

V. 21 no. 5 ✓

# *The* **WOMAN WORKER**

**SEPTEMBER 1941**

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

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

FRANCES PERKINS, SECRETARY

WOMEN'S BUREAU

MARY ANDERSON, DIRECTOR

# THE WOMAN WORKER

PUBLISHED EVERY 2 MONTHS

Vol. XXI

No. 5

September 1941



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

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



# Women's Part in Manufacturing for Defense

**W**OMEN's work contributes largely to the labor force in many plants producing ammunition, explosives, firearms, instruments and small parts for aircraft, and other ordnance and defense products. Some of these are new establishments opened in the last 2 or 3 months, others have been under construction and will open in the fall, and many are older plants long in operation but now being expanded.

Data from a number of outstanding plants indicate the situation as to women's employment and types of work. A roughly estimated 12,000 women are or shortly will be doing shell-loading operations in Indiana, Iowa, Illinois, and Ohio in the Middle West, as well as in Utah and in Tennessee. A similar number of women are performing or soon will perform processes on small-arms ammunition in Colorado, Connecticut, Missouri, and Pennsylvania. Loading bags with powder or sewing such bags is a job for 5,000 to 6,000 women in Indiana, Alabama, and Virginia. Many women are at work on explosives in New Jersey, on airplane parts in Connecticut and New Jersey, on assembling radios for airplanes or other small assembly, and on aircraft instruments in New York, New Jersey, and Ohio. It is reported that some 2,000 women are to be employed shortly in a new ammunition plant in Des Moines, and that others will work in an expanded Texas ordnance plant.

## **Placements of Women in Defense Industries.**

In the first quarter of this year women constituted well over a tenth of the workers placed by the public employment services in a selected group of 26 defense industries, according to recent reports from the Federal Bureau of Employment Security. This is a large proportion in view of the fact that many of these ordinarily are thought of as the heavier industries. Nearly a third of these placements were in jobs in iron and steel and machinery plants, and a proportion only slightly smaller were in electrical

machinery establishments, which always have been large employers of women. In March, placements of women had increased 14 percent over February, those in the defense industries about 13 percent. Among all placements of women in that month 57 percent were in service industries, around 20 percent each in manufacturing and sales occupations.

## **Labor Shortages Call for Women Workers.**

Shortages of workers are occurring in occupations more usually engaged in by women, as women are being drawn into manufacturing industries, sometimes with better pay or better conditions of work. Employment Service reports show a dearth of clerical workers in some places, of domestic workers in many localities (see p. 13 of this issue), and of sewing-machine operators in clothing centers. Experienced typists and stenographers are so much in demand by the Federal services that examinations now are kept open continuously until further notice.

Among shortages reported by the Employment Service in 78 defense occupations, one type was such as to call for women—that of detail assemblers in aircraft, in which there were demands for 50 workers for every 1 registered. Workers most in demand included aircraft riveters. This is a predominating job in the assembly of airplane parts, and a large proportion of it can be done by women, especially if a short period of training is provided.

Though primary demands have been for men and for the younger persons, the need for workers has tended to relax arbitrary restrictions such as those against married women or against older workers, if they have some needed special skill. A recent example among many is that of a large southern textile plant that has lifted its customary ban on married women. That the future may call for more women with experience or ability to serve in executive capacities is indicated by the fact that an official of a



large rubber company has predicted that more women will be needed for supervisory work in office forces.

#### **Women Making Ammunition for Small Arms.**

Women constitute a large proportion of those making ammunition for use in small arms. Women are about 40 percent of the workers in a large arsenal that tends to establish standards for this industry, according to a recent report of the Women's Bureau.<sup>1</sup> This proportion could be increased considerably. Many of the plants now being built, as well as expansions in existing plants, will produce such ammunition. The demand is almost unlimited, as can be seen from the fact that a single airplane can fire at least 160 rounds of ammunition a second from each of its 8 or more machine guns.

Women work on .30- and .45-caliber bullets, both ball (for use against persons and light targets) and armor piercing. Men work on larger bullets and on tracer bullets, which have a compressed igniting charge that gives a bright flame or trail of smoke, and are used for observation and incendiary

purposes. Women do the assembling, that is, putting the core into the jacket. They also operate machines for pointing or nosing the jacket, inserting the slug, and finishing operations.

The primer, which is to be inserted in the cartridge case, is a little brass cup that contains the pellet charge, a small explosive wafer pressed to a foiling disk; this is placed in the cup under a tiny anvil through which the flame from the ignited pellet passes into the vent hole in the cartridge case to ignite the powder. Women shellac the foiling paper and operate a machine that presses it over the primer. They place the small anvils in the primer cups, a hand operation. They inspect the finished primers.

Women are employed on various operations in making the cartridge case, and in loading it. After the brass case is formed, women operate special horizontal spindle machines that trim its top, and other automatic machines performing several processes in perfecting the case, and in inserting the propellant powder and the bullet. There are many inspection operations covering each stage of the processing of the various parts, and these often are women's jobs, as is much of the packing of the finished product.

<sup>1</sup> See Women's Bureau multith, *Employment of Women in Manufacture of Small Arms Ammunition*. June 1941.

## **Recent Trends in Women's Wages and Employment<sup>1</sup>**

**W**OMEN's employment increased almost 4 percent, men's 10 percent, in the earliest months of the defense program, according to figures just released for 24 industries. These include large samples from all the industries that employ largest numbers of women in manufacturing. In many cases, the greater part of the employment advance had occurred after March 1940. Women's hourly earnings as well as their employment had increased in half the industries reported. Comparisons are made of the situation in October 1940 with that in September of the year preceding, for identical establishments.

