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# Progress Toward Equal Pay In The Meat-Packing Industry



Women's Bureau Bulletin 251

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no. 251

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
Martin P. Durkin, Secretary

WOMEN'S BUREAU  
Frieda S. Miller, Director

Washington : 1953

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# Progress Toward Equal Pay in The Meat-Packing Industry



Women's Bureau Bulletin 251

WOMEN'S BUREAU

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

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## LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR,  
WOMEN'S BUREAU,  
*Washington, June 8, 1953.*

SIR: I have the honor to transmit a report on progress toward equal pay in the meat-packing industry. In advocating good standards of employment and promoting the welfare of working women, the Women's Bureau has had a continuing interest in equal pay and has issued various reports on legislation, collective bargaining, problems, and progress related to equal pay.

Lower earnings received by women in comparison with men are in part attributable to a number of factors including the concentration of women workers in low-paying jobs within an industry, differences in hours of work, less seniority within a plant, more limited experience and less opportunity for advancement. Another specific factor is the existence of lower rates for women on the same or similar jobs as men within a plant. Unfortunately, the incidence of such discrimination in pay cannot be accurately determined from available statistical data. In this circumstance the Women's Bureau believes that one constructive approach is to provide factual descriptions of unequal rate situations in order that the problem can be viewed realistically and its various aspects illustrated.

This report provides a description of this kind—and a particularly significant one because of the considerable progress toward equal pay that has been achieved. Dual rate structures with lower rates for women's jobs that are the same or similar to those held by men have been traditional in some industries. Since there are many companies with dual wage structures in the meat-packing industry, the experience there is of especial interest.

The report describes the background and nature of differentials in the wage rates for men and women in selected plants and indicates the progress in reducing differentials in the industry and in removing them altogether in some plants.

Management and union representatives made information available for the report and were given an opportunity to review the manuscript.

The field visits were made and the report was written by Ethel Erickson in the Bureau's Division of Research, directed by Mary N. Hilton.

Respectfully submitted.

FRIEDA S. MILLER, *Director.*

HON. MARTIN P. DURKIN,  
*Secretary of Labor.*

BETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
WOMAN'S BUREAU  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20540

Sir: I have the honor to transmit a report on progress toward equal pay in the meat-packing industry. In advocating good standards of employment and promoting the welfare of working women, the Woman's Bureau has had a continuing interest in equal pay and has issued various reports on legislative proposals regarding problems and progress toward equal pay.

Lower earnings received by women in comparison with men are in part attributable to a number of factors including the concentration of women workers in low-paying jobs within an industry, differences in hours of work, less seniority within a plant, lower job responsibilities and less opportunity for advancement. Another specific factor is the existence of lower rates for women on the same or similar jobs as men within a plant. Unfortunately, the incidence of such discrimination in pay rates has not been completely determined in our available statistical data. In this regard, the Women's Bureau has developed a cooperative approach to provide factual descriptions of unusual case situations in order that the problem can be viewed realistically and its various aspects clarified.

This report provides a description of this kind—and a particularly significant one because of the considerable number of women in that industry who are affected. That the statistics with lower rates for women's jobs that are the same or similar to those held by men have been mentioned in some industries since that time many companies with plant-wide contracts in the meat-packing industry, the report concludes as of special interest.

The report describes the background and nature of legislative proposals for equal pay and also in selected plants and industries the progress in reducing differentials in the industry and in resolving them altogether in some plants.

Management and union representatives made information available for the report and were given an opportunity to review the manuscript. The field visits were made and the report was written by Miss Buckner in the Bureau's Division of Research, directed by Miss N. Hinton.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura S. Mixer, Director

Hon. MARY P. DUNN,  
Secretary of Labor

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# Progress Toward Equal Pay in the Meat-Packing Industry

## Introduction

The meat-products industry is one of the three food industries employing the largest numbers of women. About 65,000 women were employed in meat products in the fall of 1952 and they comprised about one-fifth of the employees in the industry.<sup>1</sup>

The industry is made up of three groups—the large national packers with many plants, usually known as the “Big Four”; medium-sized companies with a smaller number of branches, usually considered the “independents”; and the small local packers. Four companies produce more than one-half of all federally inspected meat and employ about one-half of the workers. These firms set the pattern for collective bargaining and any changes in their master agreements and contractual provisions are reflected throughout the industry. Meat packing is a highly organized industry, with 90 percent of the production workers under union contract.<sup>2</sup>

One of the characteristics of the industry that is of concern to the Women's Bureau with its interest in promoting the welfare of wage-earning women is the double wage schedule. Jobs performed by women have been designated as “female” and rates for women have been on a separate schedule, which is basically lower than that for men in most meat-packing plants.

