

# THE WOMAN WORKER

THE WOMEN'S BUREAU NEWS LETTER

(PUBLISHED EVERY TWO MONTHS)



WOMEN'S BUREAU

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

WASHINGTON, D. C.

VOLUME XVIII

JANUARY 1938

NUMBER 1

# THE WOMAN WORKER

January 1938

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Published under authority of Public Resolution No. 57, approved May 11, 1922 (42 Stat. 541), as amended by section 307, Public Act 212, 72d Congress, approved June 30, 1932. This publication approved by the Director, Bureau of the Budget.

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C., at 5 cents a copy or 25 cents a year

## Greetings for 1938

BY MARY ANDERSON, *Director of the Women's Bureau*

**T**HIS NEW FORM of the Women's Bureau News Letter brings greetings for 1938 to all those official and private persons and organizations that have at heart the welfare of women workers and the desire to learn more fully of their problems and how these can be solved. The progress made during the past year gives promise that the now unwritten pages of 1938 will carry a story of many advances for women.

THE WOMAN WORKER in its printed form takes the place of the mimeographed News Letter that the Women's Bureau has sent out periodically through the past 17 years, in response to the demand for such information on the part of the Association of Governmental Labor Officials, expressed at its convention in 1920. Through THE WOMAN WORKER the Women's Bureau continues its assistance to State authorities, officials of labor organizations and women's organizations, and others planning policies and developing programs to advance the welfare of women workers; the Bureau reports and popular material serve also an important need in their wide use for workers' education, for high schools and colleges, and now for grade schools as well. We ask you to keep on telling us of your progress and your problems, in order that the Women's Bureau may continue to pass on information and thereby increase its service to women.

The past year, in which the legislature met in most States, has shown great strides in the enactment of new hour laws for women (and for men as well), in the restriction and control of industrial home work, and in the creation of women's divisions and minimum-wage divisions in the labor departments of States. The welfare of wage-earning women has been further advanced by significant

pronouncements of international bodies.

One of the most important events in 1937 was the Supreme Court decision in March upholding minimum-wage legislation. This decision revived earlier laws and stimulated the enactment of new statutes, so that now minimum-wage laws exist in 22 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Activity under these laws led at once to increased interest in the problems of the woman worker, to added demands from the States for the aid of the Women's Bureau, further enlarging the opportunities of the Bureau for service to the States through its surveys of women's wages, its advice on minimum-wage procedure, and its continuing conferences with State officials.

In the first three-quarters of the past year (as far as figures are available) employment increased to well beyond that of 1936, though in a less degree for women than for men. Pay rolls increased even more than employment, though the extent of these increases ordinarily was less for women than for men. While the picture is promising, it thus is not too rosy for women, many of whom still labor at less than a living wage.

With a fresh approach to the problems of employed women, the Women's Bureau recently has brought together a large body of information on women's economic status, including the stories of women's employment, their wage levels, their responsibility for family support, and certain labor legislation applying to them.

Welding and giving significant direction to varied lines of activity designed to advance the welfare of working women, the Women's Bureau pledges itself anew to lead the way, with your help, toward much more satisfactory conditions for women's work and life.

## Progress in the Minimum Wage

### Conference Called by the Women's Bureau

**F**OLLOWING its earlier conferences along this line, the Women's Bureau again invited to conference this fall the minimum-wage administrators of the various States having such officials. To compare this meeting with those held earlier (through the past 5 years) gave striking evidence of the advance in thinking and in direction that has resulted from the experiences of the past months and years of minimum-wage administration. The fine caliber of these officials, their intelligent approach to new problems, was in itself testimony to the importance of the activities they are furthering and a guarantee of the development of effective methods. The deliberations gave evidence of much work already in progress, of an eagerness to go forward, and of a keen interest in the working out of sound techniques of investigation, organization of minimum-wage machinery, keeping of records, determining of adequate wage standards, and enforcement of orders.

### Court Decision Upholds Minimum-Wage Fixing

Great encouragement and renewed vigor have been given to the efforts of these administrators by the decision of the United States Supreme Court March 29, 1937, upholding the Washington State minimum-wage law, which is based on a wage that would "supply the necessary cost of living, and maintain the worker in health."

This decision required payment by a west coast hotel of \$216 due a chambermaid for a period in which she had worked for less than the \$14.50 a week fixed as a minimum wage under the law. In delivering the opinion of the Court, Chief Justice Hughes specifically stated: "Our conclusion is that the case of

*Adkins v. Children's Hospital*<sup>1</sup> should be, and it is, overruled."

The Court made this strong statement, which establishes the fixing of a minimum wage on a firm legal basis: "What can be closer to the public interest than the health of women and their protection from unscrupulous and overreaching employers? And if the protection of women is a legitimate end of the exercise of State power, how can it be said that the requirement of the payment of a minimum wage fairly fixed in order to meet the very necessities of existence is not an admissible means to that end?"

