CONTENTS

Federal Wage-Hour Act Now in Force.................................................. 3
Should Married Women Work? .......................................................... 4
Findings of the Unemployment Census .............................................. 5
Women in Unions.............................................................................. 6
Rubber workers’ convention—Labor Relations Board decisions—Progress in
organization—Strike notes.

Toward Minimum Fair Wages.............................................................. 11
State administrators meet November 9–10—Minnesota order under injunc-
tion—California workers aid enforcement—Wage and cost-of-living sur-
veys—Recent minimum-wage orders—Other activities in the States.

Government Labor Officials Meet..................................................... 15
Reviews of Recent Studies.................................................................. 16
Recent Women’s Bureau Publications............................................... 16
Federal Wage-Hour Act Now in Force

Women Affected by Wage Laws

Nearly 4 million women workers today are looking into the terms of the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act to see if their jobs measure up to its minimum-wage and maximum-hour requirements. It has been estimated that about that number of women work in manufacturing establishments, in wholesale trade, and in transportation and communication (including the clerical workers in such firms) and hence come under the jurisdiction of the Federal wage-hour law. The law went into effect October 24, with a 44-hour week and a 25-cent minimum hourly wage for the first year.

Altogether, somewhat over 5 million women, or nearly half the 10½ million in gainful work in the United States, are covered by Federal and State minimum-wage laws, according to Women's Bureau estimates. These include, in addition to the 4 million in interstate industry, approximately 1½ million women not covered by the Federal act who have the benefit of State minimum-wage laws, or would have if all 25 States with such legislation had their laws fully in force. These women are employed for the most part in laundries, hotels and restaurants, beauty parlors, and retail trade.

Where are the other 5½ million women workers? In what occupations and industries are women workers employed that apparently are exempted from Federal and State laws?

First there are the professional workers and those women employed on their own account, also the supervisors, executives, managers, and officials. More than 2½ million are estimated to be in these classes, obviously not subject to minimum-wage legislation.

Second are the workers left out of the benefits provided by State or Federal minimum-wage laws but who need such protection as much as any class of workers. These are the domestic servants, such as the laundresses and cooks in private homes, and the women wage workers on farms. Many midwives and untrained nurses, as well as non-factory dressmakers, seamstresses, and milliners, may also be placed in the group of women workers whose wages should be protected by legislation. Altogether, a total of more than 2 million women in low-income groups still have no legal protection against substandard hourly wages.

Textile Wage Board Appointed

Wages in the textile industry, in which more women are employed than in any other manufacturing industry, are now under scrutiny by Industry Committee No. 1, appointed under the provisions of the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act by Elmer F. Andrews, Administrator of the Wage and Hour Division of the United States Department of Labor. On the committee are seven representatives of the employees, seven representatives of the employers, and seven persons representing the public.

Women on the committee are Elizabeth Nord, of Manchester, Conn., of the Textile Workers Organizing Committee, and Grace Abbott, long-time director of the Children's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor and now with the School of Social Service Administration of the University of Chicago.

Jurisdiction of the committee covers the manufacturing and processing of yarn or thread and the manufacturing and finishing of woven fabrics (other than carpets and rugs) from cotton, silk, flax, jute, or any synthetic fiber (except the chemical manufacturing of synthetic fiber); also the manufacture of batting, wadding, or filling, and the processing of waste from these
fibers; also the manufacture and finishing, from any fiber or yarn, of pile fabrics (except carpets and rugs) and of knitted fabrics (except hosiery or wool and wool-mixed overcoatings and suitings); also the manufacture and finishing, from any yarn or fiber, of braid, net, or lace, and of cordage, rope, or twine. Thus wool, hosiery, and worsted woven goods are omitted from this committee's jurisdiction.

In 1935 about 1,330,000 wage earners were employed in the branches of the textile industry covered by the committee and 383,000 were in cotton textiles alone.

**Committee Procedure**

All available facts on wage conditions in textiles will be given to the industry committee, which may also make its own investigation of conditions in the industry. It is expected that the committee will hold public hearings in various parts of the country, summoning witnesses and receiving evidence, if necessary, as it is empowered to do by law.

The committee, after considering the evidence, will recommend minimum hourly wage rates, not less than 25 cents nor more than 40 cents, which will not substantially curtail employment nor give a competitive advantage to any group in the industry.

When the committee has finished its investigation it will file a report of its wage recommendations with the Administrator of the Wage and Hour Division, who will hold a hearing on the recommendations and decide whether they are in accordance with law and are supported by evidence received at the hearing. If he approves the recommendations, he will make them effective in a wage order. If he disapproves the recommendations he will return them to the committee for revision or will appoint a new committee.

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**Should Married Women Work?**

In view of the vote being taken in several Massachusetts communities this month on the question of employing married women in the public service, the report of a study of the same question by the city of Milwaukee, Wis., is of especially timely interest. This study was ordered in January 1938 by the common council of the city, which sought information on the employment status of wives and husbands of city employees. It was made by the service commission of the city through the use of questionnaires, followed by a check-up where verification seemed needed.

