, and similar bills have been introduced in each succeeding Congress.

For its own civil-service employees the Federal Government has long given support to the principle of "a rate for the job irrespective of sex." The greatest single impetus to the equal-pay movement was given by the Classification Act of 1923, which established a uniform salary for each specified grade and class of work. Thus the compensation attaching to hundreds of thousands of civil-service positions was based on job content and qualifications irrespective of the

sex of the worker. This principle was reaffirmed in the Classification Act of 1949. The Department of Defense has reaffirmed the equal-pay policy for women, established by the Army and Navy Departments in World War II, which provides for equal pay for production workers in installations of the Armed Forces.

### ***International Labor Organization Action***

The United States is not alone in the equal-pay movement. The International Labor Organization has vigorously supported the principle of equal pay for more than 30 years. In June 1951 the ILO adopted an Equal Remuneration Convention and a Supplemental Recommendation. Ratifying countries are given the choice of any of the following methods of implementing an equal-pay policy: (1) Collective-bargaining agreements between employers and workers; (2) legally established or recognized machinery for wage determination; (3) national laws or regulations; (4) a combination of these various means. In the United States the Convention and the Recommendation will be referred by the Secretary of Labor to the Governors of the separate States and Territories for appropriate action.

### ***Administrative Action***

Federal administrative action directed to the establishment of equal pay in private industry has been taken. Resolutions permitting equal-pay adjustments to women workers in the face of a general policy stabilizing wage rates were passed by the War Labor Boards in World Wars I and II.

In the present mobilization program the Wage Stabilization Board has acted similarly. It is difficult to trace the effects of these administrative actions since they are permissive rather than mandatory. Until 1944 the War Labor Board required employers who proposed to equalize the pay of women workers to file a report of their actions, and the 2,250 reports filed covered 59,500 women workers. Revocation of the reporting requirement obscures the subsequent influence of the policy.

Wage Stabilization Board Resolution No. 69 requires submission of a petition. In contrast to the World War II experience, almost no petitions have been submitted, but optimists point to the fact that wage-equalizing applications may have been filed under other Wage Board policies without specifying that women workers were involved.

### ***Other Methods***

There is very little detailed knowledge of the extent to which individual establishments follow equal-pay practices, but the bits and

pieces of evidence taken from general statistics on earnings<sup>1</sup> reflect discrimination that involves both rates of pay and unequal job opportunity.

While these figures certainly involve such related employment matters as the tendency of women to find employment in the lower-rated jobs, the hours they work, and their seniority status, they also reflect discriminatory rates where these continue to be paid to women.

It is acknowledged by all that collective bargaining has played a vital role in advancing the practice of equal pay and is one of the major mechanisms for establishing equal-pay practices. A recent analysis of a sample of 2,644 collective-bargaining agreements by the Bureau of Labor Statistics found that nearly a fifth (17 percent) of the sample affirmed the principle of equal pay. Employment data were available for nearly 5½ million workers covered by 2,206 of the agreements, and a fourth (26 percent) of these workers were employed under equal-pay provisions.

State equal-pay legislation and equal-pay clauses in collective-bargaining contracts together have given greater emphasis to the value of careful job evaluation and position classification. Implicit in an objectively designed wage structure is the concept that the rate attaches to the job and not to the job holder, and that the rate is determined by the function and not by the sex of the worker. Outstanding pioneer work in job evaluation was done by the Civil Service classification system.

Said Arthur S. Flemming in his keynote address: ". . . as far as I can see, it is absolutely impossible for a governmental agency or a private business, or for an educational institution to have a sound system of personnel administration unless it does have a sound job classification plan. So that, when persons try to exercise leadership in terms of bringing into effect sound job classification plans, they are at the same time laying a foundation for a program of equal pay for equal work."

## *Attitudes*

The American Federation of Labor, the Congress of Industrial Organizations, and the National Association of Manufacturers have all endorsed the principle of equal pay.

The CIO at its 1951 convention urged its affiliates to oppose discrimination against women through clauses in union contracts and by State and national legislation. The AFL advocated achievement of

<sup>1</sup>In New York State in December 1951 women workers in all manufacturing industries averaged \$47.06 against \$77.61 for men. In Chicago in 1951 the median straight-time weekly earnings of women office workers ranged from \$44.50 to \$63.70 for various types of occupations and establishments; in the same occupations and establishments men's median earnings ranged from \$57.40 to \$78.15 per week.

equal pay through collective bargaining in its recent national convention, but opposes Federal legislation. The NAM, opposing legislation, believes that the "principle of equal pay for equal performance can be achieved through education and the voluntary cooperation of enlightened employers."

