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# *The* **WOMAN WORKER**

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**United States Department of Labor  
Women's Bureau**

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

FRANCES PERKINS, SECRETARY

WOMEN'S BUREAU

MARY ANDERSON, DIRECTOR

# THE WOMAN WORKER

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# T Maintaining Standards for Women's Work

THE UPTURN in industrial production, evident from various sources, means increases in jobs for women. For example, their employment has been advancing in most lines of clothing and the chief textiles, and in some of the food industries. The United States has an ample labor supply, the necessary raw materials, machinery, and other industrial equipment to meet almost any demand. Thus there seems no excuse for abnormal price increases, nor for efforts to break down labor standards.

Long years of experience have yielded abundant evidence to show that the maintenance of healthful standards of work is necessary to the well-being of the workers, and that it is essential also in securing the highest level of production. It is now accepted that such standards for women must include reasonable restriction of working time, wages adequate to meet the cost of living, healthful places of work, safeguards against industrial hazards, and certain other conditions.

## Experience in the Past

Concrete lessons can be learned from past experience in speeding up production—notably that of 1914-18 in this country and still more intensively in Great Britain. In the first year of that war England sacrificed all standards in industry so as to secure an adequate supply of munitions. Overtime was excessive, 7-day work the rule. Night work for women was revived after a prohibition of nearly a century. Thousands of emergency orders were issued, relaxing restrictions. Many employers disregarded all labor laws without even securing permits.

Workers were exhausted by overwork, and the *supply of munitions lagged dangerously behind* the tremendous demand. After a

year of war, it was realized that the Nation could not risk the exhaustion of the labor force. The science and experience that in time of peace had built up laws for the welfare of workers were recalled, and a committee on the health of munition workers was appointed. Probably nothing that has ever been published has had a more profound influence on labor standards than the reports of this committee, which declared that:

... the munition workers in general have been allowed to reach a state of reduced efficiency and lowered health which might have been avoided without reduction of output by attention to the details of daily and weekly rests.

The importance to women of a wise limitation of their hours of work and an appropriate distribution of the pauses in those hours can hardly be overstated. The weight of scientific evidence is behind such limitation, and without it health and efficiency cannot be maintained.

If the maximum output is to be secured and maintained for any length of time, a weekly period of rest must be allowed. Except for quite short periods, continuous work . . . is a profound mistake and does not pay—output is not increased.

## Increased Output With Shortened Hours.

Some of the more striking cases that show definite increases in output with reasonably short hours in British firms in the period under discussion are as follows:

For 100 women turning aluminum fuse bodies, a "moderately heavy" operation, a decrease of 12.5 percent (8½ hours) in weekly hours of work resulted in an increase of 23 percent in hourly output and of 8 percent in total weekly output.

For 21 women milling a screw thread on fuse bodies, described as "light labor," a decrease of 11.3 percent (7.6 hours) in weekly hours resulted in an increase of 12 percent in hourly output.

Several employers who were forced to shorten the day because of lighting regulations and for other reasons, found the output undiminished.

Among the important American cases of that period that illustrate the effectiveness of shortened work hours are the following:

A tool manufacturer reduced labor turn-over, eliminated lost time, and with a reduction of hours of about 9 percent, with no reduction in pay, secured an increase in weekly production in the entire plant of 10 percent and in one of the worst departments an increase of 18.4 percent.

The Cleveland Hardware Co. had a similar experience, securing the greatest production in any year in its history by keeping to regular hours at the time of its midwinter peak instead of adding an hour's overtime as it formerly had done.

The Cloth Craft shops of the Joseph and Feiss Co. in Cleveland instituted Saturday closing and before long found production as great in the five 8-hour days as it had been with the extra four hours on Saturday.

The Ford Motor Co. secured greatly increased production with the day reduced from 9 to 8 hours.

### Better Standards Now More Widespread

The progress since 1918 in fixing standards for women's work indicates a recognition that it pays to improve working conditions. It indicates also the importance of extending the more efficient standards. A comparison of 1918 with the present shows:

	Number of States having such laws	
	1918	1939
8-hour day, 48-hour week or less (some occupations).....	3	18
8-hour day (some or all manufacturing)....	6	16
Minimum-wage laws.....	12	26
Regulation of industrial home work.....	13	18

### War Labor Standards Today

Events in certain belligerent countries show how labor standards are likely to be affected by pressure for rapid production. The British Control of Employment Act of September 21, 1939, conferred on the Minister of Labor extensive powers for employment control for the period of the war, though the Minister must consult employers' and workers' organizations before issuing orders. Exemptions from the hour provisions for women were being considered in connection with adjustments of work to daylight on account of night black-outs, and redistribution of hours was made in the cotton textile and shoe industries. In Japan, compulsory labor service was introduced for the first time by an Imperial Order on July 8. In Germany, young women due to finish their labor service last fall were retained in service by an order dated September 5. In France, the Hours of Work Decree of September 1 reduced overtime pay to three-fourths of the regular rate, employers to pay the remaining fourth to the Treasury for allowances to soldiers' needy families. By an order of the Prefect of the Seine, September 15, offices were to remain open with half force on Saturday afternoons, with no additional pay for this or other extra service.