### States Now Having a Minimum Wage

At the time of the Court's pronouncement, 17 States had minimum-wage laws,<sup>2</sup> and within the next 3 months such legislation had been newly enacted in Nevada and Arizona, in the important industrial State of Pennsylvania, and in Oklahoma, which adopted the first law applying to men as well as women. Laws on the statute books of Arkansas, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico were revived by the Court's action, according to the decisions of their attorneys general, and similarly the Minnesota law has now again become applicable to adult women. Colorado and Utah appropriated money for initial operation of their laws, which had been inactive due to lack of funds. By the summer of 1937, 22 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico had provided for a minimum wage.

It is estimated that in these 22 States live almost two-thirds of all employed women,

<sup>1</sup> The earlier case that threw out the District of Columbia minimum-wage law in 1923. The Washington and District of Columbia laws are based on the same principle.

<sup>2</sup> California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Washington, Wisconsin, and Utah.

including about 70 percent of all women in manufacturing. Many highly industrialized States now have minimum wage laws. Of the 10 leading States in woman employment (according to the 1930 census), the first 6 have minimum-wage legislation (New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, California, Ohio, Massachusetts), and also the eighth (New Jersey). The three of this group not having minimum-wage laws are Texas, Michigan, and Georgia. This summary presents a very optimistic picture for the future of women's wages; it should not be forgotten that there are many occupations of women not yet covered, and that the manufacturing industry employing the largest numbers of women, that is, the cotton industry, is concentrated in States still without any minimum-wage provisions.

### Surveys of Special Industries

Through the late summer and fall, minimum-wage activities have proceeded apace. Surveys have been made; wage boards have been called, have deliberated, and have recommended wages; hearings have been held; orders have been issued fixing the minimum. These could be discussed in a variety of ways, so as to give, for example, a picture of the extent of coverage at any one time within each of the separate States, or of the extent to which each industry has been covered in several States; or of the extent to which surveys have been made, or mandatory or directory orders issued, this year; or of the general chronological progress of the minimum wage; or as to the complete list of industries covered in all the States, a method that now would yield a bulky and complicated report, since there are many orders, some of them with various provisions according to occupation, time worked, branch of the industry, experience or age of the workers, or size of city.

First among the usual requirements for minimum-wage procedure is a survey of the industry in which a minimum wage might be fixed. At least 11 States have had some such studies in progress within the year. Among these have been Utah,

Colorado, and the District of Columbia, in all of which the Women's Bureau has conducted general industry surveys.

Following the Utah survey made by the Women's Bureau, a wage board for retail establishments recommended a minimum of \$16 for a 42½-hour week, which the commission fixed as in effect February 1, 1938. Another board was formed to consider the minimum for manufacturing industries.

In Colorado the laundry industry is the first being considered, and the Women's Bureau field survey also has covered retail trade, hotels and restaurants, hospitals, and beauty shops.

In the District of Columbia, a wage conference of employer, employee, and public representatives for retail stores recommended a minimum of \$17 for a 48-hour week, which was accepted by the board; hearings were held in mid-December, and this minimum is to go into effect February 14, 1938. In December 1937, a board was formed for hotels and restaurants.

Other States that recently have had in progress studies of special industries for the minimum wage are:

Connecticut.—Tobacco, men's pants, and laundry industries.

Illinois.—Garment and candy industries.

New Jersey.—The manufacturing industries in the State, including clothing, textiles, cigars and tobacco, tools, dolls, toys, and buttons.

New Hampshire.—Hotels, retail trade, shoes, textiles, woodwork, hosiery, and candy.

Rhode Island.—Laundry, dry cleaning.

### Recent Wage Orders

In many of the newer laws the order at first issued is merely "directory", with enforcement depending on the employer's good will or the attendant publicity. After such time as prescribed in the law, usually 3, 6, or 9 months, if compliance is found to be lagging or wages still are below the minimum of decency, the order may be made mandatory and more rigidly enforced. (Provisions of the minimum-wage orders issued to date can be obtained from the Women's Bureau.)

## Recent Women's Bureau Studies and Activities

**C**HARGED by the act creating it with the duty to investigate and report upon "all matters pertaining to the welfare of women in industry", the Women's Bureau, through its field surveys and its statistical work and in its research division as well, is constantly collecting and preparing information of various types needed in carrying out the other duty imposed upon it by law, "to formulate standards and policies to promote the welfare of wage-earning women."

Among the studies recently completed or now being carried on by the Bureau are surveys of women's wages and hours in various States and industries; compilations of laws affecting women; and information on the economic status of women, their employment, wages, and responsibility for the support of others. Two recently initiated projects involving cooperation with other technical agencies deserve special mention—the preparation of suggestions for items to be considered in a minimum-wage budget, with the aid of the United States Bureau of Home Economics; and the compilation of wage and employment data by sex, collected with the assistance of the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics.

### State Surveys of Women's Wages and Hours

One of the major activities of the Women's Bureau always has been the assistance given States in making surveys of the hours, wages, and conditions of work of their employed women. When the constitutionality of minimum-wage laws was established by the courts, the Bureau almost immediately was besieged with new demands for such surveys desired by the States to assist in determining a suitable minimum wage.

