

# FACTS

# on Women Workers

U. S. Department of Labor  
Maurice J. Tobin, *Secretary*

Women's Bureau  
Frieda S. Miller, *Director*

WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

February 28, 1951

## EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN IN JANUARY 1951

The number of women in the labor force in January 1951 exceeded the total in January a year ago by about 700,000, according to monthly reports of the Bureau of the Census. Most of this change, about 600,000, was among women 25 to 54 years of age. Unemployment of women fell by 1/3 of a million in the year, while the number employed rose by more than 1 million, almost entirely among non-agricultural women workers.

The decline from December 1950 to January 1951 in women in the labor force, and in those employed represented a usual seasonal trend. Many women who held temporary jobs during the Christmas season withdrew from the labor force.

LIBRARY  
A. & M. COLLEGE OF TEXAS

Employment status	January 1951			
	Number of women	Percent women of all persons	Change since December 1950	Change since January, 1950
Civilian population (14 years and over)	56,751,000	52.0	+ 49,000	+ 676,000
Civilian labor force	18,421,000	29.9	- 582,000	+ 709,000
Employed	17,577,000	29.8	- 655,000	+1,083,000
In agriculture	656,000	10.9	- 87,000	+ 31,000
In nonagricultural industries	16,921,000	31.9	- 569,000	+1,052,000
Unemployed	844,000	33.7	+ 74,000	- 374,000
Nonworkers	38,331,000	80.4	+ 631,000	- 32,000

(U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census)

## COST OF LIVING

The Industrial Welfare Commission of California reported last month that the average cost of a minimum budget for a single working woman in California was \$2,003.98 in October 1950. Of this amount \$1,071.68 was for food and housing, \$180.76 for clothing, \$31.16 for clothing upkeep, \$104.67 for medical care, \$37.15 for personal care, \$94.79 for carfare and transportation, \$105.79 for vacation and recreation, \$66.45 for miscellaneous items, and \$52 for insurance and emergencies. Taxes withheld (including Federal income tax, unemployment compensation disability benefit tax and old age insurance tax) amounted to \$259.52.

This budget was designed, as provided in the State minimum-wage law, to measure the annual cost of a minimum standard adequate to supply a proper living which is not prejudicial to the health, morals, or welfare of women workers in California. It is the first "official" budget to be issued by the State; previously, the only budget figures available for California were those issued by the Heller Committee of the University of California.

## CHANGES PROPOSED IN IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION LAWS

Companion bills (S.716 and H.R.2379) to revise and enact as a whole the laws on immigration, naturalization, and nationality are before Committees on the Judiciary of the Senate and the House. One of the aims of the new bills is to remove needless sex distinctions resulting from inadequate phrases of another era. The proposed changes include recommendations made by a Special Senate Committee which studied the subject during the 81st Congress and by Departments of the Executive Branch of the Government. All of the suggestions made by the Women's Bureau before the Special Committee in 1948 for removal of sex distinctions have been included in the current bills.

## GUARD OUR WORKING STANDARDS

A warning that in the present emergency good labor standards should not be sacrificed through a misguided sense of patriotism was sounded by the Director of the U. S. Department of Labor's Women's Bureau, Frieda S. Miller, in a talk to the New York Women's Trade Union League on February 17. Attacks undoubtedly will be launched against the various women's laws, she said. Reviewing past experience, Miss Miller stated, "World War II directed special attention to the practical benefits that are derived from good labor standards and to the sound basis on which such laws rest. During its first half century of growth, labor legislation for women generally was considered to be an altruistic effort to improve the lot of one group of workers. Today, such standards receive another emphasis--they are recognized as plain good business. World War II was a proving ground in this respect, for employers then realized that the best results were obtained by employing women for moderate hours and under desirable conditions. They learned the relationship between long hours and substandard working conditions, on the one hand, and fatigue and unsatisfactory performance, on the other. That experience constitutes real evidence that moderate hours and desirable standards help rather than hinder production."

## AILMENTS OF HOUSEWIVES AND DOMESTIC WORKERS STUDIED

Dishpan hands, housemaid's knee and other aches and pains of women who do housework have at last "achieved respectable scientific status," it is reported. A symposium appearing in the January issue of the Journal of American Medical Women's Association, titled "The Pathology and Hygiene of Housework," presents an accumulation of findings by women doctors in 17 countries.

Fatigue induced by "long hours and continued demands" has much to do with the health of housewives, the doctors found. Homemakers and domestic workers in Britain, Norway, Austria, Denmark, and elsewhere suffered from inflammation of muscles and tendons in the neck, shoulders, and legs. "The cause," wrote a Norwegian woman doctor, is "too heavy carrying" while marketing, shopping, and doing laundry, and "bad muscular use." Training of the muscles mainly used for housework, lifting, and carrying should be taught in domestic schools, a Danish doctor urged. Many countries reported that better design of kitchens and equipment could cut down on disorders of the back often caused by heavy work and by wrong height of tables and sinks.