## Conference on Labor Legislation

**T**HE Sixth National Conference on Labor Legislation, called by the Secretary of Labor, was held in Washington in November. Outstanding among the resolutions passed were these:

Recommending that all phases of labor-law administration be in one department both in State and in Federal governments.

Urging the adoption of sound wage payment and collection laws.

Urging abolition of industrial home work.

Urging that all possible efforts be undertaken to dispel the erroneous prejudice against the older worker.

Calling for regional conferences of administrators on special labor problems.

Seeking for a united labor front.

Endorsing the National Health Program.

Urging establishment of savings-bank life insurance (similar to laws operating in Massachusetts and New York).

Asking for a coordinating committee of Federal agencies dealing with agricultural and migratory labor.

Advocating abolition of the poll tax as a voting prerequisite.

## Toward Minimum Fair Wages

### Ninth Conference of Minimum Wage Administrators

THE importance of extending orders fixing minimum wages for workers not yet covered was stressed in the Ninth Conference of Minimum Wage Administrators, held in November in Washington. Those to receive special State attention include the various service industries, clerical workers, employees of public institutions, home workers, and persons in local manufacturing industries, not under the Federal wage-hour provisions.

Administrators from 14 of the 26 minimum-wage States and from the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico exchanged experiences as to effective details of orders and techniques of administration, and discussed points of legal procedure.

With large numbers of workers now covered by orders, attention was directed to the importance of enforcement, necessary appropriations for securing new inspectors and essential training for them. Some States require sworn copies of pay rolls and assign inspectors to particular districts. Where sufficient force can be established, systematic efforts are made to inspect regularly once or twice a year, rather than to depend on chance complaints.

Coverage of industries or groups of industries by their own special orders was stressed. By this means wage boards, usually of limited size, can be more fully representative; moreover, living costs differ for workers in various industries—laundry and retail workers, for example. A higher minimum is fixed for the more skilled industries.

Rates for clerical workers have been fixed in some cases, and are to be set in other States. New York plans to apply future orders to all workers in the establishment, including clerical. The District of Columbia issued a special order for clerical

workers, which did not result in any lowering of wage for those above the minimum, according to the sworn pay rolls received.

In Wisconsin the minimum wage applies to domestic employees, and employment agencies both private and public will not place at a lower rate. Though enforcement depends primarily on complaint, in periods of falling wages considerable amounts have been collected for the workers under this law.

The conference opposed special rates for learners in unskilled industries. Most States have some learner rates for more skilled processes. Strict limitation of these is desirable. Federal regulations place drastic restrictions on number of learners and length of learning period. (See page 9.)

Coverage of workers in public hospitals (for example, in their laundries or restaurants) was discussed; some States have taken steps to include these in orders.

Orders apply to industrial home workers where these exist to considerable extent—for instance, in Rhode Island and New Jersey. The Federal law has been a great help in controlling home work—for example, in Ohio, Illinois, and New York—due to the meticulous reporting that is required by the law. Control of this system at the start by its inclusion in wage orders was recommended; Wisconsin had success by this method.

Desirable legal procedures received considerable attention at the conference, especially in view of certain technical difficulties met in Utah, Pennsylvania, Oklahoma, Minnesota, and Kentucky. The importance of strict adherence to requirements of the specific State law was stressed. A memorandum entitled "Some Suggested Standards of Procedure Pertaining to Wage Boards Under State Minimum-Wage Laws," prepared upon the recommendation of a committee of legal experts invited by the

Women's Bureau to consider this matter, was presented to the conference for discussion. At their request, copies of this memorandum will be sent to all administrators.

### **Minimum Wages in the States, 1939**

To the 25 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, which already had minimum-wage laws, there were added in 1939 Maine (applying only to fish packing) and Alaska (weekly minimum \$18 in the law).

Steady and marked progress was made by State minimum-wage divisions during the year. Twenty wage orders—3 of them revisions of old orders—were issued by 10 States and the District of Columbia. The new orders bring the number of women covered by State minimum-wage orders or State flat-rate laws to approximately 1,112,000. The minimum rates established by orders issued during the year range from 20, 22½, and 25 cents an hour, according to size of community, for all industries in Kentucky to 39 cents an hour for beauty-culture operators in Connecticut and 40 cents for office and building cleaners in Massachusetts.

### **Women's Back Wages Collected.**

Back wages were collected for many women under minimum-wage determinations. For example, in the first 9 months of the year, New York collected nearly \$33,000 for women in candy factories and in service industries, nearly 90 percent of it in beauty parlors and laundries; over the same period California collected nearly \$43,000 for women, employed chiefly in hotels, restaurants, and canneries. North Dakota collected \$525 in 5 recent cases for women in cafes and stores. Up to November 1, the District of Columbia collected \$17,000 due to workers. Ohio collected nearly \$48,000 for women's back wages in the first 10 months of the year.

### **Service Industries Largely Covered by Orders**

Complete coverage of the service industries is gradually being approached by the

minimum-wage States. This is of considerable importance, since they do not come under the Federal act.

### **Laundry and Cleaning Industries.**

The laundry industry is covered in 23 of the 25 States in which the law applies, Alaska, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. In Connecticut statistics on the laundry industry have been collected and the wage board is to be recalled, since earlier orders were invalidated by the new minimum-wage act which repealed the former act. In Illinois field work has been completed on a study of dyeing and cleaning. In Rhode Island laundries have been re-surveyed for compliance. A wage board for laundries is at work in Pennsylvania, where an earlier order was thrown out on the technicality that testimony for the record had not been taken under oath. New York reports striking success: Inspections after 14 months under the order reported plants employing 98 percent of the workers in the industry in full compliance.