Some of the independent packers have a single wage structure covering both men and women, but this does not affect the bulk of the industry as most of the independents follow the policies of the large companies. A report to the President of the United States on labor disputes in the meat-packing industry shortly after the end of World War II stated: “Practically all of the female employees, constituting nearly 20 percent of the total employees, are paid less than the common labor rate for male employees.”<sup>3</sup>

The Meat-Packing Commission appointed by the National War Labor Board in 1945 to deal with wage stabilization problems in the meat-packing industry made marked progress in developing a ration-

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment and Payrolls, January 1953.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Collective Bargaining in the Meat-Packing Industry, Bulletin No. 1063.

<sup>3</sup> Report to the President on Labor Disputes in the Meat-Packing Industry, by the Board of Inquiry, April 8, 1948, p. 59.

alized wage structure for the industry, but the dual rates for men and women remained. The termination report of the NWLB stated that intra-plant inequities in the industry constituted one of the unresolved problems and the commission was continued beyond the life of the parent organization.<sup>4</sup>

The labor organizations, both CIO and AFL, during and since World War II, have endorsed the elimination of male-female rate differentials and there has been a material narrowing of the gap in job rates. A number of independent companies have adopted a single rate structure and, during 1952, the differential between men's and women's rates was reduced substantially in all the large companies.

In negotiations for wage increases early in 1952, union representatives reached an agreement with two of the national packers that the differential in rates for men and women workers be reduced to 9 cents an hour wherever there was a larger differential. In the important Metropolitan area,<sup>5</sup> for example, the differential was 10½ cents an hour. The reduction in differential was approved by the Wage Stabilization Board for these two companies in February 1952. Whenever a pattern is set through collective bargaining with one or more of the big packers, it tends to become the pattern for the industry, and a month later, in March, the Board amended Resolution 80—the order covering general wage increases in the meat-packing industry—to allow all meat-packing companies to reduce sex wage differentials to 9 cents without prior approval by the Board.

This amendment to Resolution 80 did not deny the packers the privilege of giving rate increases to women to equalize their rates with men's for equal work, but such action required a direct petition to the Board for consideration under the Board's Resolution 69, which authorized increases for equal pay for equal work as a part of its policy of fostering defense production and promoting sound working relations.

In the fall of 1952, the negotiations for contract renewals of master agreements to cover the period up to September 1954 resulted in a reduction of the basic male-female differential from 9 to a maximum of 5 cents an hour. During 1951 and 1952, collective bargaining had brought about more than a 50-percent reduction of the differential—that is from 10½ cents to 5 cents an hour—in most of the large meat-packing centers.

At a national equal-pay conference sponsored by the Women's Bureau in the spring of 1952, the order of the Wage Stabilization Board covering the 9-cent differential and its "unequal" pay implications were discussed, and members of the conference requested the

<sup>4</sup> Termination Report of the National War Labor Board, vol. 1, part II, ch. 19.

<sup>5</sup> See p. 6 for discussion on geographic areas usually considered in collective bargaining.

Women's Bureau to explore and report on inequities in women's rates in the meat-packing industry. Since no current information was available in the Labor Department, a field representative of the Women's Bureau obtained information from the 2 major labor organizations for packinghouse workers and from 9 meat-packing companies. Representative plants of the "Big Four" and independents were included. The information obtained in the field explorations by the Women's Bureau was related to employment opportunities for women, basic wage schedules, job rates for men and women on the same and similar job titles, and projects of labor unions to promote equal pay or to reduce inequities in women's rates.

### *Employment and Job Opportunities for Women*

In 1910 only about 1 out of every 16 operatives and laborers in the meat-products industry was a woman while at present the comparable ratio is about 1 of every 5. Women's opportunities for employment have grown with the development of new processed products, canned meats, new specialties, and marketing of products in small-sized packages for consumer use. Most of the jobs open to women are in the casing, canning, pork trimming, sliced bacon, sausage, and selected meats departments. The slaughtering, primary dressing, and cutting up of cattle, hogs, and sheep employ relatively few women, and departments such as hides, maintenance, shipping, and stockyards rarely have any women workers.

In the kill departments, a few women work with the men on jobs such as stamping carcasses, exposing kidneys, tying guts, cutting out eyelids, trimming ears and cheeks, and other work on the head bench. In the offal sections, located close to the killing operations, women are saving and trimming all kinds of glands, bladders, tongues, viscera, and weasands. Inspecting and spotting livers, clipping and scraping fat from casings, and washing ruffle fat are other jobs that employ women as well as men. The number of women, however, tends to be small, and some companies employ no women in the killing and offal departments. Women are more likely to be working in hog-killing and hog-offal departments than in those processing cattle and sheep.