In the first place, the study shows that one-sixth of the women employed in the city service were the wives of men who were unemployed or who had only nominal earnings. In the second place, it was found that if the women whose husbands were employed lost their jobs, the family would in many cases suffer more than if the man were the one released. Two-thirds of the husbands who were employed at more than merely nominal earnings had salaries falling below $2,000 a year, but less than half of the wives earned less than $2,000. On the other hand, a slightly larger proportion of the husbands than of the wives earned more than $2,500.

Earnings of city employees were very small in a number of cases. About one-fifth of all women city employees had husbands also employed by some government agency—Federal, State, county, or municipal. In 20 of 130 such cases the wife's earnings were under $500; in 4, the husbands earned less than this amount. In 3 cases the earnings of both husband and wife were $500 but less than $1,000; in 15 cases this was true of the wife's earnings, and in 3 cases of the husband's. No tabulation has yet been made of the information collected on number of dependents in the families of these women.
Findings of the Unemployment Census

3,167,000 Women Unemployed

The final report on the enumerative check conducted as part of the Census of Partial Employment, Unemployment, and Occupations gives an estimate of 3,167,000 as the number of totally unemployed women workers in November 1937. An additional 398,000 women were estimated to be working on W. P. A. and other emergency jobs, making a total of 3,565,000 women without normal employment. Another estimated 1,492,000 had intermittent or part-time employment.

These figures are considerably higher than the numbers actually registered in the Unemployment Census, which was found in the check to be far from complete, especially for women; in the check areas, 43 percent of women eligible for registration as unemployed had not registered.

It is a well-known fact that in times of depression women who would not normally work for pay leave their homes in large numbers to seek employment when husbands, fathers, sons, or daughters are unable to support them adequately. The census makes an attempt to estimate the extent to which this had occurred in 1937.

The number of women working or available for work in November 1937 is estimated at 14,496,000, although only 11,567,000 would have been expected on the basis of the 1930 census figures with normal increase from population growth. Thus the estimated number of women in the labor market had increased by 2,929,000 more than was expected. Accordingly, the number of women workers actually employed in November 1937 is represented as being about the same as in 1930, because the number of unemployed was offset by an approximately equal number of new additions of women to the labor market.

Data From Women’s Bureau Study

Interesting in this connection are data from the few important industrial States that regularly report employment data by sex and thus furnish the chief basis of exact information as to trends in women’s employment since the 1930 census. These have been analyzed in a recent report by the Women’s Bureau.

The five States reported upon—New York, Massachusetts, Ohio, Illinois, and Virginia—show for the industry groups or subgroups with figures for both sexes available, and in most cases over the period 1928 to 1936, that men had fared somewhat better than women in three-fifths of all cases.

Because the totals for manufacturing include the heavy industries that are not important woman-employers and that suffered most severely from the depression, women’s employment in manufacturing as a whole was found to have declined less than men’s in three of the five States; in Ohio it had declined less than men’s even in all lines of employment combined. But in a number of industries that traditionally are women’s special field, men had fared better than women in all or most of the cases reported—in all reports for textiles, stores, hotels and restaurants, and office work, and in most cases in laundries, men’s clothing, and confectionery manufacture. In four States reporting on women’s clothing, men had fared the better in two States and women in two.
Women in Unions

Rubber Workers’ Convention

Five women and about 120 men, members of the United Rubber Workers of America convened in Trenton, N. J., in September for a week of comparing notes on wage rates, seniority rights, overtime and vacation provisions, strike experiences, and all the other problems of the industry that the union is attempting to solve for its members. In the visitors’ gallery at this third annual convention of the union sat 15 or 20 rubber workers’ wives, many of them members and organizers of women’s auxiliaries.

The small part that women played in the convention gives no indication of their importance in the rubber industry. It may indicate that women have not yet learned how to meet the triple responsibility of factory worker, homemaker, and active union member. Several women had been asked to attend as delegates, it was reported, but they had declined, probably not so much through diffidence or indifference as through the feeling that they should not leave home and family for so much as a week’s time.

Women’s Part in the Industry.

According to the Census of Manufactures, women make up about one-fourth of all rubber workers in the United States. In 1929 there were 35,000 women in rubber factories as compared with 114,000 men. In the international union the number of women is estimated at more than 11,000 in the United States and Canada, or about one-sixth of the total membership.

For women, working in rubber may mean anything from assembling light-weight tubes to painting the pants on a rubber Mickey Mouse. It may mean helping to produce such basic products as belting, gaskets, and gas bags, or turning out such trifles as balloons and rubber dolls. Foun-

t天 pens and raincoats, lastex and bathing caps, golf balls and galoshes, printers’ rolls and garden hose, hospital sheets and linoleum—such are only a hint of the vast variety of articles made by rubber workers. Stress at the convention was the necessity for establishing some uniformity in rates of pay and hours and conditions of work among the various parts of the industry and in different parts of the country in order to meet the very serious threat of decentralization.

Differentials in Wages and Hours.