### **Retail Trade.**

Seventeen States and the three territories mentioned have covered retail trade. Illinois has completed field work on a study of this industry. Rhode Island plans an immediate survey for compliance. In Utah new hearings on wage-board recommendations have been held, since earlier hearings were thrown out on the technicality that they did not include a formal record of factual evidence for or against the need of a minimum wage.

### **Beauty Culture.**

Beauty-culture occupations are covered in 13 States, Alaska, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. In Colorado an order for this industry went into effect December 4. Beauty-parlor orders were made mandatory in Connecticut August 30, 1939, and in New Hampshire November 20. Hearings on this industry were conducted in Ohio by the Industrial Relations Director, who was appalled to find wages as

low as \$3 to \$8 a week, while beauty schools continue training.

#### **Hotels and Restaurants.**

Minimum-wage orders or flat-rate laws cover women in hotels and restaurants in 11 States, Alaska, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia; in 2 other States, restaurants only. In New York, a wage board was organized last autumn to fix minimum rates for the restaurant industry. A survey of the wages of over 12,000 women in the industry showed that half of them earned less than \$9.31 a week; the average was \$3.73 less than the Charity Organization Society's standard for persons on relief, and median year's earnings were just half the sum required for adequate maintenance as determined by the New York Department of Labor cost-of-living study. Deductions from wages for uniforms, laundering, meals, breakage, lateness, and payments to bus boys caused wages to shrink considerably, though many employers supplied meals in addition to wages.

Wage boards for both hotel and restaurant workers have met in Colorado. A wage board for the restaurant industry is being appointed in Arizona. The Illinois restaurant study is practically completed, preliminary to the calling of a wage board, and field work is finished on a study of hotels. Complaints as to wages in such establishments have led the Massachusetts Minimum Wage Commission to anticipate establishment of a minimum-wage order to cover hotels, restaurants, and other public house-keeping. The Connecticut Minimum Wage Division has begun a restaurant study, and a study of hotels and restaurants is contemplated in Rhode Island in the near future.

#### **Living Costs**

Studies in nine minimum-wage States have found the year's cost for a woman's health-and-decency living in 1937, 1938, or 1939 to be as follows: Arizona, \$1,032; California (San Francisco), \$1,105; Colorado, \$975; Connecticut, \$935; District of Columbia, \$1,118; New Jersey, \$1,148; New York,

\$1,161; Pennsylvania, \$1,095; Utah, \$1,010. Weekly costs range from \$17.99 in Connecticut to over \$22 in New York and New Jersey.

A Women's Bureau survey of industries in Utah showed that the women employees averaged much less than the adequate budget, the highest averages, those for dry-cleaning, office, and beauty-parlor workers, being only \$15.75, \$15.50, and \$15.45, respectively. Year's earnings in manufacturing and laundry plants averaged respectively \$605 and \$565.

#### **Other State Minimum-Wage Progress**

##### **Colorado—Wage Boards Active.**

The Colorado Minimum Wage Division is conducting a State-wide survey of wages paid women and minors in office and unclassified occupations. An order for beauty-service occupations, effective December 4, fixed 35 cents an hour for senior operators and 25 cents for juniors and apprentices. These apply for 44 hours or less; overtime rates, one and one-half the regular rates, apply after 44 hours.

##### **District of Columbia—Administration.**

In the District of Columbia wage orders now are in effect for most occupations, and the first notarized pay rolls requested from employers have been received. It will be remembered that the board also has the enforcement of the 8-hour law, and several fines for violation have been collected.

##### **New Jersey—Apparel Order Violations.**

Under the New Jersey Directory Order No. 3, for apparel, the Minimum Wage Bureau took the only course open to exert influence for compliance. A number of firms were summoned to show cause why their names should not be made public as failing to pay the 35-cent hourly minimum. Evidence of noncompliance was presented by counsel for the bureau.

##### **Oklahoma—Reduced Funds a Handicap.**

Labor inspection and investigation in Oklahoma are seriously handicapped by a

legislative provision authorizing the Governor to reduce appropriations of any department of the State government to balance the budget.

#### Rhode Island—Progress in Compliance.

In the 5 months from May 1 to October 1, work accomplished by the Rhode Island Division of Women and Children included, besides a 100-percent resurvey of laundries, investigation of some 45 minimum-wage complaints, about 32 percent of all types of complaint investigated; issuance of learners' certificates for 187 retail-trade workers and 354 wearing-apparel workers; and issuance and review of home-work certificates. Immediate surveys are planned for compliance in the wearing-apparel industry. (See also section on Service Industries, p. 6.)

#### Progress Under the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act

##### Law Held Constitutional.

The Federal Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 was held constitutional in a decision of the United States District Court in Chicago, on November 22, handed down by Judge William H. Holly in a case involving a leading mail-order company. The act was held to be a valid exercise of Federal power to regulate interstate commerce.

##### Workers Affected by Increase.

When the 30-cent minimum wage for industries under the wage-hour law went into effect October 24, it was estimated that wages would be raised for between 600,000 and 700,000 workers who received less than this in April 1939.

