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## The Millinery Worker

**T**HE WOMEN'S BUREAU has recently published its report on "Conditions in the Millinery Industry in the United States" (Bulletin 169), which gives a detailed study of the problems of the millinery worker. It shows how the employer also suffers from lack of stability in the industry and points out the necessity for the employers and workers to get together in an effort to solve mutual problems.

Women predominate in the millinery industry, making up nearly two-thirds of all those employed in 1937. Men do the work of blocking and, for the most part, cutting, and many are employed as sewing-machine operators. It is women who trim the hats and put in linings and bands, and who are the milliners making the entire hat body when it is not a felt or straw shape. Women also do the general factory work of assembling materials for trimmers.

About half the workers in the industry are trimmers or milliners and a fifth are sewing-machine operators. General factory workers make up about one-seventh in the industry and blockers constitute almost another seventh. Only a very small proportion of the workers are cutters and designers. The occupational ratios vary from one part of the country to another, however, depending on what type of hat is produced. In northern New Jersey, where about one-half of the sales are of the cheapest hats, more work is done on the sewing machine than where expensive hats are made, as in Los Angeles and San Francisco. Where the good tailored hat is produced, as in up-State New York and Connecticut, there are larger proportions of blockers than where this type of hat is a minor item, as in San Francisco.

There are many more millinery workers than are needed under current business conditions. The study shows that only about

one-fourth of the workers had a full year's employment of 46 weeks or more in 1937. Over half had worked less than 6 months for the firm. Though some may have transferred to another firm during the year, it is obvious that many were being employed merely as extras.

### Average Wages in 1937

Wages paid out by the entire industry in 1937 averaged \$23.54 a week per employee, but there was a wide range from the \$16.11 average for general factory girls to the \$39.04 average for cutters. Trimmers and milliners, the largest group, averaged \$16.44, sewing-machine operators \$30.31, and blockers \$36.96. The relatively high figure for sewing-machine operators shows the influence of New York City, which employs about half the millinery workers in the United States and where it is usual to have men sewing-machine operators, rather than women as in other centers.

When employment was at its peak, trimmers and milliners averaged \$24.34, but those who still held their jobs in the dullest week averaged only \$8.74. Seasonal peaks and slumps had a similar effect on the earnings of other production workers.

Even when a trimmer or milliner had a full 46 weeks or more of employment, her earnings for the year averaged only \$849 to \$889, or about \$17 or \$18 a week.

One problem of the workers is that of having piece rates fixed on products that change rapidly. Because women's hats are produced on an order basis and many retailers take only a few of any given hat, reordering as the style meets with public approval, many different types of hats may be worked on in any one week. Each hat may require somewhat different handling, and whenever work is paid on a piece-rate



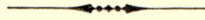
basis, rates must be set for each operation on each hat. Trimmers in the same shop in the same week may work on hats for which they are paid as much as \$6.92 a dozen and as little as 15 cents a dozen, a difference that makes easily possible errors of judgment in piece-rate fixing.

### Solving the Piece-Rate Problem

Wherever there is a union contract, the basic hourly rates for "an average good worker" are stated in the contract and the piece rates for the various operations on each hat are set to yield these amounts. Some locals of the union have contracts with the employers that provide certain minimum pay per week. In San Francisco a weekly rate is paid because here the work is largely on a fill-in basis and little speed can be acquired. In some localities cutters and general factory workers frequently are paid on a time basis. Blockers usually work as a "corporation;" that is, two or three or four blockers pool their earnings, each getting a specified proportion for the week. Some-

times sewing-machine operators work as a corporation if they are employed on fabric hats.

Workers cannot achieve much better conditions until the manufacturers adopt more efficient methods, the study indicates. This would be to the employers' advantage as well as to the workers', for profits are low, there are many failures, and some employers have smaller earnings than the better-paid of their employees. A method should be found for assessing style trends far enough in advance to permit planning each season's manufacture. The manufacturers must adopt efficient purchasing methods, undertake cost accounting (now almost entirely lacking in the industry), negotiate advance sales on the basis of preliminary designs, and have sufficient assets to obtain credit from legitimate sources at legitimate rates. The industry would benefit also if the manufacturers were organized as strongly as the workers, more than 80 percent of whom belong to one union, the United Hatters, Cap, and Millinery Workers' International Union.



## State Laws Passed in 1939

**L**EGISLATURES in most of the 44 States where regular sessions have been held this year have adjourned, and a survey of their activities shows that thus far very few laws have been adopted that have special reference to working women. Some of those passed already were reported in *THE WOMAN WORKER* for May; for example, in Massachusetts, suspension until 1941 of the night-work law for women in textile industries; amendments to the Nevada minimum-wage law and to the New Mexico and Utah hour laws; the passage in West Virginia of an act to regulate industrial home work.

In addition, New York has amended the law prohibiting the employment of women at night by extending the exemption for linotypists and monotypists to those in commercial printing establishments; Minnesota has amended its minimum-wage law by adding certain exemptions for telephone operators; the Oklahoma Legislature rejected a proposal to repeal the minimum-wage law of that State; and Alaska and Maine have passed their first minimum-wage laws. (See page 10.) The Alaska law limits the workweek of household employees to 60 hours.