The casing departments often employ men and women on the same or similar work. Flushing, trimming, inspecting, grading, measuring, salting, and packing casings are jobs on which both men and women are employed.

Pork trimming is one of the principal job openings for women. The pork trimmer trims lean from fat and separates fat and lean according to specifications for use in sausage, canning, and other processed meat products. The women usually work on the smaller pieces of meat. Retrimming trimmings is almost always a woman's

job. Women, however, in some plants trim loins, shoulder hams, and steaks and trim and roll small roasts. Men almost exclusively are employed to trim the heavier cuts. In some plants, all the trimming jobs are men's. Women on trimming must be skilled in handling knives and keeping them honed. Knives are usually sharpened for the women but men often prefer to sharpen their own knives and are allowed to do this during working hours.

Women outnumber men in the sausage departments. Many of the jobs are almost exclusively women's. Women link sausage by hand and by machine, tie and rope dry sausage, stuff meat loaves and boneless hams into artificial casings, weigh and mix spices according to formulas, prepare casings for stuffing, wash pans, and serve as general helpers in sausage manufacture. Men usually operate the air-pressure stuffing machines. Filling the hopper requires considerable lifting of sausage ingredients and this, along with the control of air valves, keeps the job from being considered as suitable for women. Women, however, often assist in the machine stuffing and during emergency periods have replaced men on this job—sometimes with help in lifting.

Canning, like the sausage department, has a high proportion of women, and the jobs of men and women for the most part are different. Since much of the work in canning is described as "kitchen-type," it is considered especially suitable for women. Women prepare products for canning, fill or stuff cans by hand where the appearance of the pack is important or where the product does not lend itself to machine stuffing, seal and label cans and jars. Men in canning, and also in sausage departments, operate the chopping, grinding, and mixing equipment and do the trucking and heavy packing.

Sliced bacon is another department where many women work. Men operate slicing machines, truck supplies and the packed bacon, do clean-up work, and serve as foremen. Occasionally, women may operate the slicers and work as gang leaders. Women scoop the sliced bacon, weigh and check-weight, wrap and pack. Men are rarely assigned the packing and wrapping jobs.

In ham departments of the smoked meats division, the job opportunities for women are not as many as in bacon departments, but women are employed along with men wrapping and packaging hams and other smoked products. Pumping curing solution into arteries of hams is a job on which women occasionally work together with or replace men.

The lard refinery is a mechanized unit and does not require much manual work. Jobs for men and women are different. A relatively small number of women are employed in setting up boxes and cartons, lining them, and operating filling equipment for the small 1- to 4-pound packages.

Although the meat-packing industry is characterized by a high degree of specialization and job dilution, it is not a highly mechanized industry compared with most durable goods industries. The hand knife and cleaver are still basic tools. Although conveyor lines and belts are used extensively, hand trucking to and from storerooms and coolers to workrooms goes on continuously, and many jobs are a combination of the primary skills and duties required for production with the secondary duties of trucking and movement of goods in process. Women are rarely employed on heavy jobs which involve marked physical strain. For the most part, women's jobs are the lighter, cleaner ones that require finger dexterity and continued application and patience on repetitive work.

The proportion of semiskilled and unskilled work in meat packing has been estimated as high as 70 percent and in rate determination, working conditions and strains are given marked consideration. Actual skill on production is not the determining factor in the ranking of many jobs.<sup>6</sup>

#### *Wage Determination in the Meat-Packing Industry*

The processing of a great variety of meat products and by-products with varying work specifications under different working conditions is accompanied by a high degree of job specialization and that, in turn, has created thousands of job titles and rates in the meat-packing industry. Ranking of jobs for rates did not follow any orderly over-all plan in most of the large companies for many years. Geographic differentials were marked. Personal rates through wage adjustments on an individual basis were common. Rates for men and for women were basically distinct.

When collective bargaining in the meat-packing industry became an important consideration in rate determination during World War II and when wage increases and adjustments had to be approved by the National War Labor Board, a great many problems arose in trying to make adjustments under the existing wage plans. Piece-meal adjustments tended to create new inequities. The National War Labor Board found the complexities baffling in handling wage adjustments under its regular procedures and in 1945 the Meat-Packing Commission was established to specialize on the problems of rate adjustments for the industry and to work out a rational plan of handling them.