Rubber plants in the South and in small towns in the East and North threaten to undermine the high labor standards in the industry, it was pointed out at the convention. A southern delegate reported that the plant in which he worked was increasing its force and working its employees full time while northern branches of the same company, located in large centers, had laid off many of their employees and were working the rest only a few days a week. Wage rates paid in the southern plant were much less than those in the northern plants for the same work.

In another southern rubber factory women averaged about 26 cents an hour and received as little as 5 or 8 cents an hour on piece rates, an organizer reported. Weekly wages for men and women ranged from $10 to $32 for a full week’s work. Conditions were chaotic, with sometimes only 1 hour of work per day and at other times as much as 15 hours. Speed-up was so intense that tremendous waste of both labor and materials resulted. Lack of safety devices contributed to the high accident rate. The organizer declared his belief that the company’s poor financial state at the present time was due largely to inefficiency of operation and waste from speed-up.
A resolution adopted by the convention welcomed the National Emergency Council's "Report on Economic Conditions of the South," and urged the delegates to return to their locals and plead the necessity for greater financial contributions for organizational work in that section.

Almost equally bad conditions, however, were reported in small plants on the eastern seaboard. In a Massachusetts factory, women working on sundries were reported to be earning 20 or 23 cents an hour on piece rates. Raincoat stitchers were being paid as little as $7 to $12 a week for 40 hours of piece work. Men earned $16 to $17 for 40 hours.

Contrasted with conditions in the sweated sections of the industry were those in the great tire plants of Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, and California. Here women have a guarantee of anywhere from 50 to 72 cents an hour and in some operations are able to make as much as $1 an hour. They work no more than 6 hours a day and 36 or 40 hours a week. They have vacations with pay. Production speed is under control, since any attempt to increase the load is regarded as a wage cut, and the workers are prepared to strike against any cut.

Union and Nonunion Conditions.

An example of differences in wage rates between organized and unorganized plants is in the golf-ball industry. In a union plant it was reported that women were paid $1 an hour for making golf balls. In nonunion plants wages were as low as 27 to 35 cents an hour.

Women who had worked for 15 to 20 years in Akron tire plants told what organization, begun in 1933, had done for them. Wages had been good up to 1929, and workers flocked to Akron from the West Virginia hills to take advantage of the high rates. With the depression came sharp wage cuts and lengthening of hours. By 1933 women were getting only 30 cents an hour and were working 9 hours a day, sometimes even 12 hours a day. It was not uncommon for girls to be ordered to work 18 hours out of 24, in two shifts. When the workers began to organize, wages were gradually increased and hours shortened until today the wage rate is more than double what it was 5 years ago, the 8-hour day is the absolute limit, and the 6-hour day and the 36-hour week are the usual standards.

The depression of 1937, which hit the tire industry particularly hard, brought problems of lay-offs and of short time for the workers who remained employed. However, in the new depression, it was reported, the workers in the big plants maintained their wage scale and maximum-hour limits as they had been unable to do in previous depressions when they had no union. In some places they even won wage increases during the past year.

Today all over the country in the organized section of the industry the 40-hour week is standard except where the 36-hour week has been introduced. The minimum-wage rate for women in plants where the workers are organized is rarely less than 35 cents an hour, according to information furnished by locals to the international office of the union. Figures collected semiannually by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics and analyzed by the Women's Bureau probably represent the unionized section of the industry to a large extent, since they are obtained from the larger and more efficient firms, and since the union strength is also in the larger firms. For March 1938 these figures showed an average of 70 cents an hour for women in the tire and tube industry, 48 cents in rubber boots and shoes, and 45 cents in other rubber goods.

In many plants the union has signed agreements providing time and a half for overtime beyond 40 hours; double time on Sundays and holidays; vacations with pay after 1 or more years' service; and a certain amount of pay for days on which the worker is asked to report for work and is not assigned to a job. Seniority provisions tend to protect the older worker.

Equal Pay for Equal Work...

In the rubber industry there are "men's jobs" and "women's jobs." Rates of pay,
as established in union agreements, are usually at least one-fifth lower for women’s jobs than for men’s jobs. Generally the difference can be accounted for by the lighter nature of the work performed by women or by some other factor other than a pure and simple sex differential. In the few cases in which the job employs both men and women, the pay rate is the same unless some other factor enters in.

Union representatives said they were attempting to narrow the differential between rates of pay on men’s and women’s jobs, but had been unable as yet to do away with it altogether. Exceptional was the agreement in a New Jersey pen factory, where both men and women were guaranteed a minimum wage of $15 a week.

The practice of replacing men with women at lower rates of pay had been followed by the factories in the past but would not be permitted in the future in the well-organized plants, union delegates said. One woman who was paid $5.40 for a 6-hour day, or 90 cents an hour, working on tubes, said this work was formerly done by men who were paid more than $10 for a day of 8 hours. Another case was reported of women being brought in to work on safety or “lifeguard” tubes for tires. Men had formerly made 24 tubes for $8. After women were brought in, production was speeded up and the rate dropped to $6 for 52 tubes.