## Women Workers and Old-Age Insurance

**J**UST over 8¼ million women had wages taxable to provide old-age insurance in the initial year of such tax collection, 1937. This is shown by an analysis recently completed by the Bureau of Old-Age Insurance of the Social Security Board. Women constituted 27 percent of all workers covered, though they were but 22 percent of all persons employed at the last census.

That the occupations covered by old-age insurance are more generally those in which the women workers are young is apparent in the fact that women less than 25 years of age constitute about the same proportion of those covered by insurance as of all employed women at the last census (37 percent), while women of 40 or more comprise much smaller proportions of those covered by insurance (20 percent) than of all employed at the last census (28 percent).

Taxable wages amounted to less than \$200 in the year for nearly 31 percent of the women and for 19 percent of the men. This does not necessarily mean that no more was earned, since workers may have been employed part of the year in an exempt occupation. For 54 percent of the women taxable earnings were less than \$500, and for only about 14 percent were such earnings \$1,000 or more; they were \$2,000 or more

for only about 1 percent of the women as compared with 12 percent of the men.

The average earnings of all women in industrial and commercial jobs covered by old-age insurance in 1937 were \$525, compared with \$1,027 for men. Younger women's earnings more nearly approached those of men than did older women's earnings, as the following shows:

	<i>Percent women's earnings were of men's</i>
All age groups.....	51
20-24 years.....	69
25-29 years.....	60
30-34 years.....	53
35-39 years.....	50
40-44 years.....	49
45-49 years.....	49
50 years and over.....	52

Negro women covered by old-age insurance numbered only 335,000, or 4 percent of the total number of women though they constituted 17 percent of all gainfully employed women at the last census. These figures reflect the fact that large proportions of Negro women are in agriculture and household employment, not yet covered by old-age insurance. The average year's wage taxable for Negro women was \$247, about 55 percent that of Negro men and 47 percent that of all women.

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## Many Women Support Chicago Families

**T**HE pin-money theory of women's work has long been outmoded. Important new evidence of the very real share women bear in the support of their families is shown in the study of family income in Chicago recently published by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics. This is the first to appear of a series of such studies made in 32 cities.

The report includes practically a 10-per-

cent sample of all the families in the city. Judging from the data it provides, more than 99,000 Chicago families (not on relief) had a woman as the principal wage earner, that is, the one whose earnings made the greatest contribution to the family support.

### **Women as Principal Family Wage Earners.**

In 14 percent of the native white families reported a woman was the principal wage earner. Three-fourths of these were not



“complete” families, that is, they did not contain both husband and wife.

The fullest information tabulated is for the sample of native white complete families.<sup>1</sup> Of these, 25,800 were scheduled, a random sample of approximately 10 percent of all in the city. Of the employed women from these complete families, 27 percent were the principal earners. These women were concentrated most largely in the clerical fields, while the men who were the principal family wage earners were more commonly engaged in the wage-earner occupations.

In nearly 1,100 of the complete families a woman was the principal wage earner, and in almost 650 of them this chief earner was the wife. Most of these wives were not extremely young women, since 25 percent of them were 45 years of age or older, and somewhat more than 50 percent were at least 35; only a small proportion were under 25. However, their income increased only up to the age of 35, while the income of husbands who were principal wage earners increased until they were 55 years old.

Women's wages are low, and practically 70 percent of the families in which women were the principal wage earners were living on less than \$2,000, 23.5 percent of them on less than \$1,000, a very low city income.

#### **Women As Sole Wage Earners in the Family.**

Four-fifths of the native white complete families had only one wage earner. Though this usually was a man, in 205 families the wife, and in 131 families some other female member, was the sole wage earner. Since this is approximately a 10-percent sample, the indication is that more than 2,000 wives in the city and more than 1,300 other women members are the sole support of native white complete families. Practically 90 percent of the families supported entirely by the wife were living on less than \$2,000, over half of them on less than \$1,000.

#### **Women Supplementing the Family Income.**

Some other member besides the chief wage earner added to the income in more than

5,000 of the native white complete families—a fifth of those reported. These supplementary wage earners were found in a larger proportion of the wage earners' and the clerical workers' families than of those in business and the professions.

This supplementary wage earner was the wife in 1,368 families, more than a fourth of all those that had supplementary wage earners (26.6 percent). Over half the families (54.5 percent) in which the wife added to the family earnings had less than \$2,000 in the year; almost an eighth (12.2 percent), less than \$1,000. Obviously a family living in a large city at such an income level was in very definite need of the wife's contribution.

It is of interest to note the extent to which the wife was at work in relation to the size of the family. The study contains data for a number of family types, worked out with great care. The present discussion can show only a few selections significant primarily from the angle of the woman worker. The wife was either the principal or the supplementary wage earner in 14.6 percent of the families with only man and wife; just over one-third of these working wives were the principal wage earners. Where there were one or two children 5.2 percent of the wives were at work. In the largest families, which presumably might have an older child or other adult member employed, 3.1 percent of the wives were in gainful work.