The Meat-Packing Commission, a tripartite group representing employers, unions, and the public, worked for about 2 years reviewing the wage rates of the large companies and directing the development

<sup>6</sup> Corey, Lewis. *Meat and Man*. New York, N. Y., Viking Press, 1950. 377 pp.

of a simplified structure. This plan—the work of management and union representatives with appeal to the Commission in case of disagreement—slotted or classified jobs into about 25 wage brackets at  $2\frac{1}{2}$ -cent intervals. Many jobs that had been at the lowest or common labor rate were slotted into brackets above the bottom rate, benefitting both men and women. The new plan was the first overall rationalization of the meat-packing industry's basic wage structure and was a marked improvement over former wage plans, but it did not eliminate the separate schedules for men and women.

The framework established under the direction of the Meat-Packing Commission is still the basic plan for the national packers, and it is followed by many of the independent packers. The bracket interval has been increased from  $2\frac{1}{2}$  cents to  $3\frac{1}{2}$  cents. Geographic areas have been consolidated and differences in rates between areas reduced. The geographic areas usually considered in collective bargaining are the Metropolitan, the Southeastern, Southwestern, Southern California, and the Western. The Metropolitan area covers all the mid-west and eastern cities. It includes such important meat-packing centers as Chicago, Kansas City, Omaha, and St. Paul. It is estimated that about 80 percent of the meat-packing employees are in the Metropolitan area.

#### ***Narrowing the Differentials Through Collective Bargaining***

The common labor rate for men and the common labor rate for women are the bases from which rates progress in  $3\frac{1}{2}$ -cent steps or brackets to the maximum. The rates for women traditionally have been lower than men's before and since the advent of collective bargaining. Until the new master agreements were signed in the fall of 1952, the differential in union agreements varied by geographic areas. In the Los Angeles or Southern California area, the differential has been 5 cents for a number of years. In the Southeastern area, it was 7 cents in urban and  $6\frac{1}{2}$  cents in rural plants. The Metropolitan area, in which approximately 80 percent of the employees work, had a differential of  $10\frac{1}{2}$  cents for many years until the reduction to 9 cents was approved in March 1952. The Northwestern and Southwestern areas, also, followed the differential pattern of the Metropolitan area. In the fall of 1952, contract negotiations established the pattern of a 5-cent differential in all areas.

During the year 1952, two changes in the differential through collective bargaining, in the areas in which most of the industry is located, led to a reduction of more than 50 percent in the gap between the common labor rate for men and women. The following summary shows the changes in actual rates and differential in the Metropolitan area.

Wage bracket <sup>1</sup>	October 1951		March 1952		October 1952	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
0 (common labor)---	\$1. 35	\$1. 24½	\$1. 41	\$1. 32	\$1. 45	\$1. 40
1-----	1. 38½	1. 28	1. 44½	1. 35½	1. 48½	1. 43½
2-----	1. 42	1. 31½	1. 48	1. 39	1. 52	1. 47
3-----	1. 45½	1. 35	1. 51½	1. 42½	1. 55½	1. 50½
4-----	1. 49	1. 38½	1. 55	1. 46	1. 59	1. 54
5-----	1. 52½	1. 42	1. 58½	1. 49½	1. 62½	1. 57½
6-----	1. 56	1. 45½	1. 62	1. 53	1. 66	1. 61
Differential-----	10¢		9¢		5¢	

<sup>1</sup> Brackets continue in 3½-cent steps up to 30.

Only 6 wage brackets are shown because very few women hold jobs that are rated higher than bracket 6. Women's opportunities are limited largely to jobs rated in the three lowest brackets, and only a small proportion of the women advance to jobs in bracket 3 or above.

General increases in the hourly wage have been the same amount for men and women and percentage-wise this, too, has narrowed the differential appreciably. In 1932, when the common labor rate in a Big Four plant was 35 cents an hour for men and 25 cents for women, the women's rate was approximately 30 percent less than the men's, while at present, in the same plant, the common labor rate is \$1.45 for men and \$1.40 for women, a difference of about 3½ percent, making the women's rates about 96 percent of the men's.

Women's rates of pay in the meat-packing industry compare favorably with women's rates in industry generally and with additional earnings when employed on incentive plans, the average hourly earnings of both men and women are higher than those indicated by the rate schedules. However, in most plants women are still in a separate wage category, 5 cents below that of the men in each wage bracket. Since most of the jobs filled by women are in the three lowest brackets, the majority of the women have basic hourly rates below any for men except the common labor rate.

### ***Differences in Job Rates of Men and Women on the Same and Similar Jobs***

Classifying the jobs into appropriate brackets on the basis of job duties, skills required, strains, and working conditions is a managerial function. All the large national meat packers have rate and time study units that classify jobs and set piece rates. In most companies, rating is based on an overall knowledge of the jobs and conditions without the aid of formal job evaluation plans. The classification of jobs of the same or similar titles into wage brackets occasionally

varies from plant to plant even within the same company. Local practices, working conditions, and traditions are factors that affect the evaluation of jobs. In all, however, a lower rate schedule for women is accepted as an established traditional pattern. Women are usually assigned the light jobs that require dexterity, patience, and application to details, and these job factors are not given as much weight in rating jobs as the strains of manual effort and disagreeable working conditions.