##### Committees Have Considered 10 Industries.

The major textile and apparel industries, employing some 2,000,000 workers, have now been covered by industry committees considering whether a minimum should be fixed above that in the act.

Of the 10 committees first appointed, 9 cover several types of textiles, wearing apparel, headwear, hosiery, and shoes

About half the women in manufacturing, compared with one-eighth of the men, are in these 9 industries. Minimum rates range from 32½ to 40 cents an hour, as listed here. In no case do rates on the mainland vary with geographic location. These recommended rates have been approved for two industries, estimated to raise wages for about 221,000 workers.

1. Cotton, silk, rayon, synthetic yarns or fabrics—32½ cents. (Approved Oct. 24, 1939.)
  - 1a. Woolen—36 cents.
2. Wearing apparel—32½ to 40 cents, various branches. (Includes men's wear, branches of women's apparel, and accessories and special products.)
3. Hosiery—Full fashioned, 40 cents; seamless, 32½ cents. (Approved Sept. 18, 1939.)
4. Hats—35 to 40 cents, different branches. (30 cents, straw and harvest hat branch in Puerto Rico.)
5. Millinery—40 cents.
6. Shoes and allied—35 cents.
7. Knitted outerwear—35 cents.
8. Knitted underwear and commercial knitting—32½ cents.
9. Railroad carrier. (Appointed Nov. 3, 1939.)

Among the general problems acted upon through hearings and special rulings are those of learners, home workers, and seasonal industries, especially the processing of agricultural products.

Rates recommended since the November issue of the *WOMAN WORKER* are estimated to increase wages of 7,500 of the 23,000 factory workers in knitted outerwear and 16,000 of the 60,000 in knitted underwear. These are chiefly in Middle Atlantic and New England States, knitted underwear also including large numbers in Tennessee, North Carolina, and Virginia. Home work to an unknown extent is a feature in knitted outerwear, but minimum rates apply to it. Women on the committees were Jane Matyas of San Francisco, workers' representative for outerwear, and Marion Dickerman and Mary B. Gilson, public representatives on the underwear committee.

##### Regulations for Inspection by States.

Regulations of the Children's Bureau and the Wage and Hour Division for using State



agencies for investigations and inspections under the wage-hour law were issued September 21, 1939. Seven States and Hawaii have passed enabling legislation permitting their labor departments to act. In 41 States, State certificates of age have been accepted for Federal certificates.

To eliminate duplication of inspections, an agreement has been concluded with one State—North Carolina—adding members to the State inspection and clerical staff. Allocation of their time to Federal work, to be paid for by Federal funds, is carefully defined. To enter into such an agreement, a State must submit a complete and satisfactory operating plan, including the designation within the State agency of a separate administrative division to make inspections and investigations under the Federal Act, and detailed budget estimates with books subject to audit by the Federal officials. High standards of personnel administration with proper job classifications must be met by the State agency.

#### **Provisions for Learners in Certain Industries.**

Employers may secure special permits for learners on the more skilled operations in several branches of apparel and textiles, but these are available only if a shortage of trained workers can be shown. The number of learners and the learning periods are strictly limited. Details covering stitching-machine operators on apparel, and applying to hosiery mills, were given in the *WOMAN WORKER* for September and for November 1939. Since that time the following have been issued, and hearings have been held as to learners in the cigar and glove industries.

Knitted wear, except hosiery and gloves, stitching and knitting operators: Minimum rate, 22½ cents; limit to number, not to exceed 5 percent of all workers in the operation; definition, person employed on operation not more than 8 weeks in preceding 3 years; effective, October 24, 1939.

Textiles operating under 32½-cent minimum: Minimum rate, 25 cents; limit to number, 3 percent of skilled and semi-skilled; length of learning period, 6 weeks

(for normal replacements if experienced workers not available); effective, November 7, 1939.

#### **Wages Raised for Home Workers.**

The 30-cent minimum was ordered paid to industrial home workers in a court decree issued in New York in November. The case applied to 11 of the country's largest knitted-garment manufacturers and sellers in interstate commerce, perhaps the most important of all the home-work industries. It was estimated that restitution of more than \$250,000 of back wages will be made to 10,000 home workers from Maine to Tennessee. A permanent injunction restrains the companies from further violation of the law, either directly or by subterfuge.

Prior to this order, two Brooklyn firms making window-shade pulls, tassels, and pot-holders, paid respectively \$4,500 to some 100 women at work in homes and about \$4,000 to 200 home workers. These cases were reported by a Chicago employer who could not compete with home work done at subminimum pay. In a third case a Chicago punchboard manufacturer paid back wages of \$5,685 to 94 home workers.

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

To November 1, 1939, wage determinations on Government contracts of \$10,000 or more have been made for 31 industries or industrial groups. In at least 10 of these industries, women comprise half or more of all employees; in at least 5 others, from one-third to one-half. Hourly rates set range from 25 cents for the fertilizer industry in the lower South, to 67½ cents in the men's hat and cap industry. The most usual rates, however, were from 35 to 45 cents, inclusive. In 7 industries different rates were set according to region; in 3, for different divisions of the industry.

In 11 cases lower rates may be paid to certain employees. These include learners, handicapped, and apprentices employed in conformity to the standards of the Federal Committee on Apprenticeship. The lowest rate fixed for any of these special classes of

workers is 20 cents an hour for learners during their first 4 weeks of employment in the cotton-garment industry.