Assistance was given at once in three cases—to Colorado, Utah, and the District

of Columbia—later to other States. The findings as to wages paid and hours being worked may be shown for these States and also for several others on which the Bureau has collected and tabulated information only a little less recently—Delaware, Texas, Tennessee, and West Virginia.

In the District of Columbia the largest groups were in laundries and department stores, and food products represented the chief manufacturing industry. In Utah, cotton goods, knit underwear, and candy headed the manufacturing list. For Colorado, only the data for laundries have as yet been made available, that being the first industry to be considered by a wage board. The making of men's cotton garments and of textiles was most important among the manufacturing industries reported in Texas, Delaware, and Tennessee (here especially hosiery manufacture), and those most prominent in West Virginia were textiles and pottery.

In three major types of work, so far as the data now have been tabulated, the median earnings (one-half the women receiving more, one-half less) were as follows:

	Manufacturing	Laundries	Department stores
Colorado.....		\$11.60	
Delaware.....	\$11.05	10.55	\$13.85
District of Columbia.....	13.35	10.90	16.60
Tennessee.....	12.00	7.85	12.75
Texas.....	<sup>1</sup> 6.80 to 13.05	8.65	13.30
Utah.....	12.10	11.05	13.50
West Virginia.....	12.70	11.50	12.70

<sup>1</sup> By industry; excludes nut picking and sorting, and home work on infants' clothing, covered in the same survey.

The reports on hours give marked evidence of a general situation in which the schedules of working hours are shorter than they were some years ago. Less than 40 hours was worked in some cases by as many as half the women reported in manufacturing and by from a fourth to a third of those in laundries in all States reported, but a very

much smaller proportion of those in department stores. The proportions working less than 40 hours were as follows:

	Manu- factur- ing	Laun- dries	Depart- ment stores
	Percent	Percent	Percent
Colorado.....	--	24	--
Delaware.....	50	29	14
District of Columbia.....	36	29	10
Tennessee.....	50	32	5
Texas.....	4	14	8
Utah.....	37	26	21
West Virginia.....	15	--	7

In manufacturing, a much smaller proportion of women worked 48 hours than worked less than 40 hours, the figure being little over 10 percent in any State and much less in some States. In department stores in two States as few as 6 percent or less worked as long as 48 hours, but larger proportions worked so long in other States in stores, and in all but one case in laundries. The proportions working 48 hours or more were as follows:

	Manu- factur- ing	Laun- dries	Depart- ment stores
	Percent	Percent	Percent
Colorado.....	--	32	--
Delaware.....	13	0	22
District of Columbia.....	8	12	0.5
Tennessee.....	5	27	58
Texas.....	12	53	32
Utah.....	10	25	6
West Virginia.....	4	60	32

### Trends in Women's Employment and Wages

In addition to its field surveys of current wages in some particular State or industry, the Women's Bureau has sought to answer the demands for information as to the general direction in which women's employment and wages are moving, both as a whole and in various industries. Material periodically reported to furnish such information has been meager, except of course for the United States Census of Occupations taken at intervals rather far apart, and the regular employment and wage reports issued by sex in a very few States.

Opportunity now has been made, in cooperation with the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, to obtain twice a year by sex the sample data reported each month by that agency. The employment and pay-

roll sample for women, to be taken in March and September of each year, will include the 12 States employing three-fourths of all the women who are in manufacturing and some 40 industries under 10 main groupings that employ three-fourths of the women in manufacturing, as well as one service industry—laundries and dry cleaning. Full cooperation in obtaining this information is being given by State officials and by the management of the thousands of manufacturing plants involved. The material applying to September 1937 is now being tabulated. It is obvious that in the beginning month of such an undertaking there is no earlier month for comparison to indicate trends, so the immediate yield is only in the nature of facts about the present situation.

### The Economic Status of Women

The Women's Bureau recently prepared a report on the economic status of women in the United States. This was done at the request of officers of 10 large national organizations of women, themselves not equipped to do this work, who desired that a report presenting facts along these lines should be sent to the International Labor Office and also should be made available for use by their organizations within this country.

The first section of the new bulletin includes a consideration of the occupations in which women are engaged and the apparent directions and causes of occupational change. It quotes evidences as to the unemployment of women and the irregularity of their employment, and describes certain employment problems that confront their sex. It further discusses the levels of compensation ordinarily available to employed women, particularly in comparison with the higher levels afforded to men, and includes data on the family status of women, especially as they relate to the considerable extent to which women, whether single or married, are responsible for the support of others.

The other main theme of the report deals with available evidences as to the results of

labor legislation for women, as related to their employment opportunities, their wages, and their conditions of work. The experience under such legislation has proved of definite benefit to women along certain lines. The discussion in the report covers not only the effects on women of special laws enacted with the definite purpose of safeguarding their interests but also the effects on women, as well as men, of labor legislation applying to both sexes.