Although the opportunities for women to be employed on the same jobs as men are few, there are some jobs for men and for women that have identical titles and the same or very similar job descriptions. Usually the bracket rating or grade classification of the job is the same but, because of the dual rate structure, the woman's hourly rate is 5 cents less—until recently it was 9 or 10½ cents less in the Metropolitan area. Where the job descriptions as well as the job titles are identical, it seems that there is inequity in pay rates.

The following illustrations are from the rate books of several plants and are for jobs with identical titles and job descriptions for men and women. The classifications or brackets are the same but, because of the dual wage structure, women are paid less than men.

### Same job title for men and women and same bracket classification

*Stuff meat loaf or ham in artificial casings (bracket 1, male and female).—*Pick up artificial casing from pan to table. Open end of artificial casing and pull on to horn or hand operated stuffer. Operate lever and spread casing. Pick up loaf or ham from table, dip end in gelatine. Position product in horn and stuff into artificial casing. Place stuffed product aside on table.

*Operate roping machine (bracket 2, male and female).—*Obtain supply of string, thread machine, start or stop motor switch as necessary. Pick up piece of sausage to be roped and hold string along sausage. Actuate foot control roping sausage. Cut string, tie string, and toss to truck.

*Clean out between toes (bracket 2, male and female).—*Remove machine mutilations from front shank. With knife in hand cut between toes of each front foot. Cut out hair and scurf. When necessary pull toenails with hand puller. Tend gas singer. Open and close valve when chain starts or stops.

*Hog dressing trim (bracket 2, male and female).—*Trim off loose fat, tissue, skin and flesh along back bone, rib inside, and hanging tender. Trim glands and fat from inside of carcass, working downward from tenderloin. Make knife cut to drop skirt. Remove heart artery. Trim out small pieces of liver and other foreign particles remaining after evisceration.

The following list gives additional selected jobs with the same title and bracket classification on which women receive the established differential:

Job title	Wage bracket	
	Men	Women
Place and pin shroud	1	1
Wash sheep	1	1
Pull caul fat	1	1
Trim, flush and count bladders	2	2
Trim off loose fat tissue and flesh along brisket and neck	2	2
Trim jawbones	2	2
Trim and save glands—pancreas, adrenal, thyroids, etc	2	2
Trim plucks (sheep)	2	2
Trim cheeks and tongues	2	2
Salt and pack butts in tierces	2	2
Scrub, trim and wash beef tripe	2	2
Skin bungs	2	2
Flesh black guts	2	2
Mark briskets	2	2
Cut off heads and ears	2	2
Operate ham press	2	2
Stitching machine operator	2	2
Inspect measure and salt casing	2	2
Operate slicing machine (bacon)	2	2
Pack and scale, dry sausage	3	3
Artery pump, hams	3	3
Pressure spray, dry sausage	3	3

**Same job titles for men and women with women's jobs in a higher bracket**

Occasionally the same job title carries a higher bracket rating for women than for men. However, although a one-bracket higher rating reduces the differential 3½ cents an hour, the women's rate is still a little less than the men's. The higher rating for women may be token recognition of discrimination and a move towards narrowing the differential in the rate for the job. The following are examples of identical job titles in the same departments and in the same plant rated one bracket higher for women than men.

Job title	Wage bracket	
	Women	Men
Trim and save pepsin skins	3	2
Pull guts—small and bung	6	5
Trim plucks	3	2
Cut lean meat from weasands	3	2
Artery pumper	6	5

**Same job titles for men and women with women's jobs in a lower bracket**

A more frequent occurrence is a higher bracket classification of men than women on the same job titles in the same plant. Slotting women's jobs with identical titles to men's in the same plant in a lower bracket widens the gap in their respective rates by 3½ cents for each bracket of difference in addition to the basic 5 cent differential.

Job title	Wage bracket	
	Women	Men
Cut, grade, and inspect beef bungs-----	1	2
Grade beef middles-----	2	3
Viscera separator (sheep)-----	5	6
Tablet maker-----	4	5

Job descriptions for these jobs, which are the same for men and women, follow.

*Cut, grade, and inspect beef bung (bracket 1 for women, 2 for men).*—Pick up bung from table, place open end on air valve, inflate, place bung in gage to determine size, inspect for nodules, turn back open end and inspect for particles of dirt. Toss bung into proper vat.