**Immediate Problems in the Industry.**

The immediate pressing problems of rubber workers are short time and lay-offs. A partial protection in well-organized plants has been share-the-work plans, by which the company is persuaded to postpone lay-offs until hours have been generally reduced to a certain figure, perhaps 30 or 24 a week. At least 3 days’ notice before lay-offs is required in some agreements.

The guaranteed annual wage is being considered as a solution for irregular employment. The convention directed the union’s executive board to study the question of the guaranteed annual wage and prepare proposals for future action.

The wage-hour act (Fair Labor Standards Act) was welcomed as a step toward Federal responsibility for “eliminating antisocial practices of certain employers.” A resolution adopted by the convention warned, however, of the lower wages which will result under the act in those sections of the industry that have been employing workers for more than 44 hours a week unless the hourly rate is increased. Even in the unorganized sections of the rubber industry, minimum wages are generally higher than the 25 cents an hour required in the Federal act, but hours are often much more than 44. Unless workers can organize and enforce wage increases they will suffer a reduction of weekly wages through reduction in weekly hours of work under the act.

For this and other reasons, the union found its paramount problem to complete the organization of the workers, both North and South. At present the industry is two-thirds organized as a whole and 90 percent organized in Ohio.

To control decentralization, the union has had introduced in Congress the Bigelow bill, H. R. 10277, which would require manufacturers to get permission from the Federal Government before moving their factories from one State to another.

**Labor Relations Board Decisions**

**Women Clerks Denied Separate Unit.**

An important trend away from the policy of organizing men and women in separate unions is indicated in a ruling by the National Labor Relations Board on September 15. The Board ruled that the employees of an Ohio publisher should be organized in one unit, rather than in separate units for men and women employees; it certified one union as exclusive bargaining agent for all 90 employees in the plant.

The 14 women in the mailing and shipping departments of the plant had an independent organization of their own which contended that it should be considered a separate bargaining unit. The Board found that “In general the only difference between the work performed by the male and
female employees . . . is based upon the degree of physical difficulty involved, the women doing a lighter class of the same type of work performed by the men.”

Orange Packers Get Protection.

Is an orange packer for a growers’ association an agricultural laborer or a factory worker? The answer to this question makes all the difference between protection and no protection under various laws, since agricultural laborers are generally excluded from protective labor legislation, such as the National Labor Relations Act, unemployment compensation acts, the Federal wage-hour act, and most State minimum-wage and maximum-hour laws.

A decision of the National Labor Relations Board, made last spring and recently published, found that certain California citrus fruit packers employed by a growers’ association could not be classed as agricultural laborers and were entitled to protection under the National Labor Relations Act. The decision is of particular interest to women since they are generally employed for grading and packing the fruit.

The growers claimed that the women packers and graders in times of severe frost were sent out to groves with hot coffee and sandwiches for the men at work on heating and smudging. The Board found that such emergency work did not make these women agricultural laborers.

The growers also claimed that the packing-house workers were agricultural laborers because they worked on truck farms and in the walnut industry during slack seasons in citrus. The Board found, however, that the citrus-house packers had about 8 months of steady employment a year in the citrus houses, returning season after season, and that such work as they did in the slack season was of a temporary and odd-job nature.

The Board also found that the graders and packers had to have experience and training before they could perform their duties. Their work was distinctly mechanized and quite different from the operations in the orchard.

The Board, furthermore, quoted definitions of “agricultural laborer” as formulated by various Federal agencies and all of which agree in effect with the Bureau of Internal Revenue’s opinion of July 1936. This states in part that—

The fact that an individual is engaged in handling farm products does not of itself make the services performed by him “agricultural.” . . . It is the opinion of the Bureau that services performed by an employee in connection with the processing, packing, packaging, transportation, or marketing of farm products constitute “agricultural labor” within the meaning of section 907 (c) of the Social Security Act only when those services are performed by an employee of the owner or tenant of the particular farm on which the product in its raw or natural state was produced. Where such services are performed by individuals who are employed by an association of producers, even though the products in connection with which the services are performed were produced by the members of the association, the services of such employees are not excepted under section 907 (c) of the Social Security Act as “agricultural labor,” since the individuals are employees of the association and not of a particular producer. [Italics by Women’s Bureau.]

Progress in Organization

Recent Textile Agreements.

A textile organizing drive which began in the summer is bearing fruit in many renewed agreements and some new agreements, judging from reports received by the Women’s Bureau. Minimum weekly rates of $13 up to $25 for some occupations are provided in several cases. Wage increases as high as 16 percent, no wage reductions, a workweek of 40 hours or less, overtime pay, and vacations with pay are some of the other terms agreed upon. Child labor has been limited in at least two agreements. Limitation has been placed on decentralization of industry in one agreement.

Among the larger firms which have recently renewed agreements is a New Jersey silk and rayon factory, employing 800, where the union has established an 8-hour day, 40-hour 5-day week, time and a half for overtime, no changes in workload without union consent, a general $14 minimum weekly wage, and rates providing $20 for weavers and smash fixers and $25 for warpers and twisters. In another New Jersey silk-weaving plant, employing 500, a
renewed agreement provides an $18 minimum for weavers. A minimum of $18 for both weavers and warpers is provided in a renewed agreement with a Pennsylvania broad-silk company for all its plants, employing 550.