### Wages in Certain Men's Clothing Industries

A number of field surveys of various branches of the men's clothing industries have been made recently by the Women's Bureau and the information obtained in some of these is now being organized preparatory to publication. In every case a number of States—those in which the industry is the most largely represented—were included in the study. For seamless hosiery, for example, pay rolls were copied in 78 plants in 11 States; for dress shirts, 38 plants in 8 States were visited. For five of these industries more than 10,000 women were reported—dress shirts, seamless hosiery, knit underwear, shoes, and work clothes. Over 3,000 women each were reported in the making of neckwear and of work gloves. For three other industries smaller numbers of women were covered.

There are great variations in the wages paid, not only as between these industries but within any one industry and even in different plants in the same State. For example, in the manufacture of seamless hosiery in North Carolina, average hourly earnings for the workers<sup>3</sup> were 47.6 cents in the highest-paying and 27.2 cents in the lowest-paying plant. These average earnings were 40 cents or more in eight plants but fell below 30 cents in three plants, all within the same State. Similarly, in work clothing plants in Missouri the average for workers in the highest-paying plant was 55.1 cents an hour, in the lowest-paying only 24.8 cents an hour. In three plants in the State

Men and women are combined in this tabulation.

the hourly average was over 40 cents, in two it was under 30 cents. Very many other such situations were shown in these industries.

Of prime importance to the worker is the weekly wage she has to live on, and this differed greatly as among the industries, one of the largest groups—shoe making—being well up on the list with an average of \$17.1 a week for the women reported, while another very large woman-employer—seamless hosiery—had the very low average of \$11.70 a week. More than 60 percent of the women making neckwear and of those making shoes received as much as \$15 a week; but fewer than 14 percent of those in knit underwear factories were paid as much as \$15, and more than 40 percent of the received only \$10 or less as their weekly wage. In these 10 industries the average weekly earnings was as follows:

Neckwear.....	\$18.60	Knit underwear..	\$12.
Shoes.....	17.10	Work clothes....	12.
Caps.....	14.00	Handkerchiefs...	12.
Dress shirts.....	13.40	Seamless hosiery..	11.
Work gloves.....	12.80	Cotton underwear.	11.

### Committee on Minimum-Wage Budgets for Women

In a number of cases, State minimum wage administrators asked the advice of the Women's Bureau as to the technique of determining a health and decency budget. This need for information to use in establishing minimum-wage standards led the Bureau to call together a committee of experts, and hearty cooperation in this work was given by various competent persons at various agencies. The Bureau of Home Economics of the United States Department of Agriculture worked out suggestions as to the items of shelter, food, clothing, and other living essentials that should be taken in consideration in making up such a budget, the exact selection from the list to be made finally by the State, which then should plan for the pricing of the articles and services agreed upon as a minimum of necessity.

The purpose of the budget suggestions issued is to help the States in formulating

their own minimum-wage budgets, adapted to local conditions. The budgets used by different States will vary in content because of climatic and other factors. However, the process of budget making is the same, regardless of locality, and certain factors should be considered by any group responsible for determining what goods and services are to be included in a budget for a wage-earning woman. The discussion of these factors is supplemented by skeleton commodity lists for some of the main budget divisions, such as food and clothing.

After decisions have been made by a State as to what the budget shall be, and prices have been collected for the commodities listed, a woman's "cost of living" at the level established by the budget can be estimated.

To assist with this part of the work, the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics prepared for the Women's Bureau suggestions as to the practical pricing of budgets. New York has proceeded with such a program more fully than any other State, having sent 18 agents into the field to do pricing in various parts of the State. (See Notes on Current News for further action in New York.)

### **Studies of Laws Affecting Women**

An important part of the work of the Women's Bureau always has been the following of the enactment of labor laws that affect women. So many new laws have been passed this year that a supplement is being prepared to the bulletin that the Bureau issues periodically to give a summary of the labor legislation in effect that applies to women. This includes hour limitations, minimum-wage laws and orders, night-work restrictions, regulations applying to industrial home work, and certain of the regulations designed to assure more healthful conditions of work.

The Bureau also has been at work upon a study of the general legal status of women, including their contract and property rights, status in the courts, marital status and control of the persons and property of their

children, and their political rights. Upon notification through the Department of State that this country had been called upon to furnish such information officially, a preliminary summary of the findings was sent to the secretariat of the League of Nations. The legal staff of the Bureau is doing this work separately for each State, by a thorough investigation of both statutes and cases and with the cooperation and assistance of legal authorities within the various States. Several of the States for which the information has been completed will shortly be sent to the printer for issuance in separate form. Some time later all States will be bound together and there will be printed also a revision of the preliminary summary of the whole that already has been made.

### **Accidents to Women in Personal Service Work**

The field of women's greatest employment is in the personal service industries, but in many cases these are the ones in which information as to working conditions is most scattering and most difficult to obtain, especially household service. Hence new information on injuries to workers in these industries in Ohio, made available by the department of industrial relations of that State and analyzed by the Women's Bureau, is of especial interest.

More than 8,000 injuries were reported as occurring in 2 years' time in laundry and dry-cleaning establishments, hotels, restaurants, beauty shops, and homes. Well over a third of these affected women. Twenty-five women either met death or were permanently injured. Cuts and lacerations were the most frequent types of injury. Nearly one-fourth of the women were hurt by falls (the most frequent cause); especially were falls common among the older women, while the very young women workers were more likely to be injured by machinery, tools, or other objects, or hot or corrosive substances.

