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MARY ANDERSON, DIRECTOR

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## CONTENTS

	Page
DEFENSE PROGRAM INCREASES NEED FOR WOMEN WORKERS.....	3
WOMEN IN MANUFACTURING AND TRADE, CENSUS OF 1939.....	4
TOWARD MINIMUM FAIR WAGES.....	5
Fair Labor Standards Administration—Public Contracts Administration— Minimum Wage in the States.	
WAGE-EARNING WIVES AND UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS.....	7
WOMEN IN TRADE UNIONS.....	8
Progress in Women's Wear, Textiles, White-Collar Work, Service, and Other Industries; British Union Welcomes New Women.	
DISABLING ILLNESS OF WOMEN WORKERS.....	10
WOMEN'S ADJUSTMENTS AS DEFENSE SHIFTS JOBS.....	12
Mobility of Weavers—Plant Shut-Down—Workers in Relief Families.	
NEWS NOTES.....	13
Government Labor Officials Meet—Benefits of New York Home-Work Order— Household Workers' Earnings and Outgo—Wage and Hour Bills Introduced in 1941—Women Earn More in South Carolina.	
RECENT PUBLICATIONS.....	16

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## Defense Program Increases Need for Women Workers

**W**OMEN's work now is in real demand in defense industries and in other occupations from which workers have gone to defense employment. Agencies concerned with labor supply are examining processes to discover the types most suitable for women. At the same time, the picture is marred by certain dislocations due to changes from civilian to defense production.

Employment Service reports as early as last spring stressed the fact that women's chances for jobs continued to improve, and that already women were being taken on in places vacated by men. Indicative of this shift are the reports from various parts of the country of labor shortages in work ordinarily performed largely by women, such as skilled textile operators, experienced office workers, restaurant employees, sewing-machine operators, salespersons, and workers in all types of service occupations. Employees, many of them women, also have been needed in seasonal industries such as canning, agricultural operations, apparel manufacture, and service in resort hotels.

### **Labor Needs That Women Can Fill.**

A detailed study of labor demands in major branches of the airplane industry made by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that in particular jobs that women in very many cases could fill, over 50,000 workers will be required by the late fall, additional numbers later. For much of this work women would need training. From surveys made by the Women's Bureau it would appear that chief jobs suited for women are as operators of various types of presses, as subassemblers in sheet metal, riveters, benchworkers (including burring and filing), inspectors, and clerical workers (including stock clerks). Other possibilities include different kinds of welding, and operating lathes, milling machines, and other metal-processing machines. A similar study of needs in the machine-tool industry shows

more than 3,000 forthcoming jobs that women might fill, chiefly as operators of machines, such as drill presses, lathes, milling machines, and so forth, as inspectors, and clerical workers.

Side by side with evidences of increased opportunities for women are currents hostile to women's chances. Where women are replacing men, this has been to some extent in lower-paying types of work. Some employers through the country still prefer men or boys outside the draft ages. One example of many is a new arms plant in New York State requiring over 1,800 workers largely on processes that women could perform, but men are preferred. Special organizations are being set up to assure jobs for the men being released from their first period of army service; there will be a continual stream of men leaving as well as going into training, and these men undoubtedly will be given job preference over women who have done the work in the interim. Shifts from industries being converted from consumer to defense manufacture also cause great hardship to women, as in the spectacular instance of silk mills, where there are indications that over half of the 75,000 women in the industry lost their jobs.

### **Women Continue To Be Placed in Jobs.**

Employment Service reports of placements of women in all types of occupations showed much the same picture from month to month throughout the spring and early summer, and may be outlined as follows: (1) On the whole, increases continue; (2) service jobs still absorb nearly 60 percent of the women's placements, manufacturing around a fifth; (3) very roughly a third of the placements in manufacturing go to women.

Placements in manufacturing increased by 10 percent in May over the preceding month. Large scale hirings in the electrical industry, in which a third of all workers are women, were reported in



Middle Atlantic States even as early as last spring. Many thousands of women should find factory jobs in three large mid-western cities before next spring, according to estimated needs. Ammunition, arms, machinery, and ordnance plants in various parts of the country were taking on women as their forces were enlarged or as their male labor supply was being reduced. Examples are:

Massachusetts—Women as bench hands in an arms factory.

Rhode Island—Women on various operations in a plant making a new type of wire for field use by the Signal Corps; and women in greatly increased numbers on assembly, bench, and press work in jewelry factories making army insignia (though there are other reports of women losing their jobs in jewelry plants).

Connecticut—Over 200 women inspectors in one plant and a shift of women solderers in another.

Maryland—400 Negro women assembling gas masks.

Ohio—1,500 women to make ammunition parts.