After a strike of silk workers in Paterson, N. J., in September, an agreement was tentatively reached by 25 shops organized in a silk and rayon manufacturers' association and about 1,000 workers organized in an industrial union. Rates agreed upon include a $14- and $18-a-week minimum for weavers, $25 for loom fixers, $22.50 for warpers, and $13 for auxiliary helpers.

The ban on child labor is raised from 16 to 17 years in a renewed agreement with a New Jersey textile plant employing 130. In a Pennsylvania silk plant, employing 150, the age limit against child labor is raised from 16 to 18 years.

Advances in the South are reported. A new agreement was signed in Alabama with a cotton mill employing 200. This provides the 5-day 40-hour week, time and a half for overtime, and union consent to any change in the workload. An attempted wage reduction in a Kentucky cotton mill was met with a 3-day strike, which ended when the two parties agreed to arbitrate the question of wage reduction, and the company agreed to a 40-hour week, 8-hour day, and time and a half for overtime.

Wage Increases Won in Clothing.

Organized hat workers won wage increases of from 35 to 40 percent on children's matched hats in New York City after a general stoppage. Coat and suit manufacturers who purchase matched caps signed agreements that they would confine such purchases in the future to cap manufacturers having contractual relations with the union. All caps must bear the label of the Millinery Stabilization Commission. About 700 workers are affected.

In Boston, after a 13-day strike, a group of women’s-clothing manufacturers agreed to cut hours from 48 to 35 and to increase wages 20 to 40 percent. The terms directly affect 1,000 workers in open shops but also help workers in closed shops. When the agreements expire February 15, 1939, the union reports, it is planned to write a collective agreement for the entire market.

**Strike Notes**

**Saleswomen Strike in San Francisco.**

The city-wide strike of several thousand department-store clerks in San Francisco, Calif., which began September 7, was still unsettled a month later. Thirty-five department and branch stores had refused to negotiate a new contract with the union. Women and girls picketed the stores, which remained open with nonunion labor. Under the expired contract the San Francisco sales clerks had a 40-hour week, unusual among retail-store employees.

**Tobacco Strike Won.**

The strike of tobacco workers in Richmond, Va., reported in the September issue of *The Woman Worker*, was won with a $1.25 weekly pay increase, check-off of dues, seniority rights, improvement in health conditions, and vacations with pay. About 300 Negro stemmers and cleaners were affected.

**Minimum Penalty for Sit-Down.**

The 30 girl employees of a Rhode Island worsted mill who “sat down” in the plant for 3 days following their discharge in July (reported in September issue of *The Woman Worker*) were not striking but were guilty of misconduct, according to a ruling of the Rhode Island Unemployment Compensation Board. Penalty for striking is an extension of 8 weeks in the waiting period before employees can obtain unemployment compensation. For misconduct, however, the penalty may be a waiting period of from only 1 to 10 weeks. The Board gave the girls the minimum penalty, a 1-week waiting period, in addition to the 2 weeks normally required before obtaining compensation.
Toward Minimum Fair Wages

State Administrators Meet Nov. 9–10

The Women's Bureau has called the Eighth Minimum Wage Conference to be held in Washington November 9 and 10, 1938. Commissioners of labor and minimum-wage administrators of the 25 States which now have minimum-wage laws, and of the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, have been invited to attend.

Among the subjects to be discussed is the relationship between the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act, which went into effect October 24, and State minimum-wage laws and their administration.

Minnesota Order to be Revised

Suits against the Minnesota State Industrial Commission were dropped October 25 when the commission agreed to exempt the complaining industries from the blanket wage order of July 11 and to issue separate orders for these industries. The complainants were a laundry, a cafe, a telegraph company, and a group of needlecraft manufacturers. Until separate orders are set up, a former wage order providing at the most $12 a week will apply to these industries.

When it asked the court for a permanent injunction against enforcement of the order, the telegraph company claimed that it should be exempt from the order because its business is interstate in character, subject to regulation by the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 but not subject to State laws.

The wage order, effective July 11, was a general one applying to women and minors in any industry, business, or trade in Minnesota and calling for minimum-wage rates as high as $15 a week, depending on size of community, for experienced women workers 18 years of age and over, and lower rates for learners, apprentices, and minors. (See May Woman Worker for details of order.)

California Workers Aid Enforcement

More than $77,000 in back wages was collected for women and minor workers in California during the 2-year period ending June 30, 1938, according to the biennial report of the division of industrial welfare of the State department of industrial relations. The money represented the difference between the wages received by the workers and the minimum required by law. Slightly more than half of this sum was collected following complaints by the workers, the remainder following routine pay-roll inspection. While the amount collected declined from the first to the second year, the collections due to complaints of workers increased in relative importance.