Where compensation is paid, it is based on the pay received, and women's relatively low earnings mean that their compensation

for injuries also is on a lower scale than that ordinarily paid men. In one year reported, from 71 to 93 percent of the women in each occupation, in contrast to from 23 to 59 percent of the men, were receiving a wage of less than \$15 at the time of the accident.

### Studies in Progress

At the close of the year, the Women's Bureau is conducting field surveys of women's wages and hours of work in Kentucky, Arizona, and Pennsylvania, the second and third of these for minimum-wage purposes. Expected soon from the printer are a study of differences in men's and women's wages and a revised bibliography of material on

household employment. Field work, statistical tabulation, or research has been completed on the following, which now are in various stages of writing, verification, or preparation for printing: A study of general trends in the employment of women, 1928-36; investigations of wages in certain men's clothing industries that are large employers of women; comparative studies of woman employment in certain minimum-wage and non-minimum-wage States; a study of the extent to which women suffer from industrial injuries in States reporting such data; a sample study from census material of the extent to which employed women support others; and a survey of unattached women on relief in Chicago.

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## High Spots in Legislation Affecting Women

THE OUTLOOK for 1938 is the brighter for women at work because of the impressive number of new laws on subjects affecting working women that were passed in the 46 legislatures in session in the past year. The new laws enacted deal with the important subjects of minimum wage, hours, home work, and night work, which past experience has shown as having notable effect in raising the working standards for employed women. They also include other subjects of great import to employed women, as unemployment compensation (all 48 States now have legislation on this subject), old-age assistance, workmen's compensation, wage payments, safety, health and sanitation, occupational diseases, and collective bargaining.

Probably the most comprehensive legislation along these lines was enacted in Pennsylvania and Illinois, the former having passed, among other bills, a minimum-wage act and a new hour law with wide coverage, and the latter a new hour law (weekly hours being fixed for the first time), each State putting the enforcement of these laws in a special branch of the labor department.

### Shorter Hours of Work

Shortening the working day and the weekly hours of employment for thousands of working women is an important advance in State legislation; some of the States that recently have taken such action are among the largest industrial employers of women.

The Illinois law, besides fixing the maximum workweek for the first time, adds to the coverage (chief of which are mechanical and mercantile establishments, factories, laundries, hotels, restaurants, and telegraph and telephone), beauty parlors, barber shops, and public and private institutions and their offices; these lines of employment had not been included in the coverage of earlier hour laws. With the exception of agricultural labor and domestic service, it is safe to say that probably all wage-earning women in Illinois have the benefit of this new hour legislation.

Pennsylvania<sup>4</sup> is in the forefront with an 8-hour day, a 44-hour week (5½ days), for women in "any establishment" in the State.

<sup>4</sup> Pennsylvania also passed a similar law covering men employees. That for women went into effect Sept. 1, 1937.

A few exceptions are listed in the laws. This legislation is practically inclusive in coverage, though flexibility in its operation is provided for by permitting variations to be made by the State labor department.

Ohio likewise has an 8-hour day now for women, with extensive coverage; the weekly hours for manufacturing are set at 45, and for all other establishments at 48. Only agricultural labor and domestic service in homes are entirely excepted.

Oregon is the only State besides Pennsylvania and Ohio with weekly hours less than 48, Oregon having a 44-hour week, with daily hours 8, as a result of the regulations of the industrial welfare commission that cover manufacturing, mercantile, office occupations, personal service, cherry stemming and pitting, public housekeeping, and telephone and telegraph. (Needlecraft, and laundry, cleaning and dyeing, had a 44-hour week under earlier regulations of the commission.)

Nevada has a new 8-hour law, applying it, with exceptions, to "private employment." Weekly hours are set at 48.

Connecticut passed her first law for an 8-hour day and applied it to mercantile establishments, 48 hours being fixed as the weekly limit.

New York greatly increased the coverage of her 8-hour law in extending it to hotels, and to restaurants in the smaller places not covered formerly, and included also women working as elevator operators and on street railways. Weekly hours are 48. (Manufacturing and mercantile establishments and laundries also operate on an 8-hour day and a 48-hour week, under earlier legislation.) The law covering women employed as messengers for telegraph and telephone companies was changed so that weekly hours were reduced for this class of employees from 54 to 48.

Significant reductions in working hours or extensions of coverage of existing laws recently have been made in four other States, as follows:

Practically all industries important as woman employers in Arkansas now are on a 9-hour day, with new legislation bringing

hotels and restaurants, banks, insurance companies, public utilities, and elevator operators under the coverage of an earlier law.

North Carolina is notable for passing a 9-hour-day law for women employed in "any labor" (a 48-hour week), with exceptions provided for; and for canneries, which had never before been under an hour law in this State, daily hours were set at 10 and weekly hours at 55.

Vermont reduced the hours of work from 10½ to 9 a day (and weekly hours from 56 to 50) for women employed in manufacturing and mechanical establishments, mines, and quarries.