*Grade beef middles (bracket 2 for women, 3 for men).*—Take string of middles (casings) from vat. Position on grading table. Locate end of middle. Clip off, using safety knife. Inflate with air. Grade for size and quality by gaging several times. Toss reject casing to inedible can. Hang grade casing on proper pin in measuring vat.

*Viscera separator (sheep) (bracket 5 for women, 6 for men).*—Take viscera from conveyor. Separate viscera from pluck. Push down separate product chutes. Tally condemnations.

*Tablet maker (bracket 4 for women, 5 for men).*—Set up machine. Scoop powder into machine. Add alcohol and water until proper consistency. Remove product. Set up granulator. Place oven pan in granulator. Spread product. Place in dryer. Set up tablet machine. Tend machine, inspect, scale tablets for weight and adjust if necessary. Dump tablets into drums.

**Job titles similar**

Men and women perform work that is comparable in the skill and duty requirements on some jobs where the job titles are not identical. The similarity of such jobs is generally recognized by classifying them in the same brackets. The rates, of course, follow the dual scheduling and women in most plants receive 5 cents less an hour than do men.

Job title for women	Wage bracket	Job title for men	Wage bracket
Split hearts and remove blood clots-----	2	Trim hearts-----	2
Cut out ear drums and save ears--	2	Cut out ear pits-----	2
Cut out stomach linings-----	2	Cut open and flush stomach linings-----	2
Cut open lungs-----	2	Cut open paunches-----	2
Trim and wash cheek meat-----	2	Trim jawbones and trim and wash tongues-----	2
Seal or tape packed containers----	2	Seal fiber containers-----	2
Hand form and pack veal drum sticks-----	2	Form hamburgers-----	2
Grade and bunch dried weasands, bladders, and rennets-----	2	Inflating, grading, and tying rennets-----	2
Wipe cans, wash pans-----	0	Washing, sorting, and trucking molds-----	0
Label jars and packages-----	0	Label shipping containers-----	0

### Other indications of inequities in rating women's jobs

Even within a company there is a lack of uniformity in bracket classification among the various plants. Random checking in examining rate structures indicated a tendency to grade jobs with the same or similar titles in higher brackets in plants designating these as men's jobs than in plants where they were classed as women's jobs. When all trimming jobs were performed by men, the brackets for such jobs were in some cases higher than when performed by both men and women.

Clauses such as the following were negotiated with national chain packers in several 1950 master agreements: "The parties agree to re-examine certain female wage rates and male common labor rates for the purpose of adjusting any inequities \* \* \*. Adjustment made pursuant shall become effective on the date agreed on between the parties." The extent to which adjustments could be made was limited to an agreed upon number of brackets or grade increases. No complete data were available on the actual number of women's jobs that had been reclassified in all companies, but in one, it was known that 24 job titles classified as women's had been regarded to higher brackets or wage grades. The number of women employed on these jobs was not reported but some of the upgraded jobs employed many women.

### *Examples of Equal Pay*

Although the big packers have dual wage schedules as their basic plan for wage determination, under some conditions women receive the same rates of pay as men and a number of independent packers have adopted single rate structures and have achieved an equal-pay status.

Piece rates established on a straight unit basis usually carry the same rates for men and women while employed on such operations. The same piece rate for men and women is a well-established rate condition in most industries. Incentive systems or bonus production plans for output above the standard set are usually related to the basic hourly rate for the job, and unlike straight piece rates are affected by basic differentials in rates.

In some plants where the policy is against men and women being employed on the same job titles, if women actually replace men on jobs designated as men's, they receive the men's rate. In one of the "Big Four," a few women separating plucks in hog-kill received the same rate as the men, which was the third bracket above common labor. These women were reported as "old timers," and it was expected that if they should leave their jobs they would be replaced by men.

Two of the five independents visited followed the usual wage differential plan, but three had single rates for production jobs that applied irrespective of the sex of the worker. Two of these plants were small; together they employed fewer than 50 women. No rates had any sex designation and women employed along with men on trimming and packaging jobs received the same rates as the men. All these women were paid above the common labor rate for men.

The other independent plant with a single rate structure had about 300 women employed, comprising about 20 percent of the plant employment. Rates for production jobs were not on separate schedules for men and women. Several years ago the local union cooperated with management in planning and introducing a job evaluation plan for grading jobs and establishing a rating plan based on job content. Jobs are compared, ranked, and rated through a point plan of factor comparison job evaluation. The five major factors used to rate jobs are knowledge, skill, responsibility, effort, and working conditions. Each of the major factors is broken down into from 3 to 10 subfactors.