Other evidence of worker activity facilitating the work of enforcing the legal minimum wage was found in fruit and vegetable piece-rate canneries where pay rolls of women and minors had increased 39 percent from the first to the second year, largely due to union agreements. Whereas the minimum-wage order for the industry requires that half of the women and minor workers on piece work must be paid rates averaging 33½ cents an hour, many piece-work plants had adopted a basic rate of 44 cents, usually under union agreement.

Altogether, piece-rate adjustments in the fruit and vegetable canning and nut cracking and sorting industries amounted to $394,-417.78, which brought the total collections and adjustments for this biennial period up to approximately $472,000.

Wage and Cost-of-Living Surveys

Arizona—Service Industries.

Many of the women in service industries in Arizona were earning less than enough to support themselves independently in the
winter of 1937–38, according to a report of the minimum wage division of the Arizona Industrial Commission, based on a survey made in cooperation with the Women’s Bureau. The great majority of the 3,000 women studied, who were employed in stores, hotels, restaurants, hospitals, laundries, and dry-cleaning establishments, failed to earn the amount shown in a carefully prepared budget as the minimum necessary to insure a woman living alone adequate food for health, decent living quarters, and other items essential for health and efficiency.

The cost of this budget, as determined from a price survey in various parts of the State, averaged $19.87 a week. In contrast, the average earnings of all regular store employees in the State were $14.20, and 88 percent earned less than $20. Women working in laundries and dry-cleaning plants had average earnings of $11.20, and only 1 out of 20 was paid as much as $18.

The budget allowed the following amounts on an annual basis:

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Connecticut—Cleaning and Dyeing.

About 2 out of 5 of the 373 women whose hourly earnings were recently reported in the cleaning and dyeing industry in Connecticut had earnings of less than 30 cents an hour, according to a survey made by the minimum-wage division of the State labor department. Nearly two-thirds had less than 35 cents and more than three-fourths had less than 40 cents.

The survey was representative in that it covered 70 percent of the firms in the industry in the State, from which were collected wage data for 514 women in a busy week and for 434 women in a slack week late in 1937 or early in 1938.

Half of the women covered by the study were receiving clerks, who usually work on a daily or weekly salary in small branch stores. They had steadier earnings than others, but made an average of only $13.55 in both seasons. About one-fourth of the women were pressers on a piece-rate or hourly-rate basis. In the busy season their earnings averaged $15.71; in the slack season they averaged $12.

In the busy week more than four-fifths of the women in the industry earned less than $18, whereas the Consumers’ League of Connecticut recently found between $18 and $20 the amount necessary for girls living alone in five cities of the State with populations of 12,000 to 165,000.

New Hampshire—Retail Stores.

Three important problems in retail employment and how to meet them are pointed out in a report recently issued by the minimum-wage division of the New Hampshire Bureau of Labor. The problems are part-time employment, long hours, and inventory and counter work after closing time.

In this study, more than one-fifth of the women and well over half of the girls under 21 had worked less than 37 hours a week. Nearly one-third of the girls had worked less than 13 hours a week, a period often representing only one day’s employment.

Two ways by which a wage board might meet the problem of part time are suggested: A guaranteed minimum wage for a standard week for all who are employed; or a higher minimum rate for part-time employment, with a proviso that no employee shall receive less than 1 full day’s pay in a week.

The problem of long hours may be due to a need, but often merely to a custom, of keeping stores open long hours for the convenience of customers, it is pointed out.
In 18 cities and towns in New Hampshire in the spring and summer of 1937, stores customarily remained open Saturday night until 9, 9:30, or in some cases even 10 o’clock. In seven cities, stores stayed open late on one other night in the week.

For the individual worker, however, long hours seemed the exception. Only 15 percent of the women and minor employees had worked as long as 49 hours, although the law allows 54. To check the tendency of a few employers to keep their workers long hours and to prevent unfair competition, the report suggests a higher minimum-wage rate, possibly time and one-half, for over 48 hours a week.

Work after closing time should be paid for at the minimum-wage rate fixed for the industry, the report contends. Such overtime work consists of quartering inventories and the straightening of counters at night, with perhaps some rearrangement at the end of each week. No record of such work was found on the pay rolls, and no extra pay appeared to be given for it.

Pay-roll records were taken during the spring and summer of 1937 for 2,260 women (21 and older), and 652 male and 741 female minors. Nearly half of the women had earned less than 28 cents an hour and less than $13 a week. Half of the girls had earned less than 22 cents an hour and less than $7 a week. The girls’ lower weekly earnings were due chiefly to the large number of them among the part-time workers.

New York—Candy Factories.

The effect of seasonality on the candy worker is shown in a study of the industry made by the division of women in industry and minimum wage of the New York Department of Labor. Pay rolls were copied for nearly 3,500 women for the first week in December 1937, the peak of the busy season. Only somewhat more than one-half of the women had worked as much as 50 weeks in the past year. Women who had less than 44 weeks of employment in the year studied were interviewed in their homes. Of the 151 women in New York City whom it was possible to reach, 126 stated that they had been unable to get work of any kind in the periods when they were not employed in the candy factory.