#### **Wage Rates Recently Fixed.**

The Secretary of Labor fixed minimum rates effective October 15 for certain paper industries and October 19 for the manufacture of small-arms ammunition, explosives, and related products. About 40 percent of the workers making all types of ammunition are women. In the other industries the proportions are smaller, though

in the paper industry probably more than 10,000 women are employed. In the making of paper and pulp and certain converted paper products the minimum rates are as follows: On the Pacific coast, 50 cents an hour or \$20 for 40 hours; in 13 Southern States, 35 cents an hour or \$14 for 40 hours; in the remainder of the country, 39 cents an hour or \$15.60 for 40 hours. On small-arms ammunition a minimum of 42½ cents an hour or \$17 for 40 hours was fixed; on blasting caps, 47½ cents, or \$19 for 40 hours; on explosives, 57½ cents, or \$23 for 40 hours.

## Women in Unions

CONSIDERABLE improvements secured by women in 1939 through union membership are reflected in advances made by means of union contracts in industries where large numbers of women are employed. New problems are being met in the union contracts. Vacations and sick leave with pay are being secured and problems of work load and technological change attacked. In the past year the Women's Bureau attempted to review contracts in important woman-employing industries as reported in union and trade papers, but this information is far from complete.

All the large trade-union conventions approved policies looking toward more security for workers. Among those most favored were: An immediate and comprehensive survey of technological unemployment and its consequences; a further shortening of hours of work until the 6-hour day and 30-hour week are attained; measures that will assure to the workers full employment and a just distribution of the benefits of technological improvements; and the principle of a living annual wage.

#### **Progress in Textile Industries.**

The Textile Workers Union of America reported at this year's convention that 300,000 workers were covered by some

1,100 contracts. Of these, 161 contracts covered hosiery workers. The paid-up membership of the hosiery branch of the textile workers was more than 52,000 as of August 1.

Textile contracts reviewed by the Bureau indicate that the 8-hour day and 40-hour week with time and a half for overtime is the usual standard. Several contracts guarantee pay for a minimum number of hours for all workers required to report at the plant on any one day. Others taking up some of the newer problems are summarized here.

An agreement signed with a southern cotton mill employing about 600 reduces the work load of spinners and doffers and provides for arbitration of all future workload problems. Workers losing their jobs because of technological changes in the first 3 months of the contract are guaranteed preference in employment.

An agreement with a carpet manufacturer employing some 6,000 in two northern cities provides that all time studies are to be reviewed by the union. A joint plan is to be developed for severance pay for employees displaced by technological improvements. Savings due to higher rates of output are to be shared with the workers, and used in general to raise rates for the lowest-paid.

In a contract with a plant making rayon and allied products (in the jurisdiction of textile unions) provision for severance pay was secured for workers forced out by technological improvements, the amount to be 1 week's pay for each year of employment. Wage increases were secured. The union is recognized as

bargaining agency for all employees, numbering about 8,000. A week's vacation was obtained, with full pay for workers employed 40 weeks or longer and with  $2\frac{1}{2}$  percent of the annual wage for others.

### **Progress in the Clothing Industry.**

Contracts in clothing frequently specify a week of 35 or 36 hours, with none longer than 40. Reduction of seasonal fluctuation and greater efficiency in management are problems being attacked cooperatively. Machinery for protecting workers' rights is being developed.

A clothing union in St. Louis plans to pay for the instruction of 100 of its members in methods of scientific management, choosing instructors from among industrial engineers in progressive plants. Workers successful in the course will then be employed by the union to assist the more inefficient plants. Earnings should increase with greater plant efficiency.

A stabilization department was set up a few months ago by the union in the men's clothing industry as an independent enforcement agency for the rates established on a national scale last summer. Over 150 inspections have been made; with the price list signed by employer and union, every worker is interviewed as to rate received. Work is inspected to see that it agrees with specifications. The department also started a drive in the New York market for installation of proper time records in all shops.

### **Progress in Electrical Industries.**

The convention of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America, in September 1939, analyzed the 202 regular contracts signed during the year, covering about 140,000 workers. Based on 1929 figures, about 39,000 were women.

Minimum rates for women workers were set in 50 contracts, ranging from 35 cents to 60 cents an hour. For about three-fourths they were 35 to 40 cents. Most of the contracts were for 1 year and provided a 40-hour week, with time and a half for overtime and double time for Sundays and holidays. Provisions for vacations were included in 121 contracts.

Recently contracts were signed in an electrical plant in New Jersey by two unions working in close cooperation, one covering 10 office workers, all women, the

other 270 factory workers, about three-fourths of them women. Office workers secured an increase in their minimum rate from \$16 to \$17.50 a week, and a reduction in weekly hours from 40 in slack and 44 in busy seasons to 35 and 38, respectively. Shop workers secured wage increases of about 10 percent. The contracts also provided preferential hiring, a union shop, and sick leave with pay.

### **Progress in White-Collar Occupations.**

The organization of white-collar workers increased greatly in 1939. Examples of renewed contracts follow:

A union of salespersons in women's apparel shops in New York City has renewed its contract with an association of employers. The agreement guarantees  $10\frac{1}{2}$  months' employment each year, provides a week's vacation with pay, and continues unemployment insurance in all shops. It calls for a strictly closed shop and covers 1,400 employees.