Under the knowledge factor, experience has the greatest potential point value of any single subfactor in the plan. Effort and working conditions have been subdivided into a greater number of subfactors than the three other major factors. Under efforts, weight lifting and physical activity are given detailed analysis, and the working conditions factor is broken down into 10 elements, taking into consideration exposure to poor ventilation, dust, fumes, dirt, wetness, noise, monotony, heat, eye strain, and accident hazards. The consideration given to effort and working conditions indicates that these are considered job factors of primary importance in ranking jobs in the meat-packing industry. Dexterity, precision, and versatility, subfactors under skill, have less maximum point values in rating than exposure to dust, fumes, and heat.

In this plant, women for the most part are employed on light jobs requiring little experience and less strength and physical activity than many men's jobs. Women's jobs tend to be performed under the more favorable working conditions in the industry. Often their primary characteristics are dexterity and precision, subfactors with relatively low point values. Since the opportunities for women are on the types of work that carry the lower total point values, the jobs filled by women mass in the lower brackets of the wage structure. Trimming cheeks, hearts, pig's feet and tongues, turning, trimming and measuring casings, preparing and packing small products, carry the same job rates for men and women. If a man worker is placed on a job that ordinarily is considered a woman's he receives the rate that applies to the job, not a higher one because he is on a man's schedule.

In addition to the plants visited, the meat-packing unions reported on a considerable number of independent plants with a single rate structure. A master agreement covering independent packers in southern California employing approximately 2,000 persons, of whom about one-fifth are women, has a single rate structure with the common labor, or lowest, rate, \$1.59. All rates follow a pattern similar to that of the male rate structure for the Big Four plants in the area. Provision houses in the same area have a similar master agreement with no sex discrimination in rates. Women were reported on jobs ranging in rates paid from bracket 0, common labor, at \$1.59 an hour, to bracket 9, \$1.90½ an hour.

### *Dual Seniority and Women's Opportunities for Advancement*

Dual seniority, through separate departmental and plant length of service lists for men and women employees, has been established by collective bargaining in master agreements of three of the national packers and also in agreements with some of the independent packers. Women's seniority rights are definitely restricted to women's jobs. The following are typical excerpts from union agreements setting up dual seniority:

There shall be separate plant and departmental seniority lists for male and female employees.

The practice in effect as of the date of this agreement with regard to administering seniority of female employees separately from that of male employees shall be continued.

Seniority will operate on a departmental basis separately by male and female.

Promotional opportunities for women are limited in most plants to the traditional women's jobs. Most jobs in the women's schedules are in the first two brackets above the common labor rate. Women's jobs in brackets above the third are few. Men's jobs are distributed in considerable numbers through the seventh and some are more than 20 brackets above the base rate.

Traditionally men have been loathe to have women take over any so-called men's jobs, fearing that the rate paid would be lowered, and this is especially true if women are on a separate and lower rate schedule. The same rates for men and women tend to lessen the fear of unfair job competition.

### *Equal-Pay Clauses in Union Agreements*

Collective bargaining has given limited recognition to equal pay in master agreements with the national packers and in agreements with some of the independent and local packers. In a study, "Collective Bargaining in the Meat-Packing Industry," released by the Bureau

of Labor Statistics in February 1952, 16 of 50 agreements had provisions relating to equal pay.

Approximately 90 percent of the production and maintenance workers of the meat-packing industry are covered by agreements with 3 unions—the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen of North America (AMC and BW), AFL; the United Packinghouse Workers (UPWA), CIO; and the National Brotherhood of Packinghouse Workers (NBPW), Ind. The NBPW bargains almost exclusively with one of the national packers. The UPWA reported that 80 percent of the employees covered by collective bargaining in the major plants were covered by its agreements.

Both the AMC and BW and the UPWA in their program of continuing objectives include equal pay and the reduction of the gap between men's and women's rates.

Seven master agreements of the "Big Four" with the three unions cover 85,000 to 90,000 workers. All seven agreements have antidiscrimination clauses specifying that there shall be no discrimination in hiring or employment because of race, color, sex, nationality, or membership in the union. This has not been construed as related to rates of pay, but rather to hiring and general personnel policies.

One of the "Big Four" has the same statement in master agreements with both the CIO and AFL related to equal pay on piecework. It is:

No piecework employees (except in the case of learners) will be paid less than the basic hourly rate for the piecework job times the number of hours worked on such piecework job in any given day. Female employees employed on piecework operations which are also performed (either regularly or at times) by male employees shall be paid the same piece rate as male employees and in such case shall be guaranteed the same basic hourly rate as male employees.