The foregoing discussion has dealt chiefly with the native white complete nonrelief families, which constituted about 80 percent of the total number of families not on relief. A woman was the principal wage earner in 55 percent of the “incomplete” native white families—those that did not contain both husband and wife. She was the principal wage earner in 13 percent of the foreign-born and in 18 percent of the Negro families. The wife or woman head was the principal wage earner in about 29 percent of the foreign-born and in about 77 percent of the Negro families that had a woman as principal wage earner.

<sup>1</sup> This applies to the families not on relief, and the discussion from this point on includes only nonrelief families.



## Problems of Household Workers

### Social Security for Domestic

**F**IGURES on low earnings of household employees compiled recently by the Social Security Board lend support to the board's recommendations that domestic workers be included under Social Security old-age and unemployment benefits. They show that domestic workers as a class are too low-paid to provide for old age and unemployment from their own meager earnings.

The data were obtained by the board from a random sample of the records of domestic workers registered with State employment offices in four cities—Cincinnati and Lakewood, Ohio; Wilmington, Del.; and Washington, D. C. Data on wages at placement or in last employment were obtained for 1,734 workers registered in 1936, 1937, and 1938.

The most frequent weekly cash wage reported in any city, in any year, was from \$5 to \$7. Daily rates ranged from 50 cents to \$3.50, with the largest single group receiving between \$2 and \$2.50 a day. In each city hourly rates reported were from 25 to 30 cents for 90 percent of the workers paid on such a basis.

Another important reason for extending Social Security to household employees—a move which the President has endorsed—is the unstable employment of such workers. Household employment fluctuates greatly. The Nation-wide unemployment census of 1937 revealed that the domestic workers totally unemployed or on emergency work were 12 percent of the number of such workers reported in the United States by the Census of 1930. An additional 5 percent had only part-time jobs and were seeking more work.

### Conditions in Illinois and Texas

Information on earnings, hours, working conditions, training, and experience of house-

hold workers is provided by the Young Women's Christian Association from studies in Illinois and Texas.

#### \$3.50 to \$20 in Illinois.

Questionnaires to all Y. W. C. A. branches in Illinois resulted in 263 usable reports from 13 communities, including Chicago and its vicinity. All but 23 of the women reporting lived at the place of employment, and the majority were general workers.

Women living in received from \$3.50 to \$20 a week, over half of them earning between \$7 and \$11. Wages tended to be higher in Chicago and vicinity, where the average was between \$11 and \$12 as compared with \$8 in other communities. Experience generally brought higher earnings, and usually workers on specialized jobs, such as cook or nursemaid, earned more than general workers.

Wages for the small group of workers living out ranged from \$3.50 to \$12. When it is remembered that such women had to pay at least for their lodging, and in some cases for meals and carfare, their position compares very unfavorably with that of the workers who lived in.

The minimum scale of wages proposed in the voluntary agreement sponsored by the Y. W. C. A. is, by population classification, \$7 or \$8 for workers living in, and \$3 higher for workers living out but receiving meals where they work. More than one-fifth of the women living in and almost seven-tenths of those living out would have their wages raised by the adoption of such minima.

#### 80-Hour Week in Texas.

A similar questionnaire survey for white household employees in Houston, Tex., brought 30 replies thought to be typical. More than half of these girls worked 80 hours or more a week, with a 55-hour week the shortest reported. Their duties usually



included the preparation of two or three meals a day, responsibility for part of the laundry work, cleaning seven or more rooms, care of one or more children. Nearly half reported no time for rest during the day, and few were paid extra for overtime. Practically all had two half-days a week off, but half of those reporting on the subject were not allowed any whole holiday free.

Wages ranged from \$5 to \$12 a week, with three-fourths earning less than \$8. More than two-thirds of the girls contributed to the support of their families and more than two-fifths of those reporting the amount gave at least half their wages. In one case the girl kept for herself only \$1 out of a wage of \$8.

### Laws Proposed for Household Workers

Efforts have been made this year in a number of States to include household employees in the occupations with legally safeguarded hours and wages, though none of

these proposals has as yet become law. In still other labor bills these workers were not excepted so often as has been done heretofore; for example in several of the State wage and hour laws patterned after the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act. Bills to apply a minimum wage to these workers specifically were introduced in Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, Washington, and West Virginia. An attempt to limit their hours was made in California, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, and West Virginia. However, the maximum usually suggested was as long as 60 hours.

At present only one State, Washington, has a law regulating hours of work in household employment, and only one State, Wisconsin, has set minimum-wage rates for these occupations. Except in Idaho and to a limited extent in New York, household workers are without the protection of unemployment insurance, and nowhere are they covered by old-age insurance.

## Toward Minimum Fair Wages

### Progress Under the Fair Labor Standards Act

#### "Six Months of Wage and Hour Progress."

**I**N A Nation-wide broadcast on April 24, Administrator Elmer F. Andrews of the Wage and Hour Division of the Department of Labor summed up the accomplishments of the 6 months in which the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act had been in effect.

Probably most of the 300,000 workers in interstate industry who had been getting less than 25 cents an hour before October 24, 1938, had their wages raised by the act, Mr. Andrews estimated. Another 250,000 receiving less than 30 cents an hour should get a raise next October when the 30-cent minimum goes into effect.