The workweek of women in October 1940 averaged less than 37 hours in more than

half the industries reported, less than 40 hours in all but one. Women's earnings for the week averaged \$16.54 in manufacturing industries, which was less than 60 percent as much as men's earnings, though recent studies of living costs indicate that a working woman's minimum for healthful living is around \$20.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Pay-roll records mailed by employers to the Bureau of Labor Statistics for 1 week in the month. Reports for October 1940 included over 433,000 women in 22 industries representing nearly two-thirds of all women in manufacturing, and nearly 32,000 women in laundries and cleaning and dyeing plants. Wage and hour figures given cover all plants reported; percent changes are computed from data for identical plants only. The 12 States included employ about three-fourths of all women in manufacturing—California, Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania. Tables showing more complete data for October 1940 can be obtained from the Women's Bureau. Earlier data appeared in the *WOMAN WORKER* for March and September 1938, May and September 1939, March and September 1940.



The more notable changes in women's employment in identical plants from September 1939 to October 1940, with those of men for comparison, were in the following industries:

	<i>Employment Percent increase<sup>1</sup></i>	
	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>
Electrical machinery and supplies.....	25	27
Glass and pottery.....	18	8
Woolen and worsted.....	16	12
Hardware.....	14	13
Paper boxes (set-up).....	10	9
Confectionery.....	9	11
Radios and phonographs.....	8	19
Book and job printing.....	8	4
Auto tires and tubes.....	6	2
Cotton goods.....	3	6
Hosiery.....	3	5
Women's undergarments.....	2	7

	<i>Percent decrease<sup>1</sup></i>	
	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>
Women's coats and suits.....	5	2
Knit underwear.....	6	6
Silk and rayon.....	6	6
Dyeing and cleaning.....	7	1
Men's suits, overcoats.....	9	5
Boots and shoes (leather).....	10	3

<sup>1</sup> Listed if change 4 percent or more for either sex.

<sup>2</sup> Increase.

### Changes in Women's Hourly Earnings.

Women's average hourly earnings had increased in most industries, in a number of them to a considerable extent. Most of the few exceptional declines were of less than 1 percent. Women usually are paid less than men, and since the increases in their hourly earnings were in most cases greater than men's they indicate that State and Federal legislation, designed to raise wages particularly in the lower brackets, is having its effect.

The advances in women's earnings went hand in hand with the employment increases in about half the industries reported. Considerable increases in women's employment were accompanied by some increase in their hourly earnings in electrical machinery and supplies; woolen and worsted, set-up paper boxes, confectionery, radios and phonographs, rubber shoes, and in laundries. The following showed notable increases in wom-

en's hourly earnings and some employment advance for them: Undergarments, hosiery, cotton goods, and cigars. Considerable employment increases were found with slight declines in hourly earnings in glass and pottery, hardware, book and job printing, and tires and tubes.

Notable advances in women's hourly earnings were accompanied by declines in their employment that were marked in shoe factories, moderate in cotton-dress shops. Other industries in which women's employment decreased though their hourly earnings improved were men's cotton clothing, knit underwear, silk and rayon, women's coats and suits, and men's suits and overcoats.

The chief changes in average hourly earnings were as follows:

	<i>Average hourly earnings Percent increase<sup>1</sup></i>	
	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>
Women's cotton dresses.....	16	4
Women's undergarments.....	11	9
Men's cotton clothing.....	9	( <sup>2</sup> )
Hosiery.....	9	<sup>2</sup> 2
Boots and shoes (leather).....	8	2
Cotton goods.....	8	6
Knit underwear.....	7	3
Silk and rayon.....	5	4
Woolen and worsted.....	4	9
Cigars.....	4	1
Women's coats and suits.....	3	<sup>2</sup> 8
Boots and shoes (rubber).....	3	8

	<i>Percent decrease<sup>1</sup></i>	
	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>
Women's dresses (not cotton).....	1	<sup>2</sup> 4
Glass and pottery.....	1	<sup>2</sup> 8
Hardware.....	4	2

<sup>1</sup> Listed if change 4 percent or more for either sex.

<sup>2</sup> Decrease.

<sup>3</sup> Increase.

### Average Week's Earnings of Women.

Average week's earnings of women had increased to an even greater extent than their hourly earnings. This was due to somewhat longer hours combined with the advances in hourly earnings. However, women's hours of work averaged less than 39 in almost all industries reported.

Earnings in the week—the amount a working woman has to live on—averaged between \$15 and \$20 in half these industries, though in 8 they averaged less than \$15. Recent studies estimate that a working



woman's minimum costs for healthful living are about \$20. In 20 of the industries reported the average woman received less than this, though men averaged less than \$20 a week only in cotton and shoe factories.

Week's earnings and hourly earnings of women in October 1940 averaged as follows:

	<i>Average week's earnings</i>	<i>Average hourly earnings (cents)</i>
<b>Over \$20:</b>		
Women's coats and suits.....	\$23.86	81.8
Auto tires and tubes.....	23.61	70.5
Hardware.....	21.36	55.8
Electrical machinery and supplies..	20.99	53.2
<b>Over \$15, under \$20:</b>		
Women's dresses (not cotton).....	19.63	70.9
Radios and phonographs.....	19.26	51.0
Boots and shoes (rubber).....	18.73	49.2
Woolen and worsted.....	17.87	48.9
Book and job printing.....	17.19	46.8
Glass and pottery.....	17.07	45.9
Hosiery.....	16.92	48.6
Paper boxes (set-up).....	16.87	41.8
Women's undergarments.....	16.81	45.2
Dyeing and cleaning.....	16.61	42.0
Confectionery.....	15.65	41.6
Cigars.....	15.51	41.5
<b>Under \$15:</b>		
Men's suits, overcoats.....	14.99	53.8
Laundries.....	14.57	36.2
Cotton goods.....	14.53	40.4