Other organizations which have supported the principle of equal pay:

*American Association of University Women.*

*General Federation of Women's Clubs.*

*League of Women Voters of the United States.*

*National Consumers League.*

*National Council of Catholic Women.*

*National Council of Jewish Women.*

*National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs.*

*Service Star Legion.*

*United Church Women.*

*Young Women's Christian Association of America.*

Both the Democratic and the Republican Party platforms in 1948 assured the voters of their support of the policy of equal pay.<sup>2</sup> The Republicans favored "equal pay for equal work regardless of sex." The Democratic Party favored "legislation assuring that the workers of our Nation receive equal pay for equal work regardless of sex."

<sup>2</sup> Similar action was taken by both major parties at their 1952 conventions.

## PROGRAM

*Monday, March 31, 1952*

*Registration—9 a. m.*

*Morning Session—10 a. m.*

FRIEDA S. MILLER, *Presiding*

Welcoming Address:

MAURICE J. TOBIN, *Secretary of Labor.*

Keynote Address:

ARTHUR S. FLEMMING, *Assistant to the Director (Manpower),  
Office of Defense Mobilization.*

“Equal Pay—What Are the Facts?”

Dr. DOROTHY S. BRADY, *Consultant, Bureau of Labor Statistics.*

Panel Discussion—“Day-to-Day Experience With Equal Pay.”

*Afternoon Session—2 p. m.*

ELIZABETH S. MAGEE, *Presiding*

“How to Make Equal Pay a Reality.”

General Discussion.

*Tuesday, April 1, 1952*

*No morning session*

*Afternoon Session—2 p. m.*

FRIEDA S. MILLER, *Presiding*

Report of Committee on Findings.

General Discussion.

# Equal Pay—Present Reality or Future Dream

MAURICE J. TOBIN, *Secretary of Labor*

Welcome to this conference on Equal Pay. The conference itself is welcome, because I look to it to give momentum to a vital program. It is a program to which your Government, especially the Department of Labor, and in particular the Women's Bureau, has long been devoted.

As I look at this group, drawn from all parts of the country, representing so many elements of our complex society, I am encouraged to believe that the equal-pay program is not very far from achieving its objectives. For all of you come here with your own special backgrounds and interests in the spirit of a cooperative enterprise. By welding your various viewpoints harmoniously into a common undertaking, you will multiply the influence and strength of your individual efforts. Together let us examine the truth, both pleasing and painful.

This conference has a very serious purpose. I hope it will blow or blast away the fog of unrealistic, even romantic, thinking about equal pay for women that still remains among various groups of people in the country. Ask the average businessman, the laboring man, and the public servant whether he believes in equal pay, and you will get virtually unanimous agreement. They are for it just as they are against sin. And it is a pretty general assumption that women *do* get equal pay. But the reality is often a denial of the general belief.

In spite of what all responsible leaders think is right in regard to equal pay on human grounds and as practical business and national policy, practices creep in which are recognized as unsound and contrary to the morality of our times. Let me read a letter which a field worker for the Women's Bureau came across last month in the line of duty. It might be amusing, if the implications were not so serious. The manager of a broadcasting company writes to an employment agency as follows:

DEAR MR. BLANK: We have an opening here for a combination program director and salesman. This position can be filled by either a man or a woman. We will pay a woman \$20 a week for doing the office work and give her \$10 a week drawing account, thus guaranteeing her \$30 a week. We will also pay her 20 percent commission on all sales.

We will start a man at \$30 a week for doing the office work and \$30 a week drawing account, and also pay him 20 percent on all sales . . . the person who fills this position must have at least a year or two of business and office experience . . . the girl especially should be attractive.

When a woman walks into a department store, or buys an automobile, or seeks any kind of merchandise (or services), is she charged more—or less—because she is a woman? Of course not. There is one price for all shoppers.

But it is sometimes another story when a woman seeks a job. There are some employers who still expect to pay a woman less than the rate for the job. This practice is neither fair nor logical. It arises from a state of mind, a bad business habit, a cultural pattern that will ultimately be eradicated by the efforts of trade unions, women's organizations, progressive employers, and others, like the members of this conference.

There are today in the United States about 19,000,000 women in the civilian labor force. Last year about one-third of all the women of working age in the United States were actually employed.