Of the workers in interstate industry who received no immediate wage increase under the act, some had their workweek shortened

and others had overtime pay that they would not otherwise have received.

Though 11,910 complaints of violations were received in the first 6 months of the act, or one complaint for each 11,000 workers covered, many were based on misunderstanding of the law or were filed by workers not employed in interstate commerce. Further, many of them were duplicates, Mr. Andrews said, since a number of persons complained of the same situation. Only 4,145 of the total complaints appeared to be valid.

Nineteen cases of violation were taken to court, five for criminal prosecution and fourteen for injunctions. In all its court cases settled the Wage and Hour Division had been upheld. About \$12,000 was paid to workers as a result of injunction cases against employers who had withheld wages due. Thousands of dollars had been paid



to workers without court action, merely by the Administrator pointing out to employers that they were violating the law.

#### **Amendments to Wage-Hour Act Proposed.**

Amendments designed to facilitate the administration of the Fair Labor Standards Act, introduced by Representative Mary T. Norton of New Jersey but not adopted by the House, include the following:

Permitting a lengthened workweek without overtime pay (60 hours a week, with no limitation during 14 weeks in the year) for a large group of farm occupations. These include, for example, such important occupations of women as the making of dairy products; poultry picking and dressing; handling chicks and other fowls; preparing, preserving, and canning fruits and vegetables; handling eggs; and so forth. Instead of applying, as at present in some occupations, only to the "area of production" (a term that has caused great administrative difficulty) the new exemption would cover a wider area, though in general it would not include terminal establishments, defined in the amendment.

Exempting from both wage and hour provisions certain workers at present covered: Switchboard operators in telephone exchanges having less than 500 stations; certain salaried employees receiving \$200 a month or more, who at present are entitled to overtime pay above 44 hours a week under the act; workers engaged in tobacco processing prior to storage, and storing of leaf tobacco; and those who handle fresh fruits and vegetables on farms.

Giving the Administrator authority to restrict industrial home work and fix piece rates for it to the extent necessary to safeguard the minimum standards provided in the act, which at present makes no mention of home work.

#### **"Area of Production" Further Defined.**

Another definition of "area of production" as applied under the Fair Labor Standards Act to agricultural and horticultural products has been issued by the Administrator of the Wage and Hour Division. This definition exempts from the wage and hour provisions of the act employees engaged in canning, packing, and storing of fresh fruits and vegetables in establishments situated in the open country or in towns of less than 2,500 population and that draw all their products from within a radius of 10 miles.

(For other definitions of "area of production" see *WOMAN WORKER* for January, March, and May 1939.)

#### **Home-Work Regulations Explained.**

The Administrator has issued a statement pointing out that the act makes no mention of home work and does not prohibit it. Consequently, provisions of the act apply to home workers exactly as they do to all other workers if the employer is engaged in interstate commerce or the production of goods for interstate commerce. The special regulations on home-work records had been issued only to determine whether employers of home workers were complying with the wage and hour provisions of the statute.

The Administrator also found it necessary to point out that domestic servants are not industrial home workers and are not in any way protected by the act.

#### **Hours of Work Defined.**

An interpretative bulletin to guide employers and employees in determining what are "hours worked" under the Fair Labor Standards Act was made public May 3. It explains that as a general rule hours worked include all time during which an employee is required to be on duty or on the employer's premises, or at a prescribed workplace, and all time during which an employee is permitted to work, whether or not he is required to do so.

Time clocks are accepted as an appropriate basis for recording hours worked only when they accurately reflect the period worked by the employee, and not, for example, when they are punched after the employee has been at work for some time. Brief periods of inactivity due to break-down of machinery, waiting for materials, or other interruptions beyond the workers' control should generally be computed as hours worked. Time spent in travel may be considered as hours worked, depending on circumstances, as may time spent attending meetings and lectures sponsored by the employer and related to the employee's job.

Employees having more than one job must be paid the minimum rate by each employer if the employers are disassociated from each other. If two employers share the same



worker, however, they are not each required to pay the minimum for all hours worked.

#### Other Policy Decisions Under the Act.

The Administrator has advised that: All employees of banks should be considered subject to the Fair Labor Standards Act since banks are not considered service establishments.

Overtime payments must be made in cash on the regular pay day.

Workers engaged in making buttons, knife handles, and similar products from shells cannot be exempted from the act under the claim that they are engaged in processing fish products or byproducts, the Administrator has declared in an interpretative bulletin. Office employees of fish companies, except when engaged in actual "marketing" or "distributing," also are not exempt, nor are cooks and watchmen employed in the sea-food and fishery industry. The exemption of workers in fish processing can be applied only to those operations closely connected with catching fish and affected by natural factors, such as freezing, canning, curing, storing, and distributing.

The temporary blanket exemption of non-profit agencies that employ handicapped persons was extended from April 1 to June 1, 1939. Meanwhile a committee has been appointed to study such employment.

#### Alaska and Maine Enact Laws

Effective March 9, 1939, the Legislature of the Territory of Alaska enacted a minimum-wage law for women workers, establishing \$18 as the minimum-wage rate for a 6-day week of 48 hours in all types of employment. The minimum hourly rate for part-time employment is 45 cents, "provided, however, that part employment is not intended to include domestic or caretaker service where no manual labor is required of employee." The rates apply to women over 18 years of age.