Another of the "Big Four" does not have any equal-pay clause for piecework operations. Its master agreement with one union makes no mention of equal pay for women. In master agreements with two other unions, it has a clause containing two sentences which seem to contradict each other. One sentence approves equal pay when women replace men; the other makes the possibility of this occurring practically impossible. This clause is:

All skilled or semiskilled female help shall receive above the minimum rate for female unskilled labor and shall be paid according to the scheduled rate established for female help. *If female employees are assigned to jobs formerly performed by male employees, they shall be paid the approved male rate.* It is agreed that work will be assigned to females which was formerly performed by men only after it has been changed so it will be comparable with other work performed by females for many years in the past. Hourly rates of pay for such work shall have the same ratio to the women's unskilled rate as the rate paid men before the job was altered has to the male unskilled rate.

The preceding statement definitely restricts women in taking over work that has been classified as men's jobs at men's rates. Escape from the wage differential is difficult for women when there is a dual wage structure.

A third company of the "Big Four" group takes cognizance of equal pay for equal work in its master agreement with the UPWA, but no specific mention of application to male and female rates is included in a clause reading: "The Company recognizes the principle of equal pay for equal work performed."

In the same agreement, the company agrees to equal pay for women assigned to men's piecework jobs, but makes clear the existence of a dual wage structure and protects males from female rates when the assignment is reversed, which would not be in accordance with the "equal pay for equal work performed" statement. The equal-unequal pay clause is:

When female employees are assigned to work on male piecework jobs, such employees shall be entitled to the male basic hourly rate for all purposes under this agreement. When male employees are assigned to work on female piecework jobs, the piecework rate for such employees shall be computed on the basis of the male basic hourly rate and such employees shall be entitled to the male basic hourly rate for all purposes under this agreement.

The fourth company has the most comprehensive equal-pay clause in master agreements of the "Big Four," the clause is:

The company recognizes the principle of equal pay for equal work performed. In applying this principle it is agreed that the female workers must perform the same quantity and quality of work as the male employee on the same job.

This company has a few women on men's jobs receiving male rates of pay.

In a study, "Collective Bargaining in the Meat-Packing Industry," released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in February 1952, 16 of 50 agreements, covering about one-half of the workers, contain some equal-pay provision. Three agreements of the "Big Packers," covering about two-thirds of the workers with equal-pay clauses, provide for equal pay on piecework. Payment of the same piece rates for men and women is an accepted practice in industry and is only a gesture in the direction of equal pay. Ten agreements between independent packers and unions were reported as having provisions for equal pay for women on work that is normally performed by men.

The present equal-pay clauses in the meat-packing industry seem of little value in establishing equality in rates for most of the women in the industry. There is an apparent need for better clauses in union agreements if they are to be effective in achieving and supporting equal pay. Both the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen of North America, AFL, and the United Packinghouse Workers

of America, CIO, have tried for years through contract negotiations and grievance procedures to eliminate or reduce discriminatory wage differentials based on sex.

The International Executive Board of the AMC and BW reporting to the 1948 convention of the organization urged support of equal-pay legislation in Congress, stating: "There is no justifiable reason why women, who perform the same work as men, and have acquired the same skills, should be discriminated against when it comes to paying wages. Although we have provisions in most of our collective bargaining agreements which require equal pay for equal work, regardless of sex, the enactment of this law will eliminate a great many presently existing inequalities." At its June 1952 meeting their policy committee included, among specific proposals for negotiation, an increase in female rates to eliminate differentials for similar jobs performed by both men and women.

The UPWA during World War II tried to eliminate wage differentials on a sex basis in cases before the War Labor Board. At its 1947 convention, the elimination of sex differentials in wages was one of the projects in its long-range program, and this has been reaffirmed at later conventions. At the 1952 convention, women delegates took their leaders to task for laxity in correcting unfair wage differences. A resolution adopted at that convention endorsed equal pay for equal work, the elimination of the differential in wages between men and women employees, the appointment of at least one woman on bargaining or negotiating committees in plants with women employees, and the education of local membership on problems of women employees through a woman's affairs committee.

Local unions, through grievance procedures, have been able to obtain adjustments of inequities in rates on an individual basis, but such adjustments are relatively few and do not remove the basic differentials. Union representatives reported that women are less inclined than men to bring their grievances to the attention of local and international representatives and often women's problems get less attention than those of men.

Where a dual wage standard exists, with women on a lower level, the difficulty of achieving equal pay even through collective bargaining is great. The dual wage structure of the meat-packing industry and its traditional justification typify the problems that are common to many plants in other industries. In this industry as in others, there is still a need in many companies for appreciation and application of specific criteria to analyze and rate jobs in relation to content, duties, skills, responsibilities, application, and working conditions. Differences in rates, if equitable, must reflect actual differences in job content.