#### Under \$15—Continued.

	<i>Average week's earnings</i>	<i>Average hourly earnings (cents)</i>
Silk and rayon.....	\$14.49	40.5
Knit underwear.....	14.42	41.0
Men's cotton clothing.....	14.29	41.6
Women's cotton dresses.....	13.64	40.6
Boots and shoes (leather).....	13.14	43.6

#### Situation of Men and Women Compared.

Changes in employment usually took the same direction for both sexes, increasing in the same industries for women and men, but there still were wide differences in earnings. Men's hourly pay always averaged more than women's—at least 20 cents an hour more in over half the industries. Men's weekly averages usually were above \$20, but women's were below this in 20 of the 24 industries. Women suffer from another disadvantage—greater irregularity of work hours. Whether average work hours in an industry had increased or declined, in the majority of industries changes were greater for women than men, notably the increases in woolen and worsted, silk and rayon, and undergarments, and the declines in plants making boots and shoes, men's suits and overcoats, and confectionery.

## Women Workers in Michigan

**M**EN and women in stores and restaurants in Michigan would be earning more, and the hours of most of them would be shorter, if conditions prescribed in the Fair Labor Standards Act applied to them as it does to those in factories and other interstate industries. In order to recommend favorable standards for these workers, the Women's Bureau made a survey of the State early this year, at the request of the State Commissioner of Labor and Industry. In the various types of stores and restaurants covered, nearly 59,000 employees were reported by the census in 1939. On the basis of the sample studied, women constituted more than three-fourths of the employees in general merchandise, department, dry goods, and limited-price stores, and well over half those in restaurants.

#### Earnings of Women in Stores.

At the time of the study a 30-cent minimum was mandatory for all workers covered by the Fair Labor Standards Act, and for many industries higher minima had been set. In limited-price stores in Michigan nearly half of the women who were regular employees earned less than this, as did more than one-fifth of the men. In other stores the majority of the regular employees earned at least 30 cents. In limited-price stores all salespersons were women, and their hourly average was 29.8 cents. Averages in Detroit, Flint, and Grand Rapids were somewhat higher, but they were lower in the smaller places, which had more salespersons than were found in Detroit.

Not more than 15 percent of the men and women who were regular employees in any



type of store had worked as few as 40 hours. However, unless provided by a union contract, there was no extra payment for more than 40 hours as is required in interstate industries. The State law allows women to be employed 54 hours a week, and for men there is no limit. Even among those classified as extra or part-time workers, some had worked more than 40 hours. This was true of one-eighth of the women in limited-price stores and one-fifth of the women and one-third of the men in other stores.

### Earnings of Women in Restaurants.

An evaluation of earnings in restaurants is complicated by the fact that workers more often than not receive one or more meals as part of their compensation, and in a few cases lodging. The question of tips may be disregarded. Tips vary widely from day to day and from firm to firm. In the majority of the firms visited, they were reported to be an unimportant source of income. Regardless of supplements, 56 percent of all men regular employees and 82 percent of all women regular employees earned less than 30

cents an hour, while three-fourths of the men and practically all the women earned less than 40 cents. Cooks usually are the best paid of restaurant employees. A sixth of the men and practically half the women cooks earned less than 30 cents an hour. Approximately three-fourths of all men and women extra or part-time workers were paid less than 30 cents. The average earnings of workers according to the number of meals received show that many must fall below the standards of the Federal act, even with the value of meals added. This is especially true of the women employees. These averages were as follows:

	<i>Average hourly earnings, in cents, for workers receiving—</i>			
	<i>No meals</i>	<i>1 meal</i>	<i>2 meals</i>	<i>3 meals</i>
Men.....	32.9	34.3	33.0	31.7
Women.....	25.5	27.6	23.0	21.9

Hours of restaurant employees seldom were as short as 40, except for extra or part-time workers. Nearly three-fourths of the women and 93 percent of the men regular employees had worked more than 44 hours.

## Toward Minimum Fair Wages

### Fair Labor Standards Administration

#### New Minimum-Wage Rates Established.

MINIMUM rates of 36, 38, and 40 cents became effective as of June 30 for certain paper products; and in July a minimum of 40 cents for drugs, medicines, and toilet preparations and for rubber goods. On September 15 a 36-cent rate will go into effect for seamless hosiery.

About 200,000 persons are employed in the manufacture of paper products, more than one-third of them women. Nearly 50,000 workers, probably more than half of them women, will have their wages raised by the order. Rates for the groups employing the larger numbers of women are as follows: Set-up paper boxes etc., 36 cents; paper bags and similar products, 38 cents; envelopes, blank books, stationery, and the like, 40 cents.

About 44,000 persons are employed in the making of drugs, medicines, and toilet preparations, probably about half of them women. It is estimated that wages of 9,000 will be raised by the order. A study by the Women's Bureau in 1938 indicates that about 90 percent of those with earnings below 40 cents are women.

Of about 132,000 persons in the rubber industry more than one-fifth are women. About 9,900 men and women will receive increases as a result of the order.

The seamless hosiery industry, with some 62,000 workers, has been operating under a minimum of 32½ cents. It is estimated that 27,500 persons are earning less than the new rate of 36 cents. Sample studies indicate that large proportions receiving less than this amount are women.

Piece rates for home needlework in Puerto Rico have been revised, effective October 12.



Earlier rates set in December 1940 were increased or decreased as a result of time studies conducted by the Wage and Hour Division in Puerto Rico.