On April 21, 1939, Maine adopted a minimum-wage law for women and minors applying to only one industry—the packing of fish and fish products in oil, mustard, or

tomato sauce. The law provides for investigation of wages in the industry and appointment of a wage board representative of the employers, employees, and the public, to determine a minimum fair-wage standard.

#### Recent State Minimum-Wage Orders

##### Arizona—Laundry and Dry-Cleaning.

A minimum rate for women and minors in laundries and dry-cleaning establishments with a modified weekly guarantee for three-quarters of the year went into effect in Arizona as a directory order April 15, 1939, and became mandatory June 15.

Employees of 3 months' or more experience, working not less than 32 hours nor more than 40 hours in a week, are guaranteed \$11.20 for 9 months of the year, except in cases of voluntary absence. The guarantee does not apply in nine counties, forming roughly the southern half of the State, from June 1 to August 31, nor in the remaining five counties from December 16 to March 15.

A minimum rate of 28 cents applies to hours worked above 40 a week and to 32 or more hours during the 3-month period when the weekly guarantee is not in effect. A rate of 30.8 cents an hour must be paid for hours under 32 a week.

Learners, those of less than 3 months' experience, must be paid at least 90 percent of the rate for experienced workers.

##### District of Columbia—Manufacturing and Wholesale.

A minimum-wage rate of \$16 has been ordered for women and minors in manufacturing and wholesaling establishments in the District of Columbia for a workweek of 32 to 44 hours. It became effective June 5, 1939. Overtime is paid at the rate of time and a half the regular rate. The minimum hourly rate for hours under 32 is 40 cents.

A learning period of 3 months is established for adults in all but the graphic arts industry, with a rate of \$13 a week. In graphic arts the learning period for adults is 18 months, with rates of \$13, \$14, and \$15, each for a 6-month period. Office workers and maids in manufacturing and wholesale



establishments must be paid the rates previously ordered for these types of work. (See *WOMAN WORKER* for May 1939.)

This final order completes coverage of all the major groups of women in the District of Columbia in occupations that come under the minimum-wage law, the earlier ones having been retail establishments, beauty parlors, laundries, dry-cleaning establishments, public housekeeping, offices, and unclassified occupations.

#### **Illinois—Confectionery Industry.**

Effective June 1, minimum rates for the confectionery industry have been set at 35 cents an hour in the Chicago area and 31½ cents elsewhere in Illinois. Minimum hourly rates for work in excess of 44 hours a week shall be not less than 1½ times the basic rate, except during 14 weeks of peak activity when the overtime rate need be only 1⅓ times the basic rate. Employees called but given no work are entitled to at least 4 hours' pay.

#### **Kentucky—All Industries.**

The original Kentucky minimum-wage order, effective January 14, 1939 (see *WOMAN WORKER* for March 1939), was modified as of March 11 to allow a rate below 25 cents an hour except in the 7 largest cities of the State, those of 20,000 population or over, and in 17 contiguous towns listed, including territory within 1 mile of the corporate limits of such cities and towns. In these localities 25 cents is paid for the first 48 hours and 37½ cents thereafter. In smaller cities of 4,000 to 20,000 population, including the territory within 1 mile of the limits of such cities, the rate becomes 22½ cents for the first 50 hours and 34 cents thereafter. In the smallest cities and towns and all other unallocated territory in the State, the rate becomes 20 cents for the first 52 hours and 30 cents thereafter.

#### **New Jersey—Apparel, Allied Products, Light Manufacturing.**

Effective July 3, a 35-cent minimum wage is set for women and minors in New Jersey apparel and allied products and light

manufacturing industries. Specifically included with apparel are knit goods, footwear, hats, and such articles as upholstery, curtains, rugs, pillows, and mattresses. Light manufacturing includes toys, brushes, hand bags, razor blades, novelties, and so forth. The overtime rate of time and one-half is adjusted to the terms of the Fair Labor Standards Act: Up to and including October 24, 1939, it is applied to hours above 44 a week; for the next 12 months to hours above 42; and thereafter to hours above 40 a week. Provisions are made for regulating home work, which must be paid at the same piece rates as factory work.

For wearing apparel and allied occupations the minimum rate is to increase periodically, and be as follows: From October 24, 1941, to October 23, 1942, 38 cents; from October 24, 1942, to October 23, 1943, 40 cents; and thereafter, 42 cents an hour.

For light manufacturing a 30-cent rate is provided for a 6 weeks' learning period.

#### **Compliance With New York Order**

Inspection of the 211 candy factories in New York that employed women and minors during the first 3½ months that the directory order for the confectionery industry was in effect showed that 171 firms, or 81 percent of the total, were in compliance, or had been brought into compliance by March 1, 1939. Included were 72 firms that were induced to make payment of back wages due women and minors under the order.