A New York publishing house has recently renewed its agreement with the Union of Office and Professional Workers of America. It provides a  $37\frac{1}{2}$ -hour 5-day week; time and a half for overtime; a basic weekly minimum of \$21 for clerical workers and stenographers, and \$30 for editorial workers; sick leave with pay for all workers, including temporary employees; and liberal graduated severance pay.

Office and shipping-department workers in a renewed contract with a New Jersey manufacturer have secured severance pay for workers dismissed without cause. The contract establishes minimum weekly rates of \$21 for office and \$20 for shipping-department employees. Other important features are a wage increase of about 10 percent, a basic 5-day 40-hour week, and 2 weeks' sick leave with pay. The management and the union have set up a joint committee to study overtime hours with a view to reducing them by February to 8 a week from 12 as now allowed.

### **Progress in the Service Industries.**

Hotel and restaurant workers and laundry workers have steadily increased their membership in recent years. That of the hotel and restaurant workers more than doubled between 1936 and 1939; that of the laundry workers more than quadrupled.

An agreement between 25,000 laundry workers in the New York area and members of seven trade associations guarantees 40 hours' pay in any one week to all regular employees. The workweek was reduced from 6 to 5 days. A survey of current wages is to be made. A joint committee of employers and the union is to determine minimum rates.

## Unemployed Women

**N**EW evidence of the fact that women in the labor market suffer particularly from the extremes of economic change is given in three recent reports:

An analysis by the United States Employment Service of changes in applicants and persons placed in the 18 months from April 1937 to October 1938;<sup>1</sup> a study of long-term unemployment in Philadelphia, giving a picture of chief wage earners on relief at least 2 years in August 1936;<sup>2</sup> and an analysis of jobs in 1931 and 1936 in Minnesota, which sheds light on the effect of changes in machinery.<sup>3</sup>

Many women are affected by seasonal movements, especially in manufacturing; others, chiefly in certain service industries, are continually on the rolls of unemployed. Changes in machine requirements, though creating jobs for some women, cause others to lose employment. Declines hit hardest, and upturns come most quickly, in consumers' industries, often large woman-employers—for example, textiles and clothing. Special difficulties confront women as they grow older, and those entering or re-entering the labor market.

### Rapid Employment Changes.

Following the swift decline in business late in 1937 there was a great increase of craft and production workers among Employment Service applicants, more extreme among women than among men, probably because of widespread unemployment in textiles and clothing. In April 1938 about three-fourths of the women craft and production workers were newly applying for

jobs, but in the late summer there was a spectacular rise in placements of women as production workers. In August, the peak month, there were over six times as many such placements as in January, comparatively few of these being temporary (for less than 1 month); in September, nearly five times the January number.

The Philadelphia study deals with the "hard core" of unemployment—chief wage earners whose families had been on relief for 2 years prior to August 1936. It is not surprising that this was an older group, containing a smaller proportion of women (15 percent) than in the case of first applicants at the State employment office (25 percent). There was a larger proportion of women textile and clothing workers in the long-term than in the new-applicant group; it also contained a larger proportion of Negroes.

### Service Workers' Problem Constant.

The problem of service workers tends to be constant. Of those registered for work in April 1938, 40 percent had been on the rolls in July and November 1937. Probably at least half the service group were household employees, ineligible for unemployment compensation. In the recession from November 1937 to April 1938 the numbers of such workers increased less than one-fifth, compared to the trebling of production workers.

Two-thirds of the Philadelphia chief wage earners who were women had been in domestic and personal service, compared with slightly over one-third of the new applicants to the State employment office.

### Older Workers.

Regardless of occupation, increasing age complicates the problem of obtaining work. Beginning with women of 25, the proportion registered with the Employment Service in April 1938 who had been on the rolls from

<sup>1</sup> Survey of Employment Service Information. *Kinds of Workers Unemployed in the Recession of 1937 and 1938.* May 1939.

<sup>2</sup> *The Long-Term Unemployed in Philadelphia in 1936.* Work Projects Administration, National Research Project, and Industrial Research Department, University of Pennsylvania. August 1939.

<sup>3</sup> *Changes in Machinery and Job Requirements in Minnesota Manufacturing, 1931-36.* Work Projects Administration, National Research Project, and Employment Stabilization Research Institute, University of Minnesota. July 1939.

July and November 1937 rose steadily with each age group: Of those 45 and older, at least 40 percent were on the rolls at all three dates, as was true of more than half of those 60 or older. Changes in process, such as are discussed in the Minnesota study, are especially hard on the older workers.

#### Workers Without Recent Experience.

Another group that remained in the files of the Employment Service more continuously than the average was composed of women without recent experience. Some sought to reenter the labor market, a smaller number were recent students, presumably young. Half the former and 46 percent of the latter had been on the rolls in July and November 1937 as well as in April 1938. Unemployment insurance usually does not help these. In the report from Philadelphia the proportion of applicants who wanted clerical work was about five times as great, the proportion who wanted trade and transportation jobs more than twice as great, among the new applicants as among those

more continuously on the rolls as "chief wage earners."