During World War II, the proportion of women in the labor force reached 37 per hundred in April 1945. Why do so many women work? The answer to that question can be answered by more facts and figures. They work for the same reason that men do . . . to make a living. In a Women's Bureau survey carried out in cooperation with 6 large labor unions and to which some 8,300 women workers responded, it was found that 60 percent not only supported themselves, but had others depending upon them. Fifteen percent were the sole support of their families. While the majority of these families had only one other member, some of the union women were the only wage earners in families of four or more.

I am glad that I can come before this conference with pride in the record which the Department of Labor can present of support for an equal-pay program. For well over a quarter of a century, the Federal Government has recognized the validity of the principle of "rate for the job" irrespective of sex. This principle was established for Federal civil-service workers by the Classification Act of 1923 and was reaffirmed in the Classification Act of 1949.

The position of the Department of Labor has been clearly stated time and again. The late Secretary Schwellenbach said in his 1947 report:

Equal-pay legislation "is required as a matter of justice to the millions of women in the American labor force and to prevent the use of women as wage cutters, a process which tends to depress general wage levels of both men and women."

And in my first annual report in 1948, I stated, "The principle of 'equal pay for equal work' is as basic to the American way of life as are the guarantees of free speech, free thought, free press, free assembly, and free association . . ."

In the light of these truths, consider the point of view of the employer who was recently asked why he paid the women workers in his factory less for a given job than he paid the men. He said: "Tradition, I suppose," then added frankly, "anyhow it's cheaper."

But you and I know that it isn't. The unequal pay practice is not cheaper in the end—for anyone. Undercutting the wage scale by one or another group in society jeopardizes that most desirable of all social goals—an adequate standard of living for the family. Equal pay is essential to a healthy economy. Displacement of higher paid workers or acceptance by them of lower wage scales eventually must result in a reduction in consumer purchasing power and in standards of living.

I have not come here today, however, to belabor you with economic theories as familiar to you as to me, but rather to toss into the air a few straws that show which way the wind is blowing. Certainly I would not want to create an impression that the fault lies only on the side of the employer.

Often men employees try to perpetuate unfair practices—sometimes on the shaky grounds that more muscles deserve more money.

For example, a man display artist at a department store complained because women artists received the same pay as men. He based his complaint on the fact that the women had to have a porter carry their models for them, while the men could carry their own. The employer said, "All right, then we will pay porter's rates to the men for the time spent carrying the models, and for the artistic work the established rate of pay for all display artists." There were no more complaints.

This equal-pay conference comes at a good time. Because of high employment and the need for good workers, you have a good opportunity to persuade all interested groups of the justice and merit of your case. Press your educational efforts now. That should be the core of your action program.

And let women be ready and willing to assert the right of equal treatment where they are legally accorded that right. Reports have come to us that even in States which have equal-pay legislation, there are areas of noncompliance. This kind of situation thrives on ignorance of the law. Therefore, besides educating legislators and administrators, management and trade unions, you must educate women workers themselves as to the protection afforded them under the law.

Another educational task faces you. It is of the same family as "equal pay." It concerns full job opportunities. Workers and employers alike should recognize that women have shown themselves capable at jobs for which they are rarely selected. There are few women in top level executive positions in industry and government, or in highly skilled technical jobs. There could and should be more.

The fault lies partly in the fact that women themselves have been persuaded that they cannot qualify or that they cannot get the job. They must be encouraged by persistent publicity and education to have more faith in themselves.

I understand, of course, that in most employed women a deep psychological conflict must be resolved. Women, all women, are at heart mothers and have a basic homemaking drive. For centuries their creative talents have been directed almost exclusively to the immediate welfare of their family circle—where they are always needed. Yet today millions of women must work. That is a simple economic fact. Why, then, should they be relegated to or accept jobs and responsibilities inferior to their abilities? They are entitled to the full rewards of their talents. The Nation needs the product of their skills.

Herein lies *your* responsibility. You must be the leaders in this program. When I consider the great advances in social welfare which have been accomplished largely with your help, I have no doubt that you will one day soon establish the equal-pay principle throughout our country. Godspeed to all your efforts.

## Keynote Address

ARTHUR S. FLEMMING, *Assistant to the Director (Manpower) Office of Defense Mobilization*

Madam Chairman, Secretary Tobin, and friends. I appreciate having the opportunity of participating in what I regard as a very significant conference.

Miss Miller has indicated that I did have some administrative contact with a law that does provide for equal pay for equal work.

When I left the Civil Service Commission in 1948 to go back to Ohio to serve as President of Ohio Wesleyan University, I immediately became conscious of the fact that this problem of equal pay for equal work also exists in the realm of educational administration.