## MAJOR OCCUPATIONS OF WOMEN, JANUARY 1951

There was a net increase of about a million employed women from January 1950 to January 1951 according to the Bureau of the Census. Not far from half of this gain was among operatives, laborers, and the like — representing to a considerable extent a growing demand for factory workers. More than a fifth of the increase was among women office workers. Service workers (except in private households) showed a substantial, though smaller, gain. Only the managerial group recorded a decline in employment.

Occupational group	Employed women, January 1951			
	Number	Percent distribution	Percent of all workers	Change from January 1950
All occupations	17,577,000	100.0	29.8	+1,083,000
Clerical and kindred workers	4,784,000	27.2	63.6	+ 237,000
Operatives, laborers (except farm and mine), craftsmen and foremen	3,967,000	22.6	16.2	+ 493,000
Service workers (except private household)	2,136,000	12.2	44.9	+ 149,000
Private household workers	1,851,000	10.5	96.5	+ 86,000
Professional, technical, and kindred workers	1,843,000	10.5	38.3	+ 91,000
Sales workers	1,395,000	7.9	38.2	+ 29,000
Managers, officials, and proprietors (except farm)	969,000	5.5	15.9	- 29,000
Farmers and farm workers	632,000	3.6	10.8	+ 25,000

(U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census)

## EARNINGS IN DEPARTMENT AND WOMEN'S READY-TO-WEAR STORES

Sales clerks of women's and misses' suits and coats in department and women's ready-to-wear stores had the highest average weekly earnings among selected saleswomen groups in 11 of 17 major cities surveyed in the spring (May-July) of 1950 by the U. S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. Their earnings ranged from an average of \$36.85 a week in Providence to \$70.57 in Dallas. Baltimore was the only other city in which weekly earnings of these saleswomen were below \$40, while in 6 cities averages were over \$50.

Average earnings of saleswomen of women's shoes ranged from \$36.18 a week in Baltimore to \$67.42 in New York. The lowest earnings of the groups studied were generally found among those selling blouses and neckwear, notions and trimmings, and women's accessories. Nearly half of the city averages for these workers were \$35 or less.

Fitters of women's garments whose weekly earnings ranged from \$38 to \$62 were highest paid among women's nonselling occupations studied (except office) and received, on the average, from \$2 to \$13 more a week than alteration sewers of women's garments, the next ranking group. Stockgirls employed in selling sections were the lowest paid women workers and typically averaged less than \$30 a week.

## INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION OF WOMEN HOLDS SEMINAR

A seminar on the status of women in the Central American Republics, Mexico, and the United States was held recently in San Salvador, under auspices of the Inter-American Commission of Women. Miss Mary Cannon, Chief, International Division of the Women's Bureau, was chairman of the United States delegation to the seminar. The seminar analyzed civil rights of women set forth in the laws of the various countries and considered ways of improving these laws. Also discussed were the contribution of women to the political and administrative life of America, and problems of the economic, social, and educational status of women. The seminar drew up recommendations to the Inter-American Commission of Women for measures to improve women's status. Two similar regional meetings to be held later will be modeled after the San Salvador seminar.

## REPORT FROM GREECE

Equal pay for women is a problem in Greece, and the burdens of the woman worker who also has a home and family to care for are even heavier there than here. This was brought out by a Greek woman, one of an otherwise all-male committee of tobacco workers who visited the Labor Attaché at the United States Embassy in Athens recently and described conditions among the tobacco workers there. Roughly half the workers in the tobacco industry are women. They receive wages 30 percent lower than those of men, but the unions are currently backing the women's demand for equal pay.

The typical woman tobacco worker is over 40, married, with a family to help support. "After her day's work, in the evening," the union representative said, "the worker has to go to the market to buy the necessaries for food, which means a loss of time because the markets are in the center of town and their homes on the outskirts, and also additional fatigue from the transportation. At home the female worker has to do the household work, which is very fatiguing because of the lack of kitchen and laundry facilities, lack of water in the house, electricity, and cooking utensils. ...Household work drags on most of the time until twelve and she has to get up at five in the morning to prepare food which she will carry with her and take care of her husband and children. The latter will be left in the streets because there are no children's care centers. ...The fact is that she is confronted with much hardship, having to work at the work place and at home; and in both, facilities which we know are provided for our colleagues in other countries are lacking here."

## "TOP-DRAWER" DIPLOMAT

When the French Prime Minister, René Fleven, and President Truman met in Washington in January, much of the groundwork for the meeting had been laid by a woman, Mlle. Jeanne Paule Sicard, chief assistant to M. Fleven, who had arrived in Washington the previous week. Mlle. Sicard, according to newspaper reports, is the first woman chief assistant to any French minister.

STATE MINIMUM-WAGE LAWS AND ORDERS, July 1, 1942-July 1, 1950: Revised Supplement to Bulletin 191. U. S. Dept. of Labor, Women's Bureau Bull. 227, Rev. "State Labor Legislation: Improved Hour and Wage Laws Would Provide Better Working Conditions for Nurses as Well as Other Working Women" by Ethel V. Weiss. Reprinted from the AMERICAN JOURNAL OF NURSING, Vol. 50, No. 11, November 1950. (Available at Women's Bureau.)

(The printing of this publication has been approved by the Director of the Bureau of the Budget, March 9, 1950.)