In general, earnings were not enough to permit any savings. They averaged $16.12 for regular workers for the sample week in December 1937, while only $12.59 was the weekly average for the women who had worked at least 26 weeks during the year.

Pennsylvania—Hotels.

The need of a minimum wage for women and minors employed in hotels and other lodging places is shown in a sample study based chiefly on an investigation of the industry, as of January 1938, by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry.

More than two-thirds of the 1,545 full-time women employees in year-round hotels received neither room nor meals, and earned on an average $11.44 a week in cash wages. One-eighth of the entire group received one meal a day and averaged $10.61 a week. The small group receiving full maintenance averaged $6.84 a week. The 1937 annual cash earnings, reported for only 882 full-time workers, averaged $559, $518, and $400, respectively, in the three groups mentioned.

The hours worked by full-time women in year-round hotels show the benefits of the State 44-hour law for women. Only 13 percent had worked more than 44 hours, probably in some cases because of the overtime provisions in the law, and in other cases because of violations. More than one-fourth of the women had worked less than 40 hours.

Evidence available on tips received by both year-round and seasonal employees indicates that relatively few received tips amounting to more than $1 a week. Size of community appeared to make little difference in earnings of women hotel employees. Those in towns of 100,000 to 500,000 had smaller earnings than those in towns of 25,000 to 100,000.
Recent Minimum-Wage Orders

Massachusetts—Millinery.

A minimum rate of 35 cents an hour for experienced workers in millinery occupations became effective in Massachusetts October 1. No apprenticeship period is provided for workers on men’s and women’s wool-felt and fur-felt hat bodies. For other workers a 10 weeks’ learning period is allowed at 25 cents an hour.

Massachusetts—Paper Boxes.

A directory order effective August 1 requires that women and minors with 6 months’ experience in manufacturing paper boxes must be paid at least 35 cents an hour; those with less than 6 months’ experience must be paid at least 30 cents an hour.

Oregon—Nut Industry.

Effective November 15, the State welfare commission has ordered a minimum wage of 30 cents an hour for women and minors employed as time workers in cracking, shelling, processing, bleaching, grading, and packing of nuts. Piece workers employed in cracking and shelling must receive a rate such that at least 35 percent of the total number of women and minors on piece work can earn 30 cents an hour.

Women and minors engaged in cracking and shelling may not be employed more than 8 hours a day and 44 hours a week, except that in emergencies women may be employed longer at time and a half the usual hourly rate. For women engaged in processing, bleaching, grading, and packing, maximum hours are 10 a day and 60 a week, with provision for overtime in emergencies at time and a half the usual rate. Home work in cracking and shelling is prohibited except for growers who crack and shell their own crop.

Pennsylvania—Laundry Industry.

The first minimum-wage order issued under the Pennsylvania law of 1937 went into effect October 1. It is a directory order providing that women and minors in the laundry industry, including production, maintenance, office, and store workers, shall be paid at least $9 a week if they work over 16 to 30 hours, and as much as $13.20 a week if they work a full 44-hour week. That is, for hours worked above 16 up to and including 30 a week they are guaranteed 30 hours’ pay at 30 cents an hour; the same hourly rate applies for hours worked above 30 up to and including the legal limit of 44 a week. Employees who work only 16 hours or less must be paid at least 33 cents an hour. No differentials are provided for beginners, for occupations, or for regions.

Other Activities in the States

In the District of Columbia the enforcement of the 8-hour-day law for women was transferred September 1 from the health department to the minimum-wage board. This means that the hours worked and the wages paid can be checked simultaneously.

In Kentucky, Clay A. Copeland has been appointed supervisor of minimum wage for women and minors under the State department of industrial relations.

The minimum-wage division in New Hampshire is securing pay rolls from all textile factories in the State, including wages and hours of men as well as women.

Miss Kate Papert has been appointed acting director of the division of women in industry and minimum wage of the New York State Department of Labor to succeed Miss Frieda S. Miller, now State commissioner of labor. Miss Papert was formerly chief of the research bureau of the division. In her 11 years in the New York labor department she organized and directed some of the most extensive and important research projects handled by the division of women in industry and minimum wage.

The order for the laundry and dry-cleaning industry in Rhode Island became mandatory September 12, 1938. It had been directory since May 2.

The Industrial Commission of Wisconsin
has appointed an advisory committee on woman and child labor, consisting of 15
members with equal representation of em-
ployers, employees, and the public. This
committee will consider, among other mat-
ters, revision of the minimum-wage rate,
also possible revision of orders relating to
women’s hours.

Government Labor Officials Meet

W hat should State labor departments
do to improve conditions of women
workers now that the Federal Government
in the wage-hour law has accepted respon-
sibility for minimum standards of those in
interstate industry?

This question was considered at the
twenty-fourth annual meeting of the Inter-
national Association of Governmental Labor
Officials in Charleston, S. C., in September.