New Hampshire reduced hours of work for women in manufacturing establishments to 10 a day and 48 a week; for all other establishments the hours are continued at 10¼ a day and 54 a week.

For the first time in any State an hour law is now in existence governing hours of work for household employees. The State of Washington has enacted a law setting a 60-hour week for all domestic and household employes (men as well as women).

### Minimum Wage

States now having minimum-wage laws for the first time are Nevada, Oklahoma,<sup>5</sup> and Pennsylvania. Arizona, whose earlier legislation had been invalidated, enacted a new law; the legislatures in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, and Wisconsin revised or amended the minimum-wage laws already existing in those States. The laws in two other States, Arkansas and Minnesota, were revived by a ruling of the attorney general without action by the legislature being necessary; this also was the case with the District of Columbia law and in Puerto Rico. There are 22 States (as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico) now having such legislation. Further information on their activities is given elsewhere in this issue of *THE WOMAN WORKER*.

<sup>5</sup> The law in Oklahoma applies to men as well as to women.

### Laws Regulating Industrial Home Work

Using the home as a workshop for commercial purposes, and the members of the family (children as well as adults) as the workers, has been a practice long employed by industry to lower costs. Efforts have been directed in late years to enact legislation to protect the home worker against poverty wages and long hours, to protect the consumer from health hazards inherent in articles produced in unregulated homes, and to prevent undercutting of standards for factory workers. New laws passed in 1937 emphasize the increasing significance of this problem throughout the country.

Absolute prohibition of industrial home work on certain designated articles has been embodied in laws newly passed in Illinois, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania. On the lists of goods that are to be manufactured or processed in factory establishments only are articles of food or drink, drugs and poisons, surgical and sanitary supplies, explosives, dolls, children's clothing, and tobacco. (Similar prohibitions already existed in the important States of New Jersey, New York, and Oregon.)

Massachusetts and Pennsylvania provide further that home work in any industry can be prohibited if the State labor department finds that wages or working conditions either are injurious to the health and welfare of the home workers or jeopardize maintenance of labor standards in factories.

Texas now has passed its first law to regulate home work, the State board of health being the enforcing agency and having the power also to prohibit home work on the basis of injury to the health of home workers, the general public, or the factory workers.

Connecticut amended its home-work law as to conditions for distribution and as to rules for procedure.

Besides the States just mentioned, nine others, many of them important in the past as centers for the home-work trade, have some type of home-work legislation but have made no recent changes in their laws. (California, Indiana, Maryland, Michigan,

Missouri, Ohio, Rhode Island, Tennessee, and Wisconsin.)

### Diseases Due to Employment

There are very many women whose health is affected directly by the type of industry in which they are engaged, either because working conditions themselves are harmful or through the use of materials containing poison. In some cases occupational diseases are quickly determined, in other cases they are not so definite in character and not easily discernible as to cause. While the majority of States do not compensate for occupational diseases, each year sees further recognition by the State legislatures of the necessity for legislation on this subject.

Twenty-one States and the District of Columbia now have laws compensating workers for diseases in industry, besides the two Federal laws on the subject. Five States have for the first time enacted such legislation: Indiana, Delaware, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Washington.

Seven additional States took action preparatory to submitting the question to a future session of the legislature. Legislation providing for a board to study occupational disease occurrence in the State and make recommendations was passed in Arkansas, Idaho, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Montana, and Oregon.

Wisconsin added to its earlier law on occupational disease a provision establishing greater security of employment for the partially disabled worker.

### Night-Work Laws

There are now 16 States that have legislation prohibiting night work for women; two States, New York and New Jersey, have recently extended the coverage of their laws.

New York enlarged the scope of its earlier law prohibiting night work for women in restaurants by extending the coverage to all restaurants in the State regardless of size of city, the prohibited period of 12 midnight to 6 a. m. being set for women 21 years and over, and that of 10 p. m. to 6 a. m. for women under 21. For this younger class

of employees, hotels as well as restaurants are included in the law.

New Jersey extended its night-work law to include restaurants (though hotel restaurants were excluded), the period in which work was prohibited being set at 12 midnight to 7 a. m.

### Administration of Labor Laws for Women

In estimating what progress for employed women has been made in States during the past year, it is certain that the administration of laws is of importance equal to their enactment. This year significant steps have been taken to insure more adequate enforcement.

Outstanding among the recent measures is the action in two States that have established new divisions for women and minors, Illinois and Utah. Equally important to employed women are the minimum-wage bureaus created this year in Colorado, Connecticut, and the District of Columbia; and Pennsylvania reorganized its department of labor so as to include a separate bureau for law enforcement on wages and hours.

Of very great help to employed women will be the complete reorganization of the labor-law administrative bodies that has taken place this year in Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, and Indiana, where the administrative functions are now so unified as to establish a more effective central agency.

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## Women in the International Scene

### 40-Hour Week for Textile Workers

**I**N OTHER PARTS of the world, as in the United States, the textile industries employ the largest numbers of women in manufacturing; where this industry exists, women form very much larger proportions of its workers than in this country. At the meeting of the International Labor Conference in the spring of 1937, a Convention for the textile industry was adopted that in time will exert great influence on vast numbers of women workers throughout the world.