#### Findings as to Changes in Machinery.

It may be encouraging to new workers that in many cases less skill than formerly is required after machine improvements in a job. In Minnesota there was an increase between 1931 and 1936 in the proportion of machines designed or modified to produce but one particular article or part. Accuracy was built into the machine itself. In some cases emphasis had shifted from hand to finger manipulation, which makes for more rapid performance though it may increase fatigue.

Several industries had a number of operations in 1936 requiring no training. A shift to female labor may be made easier by substituting machine for hand operation, making machines automatic, revising the layout, dividing labor, integrating machinery, or combining several of these economies. Cigar, candy, and bakery establishments afford examples of a trend to woman employment.

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## Incomes of City Families Headed by a Woman

**M**ORE than one-fourth (26 percent) of the urban families of two or more persons in this country had an income of less than \$1,000 a year according to a study made in 1935-36; if those on relief be added the total is above 40 percent of all such families. "On relief" in this connection means that the family had such a status at some time within the year. These two classes undoubtedly are the families that should be aided the most by the Federal wage-hour act.

This testimony to the low income of many families in this country,<sup>1</sup> as well as information on families headed by women, comes from a series of further analyses by

<sup>1</sup> See also the *WOMAN WORKER*, November 1938, p. 16; July 1939, pp. 5-6; November 1939, p. 3.

the Social Security Board of data for the 703,000 urban households canvassed by the National Health Survey. Practically half the families of two or more had incomes below \$1,500 a year; and if those on relief are added, two-thirds come in this group.

Women were at the head of a tenth of the urban families (of two or more persons) that constituted a single household—48,000 of them. Of these women's families, 87 percent were made up of 2 to 4 persons. Where the head was the wife, about three-fifths of the families either were on relief or had incomes of less than \$1,000, and this was the case with nearly two-fifths of those headed by a nonparent woman. The reports include more than 33,000 women living

alone. The median year's income of wives living alone was \$734, of nonparent women living alone \$909.

The problems of older persons are emphasized by the fact that a sixth of those 65 years of age and older in the urban households reported were in families on relief,

half of them in families either on relief or with incomes under \$1,000. Of the single-family households reporting age of head in which the family head was 60 to 64 years old, a larger proportion had incomes under \$1,000 than where the family head was in the younger age group of 25 to 59 years.

## Women in the International Scene

### I. L. O. Conference at Habana

**T**HE Second Conference of the American States Members of the International Labor Organization, held in Habana, Cuba, November 21 to December 2, was of special interest to women because of the second item on the agenda: Examination of the effect given to the Resolutions of the Conference at Santiago, Chile [in 1936], particularly as regards the work of women and children and social insurance.

The Conference adopted resolutions similar to those of Santiago, embodying the standards of the I. L. O. conventions designed for the protection (1) of women workers at childbirth and (2) of women's wages through minimum-wage-fixing machinery, but clarifying and amplifying these principles in various ways.

Of special interest to women in the United States were the practical methods outlined in the resolutions to guarantee women "equal pay for equal work." These stress, among other things, the need to evaluate women's skill on the same basis as men's and to develop means, such as vocational training, to improve women's output where it falls below men's in quantity or quality.

Recognizing the evils of industrial home work, the Conference recommended its abolition and outlined strict regulations to control it as long as it exists and requiring the same minimum-wage rates as for similar work in factories.

Even more noteworthy were other resolutions for women that came out of the Habana

Conference. A progressive program, recommended for domestic and agricultural workers, called for application to them of social legislation including legal standards for hours, wages, and working conditions. One resolution recommended legislation to prohibit the dismissal of married women workers because of their marital status. Another specified that women should be granted all the rights necessary to enable them to function fully as responsible citizens, including the right to organize for collective bargaining, to have full representation in all bodies responsible for preparing and administering social and labor legislation, as well as the right to vote and hold office.

The Conference reaffirmed the resolution adopted at Santiago stressing the right of women to appointment as delegates and advisers, and particularly the need of such representation where questions affecting women are involved. This step was taken in view of the very few women representatives at the Habana Conference. Only two countries besides the United States had sent women, Mexico having one and Cuba three, as technical advisers. The United States had sent six women, one of whom was a Government delegate, Mary N. Winslow (elected chairman of the Committee on Work of Women and Juveniles at the Habana Conference). The other five were advisers: Beatrice McConnell and Mary V. Robinson for the Government; Dorothy Bellanca, Kathryn Lewis, and Rose Schneiderman for labor.

## Study of The Law and Women's Work

The International Labor Office publication "The Law and Women's Work" has been received in its English edition. The French edition was issued in 1938. It gives a cross-section view for the world as to women's situation under each subject and also a list of laws and rules for each country. This study includes a chapter on the right to employment, important since the depression, dealing with certain legal restrictions on women's employment; with the contrary movement for protection of women's right to work or compensation for loss of employment; and with the instances of certain occupations reserved especially for women.

Chapters on methods of regulating women's employment and on administrative departments for women's work precede the obvious subjects of maternity protection; employment on unhealthy, heavy, or dangerous work; night work; minimum wage; hours. The I. L. O. has always held that to

protect women workers against conditions of employment prejudicial to motherhood need not compromise the equality of the sexes in the matters of right to jobs and fair wages. (See resolution adopted on motion of United States Government delegates, 1937, in *WOMAN WORKER*, January 1938.)