#### **Wage Rates on Public Contracts**

##### **\$13 in Tobacco Industry.**

The Secretary of Labor has announced that a minimum of 32½ cents an hour or \$13 for a 40-hour week should be paid in plants producing cigarettes, smoking or chewing tobacco, and snuff for the Government. This order is made under the provisions of the Public Contracts Act and applies to contracts of \$10,000 or more for which bids are submitted on or after May 2, 1939.

Wage data submitted by about 90 percent of the industry showed that 32½ cents was the prevailing wage for the industry as a



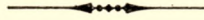
whole. The low-paid stemmers, in most cases Negro women, should greatly benefit by the order. The wage data showed that nearly one-fourth of the stemmers in tobacco plants were paid less than 35 cents an hour, whereas this was true of less than 5 percent of workers in other departments.

#### **\$12 to \$18 in Furniture.**

Minimum rates have been determined by the Secretary of Labor for three branches of furniture manufacture under the terms of the Public Contracts Act. In the wood furniture industry, three rates are fixed as follows: For 13 southern States, 30 cents an hour or \$12 for 40 hours; for California, Oregon, and Washington, 50 cents an hour or \$20 for 40 hours; for the remaining States, 35 cents an hour or \$14 for 40 hours. The

rate for the public-seating branch of the industry is 37½ cents an hour or \$15 for a 40-hour week; and for metal furniture, 45 cents an hour or \$18 for a 40-hour week. Rates are effective on all Federal contracts of \$10,000 or more solicited on or after May 13, 1939.

A study of the furniture industry made by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in October 1937 showed that women made up a small part of the workers in these three branches of the industry. In wood household furniture, where women were most numerous and made up 5 percent of the workers, they averaged 44 cents in the North and 30 cents in the South; 42 percent of the women had earned less than 30 cents in the South and 27 percent had earned less than 35 cents in the North.



## Women in Unions

### **Labor Relations Board Decisions**

#### **Hosiery Workers Awarded Back Pay.**

**T**HREE women and seven men who were ousted from a North Carolina hosiery plant in 1937 because of union activity are to receive pay for time lost because of their ejection from the plant, in a recent decision of the National Labor Relations Board. The women were ejected bodily on December 2, 1937, by a group of antiunion women with the assistance of the company watchman. They were not allowed to return to work until a week or more had passed. Several men union members received similar treatment and threats of bodily harm if they continued union activity.

The board found that the company had participated in the ousting and in spreading antiunion sentiment in the plant. The company was ordered to cease permitting assaults on union employees and to grant protection to them at their work.

#### **Textile Workers Reinstated.**

Four textile workers, including two women, were ordered reinstated with back pay by the National Labor Relations Board in a recent decision against a Texas textile mill. The women were the wives of two union members who attempted to protect the union organizer from intimidation by the company superintendent and overseer. After engaging in an altercation with the officials in the lobby of a hotel where the union organizer was staying, they and their wives were discharged.

The board found that the men's action in seeking to protect their organizer was legitimate union activity. The company was ordered to cease discouraging membership in labor organizations of its employees.

### **Recent Union Agreements**

#### **Minimum Wages in Needle Trades.**

A wage of \$14 a week has been set as the minimum pay for the 300 workers employed



in seven Boston, Mass., shops which produce embroidery, tucking, and stitching. The union agreement also provides increases for some workers up to \$6; time and a quarter for the first 4 hours of overtime, time and a half for hours after that; the 40-hour week; and the closed shop. As a result of lack of organization and an influx of young workers, wages had run as low as \$11, \$12, and \$13 for 48 to 70 hours, the union reports. The industry in Boston is now said to be 100 percent organized.

In St. Louis, Mo., a minimum wage of \$13 a week has been set for women employees of a company making automobile seat covers. The starting rate for new workers is increased by 2½ cents an hour in the union agreement recently signed. Other provisions are the 40-hour week, hiring through the union, arbitration of disputes, and a price committee to set piece rates on new styles. About 125 workers are affected.

A general wage increase of 10 percent and the 40-hour week are provided in a renewed contract with a shirt company, covering 1,000 employees in Kentucky and Indiana plants. In Chicago, Ill., wage rates of lower-paid occupations have been increased in an agreement renewed for 2 years between organized dress manufacturers and organized garment workers. Basters and pinkers are raised \$1 a week, and cleaners and sorters 50 cents a week. Wages of operators, cutters, and pressers are unchanged. Hours remain 35 a week.

A \$1 increase for women and a \$2.50 increase for men are provided in an agreement between the tailors' union and the ready-made stores of Bridgeport, Conn. Also provided are the 40-hour week, pay for all legal holidays, and 1 week's vacation with pay.

#### **Wage Increases for Laundry Workers.**

A minimum wage of 36½ cents an hour, with time and a half for over 44 hours for women and over 48 hours for men, is provided in an agreement signed with three New Jersey laundries. Wages for weekly workers are increased 5 percent. Workers

employed a year or more are to receive 1 week's vacation with pay. During July and August inside workers shall have a 15-minute daily rest period with pay. The union is recognized, and impartial machinery is set up for adjustment of disputes. A check-off system will be put into effect on vote of a majority of the workers.