#### **Recommendations for Minimum Rates.**

An increased minimum, 40 cents an hour, has been recommended for women's apparel and for knit underwear, commercial knitting, and men's woven underwear.

For the lumber industry, a minimum of 35 cents has been recommended. Interstate lumbermen encounter intense competition from owners of small portable mills doing business within the State and often paying as little as 15 cents an hour. The situation could be met by an amendment to the act making "any minimum wage fixed under the act applicable alike to all industry, including intrastate operations affecting interstate commerce."

#### **New Committees.**

New committees have been appointed for three industries now operating under a minimum rate of 35 cents: Miscellaneous apparel (neckwear, robes, accessories), knitted outerwear, and shoes and allied products. Each committee has one or more women members. Dorothy J. Bellanca, of New York, is an employee representative on the miscellaneous apparel committee. The others are public representatives, as follows: Teresa M. Crowley, New York, and Marian D. Irish, Tallahassee, miscellaneous apparel; Elizabeth S. Magee, Cleveland, and Elizabeth Morrissy, Baltimore, shoes; Mary B. Gilson, Chicago, miscellaneous apparel and knitted outerwear. Committees have also been appointed to set rates for passenger motor carriers, and for property motor carriers.

#### **Apparel Order Upheld.**

Southern garment workers will receive about \$210,000 now held in escrow as a result of a decision of the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia. Effectiveness of the same minimum rates for the South as elsewhere also is established. Members of a southern garment manufacturing association had petitioned the Court to set aside

the orders which established minimum rates between 32½ and 40 cents for divisions of the apparel industry. The Court upheld the procedure used in determining the various rates, and rejected the contention that the petitioners had not received a fair hearing. While awaiting the decision, some of the firms have continued to pay piece rates yielding less than the minimum and have put the difference in escrow. Most of the 31 firms are makers of men's cotton garments for which the minimum is 32½ cents. The petitioners attacked as unlawful the classification of men's wash suits with the rest of the men's clothing industry, also the setting of two rates for men's single pants, depending on whether or not they contained any fabric other than cotton.

#### **New Definition for Retail Sales.**

Effective July 1 is a Wage and Hour Division rule that unless at least 75 percent of the sales of an establishment are retail, rather than wholesale, commercial, and industrial, the establishment is covered by the Fair Labor Standards Act. Formerly only 50 percent need be retail. A broader concept of what may constitute "retail sales" was established. Sales to industrial or commercial purchasers may be included as retail if they are sales of articles commonly sold to both business and private buyers and in a similar quantity or at a similar price.

#### **Learners in Textiles.**

Rules governing employment of learners in the textile industry have been materially liberalized, following labor shortages that have arisen in various textile centers because of defense. Previously no person with the required experience in any textile occupation could be employed as a learner. The new regulations permit the employer to pay learners' rates to a newly hired person experienced in some occupation or on some product in another plant during a period of training in an occupation in which they have not worked. No person employed in excess of the learning period in one mill may be retrained in the same mill at learners' rates.



If nonavailability of experienced workers is shown, more than the standard number of learners may be employed in new or expanding plants.

**Public Contracts Administration**

**Certain Canners Exempt.**

Since June 9 all contracts with the Government for future purchase of certain fruits and vegetables listed (the kinds most used) are entirely exempt from the provisions of the Public Contracts Act for the remainder of the year. This enables canners who supply the Government to operate, like other canners, under the Fair Labor Standards Act, which requires payment of a minimum rate of 30 cents an hour.

Attention may be called again to the 28-week exemption of the canning industry from the usual requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act as to rates of pay above 30 cents for overtime beyond 40 hours of work in the week. (See WOMAN WORKER, September 1940.) The act itself exempts the industry, for a 14-week period, from the payment of overtime rates no matter how long the hours worked. In addition, the Administrator has ruled that canning comes under the seasonal provision of the act, under which an added rate of pay is required only for work beyond 12 hours a day, 56 a week, instead of the usual rule that the higher rate be paid after 40 hours. These 28 weeks in which the regular overtime-pay provisions of the act either do not apply at all or do not apply fully may or may not be consecutive, though they must be within the calendar year.

**Minimum Wage in the States**

**California—Tips as Wages.**

That section of the minimum-wage order covering hotel and restaurant workers which provides that tips shall not be counted as part of the legal minimum has been held void by a recent court opinion in a test suit brought by the California Drive-in Association to determine whether or not they must comply with this part of the order in paying "car hops." These waitresses

usually receive no wage, unless gratuities fall below the \$16 minimum. (See WOMAN WORKER, May 1940, p. 11.)

The court held that there was an implied repeal of the section by the subsequent passage of a tipping-sign law. This law provides that any employer who collects all or part of the tips left for workers, or requires them to be deducted from wages or accounted for in any way, must post a sign where patrons will see it stating what disposition that establishment makes of tips. The Division of Industrial Welfare plans to appeal from the decision. One of the rules issued under the California Unemployment Reserve Act states that tips are not deemed wages upon which contributions are to be paid by the employer.