I remember distinctly taking a look at the salary schedules at the university for the first time and noting immediately that, as far as women were concerned, the principle of equal pay for equal work had not been followed in all instances. In developing a new salary schedule, we tried very hard to keep that principle in mind.

Just this morning—prior to leaving the office pursuant to coming here—the vice president and dean of the university called me relative to some salary changes for next year, and he said: “I think that in one or two instances we ought to make some upward adjustments beyond what we are planning for the group as a whole, in order to

come closer to this concept of equal pay for equal work; what do you think?"

I said, "I am just about to leave to participate in a conference that has that as its objective. I concur in your recommendation."

As I have had the opportunity of coming in contact with other administrators of non-tax-supported institutions of higher education, I am very conscious of the fact that there is a great deal of work for us to do in the field of education if we are to achieve the kind of objectives that this conference has in mind. I know also that it is a problem in the educational field as far as tax-supported institutions are concerned.

I was very happy to have the privilege of participating in the administration of the Classification Act of 1923, while I served as a member of the Civil Service Commission. That act has since been amended and is now known as the Classification Act of 1949.

When I was a member of the Civil Service Commission I used to say on a good many occasions that it was my feeling that the United States Government should become known as one of the—if not the—most progressive employers in the Nation; and I still believe that is an objective which the United States Government, as an employer, should keep in mind.

In this particular area the Federal Government has taken the lead and is recognized as a progressive employer. When it comes to providing equal job opportunities for women, however, particularly in the upper administrative levels, I think that even the United States Government as an employer has some work to do. And I certainly agree with Secretary Tobin in his emphasis on that particular point.

As this conference thinks in terms of equal pay for equal work, I also hope that it will think in terms of equal job opportunities, because it seems to me that both are closely related to our defense mobilization program.

When I have had the opportunity of discussing the manpower aspects of our defense mobilization program, in all instances I have proceeded from the following premises:

First, that we are face to face with the most serious threat to our basic freedoms that has ever confronted us as a nation;

Second, that in all probability we will be engaged in some kind of a defense mobilization program for the next 10 to 15 to 20 years;

Third, that this Nation is capable of handling the manpower aspects of the defense mobilization program on a voluntary basis, and that it could continue to do so even though we become involved in an all-out war.

All of you have read statements that Secretary Tobin has made, and that others have made who have been participating in the handling of the manpower aspects of the defense mobilization program, to the effect that on a national basis and in terms of gross numbers we are

not face to face with any serious manpower shortages. This is certainly the case, and I think it will continue to be the case, as long as we are participating in a defense mobilization program of approximately the magnitude of the present program.

At the same time, however, I am sure you have heard statements, and read statements, to the effect that when we move over into certain skilled trade areas, and when we begin to think in terms of scientific, technical and engineering personnel—on a national basis and in terms of gross numbers—we are face to face with serious shortages.

As we think in terms of those shortages, we emphasize, of course, the absolute importance, first of all, of all employers doing everything within their power to utilize their manpower resources in accordance with the training and experience that those persons have received. In other words, we place a great deal of emphasis on maximum utilization of the resources now available to us.

In the second place, we have emphasized the fact that in connection with our counseling programs—both in the field of higher education and on the secondary level—we should do a better job of counseling young men and women who have aptitudes for work in those areas where we are confronted with serious shortages, to obtain the training they need in order to serve the Nation with maximum effectiveness.

In this connection, for example, dealing specifically with shortages in the field of engineering, I have emphasized my own conviction that there isn't a chance in the world of our closing the gap between the supply and demand unless we do persuade more women with aptitudes for this type of work to receive training in the field of engineering.

Then finally, we have emphasized the importance of identifying persons who are now working and who have aptitudes along these lines, and, in cooperation with educational institutions, making it possible for them to receive the training which in turn will make it possible for them to be up-graded.

Here again, it is absolutely essential to place emphasis on the necessity of women as well as men being provided with such opportunities.

In summary, it is clear to me that in those areas where we are confronted with serious shortages we must do those things which will bring about a more intelligent utilization of the womanpower resources of our Nation, if our defense mobilization program is to be handled in an effective manner.

And remember, I am not talking about an emergency of 2 or 3 years' duration, a short-term emergency such as confronted us in World War II. I am talking about a long-term emergency, and the things we need to do in the manpower field today are things that we are going to have to continue to do in the future.

If we are going to utilize the womanpower of our Nation in an intelligent and effective manner, and if our defense mobilization program is to rest on a solid foundation from a manpower point of view, then it is perfectly clear to me that this principle of equal pay for equal work, and the principle of equal job opportunities for women, are "musts."