A 35-cent minimum wage for women and minors is stipulated in an agreement with eight Buffalo, N. Y., laundries and cleaning plants employing 300. Hourly employees receive increases of 2 to 15 cents an hour and weekly employees are increased \$2 to \$10 a week. Time and a third for overtime is provided for men and time and a quarter for women and minors.

Following a 7 weeks' strike, laundry workers in a Los Angeles company, employing 225, won increases in wages up to 40 percent, vacations with pay, the 8-hour day, and union recognition.

One week's vacation with pay and equal division of work are provisions of a recent agreement covering 10 laundries, employing 600, in Toledo, Ohio.

#### **New York Department Store Contracts.**

Two large New York department stores have recently signed agreements with unions of their employees. One has agreed to 2 days with pay for religious purposes, and a reduction in July and August from the 45-hour 6-day week to a 37½-hour 5-day week. Vacations with pay continue, as in the previous contract—3 days after 26 weeks' employment, 1 week after 51 weeks', 2 weeks after 102 weeks', with additional safeguards that will increase the number of employees entitled to them. In case of industrial accident due to the employer's negligence, the employer shall pay for lost time not covered by workmen's compensation. Minimum wages for permanent employees are \$17 a week for nonselling; \$17 a week plus \$1 guaranteed commission for selling; and \$16 for temporary employees for their first 90 days.

The other department-store agreement calls for the closed shop, wage increases,



shorter hours, time and a half for overtime, paid vacations, legal holidays with pay, strict seniority observance, and grievance machinery to handle dismissals or transfers.

### **35- to 45-cent Textile Minimum.**

Minimum wages of 35 to 45 cents an hour are provided in union agreements with textile companies in New Jersey and California. The 35-cent minimum is stipulated in an agreement with a New Jersey coverlet manufacturer employing 150. Also provided in this agreement are some wage increases, the 8-hour day and 40-hour week, time and a half for overtime, 7 holidays, equal division of work, no subcontracting, the check-off, arbitration, and the closed shop.

The 40-cent minimum is included in an agreement with a New Jersey firm making rugs and carpets and employing 400. This agreement calls for no wage reductions; the 8-hour day and 40-hour 5-day week; time and a half for overtime, Saturdays, Sundays, and 7 holidays; no operating of looms by loom fixers; 2 hours' reporting pay; equal division of work; the preferential shop; posting of union notices in shop; and arbitration. The agreement was signed following an 8 weeks' strike.

A San Francisco cloth-sponging company, employing 50, has agreed to a 45-cent minimum wage, 15 to 20 cents an hour increase, 8-hour day and 40-hour week, 2-hour reporting time guarantee, a minimum of 4 hours' pay per day, 1 week's vacation with pay, seniority, and the closed shop.

Wage increases of from 4 to 40 percent are contained also in new or renewed textile agreements. A New Jersey plush factory employing 160 raised wages from 25 to 40 percent, and agreed to the 40-hour week, time and a half for overtime, and the closed shop. A 4-percent increase was granted by 38 Paterson, N. J., mills employing 3,000 jacquard workers; a South Carolina hosiery mill raised wages 5 percent in an agreement signed after a 7 weeks' strike; also agreed upon were continuation of the closed shop,

the 40-hour 5-day week, and time and a half for overtime.

On the other hand, a 5-percent cut was accepted by linen-thread workers in New Jersey after a 10 weeks' strike against a 10-percent cut. The agreement provides that the cut shall be restored when business conditions improve sufficiently and that the union may petition and present facts when it thinks restoration should be made. Other provisions are a \$15 minimum wage and the right to review changes in piece-work rates under the Bedaux system before they are put into effect. About 900 workers were on strike.

Another recent textile agreement restored jobs to workers who lost them through strike activity. Eighty strikers were reinstated in their jobs in a Chicago felt company and were granted back pay averaging \$375 each. The company employs 400.

The jobs of 12 spinners at a North Carolina cotton mill were saved and an increase in the work load of 60 additional spinners was prevented when the union insisted on a review of the work load by technical experts representing the management and the union. The management had notified spinners of an increase in their load from 8 to 10 sides and from 9 to 11 sides, and a reduction of 10 percent in piece rates.

### **Automobile Worker Tells of Benefits.**

Following is part of a letter received by Miss Mary Anderson, Director of the Women's Bureau, from a woman automobile worker in Detroit, Mich.:

I have worked 14 years in the auto industry. I have 12 years' seniority on my job. Before the N. R. A. we earned 25 cents per hour. Now through our union, United Automobile Workers of America, we earn 75 cents per hour with no more speed-up. We have more than 4,000 women in our shop alone. Also I am an executive board member of Local 174, which is the largest auto workers' local; we have 30,000 members. About 9,000 are women workers and when I speak of the benefits we receive that is the voice of all these women workers. I would like to have my name added to your mailing list for any information on women problems. We are especially interested in health and also minimum-wage legislation for women. Thank you.



## Earnings of Women Workers

### Beauticians in Connecticut

**T**HE average woman beautician in Connecticut, according to a study in the fall of 1938 by the State Minimum Wage Board covering 28 percent of the beauty shops and some 550 women, had earned \$15.60 a week and worked on a 48-hour schedule. She was 25 years old and had held her current position for 2 years. Two-thirds of the women had earned less than \$17.99, the amount recently determined to be the minimum necessary in the State for women to maintain health and self-respect. One out of nine had earned less than \$10 a week, and only three out of nine had earned as much as \$18.