**New York—Laundry Workers' Wages Rise.**

Wages of New York women and minor laundry workers have risen steadily since they were covered by a minimum-wage order, according to the third annual audit of pay rolls for that industry in November 1940. Less than 1 percent are now paid below the minimum hourly wage. Further, employers are not keeping workers at the minimum pay. A study made in 1937, before the order went into effect, showed that less than 35 cents an hour was received by 39 percent of these workers in zone A (the Metropolitan New York area), and by 75 percent of those in zone B (since combined with A). In 1940 only 0.4 percent of the workers in each of these zones had such earnings. In the same period, the proportions of workers who received 45 cents and over increased steadily, as follows:

Percent receiving 45 cents and over		
	Zone A	Zone B
1937.....	10.8	4.0
1938.....	13.5	5.0
1939.....	14.6	5.7
1940.....	15.8	6.4

**Oregon—Women in Canneries.**

The Oregon cannery audit for last year shows more than 10,000 women at work in these plants at the peak of the season. During the year women earned a total of



more than  $1\frac{1}{4}$  million dollars. The average hourly wage was practically 41 cents. The great majority of hourly workers were paid the minimum of 35 cents then in effect, though a considerable number earned 40 cents or more, the highest being a single instance of 60 cents. (The minimum for the present year, effective June 8, is  $42\frac{1}{2}$  cents. See WOMAN WORKER, July 1941.) Piece workers constituted about a fourth of the total, and the majority (60 percent) of these earned from 35 to 45 cents an hour, with a range from 30 cents to 75 cents.

There were more than 5,000 instances in which a woman was paid overtime, as required by the State order, after 10 hours of work a day. Probably fewer women than this were affected, since the same woman may work overtime on two or more days. During the time that the Federal standard of 42 or 40 hours was in effect, overtime was paid to women in 342 cases. In the 14 weeks when the Federal law entirely exempts canneries from the payment of overtime rates, no matter how long the hours worked, there were 3,605 instances of women working in excess of 56 hours a week; in the majority of these cases hours did not exceed 60, but in a few they exceeded 80.

**Pennsylvania—Minimum-Wage Law Upheld.**

The Pennsylvania minimum-wage law for women and minors has been held constitu-

tional in the Court of Common Pleas of Dauphin County. This decision was given by Judge John E. Fox on July 5 in dismissing the petition of the Mechanicsburg Laundry for a review of the mandatory minimum-wage order for laundry occupations issued December 19, 1940.

For more than 10,000 women in Pennsylvania laundries the protection of the order establishing a minimum wage of 27 cents an hour is now assured.

#### **Utah—Order for Public Housekeeping.**

Women and minors in Utah who are experienced workers in establishments furnishing lodgings are to receive for a 48-hour week a minimum of from \$10 to \$14, by size of city in which employed, according to the order for this industry effective July 14. Workers with less than 3 months' experience may be paid \$1 a week less. Included in the establishments covered are hospitals and institutions, rooming and boarding or apartment houses, and auto camps. The only occupations in these establishments not covered are those of registered nurse and resident manager. For less than 48 hours, experienced workers are to be paid minimum rates of from 21 to 30 cents, learning rates being 2 or 3 cents less. The minimum pay for any day's work shall be \$1 for experienced workers and 60 cents for learners.

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## Women in Unions

UNION action is one of the best ways of increasing earnings to meet increased living costs, and great progress has been made in this respect. The need to continue such activity is shown by the fact that there already are increases in the cost of living, in spite of some success in the Government's efforts to prevent unwarranted price rises.

According to a report by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics living-cost increase from May 15 to June 15 of this year was just under 2 percent, but from June of last year it was more than 4 percent and from August 1939 it was as much as 6 per-

cent. These figures are for city families. In general, in these urban areas the rise in food costs from mid-May to mid-June was about twice the total increase. This is a serious situation for low-income families, who must spend larger proportions of total earnings for food than do those who earn more. In addition to their efforts to advance wages, union contracts are more and more meeting the legitimate need for rest and recreation by providing for vacations with pay.

#### **Progress in Metal and Machinery.**

Many women will benefit from the 10-percent raise gained for 175,000 automobile



workers, and for 25,000 on electrical equipment. Another automobile contract covering 130,000 persons calls for wages equal to the highest in the industry. This will require adjustment of from 5 to 30 cents an hour. An agreement in a storage-battery plant in Philadelphia provides a 10-cent raise for 2,800 workers, and minimum rates of 65 cents for men and 54 cents for women. Further increases are to follow if living costs go up. In an airplane plant women who earned from 35 to 40 cents now get a 60-cent minimum. Some 1,700 makers of small electrical equipment in Brooklyn, many of them women, gained a 10-percent raise and a \$15.50 minimum following a long strike. Previously, \$12 a week at piece rates had been common. Payment for breakage is to be eliminated and waiting time due to machine break-down is to be paid for.

#### **Progress in Textiles.**

Union agreements help to maintain wage increases that were general in textiles this spring. Recent reports show that nearly 10,000 workers in 6 large mills in 5 States had secured wage increases of at least 10 percent through union contracts. Several recent contracts provide for wage adjustments as needed, sometimes at regular intervals. Vacations with pay were negotiated in a number of these, though in two extra pay in lieu of vacations will be accepted voluntarily this year because of defense contracts. Also helpful in defense production are no-strike-or-lock-out provisions often included.

#### **Progress in Wearing Apparel.**

Firms affiliated with the Shirt Institute have agreed with the union to a 10-percent wage increase and paid vacations for about 15,000 workers. Wage negotiations for 50,000 employees of other employers were begun soon after. A separate contract covering 800 shirt workers in the South calls for the same increase. An association of more than 30 contractors on washable suits, sportswear, and the like, has agreed to raise the weekly minimum for 2,500 workers

from \$14 to \$16, thus making effective the rate recommended under the Fair Labor Standards Act.