And certainly whenever we refuse to put into operation this concept of equal pay for equal work, we are just refusing to face the manpower aspects of our defense mobilization program in an intelligent and realistic manner.

That is why, personally, I am delighted that there is a conference of this kind taking place in the City of Washington during the next 2 days, and I am also delighted to know that at the end of this conference there are certain findings which are going to be submitted by those participating in the conference.

In this area as in all other areas we can carry forward our educational programs effectively when government—Federal Government or State governments—exercises intelligent leadership. Oftentimes this leadership is exercised by the passage of legislation. And certainly I hope that over the period of the next year or two substantial progress will be made in the legislative field, at both Federal and State governmental levels.

Also, however, if we are going to make real progress in this particular area—as well as in many other manpower areas—we must lift the levels of performance as far as the whole field of personnel management is concerned, whether we are thinking of public employers or private employers. That is the only way in which we can hope to deal with manpower problems on a voluntary basis.

Well, here in this area, you—through leadership you have the opportunity of exercising—have the privilege and opportunity of persuading employers, both public and private, that if they are to deal with the manpower problems on a voluntary basis, and if they are to make the most effective and intelligent use of our existing manpower and womanpower resources, they must put into effect this concept of equal pay for equal work, and the other concept of equal job opportunities for women.

Now, I have noted in reading the literature in this particular area that it is not too difficult to obtain an agreement between management and labor, for example, calling for equal pay for equal work. But it is more difficult to bring about an actual enforcement of such a provision.

Growing out of my own experience in the Federal Government, I know that there is not a chance in the world of the concept of equal pay for equal work really being put into effect unless there is in effect

a good, sound, practical system of analyzing and classifying jobs on the basis of duties and responsibilities.

This is the reason why the Federal Government has made some progress in this particular area; and as far as I can see, it is absolutely impossible for a governmental agency, or a private business, or an educational institution, to have a sound system of personnel administration unless it does have a sound job classification plan.

When persons exercise leadership in the personnel field in terms of persuading public and private employers to put into effect sound job classification plans, they are at the same time laying the foundation for a program of equal pay for equal work. And that is the only way in which we are going to make substantial progress in the direction of reaching the objective in which you are interested.

As one who has responsibility for the manpower aspects of defense mobilization, I want to assure you that I will be very, very anxious to have the opportunity of examining the findings which you make, and that personally I will do anything and everything I possibly can to see to it that those findings are put into operation.

I believe in the objective in which you are interested. I not only believe in it, but I believe that it is imperative for our Government to exercise the kind of leadership which will result in the realization of the objective in which you are interested.

Thank you very much for this opportunity of being with you.

## Equal Pay—What Are the Facts?

Dr. DOROTHY S. BRADY

*Bureau of Labor Statistics, U. S. Department of Labor*

### *The General Picture*

Fifteen million women and 41 million men who were employed in civilian work in April 1951 reported earnings for 1950. On the average, women's earnings from wages and salaries amounted to 45 percent of men's earnings.<sup>3</sup> The spread between the median earnings of women and men, from about \$1,200 to approximately \$2,700, can be traced to many differences in men's and women's work—in occupation, industry, location, length of employment, as well as in the wage or salary rate. Advocates of the equal-pay principle assume that some part of the general difference in the earnings of men and women is due to differential rates of pay for the same kind of work. The statistics of income

<sup>3</sup> These comparisons of men's and women's earnings are from U. S. Bureau of the Census, Population Reports, Series P-60, No. 9, "Consumer Income," March 25, 1952.

that have been accumulating over the past 10 years support this view but at the same time, raise some serious questions about the progress of women's employment. In 1939, the ratio of women's earnings to men's was higher than in 1950, 59 percent compared with 45 percent. Excluding domestic service, the ratio of women's earnings to men's was 62 percent for 1939 and 53 percent for 1950 for all industries.

Women's earnings, relative to men's are much higher than the average in the major industries in which the equal-pay principle has operated to some extent over the longest time—namely public administration and transportation and public utilities. The median earnings of women in public administration amounted to 74 percent of the median earnings of men in 1950; the percentage for transportation and the utilities was 67. At the other end of the scale, in the industries only recently affected by the equal-pay principle in any degree, retail trade and personal services, women's earnings relative to men's are below the ratio of 53 percent for all industries combined—in retail trade 48 percent and in personal services 33 percent. In manufacturing women's earnings as a percentage of men's earnings amounted to 57 percent, somewhat above the over-all ratio.