On a yearly basis the average woman had earned only \$625, equal to about \$12 a week for 52 weeks. About 70 percent of the women whose year's earnings were secured had worked from 9 to 12 months, and of these more than half earned less than \$800.

For these low wages both training and experience are required in Connecticut. Under a State law beauticians must have a course of training and 2 years of practical experience before they can obtain a full license as hairdresser and cosmetician.

Most of the women received tips, but these averaged roughly only \$1.50 a week. A few shops paid extra for overtime; many gave time off as compensation. The employees practically always furnished their uniforms, and paid for laundering or had them washed at home. Often they furnished their own equipment (small tools) and kept it in repair.

### White and Negro Women in Georgia

Average weekly earnings of women in various industries in Georgia in 1938 were reported by the Commissioner of Labor for nearly 41,000 white women and more than 3,300 Negro women.

White women in 12 industries with 400

or more women reported averaged from \$11.78 a week in laundries and dry-cleaning establishments to \$23.10 in beauty shops. The leading employers of white women in the State were textiles, with an average of \$14.90, and garments, with an average of \$14.

The highest earnings of Negro women were reported in sugar refineries, \$13.20. Practically four-fifths of the Negro women were found in laundries and dry-cleaning plants, in textile mills, and garment factories. In these their average earnings were respectively \$8.46, \$8.42, and \$9 a week.

The data were obtained in the course of 2,422 inspections made in the enforcement of the State labor laws. They are admittedly incomplete, since, because of inadequate appropriations, there are only two inspectors, a man and a woman, to cover all establishments in the State. The Commissioner of Labor, in his second annual report, urges that the appropriation for the department be increased so that the intent of the labor laws may be more fully carried out.

### New Jersey Home Workers

Average hourly earnings ranging from 4 to 21 cents are reported by the New Jersey Department of Labor as received by home workers in 1938 on 10 different products.

Home workers employed in knitting and crocheting women's, children's, and infants' outerwear averaged 4 cents an hour for the State as a whole and 7 cents in the northern part of the State. Workers on artificial flowers and feathers averaged 4½ cents an hour; those on powder puffs, 8½ cents. Averages of 10½ to 16 cents an hour were reported on six kinds of work: Embroidery on infants' clothes, hand sewing on dolls' clothes, embroidery on women's and children's clothes, lace cutting and thread pulling, beads and bead work, and hand sewing on men's clothes. The highest average hourly earnings, 21 cents, were reported for work on mechanical pencils.



## Job Opportunities of Older Workers

**W**OMEN more quickly than men suffer a job handicap because of age, according to the findings of the Committee on Employment Problems of Older Workers, which recently reported to the Secretary of Labor. Employment opportunities begin to decline for women after they become 35 years of age, for men after 40. The committee concludes, however, workers are not "through after 40."

An examination of available material showed no evidence of a decline in earning power due to age alone. Net cost of accidents varies little with age; older workers have fewer though more severe accidents

than younger workers.

The committee urges that employers discontinue the use of age limits in hiring. It points out, also, that the employees themselves can help to break down prejudice against older workers.

Government service provides a larger share of employment for older workers than does private industry, the report shows. The committee proposes that age limits be abolished in recruiting for Government service. Recommendation is made that the United States Employment Service make a special study of job possibilities for older workers in certain communities or industries.

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### News Notes

#### Industrial Injuries in Maryland.

Of industrial accident claims closed in Maryland in the year ending October 31, 1938, 728, or 7.5 percent of the total, were injuries to women, the State Industrial Accident Commission of Maryland reports. No injuries to women resulted fatally; 27 left some permanent disability, the remainder being of a temporary nature.

Of the women involved and reporting age, a little more than one-third were under 25 and one-half were under 30. More than one-fourth were 40 years old or more. The women with permanent injuries were from 16 to 57 years old.

#### Home-Work Violations in New York.

Two manufacturers of artificial flowers in New York have been found guilty and fined for repeated violations of the home-work law and of order No. 3 regulating the distribution of home work in the artificial-flower industry. These firms had distributed work to home workers who had no

certificates to work at home, which are required under the law. One firm, previously convicted for a similar violation, was fined \$400; the second firm, \$250. (See *WOMAN WORKER*, March and September 1938, for history of this home-work order.)

### Recent Women's Bureau Publications<sup>1</sup>

#### Printed Bulletins

CONDITIONS IN THE MILLINERY INDUSTRY IN THE UNITED STATES. Bul. 169. 1939. 128 pages. 20 cents.

ECONOMIC STATUS OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN IN THE U. S. A. Bul. 170. 1939. 50 pages. 15 cents.

#### Mimeographed Material

SOCIAL SECURITY FOR HOUSEHOLD EMPLOYEES. Radio talk by Mary Anderson, May 13, 1939. 4 pages.

SUPPLEMENT TO GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT OF MARRIED WOMEN. March 1939. 11 pages.

<sup>1</sup> 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 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. Mimeographed reports are obtainable only from the Women's Bureau.