An agreement covering 5,000 workers on silk dresses in Chicago raised minimum rates for the lowest-paid jobs by 50 cents a week to the following amounts: Basters, \$16.50; pinkers, \$16; cleaners, \$15.50; sorters, \$15. Contracts signed with two large eastern dress firms brought wage increases to more than 1,000 workers. In one, a second increase will be received in about 8 months. Basic hours are set at 37½ and 35, respectively. In a Pennsylvania knit-underwear mill, a 10-percent increase and paid vacations were secured for approximately 1,000 employees. A system of deductions for imperfect work was eliminated; instead, imperfect goods are to be returned to the worker for repair. About 300 workers on gloves and mittens in Illinois negotiated wage increases of from 6 to 9 percent and vacations with pay. Recent reports show that more than 4,000 workers on hats, caps, and millinery in eight States and Canada have secured wage increases ranging from 5 to 40 percent.

#### **Progress in Other Manufacturing.**

A raise of 3 cents an hour has been negotiated for tobacco workers in one plant in North Carolina, and 5 cents for 2,700 workers in Kentucky, important gains in a low-wage industry. Workers for a Chicago canning company, sometimes numbering 700, are given assurance of a minimum of 32 hours' work a week. Wages are raised by from \$2 to \$4 a week and vacations with pay granted. In a cannery in Indiana, 500 year-round and seasonal workers have received a 10-cent raise in a renewed contract. Some 1,975 workers in a Massachusetts watch factory have ratified a contract that provides for a raise of 2½ cents an hour and paid vacations. A contract with a Detroit firm making waxed paper provides minimum rates of 75 cents for men and 70 cents for women. Wage increases were secured in two New Jersey rubber companies, in one a 10-cent increase for all workers, in the other 3 to 10 cents for men and 5 to 7 cents



for women. In a New Jersey shoe company, 125 workers have secured increases of from 20 to 35 percent.

#### **Progress for Service Workers.**

A contract covering 20,000 workers in 88 New York City hotels provides wage increases of from \$2 to \$4 a week.

A strike of 255 restaurant workers in Massachusetts was settled by the help of the State Department of Conciliation and Arbitration. Ten-percent increases for waitresses and certain classifications of men employees, 7½ percent for all other men, were secured.

A 2-year contract ratified by about 5,000 laundry workers raised wages in the linen-supply branch of the industry in the Detroit area. It also provided a week's vacation with pay and time and a half for over a 48-hour week. The existing minimum is to be raised next year.

#### **Progress for Other Workers.**

A contract has been signed covering 1,500 employees of a Detroit firm that publishes directories. It provides a 14-percent wage increase, 1 to 2 weeks' vacation with pay, 2 holidays off with pay, and double time for work on other holidays. Poor sanitary and lighting conditions are to be remedied and piece work eliminated in 3 departments. Another contract covering 35 clerical workers secures time and a half for overtime and

8 holidays a year with pay, provisions usually taken for granted for production workers.

A department store contract covering 300 workers in New York City recognizes the relation of the rising costs of living and profits of the firm to wages. In August 1942 an increase is to be given based on the ratio of these factors. For the present a general raise of \$1 a week and an increase in commissions were secured, also minimum rates of \$19 for all salespersons, \$27 and \$30, respectively, for women and men shoe clerks. The contract provides a 40-hour 6-day week, but allows for the reopening of the hour question if a major competitive store goes on a 5-day week.

A contract covering 750 employees of about 20 independent grocers in St. Louis provides a basic 5-day week, each worker having 1 day free besides Sunday. A minimum of \$17 a week is provided for all clerks, to be raised after 3 years' service to \$21 for women and \$23.50 for men. A similar agreement providing a 5-day 48-hour week in an important chain of food stores has been in effect in St. Louis since the first of the year.

A strike of 4,500 warehouse workers in California was called because, while granting an increase of 10 cents an hour to men, only 5 cents was offered to 1,000 women. The strike secured them 7½ cents.

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## Employment Problems of Household Workers

#### **Substitute for New York Curb Markets.**

A STEP has been made to do away with the street-corner hiring of day workers that grew up in the Bronx during the depression. Experimental hiring centers were opened in May and June, providing off-the-street quarters with adequate seating and other facilities. Formerly, on some 50 corners and in all sorts of weather, housewives bargained with unemployed girls. Establishment of these centers is the result of more than a year of work. A special committee was formed at the request of the In-

dustrial Commissioner of New York, headed by Cara Cook of the New York Women's Trade Union League, with cooperation of various public and private agencies. The committee approved two hostesses to operate the offices. Here employer and employee meet and make their own bargains as they used to do on the street. At first there was no plan to set standards, but there appeared a rather definite understanding that girls would expect a rate of at least 35 cents an hour. Telephone orders are accepted and announced to the entire group or filled by



the first girl arriving who is willing to take the position.

#### **Reports on Household Workers' Wages.**

That household workers' wages remain very low is indicated by several studies in recent years. Over 400 Negro women employed in Atlanta homes were interviewed under the direction of the Phyllis Wheatley Branch of the Y. W. C. A. in 1938. Two-thirds of those paid by the week earned only from \$3 to \$6, while over three-fourths of the day workers averaged only a dollar a day. In this city of more than 250,000, it was estimated a few years ago that a family of 4 persons needed about \$24 a week for adequate living, yet the household workers reported were earning from \$1 to \$13 a week. The fact that "living in" often is expected and taken into consideration in setting wages tends to keep the pay low. Hours of work in domestic service often are so long that if industry standards prevailed in this employment time and one-half would begin on Friday morning.

In Summit, N. J., an analysis of the openings for household workers occurring in 1 month in 1941 at the State Employment Office showed wages offered ranging from \$6 to \$18 a week, with \$7 to \$12 most usual.