Other chapters deal with the legal position of women as professional workers, and the handicaps that may be put on women workers because of their unsatisfactory civil and political status, and with differential treatment of women under social insurance schemes.

This work results from a request of the League of Nations Assembly in 1935, on the question of equality under labor legislation. It represents "only the introduction to a series of studies" which include the practical situation as to women's wages, the contributions of women workers to the support of dependents, and other matters. (See I. L. O. resolution, 1939, *WOMAN WORKER*, September 1939.)

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## News Notes and Announcements

### The White House Conference on Children in a Democracy

**T**HE 1940 session of the White House Conference on Children in a Democracy will convene in Washington, D. C., January 18 to 20, at the request of President Roosevelt.

These conferences developed as a result of suggestions coming to the President and to the Department of Labor from many sources in regard to a review of goals with reference to children and the extent to which they were being attained. Such review, with increasing breadth of approach and coverage, took place in 1909, 1919, and 1930.

Existing knowledge and opinion rather than new research is being utilized in determining major goals for action. The conference report is expected to include con-

sideration of (1) aspirations for children in America as determined by democratic ideals; (2) opportunities and services available to children in different parts of the country and in the several economic strata and population groups; (3) difficulties in the way of attaining desirable opportunities and services; (4) specific recommendations for action.

Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins, chairman of the conference, has stated that "The conference is not going to attempt to define or defend our American democracy though it may have to attempt to state some of its underlying purposes."

### New York Home-Work Order

The New York order prohibiting industrial home work on artificial flowers and feathers was reissued October 30. Since first issu-

ance of such an order in 1938, the Commissioner of Labor testifies, "a thousand" women have found regular employment in artificial-flower factories in New York City. (See *WOMAN WORKER*, November 1939.) In artificial flowers special permits may be granted to workers and employers so engaged before March 10, 1938, when the first such order was issued, if the worker is unable to work in the factory due to age or disability or has to care for an invalid at home. The employer must conduct a factory and pay the factory rate to home workers, and must cover these workers by compensation.

### Puerto Rico Home Work

A home-work law for Puerto Rico was approved May 15, 1939. Excepting section 11 on record keeping, which is to go into effect July 1, 1940, the law became effective August 13.

### Over-all Hours in Massachusetts

A 1939 amendment to the Massachusetts hour law fixed a maximum of 10 consecutive hours. The Attorney General has decided that both the wording of the law and the clear intent of the legislature signify that time off for meals or for any other purpose must be included in the 10 hours.

### Michigan Equal-Pay Law

The Michigan law requiring equal pay for equal work, passed in 1931, has recently been challenged both in State and Federal Court. In the action brought in the State court by an employer, the judge declined to pass on the constitutionality of the statute on jurisdictional grounds. The Federal court action, which was brought by women workers to obtain restitution of back pay, is still pending.

### Women's Bureau Exhibit

The Women's Bureau announces the completion of an attractive new exhibit for table display. The general subject, "Good Standards for Women Workers Are the Keys

to Health and Efficiency," is developed through the use of three large illuminated panels. Prepared in cooperation with the Department of Labor Exhibits Division, this will be available for educational purposes, express charges to be paid by the borrower. For details as to size, weight, specific charges, etc., write the Women's Bureau.

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

### Printed Bulletins

- THE LEGAL STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, JANUARY 1, 1938. Reports for California (Bul. 157-4), New Jersey (Bul. 157-29), and North Carolina (Bul. 157-32). 1939. 5 cents each.
- WOMEN AT WORK: A CENTURY OF INDUSTRIAL CHANGE. Bul. 161. 1939. 79 pp. 15 cents.
- HOURS AND EARNINGS IN CERTAIN MEN'S-WEAR INDUSTRIES: CAPS AND CLOTH HATS; NECKWEAR; WORK AND KNIT GLOVES; HANDKERCHIEFS. Bul. 163-6. 1939. 22 pp. 5 cents.
- THE WOMAN WAGE EARNER: HER SITUATION TODAY. Bul. 172. 56 pp. 10 cents.
- JOB HISTORIES OF WOMEN WORKERS AT THE SUMMER SCHOOLS, 1931-34 AND 1938. Bul. 174. 25 pp. 10 cents.

### Mimeographed Material

- ANALYSIS OF 1939 STATE MINIMUM-WAGE ORDERS. Supplement to Women's Bureau Bulletin 167—State Minimum-Wage Laws and Orders. November 1939. 23 pp.
- EXPERIENCE AS TO STANDARDS FOR WOMEN'S WORK IN PERIODS OF RAPID INCREASE IN PRODUCTION. October 1939. 16 pp.

### Other Recent Publications

COST-OF-LIVING AND WAGE STUDIES, mimeographed. Issued by the Minimum Wage Division of the Industrial Commission of Utah, 1939. Contains findings in Women's Bureau survey of employed women in Utah, and Utah cost-of-living study in which the Women's Bureau assisted. (See p. 7 of present issue of *WOMAN WORKER*.)

LIFE AND LABOR BULLETIN. The Bureau welcomes the resumption by the Women's Trade Union League of this bulletin, now issued monthly in mimeographed form.

<sup>1</sup> Bulletins may be ordered from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., at prices listed. A discount of 25 percent on orders of 100 or more copies is allowed. Mimeographed reports are obtainable only from the Women's Bureau.