This Convention establishes an average 40-hour week for the textile manufacturing industry, including bleaching and dyeing, and printing and finishing, as well as hosiery. The principle of the shorter workweek includes, of course, no change in standard of living. Exceptions are made for family undertakings, and provision is made for persons working on continuous processes, for determining the number of weeks over which the average should be calculated, and the amount of overtime. Glass-bottle manufacture and public works were the subjects

of discussion at previous 40-hour-week conferences, and a Convention was passed to apply this shortened workweek to each of these industries.

Action on the 40-hour week on a broader basis was taken by the International Labor Conference and the Governing Body placed on the agenda of the 1938 International Labor Conference the subject of the generalization of the 40-hour week for all industry not already covered.

Of great importance to American workers was the calling by the International Labor Organization of a technical conference for the textile industry, including representatives of all the various countries in which it exists, and, like other such meetings, composed of representatives of employers, employees, and the governments. This conference, the first of its kind to be devoted to the special economic and social problems of a particular industry, was held in Washington just before the usual spring meeting of the International Labor Conference in Geneva, at which the 40-hour week for textiles was to be discussed and was adopted. The purpose was not to adopt formal Con-

ventions, but to discuss the general situation in the industry, and in this connection a considerable body of information was prepared for the use of the Conference.

This body of data revealed that of nearly 14 million people engaged in textile manufacturing, 53 percent are women. In the 7 major textile-producing countries, women form 78 percent of the workers in Italy, about 60 percent or over of those in the Soviet Union, Japan, Great Britain, and France, 52 percent of the workers in Germany, and just over 40 percent of those in the United States. With the movement of yarn and cloth production from high-cost to low-cost nations, labor standards in the newly industrialized areas of China, Mexico, Brazil, and the Balkans become of great significance. International conferences and international agreement respecting this industry, therefore, are of interest in affecting the millions of workers involved.

### **International Resolution on the Economic Status of Women**

The International Labor Conference of 1937 also passed the following resolution, introduced by the Government delegates from the United States, Miss Grace Abbott and Mr. Edward McGrady, calling the attention of the governments to the position of women in the working world:

Whereas, in view of the social and political changes of recent years and the fact that women workers have suffered from special forms of exploitation and discrimination in the past, there is need to reexamine their general position; and

Whereas, it is for the best interests of society that in addition to full political and civil rights and full opportunity for education, women should have full opportunity to work and should receive remuneration without discrimination because of sex, and be protected by legislative safeguards against physically harmful conditions of employment and economic exploitation, including the safeguarding of motherhood; and

Whereas, it is necessary that women as well as men should be guaranteed freedom of association by governments and should be protected by social and labor legislation which world experience has shown to be effective in abolishing special exploitation of women workers; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That the Twenty-third Session of the International Labor Conference, while recognizing that

some of these principles lie within the competence of other international bodies, believes them to be of the greatest importance to workers in general and especially to women workers; and therefore requests the Governing Body to draw them to the attention of all Governments, with a view to their establishment in law and in custom by legislative and administrative action.

### **International Resolution on the Legal Status of Women**

The Assembly of the League of Nations at its meeting in the fall adopted the following resolution relating to a survey to be made of the legal status of women. A resolution passed in the 1935 session of the Assembly called for information to be supplied by the several governments as to the existing political and civil status of women under the respective national laws, and this 1937 resolution represents the subsequent action of the League on this question.

The Assembly,

1. Having regard to the information concerning the question of the legal status of women, more particularly the political and civil status, which has been collected by the secretary general in accordance with the resolution of the Assembly adopted on September 27, 1935;

2. In view of the fact that in general the trend is for law to develop in the direction of equality between the sexes;

3. Considering it to be desirable that a comprehensive study should be prepared and published giving full information on the legal status accorded to women in the various countries of the world by the provisions of national law and the application of these provisions;

4. Considering that by its resolution of September 27, 1935, the Assembly recognized "that the question of conditions of employment, whether of men or women, is a matter which properly falls within the sphere of the International Labor Organization"; and expressed the hope that that organization "will, in accordance with its normal procedure, undertake an examination of those aspects of the problem within its competence, namely, the question of equality under labor legislation, and that it will, in the first place, examine the question of legislation which effects discriminations, some of which may be detrimental to women's right to work";

5. Considering that the International Labor Organization is engaged in the study contemplated by the Assembly's resolution and that the comprehensive study now in view should not cover matters which have been recognized to fall within the scope of the International Labor Organization;

6. Considering furthermore that the comprehensive study should also not extend to questions of the nation-

ality of women, in regard to which the Assembly maintains the decisions which it has already taken;

7. Considering it desirable that the study of the other elements of the question should be entrusted to the competent scientific institutions, which should be given instructions enabling them to coordinate their work;

8. Seeing that for private law the League of Nations possesses in the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law an organ well qualified to carry out a study of comparative legislation; and that for other aspects of the question it would be desirable to have recourse to competent scientific institutions;

9. Considering that a small committee of experts, comprising members of both sexes, should be established for the purpose of determining the exact scope of the contemplated comprehensive study and distributing the work among the various scientific institutions,

should, so far as necessary, maintain contact with the institutions during the progress of the study, and finally should examine and settle the final form and content of the documents, with a view to the establishment of a synthetic survey, which should accompany the documents when they are published by the League;

10. Considering that this committee should have power to consult women's international organizations and invite their cooperation in any form which it thinks advisable;

11. Asks the Council to appoint a committee of experts of both sexes for the purpose above-mentioned and

Expresses the hope that the committee will receive the cooperation necessary for the successful execution of the present resolution.