#### **Shortages of Household Workers Occurring.**

Employment Service reports already show shortages of household workers, especially in places where defense industries offer the

competition of shorter hours and higher pay. Only by making jobs more attractive can homes compete with industry for labor. For example, such shortages have occurred in Connecticut and New Jersey where the expanded metal, electrical, and arms industries draw workers, in the Great Lakes area, in Kansas and Missouri where more employees are going to garment and shoe factories, and in Washington State.

#### **Need for Security in Old Age.**

The need to include household workers in the benefits of Social Security has been stressed repeatedly by various official agencies and groups interested in the welfare of workers, such as the Advisory Council on Social Security, the American Association for Labor Legislation, the Y. W. C. A., the labor conferences of the Secretary of Labor, and officials of the Social Security Board itself.

Despite their low wages many household workers earn enough to benefit from old-age insurance if they could be included by an amendment to the act. Such is the showing in a recent sample study of some 550 workers in Philadelphia made under the auspices of the National Council of Household Employment. Of all workers employed at the time of interview, 68 percent had earned \$7 or more a week, 91 percent \$5 or more. Even the latter amount exceeds the required \$50 a quarter.

## **Labor Laws Affecting Women—1941**

**I**N ADDITION to legislation reported in the July WOMAN WORKER, the following laws of particular interest to working women have been approved in the States.

#### **Colorado.**

An act has been approved making it unlawful for an employer to claim tips given his employees unless he posts a notice (of specified size) stating that tips belong to him and not to the employees.

#### **Connecticut.**

The 9-48 law for women in manufacturing has been amended by authorizing the

Governor, in the interest of national defense, to allow 10 hours daily, 55 hours weekly, during an emergency. This provision is in addition to the 10-55 hour allowance that may be granted by the Labor Commissioner for 8 weeks in a 12-month period.

#### **Massachusetts.**

Amendment to industrial home work law requires employer to pay, after the initial \$50 fee, annual fees ranging from \$50 to \$300 according to number of home workers employed.



**New Jersey.**

An amendment to the statutes provides that in employment by the State there shall be no discrimination based on sex or marital status in compensation, appointment, assignment, promotion, transfer, dismissal, or other matters.

A new industrial home work law prohibits manufacture of listed articles; authorizes

Commissioner of Labor to prohibit home work in any industry if found injurious to welfare of home workers or detrimental to factory labor standards; sets up conditions to be met if home work is done.

Amendment to the minimum-wage law eliminates the 9-month directory period, provides that wage orders become mandatory 180 days after issuance.

## Industrial Home Work Curtailed in Two States

**H**OME work in garment manufacturing in California and in the glove industry in New York is practically eliminated in recent orders issued under the terms of home-work laws. Practically all handwork on leather gloves and most of that on cotton, silk, and woolen gloves has been done in New York. About 40 percent of the home-work permits for cotton garment work have been in California, and this industry represents about half the home work in the State.

**Home Work on Gloves in New York.**

Home work in the glove industry in New York is *restricted* by a new order that became effective August 15, 1941. Included in the provisions of the order are the following: Permits will be granted only to employers and workers who held such permits prior to April 1, 1941; home workers are to receive the same wages as factory workers; no home work may be given to factory workers; home workers may not work for more than one employer, and the amount of work they are given in one week is limited; the employer must cover his home workers by workmen's compensation.

On May 1, 1942, after a period of adjustment, home work will be *prohibited* except for workers unable to accept factory employment because of age, or a handicap, or because needed at home to care for an invalid. After this date every employer of home workers must maintain a glove factory and the home workers' operations must be the same as the factory operations. The

provisions cited in the preceding paragraph will apply under these conditions also.

A study of this industry showed that home workers, sometimes assisted by other family members, in some years exceeded the number of women employed in the factories. A few small establishments actually had no factory workers. At times large numbers of home workers were given full employment while many factory workers had a short week. Wages of home workers were below subsistence level, and many of the families were receiving public aid. Average hourly earnings of home workers were substantially below those of women on the same occupation in the factory, showing that their piece rates were lower. For instance, makers of leather dress gloves averaged 38 cents in the factory and 32 cents at home in the fall of 1938. The result was to depress factory earnings so that even these women did not receive a living wage. Average weekly earnings of women factory workers on leather dress gloves in November 1939 were \$14; average year's earnings, \$652.

Home work has been increasing in New York State in recent years. In the middle of January 1941, 178 firms in the glove industry had permits to distribute home work and 5,422 home workers' certificates were outstanding. Probably not all these women were working, but on the other hand some worked illegally without permits. When home work is allowed it is admittedly difficult to regulate.

Home workers have been obliged to fur-



nish their own equipment, machines costing on an average from \$66 to \$73, and to keep machines in repair. These are costs now generally recognized as the responsibility of the employer. At present, some glove manufacturers in New York, and most of those in other States, operate without home workers.

#### **Home Work on Garments in California.**

The California order applies to any process, hand or machine, on any garment regardless of material, except that hand knitting is specifically exempt. After September 1, home-work permits may be issued only to persons unable to work in factories because of age, physical or mental handicap, or because needed at home to care for an

invalid. These persons also must have been holders of permits before September 1. The employer must cover his home workers by workmen's compensation. He must pay them rates that will yield to workers on similar operations in the factory at least the State minimum. Work given out to an individual in a week must not exceed the average weekly amount produced by workers on similar operations in the plant working the legal 48 hours. To insure these provisions, the employer must have at least one employee in the factory on operations similar to the home-work operations. Home workers may work for one employer only, and may not do factory work at the same time.