The following recommendations made by
the Women in Industry Committee may be
summarized as follows:

First, labor officials in States with minimum-wage
laws should issue more wage orders and more adequate
wage orders to protect women not benefited by the
Federal act;

Second, in extending hour and wage legislation to
men, States should formulate separate laws, so that
the laws for women and minors, already found constitu-
tional by the United States Supreme Court, will not
be jeopardized by inclusion of provisions for men
which may be challenged in the courts;

Third, States should expand the coverage of their
wage-hour laws to include groups that are now ex-
cluded from the benefit of both Federal and State
laws. Most important of such groups are agricultural
workers and household employees.

Difficulties of enforcement of labor laws
in such fields as agriculture and domestic
service “should not entirely block the way
of experimentation and progress,” the report
of the Women in Industry Committee urged.
It declared that the States should find some
method of raising the wage levels of the
2 million women agricultural workers and
household employees who are “among the
lowest paid of all workers and not covered
by any law.”

The report on minimum wage urged the
State administrators to give most careful
attention to observing accepted techniques
in issuing and administering wage orders.
It was pointed out that since the constitu-
tionality of minimum-wage laws for women
and minors under the United States Constitu-
tion is now established, those opposed to
the minimum wage are seeking to find flaws
in the administrative procedure, or trying
to claim that the law is not in accord with
State constitutions.

Following are the texts of the resolutions
adopted on minimum wage and industrial
home work:

RESOLUTION ON MINIMUM WAGE
Be it resolved, That all States not now having mini-
imum-wage legislation for women and minors draft
such legislation in conformity with the standards
approved by this association and present such bills to
the next session of their legislature; and

Be it further resolved, That although the constitu-
tionality of the Federal wage-hour law has not been
tested in the courts, the States nevertheless extend the
application of minimum-wage legislation to men. It
is recommended that this be done by the introduction
of new legislation which will not endanger present
minimum-wage laws for women and minors; and

Be it further resolved, That States having minimum-
wage laws be urged to take concerted action in estab-
lishing minimum-wage standards for industries which
are interstate in nature; and

Be it also resolved, That this association urge that
adequate appropriations be granted for the enforce-
ment of minimum-wage legislation.

RESOLUTION ON INDUSTRIAL HOME WORK
Be it resolved, That the Administrator of the Wage
and Hour Division and the Chief of the Children’s
Bureau be urged to take every step possible to insure
application of the wage, hour, and child labor provisions
of the Fair Labor Standards Act to the home-work
practice, and that the Administrator be urged to include
in each minimum-wage order issued under the law a
provision prohibiting industrial home work in the
industry or industries covered.
Reviews of Recent Studies


There is now a new byword in America—one-third of the families of the Nation live on less than $780 a year. This important report of the National Resources Committee for the year 1935–36 shows that President Roosevelt spoke accurately when he said that one-third of the Nation is ill-housed, ill-clothed, and ill-fed.

It shows that the lower one-third of the Nation gets just over one-tenth of the national income. It shows that 1,600,000 unattached women not on relief rolls live on less than $780 a year. For relief and nonrelief groups taken together, 29 percent of unattached women had less than $500 in the year 1935–36.

These are just a few of the striking facts to be found in this report, which presents the first estimates of income distribution to appear since the Brookings Institution estimates for 1929, published in “America’s Capacity to Consume.” The study was made possible through a Nation-wide sample survey of consumer purchases by some 300,000 families, conducted with Works Progress Administration funds by the United States Bureau of Home Economics and the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, in cooperation with the National Resources Committee and the Central Statistical Board. Material from various other sources, including the Women’s Bureau, was used to build up income estimates for all the Nation’s consumers. The study was directed by Dr. Hildegarde Kneeland.

Wages and Hours of Women Workers in 1938. Hewes-Fagin Unit, Bryn Mawr Summer School. 1938.

A practical and timely project in workers’ education at the Bryn Mawr Summer School this year was the study made by the girls themselves of their own working conditions as compared with those required under the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938. The act was passed by Congress at about the time the session opened, and immediately wages and hours became the central theme of the curriculum at the school.

The report on the study made by the girls shows that union organization had done much more for them than the Federal wage-hour act could do at present. Of 62 students, all but 6 were union members, and practically all were extremely active in their unions.

Three-fifths of the women, chiefly in the clothing industry, had hourly earnings of 40 cents or more. Only one-quarter of the group worked as much as 44 hours. In this group one domestic worker reported working at times as much as 70 hours a week.) Only 2 girls of the 62 expected to be affected by the provisions of the Federal wage-hour act—a 25-cent minimum wage and a 44-hour maximum workweek—during its first year of operation. The others either had better conditions, were in industries not covered by the law, or were students from foreign countries.

Recent Women’s Bureau Publications


The Legal Status of Women in the United States of America, January 1, 1938. Latest reports issued are Delaware (Bul. 157–7) and Idaho (Bul. 157–11). 1938. Price 5 cents each.

Hours and Earnings in Certain Men’s-Wear Industries.


1 Bulletins may be ordered from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D.C., at prices listed. A discount of 25 percent on orders of 100 or more copies is allowed. Single copies of the bulletins or several copies for special educational purposes may be secured through the Women’s Bureau without charge as long as the free supply lasts.