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## Notes on Current News

### **New York Cost-of-Living Survey.**

The single working woman living alone in New York State needs an annual income of \$1,215.73 "for adequate maintenance and protection of health"; or if she lives with her family, one of \$1,078.95. Emphasis was placed on the necessity for making a budget on an annual basis, because such expenses as shelter, food, and clothing continue the year round regardless of seasonal unemployment. Considered on a weekly basis, the woman sharing a home with her family requires \$20.73 and one living alone requires \$23.36.

While separate studies have been made of the woman who lives alone, and the one, who, living at home, pays less for room and board, the department takes the position that the girl living at home who pays too little for room and board in order to dress adequately is unwittingly keeping down the standard of living of the group.

A field staff of 18, under the supervision of the director of the division of women in industry and minimum wage of the New York Department of Labor, carried on for 7 months an investigation of the living costs of the employed women in 15 cities in the State of New York. The budget included food, clothing, medical care, and various services.

The cost-of-living study will furnish preliminary data to the wage boards in their deliberations on the wage scales to be set under the new minimum-wage law for women and minors.

Forty-one percent of the working women in the State who will be covered by the new wage law are engaged in clerical occupations. Next largest is the industrial and manufacturing group, approximately 31 percent. (New York Times, Dec. 15, 1937, and release from New York Department of Labor.)

### **Wages of Women Workers in New Jersey.**

Results of a wage survey of women and minor workers in New Jersey have been released by the minimum wage bureau of the State. The report estimates that 377,000 women are employed in occupations coming under provisions of the minimum-wage law. Approximately 292,000 of these women earned less than \$17 a week, and almost 34,000 earned less than \$5. Nearly half the women earned less than \$12, and the report cites instances of average factory pay checks in certain localities being as low as \$7.40 a week. (Letter from the New Jersey Minimum Wage Bureau.)

### Women in Industrial Disputes in the United States.

A selected list of important woman-employing industries accounted for 401 industrial disputes reported to the Conciliation Service of the United States Department of Labor during the 5 months July 1 to December 1, 1937. For only 276 of these disputes were reports of the workers involved given by sex. Almost 70,000 women were directly affected by the 276 industrial disputes, these forming 41 percent of all persons affected. Of course many more women in the country were affected by strikes, since these figures refer only to those disputes reported to the Conciliation Service that are reported by sex.

Naturally the number of strikes and the number of workers affected varied greatly from month to month; for example, many large strikes in the silk textile industry accounted for a great increase in August, and in November fewer strikes occurred in these woman-employing industries than in the four preceding months, though a greater number of persons were affected than in July or October.

It is not surprising to find that certain large industries that employ many women and that generally pay very low wages are those in which the greatest numbers of women have been on strike. For example, large numbers of women have been affected by textile strikes, followed by those in cigar making, laundries, and clothing manufacture. Over two-fifths of all the workers involved in strikes, and nearly three-fifths of all the women, 37,500 in all, were employed in textile mills. Three-fourths or

more of the workers affected by strikes in the laundry, clothing manufacture, and telephone industries were women, and women formed over half those on strike in the following disputes:

Industry	Number of disputes reported by sex	Women directly affected	
		Number	Percent of total
Telephone and telegraph.....	4	190	100
Clothing manufacture.....	13	3,328	83
Laundries.....	29	4,638	79
Toy manufacture.....	1	400	71
Hotels.....	12	427	60
Cigar manufacture.....	5	6,974	56
Textile manufacture.....	44	37,511	55
Enameling.....	2	700	54
Paper manufacture.....	9	341	51
Canneries.....	3	391	51

### Effect of Hour Law for Women in Pennsylvania.

The new 44-hour week in force for women employees in Pennsylvania has resulted in increased employment of women. From the 1st of September (when the law became effective) to the 1st of October, woman employment increased between 3 and 15 percent in various industries; both the State employment office and the Works Progress Administration confirm reports of women's gain in employment. Other factors besides the shortened week also were operative, such as seasonal upturns in certain industries. (Philadelphia Bulletin, Oct. 6, 1937.)

### South Carolina Night-Work Law Upheld.

The South Carolina law prohibiting the working of female employees in mercantile establishments after 10 o'clock at night was upheld by the Court of General Sessions in a decision of September 28, 1937. (Communication to the Women's Bureau.)

**Note.**—Write to the WOMEN'S BUREAU for special types of information on women's work. Lists of available bulletins, charts, exhibits, or other material will be furnished on request.