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## Hazards to Health of Employed Women

#### **Tuberculosis an Occupational Hazard.**

**I**N A 20-year period, 21 women in Wisconsin have received compensation for tuberculosis, at a total cost of nearly \$46,000, including medical care. All were employed in tuberculosis sanitariums or State mental institutions, and all but one contracted the disease from a patient or inmate. All were young, ranging in age from 21 to 37, the majority under 30. Of the women reported 3 died of the disease and 1 was left with a 25-percent permanent impairment; 1 was disabled for more than 3 years, 3 others for about a year. Three were receiving compensation at the time of the report early in this year, 1 since 1934, and for these the final outcome is not yet known.

#### **Organic and Mineral Dusts Hazardous.**

Organic dusts are the most serious hazard in woman-employing industries in Illinois and Ohio. This was true also in earlier studies in 5 other States (see *WOMAN WORKER*, March 1940). Of 49 specified groups of materials, organic dusts were first in Illinois and seventh in Ohio in number of workers exposed.

Such dusts are present in all industries, but

are especially prevalent in textile, tobacco, and clothing manufacture, as well as in furniture, food, and chemicals. The extent to which control methods—ventilation, respirators, or the use of liquid to lay the dust—were in use for exposed workers varied greatly, but in no case was such protection complete and often it was supplied for a minority only. In Ohio, where 89 percent of the workers on cigars were exposed to organic dusts, less than 4 percent were protected in any way. In the making of furniture women often are sanders and upholsterers, both occupations exposing them to dusts. Of all workers so exposed in this industry, regardless of occupation, considerably less than half were protected, usually by local exhausts.

Another problem to be solved by ventilation or wet methods was that of exposure to silicate or silica dusts. Women are exposed to these hazards less often than men, but it is a serious problem in pottery manufacture, an important industry in Ohio, where women were nearly one-third of the workers studied. More than three-fourths of all workers reported in this industry in the State were exposed to silicosis, a disease with



very serious consequences. The chief control reported was the wet method, but this was supplied for less than half of all exposed workers. Other protection was offered about one-eighth of the workers. It was pointed out also that if care is not exercised dusty conditions may arise from the dried silica and silicate materials that originally were wet.

### Women Frequently Affected by Dermatitis.

Dermatitis, or irritation of the skin, usually is the most prevalent occupational disease reported for women. While each report shows dermatitis producers as a separate group, this by no means indicates the complete hazard, as many other sub-

stances listed separately, such as alkaline compounds, oils and greases, chemicals, metals, and so on, are found to cause skin infections in some people. Protective clothing, chiefly gloves, would seem to be the best preventive, with adequate washing facilities, lotions, and the like. In no case was protective clothing provided for as many as a third of all the workers exposed to any one material, and less than one-tenth of those exposed to specific dermatitis producers were so protected. In candy factories, where women predominate, 60 percent or more of all workers were exposed to a dermatitis producer, but less than 3 percent of these in either Ohio or Illinois were furnished any protective clothing.

## Recent Publications

### Women's Bureau—Printed Bulletins<sup>1</sup>

THE OCCURRENCE AND PREVENTION OF OCCUPATIONAL DISEASES AMONG WOMEN, 1935 to 1938. Bul. 184. 46 pp. 10c.

### Women's Bureau—Mimeographed Material<sup>1</sup>

EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN IN THE MANUFACTURE OF SMALL-ARMS AMMUNITION. June 1941. 18 pp.

EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN IN THE MANUFACTURE OF ARTILLERY AMMUNITION. July 1941. 31 pp.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE TENTH MINIMUM-WAGE CONFERENCE, Washington, D. C., January 17-18, 1941. 79 pp.

### Other Department of Labor Publications

WAR TIME REGULATION OF HOURS OF LABOR AND LABOR SUPPLY IN GREAT BRITAIN. Wage and Hour Division, June 1941. (Mimeographed.)

MONEY DISBURSEMENTS OF WAGE EARNERS AND CLERICAL WORKERS, 1934-36. 42 cities in the United States. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Bul. 638. (Last of series.)

STUDY OF CONSUMER PURCHASES, URBAN SERIES, 1935-36. FAMILY EXPENDITURES IN SELECTED CITIES. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Bul. 648, Vol. I, Housing; Vol. VII, Miscellaneous Expenditures: Recreation, Reading, Education, Gifts, and Community Welfare. (Last of series.)

MATERNITY CARE AT PUBLIC EXPENSE IN SIX COUNTIES IN NEW YORK STATE. Children's Bureau. Bul 267.

WHAT DO I GET FOR MY MONEY? An Employee's Views on Safety Services of Governmental Agencies. Division of Labor Standards.

### Other Publications

WOMEN WHO WORK IN NEW YORK. New York State Department of Labor, Division of Women in Industry and Minimum Wage. June 1941. 5¢.

This pamphlet "tries to follow the woman worker from the beginning of the century up to the present time."

WORKSHOP SENSE. A Book Written for Munition Workers and Other Entrants into Productive Industry. By W. A. J. Chapman. Edward Arnold & Co., London, 1941.

WOMEN IN THE WORKING WORLD (La Mujer en el Trabajo). By Josefina Marpons.

The young Argentine woman who writes this unique and important book also has put the problems of the young business girl into a novel called "44 Hours a Week." These books, as well as current articles of Miss Marpons appearing in "El Hogar" and "El Mundo Argentino," are worth reading.

"Women in the Working World" contains abundant and reliable information about working women in Argentina, and to a certain extent in other Latin-American countries, and gives frank and constructive criticisms and ideas. It is full of concrete suggestions that well might be considered for immediate adoption.

SEATS FOR WORKERS IN FACTORIES. Great Britain Ministry of Labor and National Service. Welfare Pamphlet No. 6. Third Edition, 1940.

<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. Mimeographed reports are obtainable only from Women's Bureau.