A comparison of women's and men's earnings in the major occupational groups shows a similar range which cannot be considered a result of differences in the training or skills required. Among sales workers and personal service workers, exclusive of those in private households, women's average earnings are less than 40 percent of the men's. Among clerical workers the ratio is highest, 69 percent; among factory operatives and in the professions, women's earnings average a little less than 60 percent of the men's.

Women workers are concentrated in the middle-income occupational groups as judged by men's earnings. Relatively few women work as laborers, the lowest-paid occupation among men. (Domestic service, the lowest-paid occupation for women includes so few men that it has to be excluded from the comparison of men's and women's earnings.) Very few are found in business management, the occupation in which men earn the most. Nearly 60 percent of women employed outside of private households are factory operatives or clerical workers. Because of this occupational concentration, women workers in an industry may have earnings well above the average percentage of men's earnings even though few women are found in the highest paid occupations.

### *Women's Earnings in Specific Occupations*

The general picture of women's earnings in 1950 was much the same as in 1939. Until more publications from the 1950 Census are available, the data from the 1940 Census will have to serve for detailed

comparisons such as the relative earnings of men and women in specific occupations. Since so large a proportion of women workers are found in the major group "operatives and kindred workers," this group may be taken to illustrate in more detail the factors influencing the relative earnings of men and women. The 35 occupations within the operatives' group separate into three classes. In one class there were very few or no women employed in the occupation; and here the men's earnings for 12 months' work were highest, above \$1,300 for all but one occupation—service station attendants. In the second, the men's earnings were close to \$1,300 for almost all occupations, and the proportion of women workers ranged from 10 to 40 percent. In this second class, the women's earnings ranged from 55 to 70 percent of the men's earnings. In the third class of occupations, where the proportion of women workers exceeded 40 percent, the women's average earnings were from 60 to 100 percent of the men's—but the men's earnings were much lower than in the other two classes of occupations, uniformly \$1,100 or less. It appears that where the earnings of women and men approach equality, there are many women employed and the earnings of men and women are equally low.

These statistics obviously lack the precision of comparison that is defined in equal-pay laws and equal-pay provisions in collective-bargaining agreements, but they throw much light on the historical effects of the employment of women in the determination of the occupational differentials in earnings. The channeling of women into certain occupations may have kept the rate of earnings low, but the main influence may well have been in continuing the existence of the occupation. If all the earnings of women were raised to the level of men's earnings in the same occupation, women as a group would still have low earnings relative to men. The men's earnings in the occupations in which women are numerous, amount to about 70 percent of the men's earnings in the occupations few women follow. Among the operatives and kindred workers, equal pay might raise the ratio of women's earnings to men's from the actual 59 percent to slightly more than 70 percent; but without change in the occupational differentials in employment of men and women there could be no greater change towards equality.

### *Age and Experience*

The clustering of women in certain occupations is not entirely due to restrictions on entry into other fields because of sex alone. Within all occupational groups women tend to be concentrated in the types of work which require the least training and experience. Women's occupations thus tend to be those in which the younger workers of both sexes are found; and the woman worker is still characteristically

a younger worker although there have been substantial increases in the number of older women employed.

Men's earnings rise steadily with age to a maximum in the ages between 45 and 55. The earnings of young men 20 to 25 years old are, on the average, about 60 percent of the peak earnings of men 50 years old. The earnings of young persons under 20 tend to be the same for both sexes but women's earnings rise at a slower rate and reach their highest point at an earlier age, between 35 and 45. The peak earnings of women are about equal to the earnings of young men 20 to 25 years old.

If the age differences in men's earnings are taken as a measure of the value of experience, the difference in men's earnings between the occupations with relatively large numbers of women workers and those with practically no women workers can be attributed to this factor alone. If there were no women workers, either the wages in many of these occupations would have to be increased or the work process mechanized for there would not be a sufficient number of young or inexperienced men to fill all the positions. Women swell the ranks of inexperienced workers and thereby help determine the occupational differentials in wages and salaries that prevail at any given time.

It might be argued that the discontinuous work history of the great majority of women can lead to no other result—women will always lack experience—but this interpretation does not explain why the sex differential in earnings is established in the early 20's at the beginning of work experience for both men and women. In almost all situations the earnings of women in the age group 20 to 24 are nearly 80 percent of the men's earnings. This difference may be attributed to the channeling of women into certain occupations but it does not explain the channeling. The occupational distribution of young men and women in the labor force today must be explained to a large extent by their educational training. Practically the same numbers of men and women finish high school and finish college. We all know that opportunities exist for women in many fields that were closed to them in the past—but where are the women equipped to take advantage of these opportunities? It seems to me that the secret of the maximum utilization of women in productive services lies deep down in the educational process. Equal pay as a principle may have its chief force as a challenge to prepare women to perform equal work when there are opportunities to do so.

## Report of Committee on Findings

There was agreement on the principle of equal pay for comparable work in the same establishment.

There was also agreement that in addition to equal pay, there needs to be equal opportunity for women in training, placement and advancement.

Three methods were discussed through which this might be accomplished:

1. Legislation.
2. Education.
3. Collective bargaining.

### 1. Legislation

Majority opinion seemed to be in favor of Federal legislation which would set a standard for employers and would furnish a framework for collective bargaining, such as was accomplished [for minimum wage] by the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Since Federal legislation if enacted would cover only employees in interstate commerce, State legislation is also required. State laws which have been enacted vary greatly and in some instances are inadequate and difficult to enforce and should be improved. However, even a law which is not completely effective has value in establishing a standard.

Furthermore, the practice of equal pay by Federal, State, and municipal Governments has resulted in more equitable pay standards for women and better personnel relationships and practices.

There were some views expressed that rather than through legislation, equal pay should be accomplished through development of public opinion, education on a broad scale, and improved management methods.

Traditionally, however, legislation has been recognized as an educational basis for employers, employees, and the public.

### 2. Education

Members of the conference indicated a great need for an educational program which would result in a better understanding of the *principle of and need for* equal pay. Various organizations requested help in promoting the idea at the local community level. Suggestions offered included regular meetings for discussion of equal pay, printed material in club magazines, and collection of pertinent data from union organizations.

### 3. *Collective Bargaining*

Collective bargaining has resulted in the establishment of proper wage rates for the job regardless of sex for many workers.

Collective bargaining does not cover the large number of women who are unorganized at the present time. For these women, the only methods by which equal pay could be obtained would be through legislation, education, or voluntary action by enlightened employers.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

Since our country is facing a crucial period in our national life which requires the maximum utilization of all labor resources; and since legislation that is enacted into law by the majority of our people is a democratic process, it is pertinent to make the following recommendations:

1. That Federal legislation for equal pay for equal work be enacted as soon as possible.
2. That State legislation for equal pay for equal work be enacted where it does not exist, and that existing State laws be improved in cases where they are inadequate.
3. That an intensive educational campaign on the principle of and need for equal pay be carried on at a national and local level to inform and influence the employers, employees, and the general public. This will require the use of all channels available to the women's organizations, the Women's Bureau, the unions, the press, the radio, and community organizations.
4. That a small continuing committee be appointed from the conference to further the objectives agreed upon. There are equal pay bills pending in both houses of Congress. To be enacted, legislation for equal pay for equal work must receive widespread support.

#### *Addendum to Recommendation No. 4 of the Findings Committee*

Shortly after the conference, the Director of the Women's Bureau called together for consultation on the subject of the "small continuing committee," the individuals who had served the Bureau in an advisory capacity for the National Equal Pay Conference.

Since the conference had specifically favored as its first objective the enactment of Federal legislation as soon as possible, it was obvious that an important part of the work of a continuing committee would be to promote such legislation. Yet, as the Director of the Bureau pointed out, *no Federal agency can be involved in any activity designed to influence Congress.*

The Planning Committee, therefore, decided that the continuing committee would have to act as an independent group. Such a committee would feel free to call on the Bureau for such traditional services as fact-finding and for educational and technical advice on legislative matters, but it would be set up separate and apart from the Women's Bureau.

The group then appointed a subcommittee whose function was to prepare a plan of work for a small continuing committee, which would further the objectives of the National Equal Pay Conference, as stated in the Recommendations of the Findings Committee.

## Summary of Conference Discussion

The report of the Committee on Findings succinctly brings together the conclusions reached at the conference.

The variety of viewpoints expressed, differences of opinion as to methods for achieving equal pay, the relationship of equal opportunity to equal pay, and the underlying thread running through all discussion, namely the need for greater public understanding, could not be presented in sufficient detail in that report. Among a group of people representative of such a variety of viewpoints, background, and experience it was not in the least surprising to find widely divergent opinions no matter what the subject. Therefore this section will summarize briefly the discussions upon which these differing conclusions are based.

Conference members all supported the principle of equal pay and the need for a broad educational program to create better public understanding.

There were those who believed passage of Federal and State legislation was the answer to achieving in reality the "rate for the job." Some groups favored State legislation, but opposed Federal legislation. Still others wanted no legislation at all, but were sure voluntary action by industry would provide "rate for the job regardless of sex."

Discussion on legislation revealed the fear on the part of some that existing State laws were difficult to enforce. Many of them were written in such a way that their intent could be circumvented. Anyway, until women have access to better paying jobs legislation was thought to have little meaning. Others pointed out the values of legislation even though the law might not be perfect. Inspection staff has an opportunity to do an educational as well as an enforcement job on equal pay and many injustices are wiped out after passage of a law through the voluntary compliance of an overwhelming majority of employers.

Collective bargaining as a method of providing equal pay for comparable work was also presented as an effective method. On the whole, this premise was accepted, but many conference members pointed out what in their opinion were definite limitations to the effectiveness of such a program. The large numbers of women who are unorganized, the lack of enforcement of equal-pay clauses in collective-bargaining agreements, and the danger of the equal-pay clause being omitted when a contract is renewed, were all arguments given in support of legislation in addition to collective bargaining.

Throughout the conference, regardless of the subject, there arose for discussion time after time the belief that a better educational job needs to be done to create favorable public opinion in support of the principle of equal pay and to make known the economic soundness of this principle. Women, in particular the wives of working men and business executives, have a peculiar opportunity to develop sound attitudes on equal pay. The conviction that attainment of equal pay would be a very limited victory unless women also obtain equal job opportunities was reiterated. Equal opportunity for women must be available in the field of training, placement, and advancement. Women themselves must be convinced that they are capable of assuming positions of responsibility in business, the professions, and public service.

Thus a day of lively discussion refreshed the thinking of sincere men and women. The conference ended with the expressed conviction that much still remained to be done and that individuals as well as organizations had an obligation to work for the establishment of the principle of equal pay as a reality rather than to let it remain a future dream.

# Appendix

## Notes From the Field

Unfortunately, it is still difficult to get comprehensive plant-by-plant, job-by-job statistical information to prove the extent of equal pay in the United States today.

Illustrative material based on information picked up by field representatives of the Bureau and from other sources indicate that there still are instances where the "rate for the job" is not company policy.

In a department store women floor-service managers were receiving about \$5 per week less than men on the same job. The only reason given for the unequal rates was that it is a traditional practice, "probably based on the belief that customers prefer dealing with men."

In four banks it was found that there was a woman's rate and a man's rate for teller trainees, although both were equally inexperienced on the job. In one of the banks there was a differential in the hiring rate for teller trainees, and also for experienced men and women tellers. The differential was for no uniform amount, but it was at least \$25 per month for the experienced women and as much or more for women trainees.

In one city the teachers' union has been given printed wage scales which showed equal pay for men and women, but men teachers were paid more money on the side so that in fact equal pay did not exist.

Job orders in several public employment offices show the requirements for the job were exactly the same, whether the person hired was a man or a woman, yet the rate of pay offered in each case, as shown below, indicates salary discrimination against women:

Job to be done	Salary of man hired	Salary of woman hired
Medical technician in laboratory..	\$285; end of 3 months \$300.	\$230; end of 3 months \$240.
Bookkeeper (beverage bottling)---	\$75 to \$80 per week..	\$50 to \$60 per week.
Salesperson, general hardware.....	\$40 per week-----	\$35 per week.
Manager, credit and collection, retail clothing store.	\$40 to \$50 per week..	\$35 to \$40 per week.
Sales clerk, grocery store; can advance to checker.	\$39 per week-----	\$36 per week.
Bookkeeper, office manager trainee (for man who might be inter- ested, employer will not require much experience).	\$200 to \$225 a month..	\$175 to \$200 a month.
Salesperson, ladies' ready-to-wear..	\$6 to \$7 per day-----	\$5 per day.
Bookkeeper (heating contractor)---	\$65 per week-----	\$45 per week.
Bookkeeper (wholesale uniforms)---	\$250 a month-----	(To be arranged.)
Salesperson, men's clothing (part time).	\$6 a day-----	\$5 a day.

## Participants in National Conference on Equal Pay

Hon. Maurice J. Tobin—*Welcoming Address*,  
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Arthur S. Fleming—*Keynote Address*,  
Assistant to the Director (Manpower),  
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Dr. Dorothy S. Brady—*Speaker*,  
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Frieda S. Miller—*Presiding at Monday morning and Tuesday sessions*,  
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*Executive Secretary of Conference*—Mrs. Adelia B. Kloak, Chief, Special Services and Publications Division, Women's Bureau, U. S. Department of Labor

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