St. Louis—3,000 women in an arms ammunition plant.

Western New York—About 800 women taken on in a large ammunition plant.

Some experiments are being made with women's work in aircraft plants, and a large California firm has pioneered in putting on 300 women.

Of women's placements in a special list of defense jobs over an 8-month period, nearly half were for some type of press operation. A fourth were in assembly, chiefly in electrical and radio plants, but in a few cases for aircraft. An appreciable number also were inspectors. The largest group of industries into which these women went were in metal work, the next in machine-shop and machine-tool plants; third came electrical manufacturing, with almost as many in foundries and forgings.

#### Women Given Training in Many Localities.

Employers consider more seriously how best they can train and install new divisions of women, or use these workers to replace men no longer available, and many plants are experimenting with women on new jobs. Scattered evidences of changes in processes in order to employ women range from textile mills to fine-instrument making.

## Women in Manufacturing and Trade, Census of 1939

### Women in Manufacturing.

The Census of Manufactures shows that more than 2½ million women were employed in factories in October 1939, the month of peak employment for all industries combined. The great majority of these women were wage earners on production jobs, more than 2,235,000 in all. Besides these, 232,000 were clerical workers in the plants; 145,000 were concerned with distribution of the products; 10,000 were salaried officers; 16,000, managerial or professional employees.

The average number of wage earners for the year (men and women combined) was about half a million less than in 1929. The *proportion* of women, however, had increased: In December 1929, 21 of every 100 factory employees were women, in October 1939 practically 26 in every 100 were women. There was a marked increase in the pro-

portions of women in certain of the major woman-employing industries, as follows:

	Percent of wage earners who were women	
	1929	1939
Apparel.....	67	74
Food preparation.....	23	28
Leather and leather products.....	34	40
Machinery.....	11	15
Stone, clay, and glass products.....	7	11

On the other hand, women had lost ground somewhat in textiles, chemicals, and non-ferrous metals and their products.

At the later date more than one-fourth of the women in manufacturing were in apparel factories, more than one-fifth in textile mills. This reversed the 1929 situation, when women in textiles were the largest single group. Food preparation had increased in importance, accounting for 13 percent of the women, compared with 9 percent in 1929. Next in importance were leather



and leather products, machinery, and paper and printing, each including about 6 percent of all women, with little change in the 10 years. All these main groups employed at least 125,000 women wage earners in October 1939; textiles employed more than 500,000, apparel more than 610,000.

#### **Women in Trade.**

The Census of Business in 1939 shows that women employed in retail distribution (including eating and drinking places) had increased in both numbers and proportion. In 1935 there were not quite 31 women in every 100 employees reported, in 1939 there were 34 in every 100. This was accompanied by a marked increase in the number of all employees, full- and part-time combined, and women alone increased by well over 50 percent to 1,566,545. Total numbers employed had increased in every State, and the proportion of women had increased in every State but Idaho, where the decrease was very slight.

About three-fourths of the women were found in three groups of trade: General-merchandise stores, eating and drinking places, and apparel stores. Well over one-third of the women were in the general merchandise group, chiefly in department and variety stores. In these three groups

women employees usually predominated. They were 71 percent of all in general merchandise, 57 percent in apparel, and 47 percent in eating and drinking, in each case a higher proportion than in 1935.

Not far from one-fifth of all workers were employed for only part time, and there are indications that more women than men usually are employed on this basis. In department stores a fifth of all workers were on part time, in variety stores nearly half. In the general-merchandise group the proportion of part-time workers had increased from 24 to 28 percent. In apparel stores and in eating and drinking places, on the other hand, there was a slight decline in the extent of part-time employment.

In wholesale distribution in 1939 women represented 19 of every 100 persons employed, a slight increase over 1935. Total employment (men and women combined) had increased by about 200,000, to 1,562,000. The ratio of women in 1939 varied from a low of 5 percent for the petroleum trade to 45 percent in the specialty-line drug business. Women comprised more than one-third of all employees in amusement and sporting goods, drugs and drug sundries (specialty lines), and jewelry.

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## Toward Minimum Fair Wages

### **Fair Labor Standards Administration**

#### **New Minimum-Wage Rates.**

A minimum rate of 40 cents an hour, the highest allowed under the act, has been approved for the following five industries: Men's shirts, single pants, and allied garments, and women's and children's apparel, September 29; jewelry (including watch cases and cigar and cigarette cases), November 1; and wood furniture industry and gray iron jobbing foundry industry, November 3. A minimum of 34 cents an hour for the clay-products industry and 35 cents for the lumber industry became effective

September 1 and November 3, respectively.

The new minimum for the men's garment industry will increase the wage rate of about 89,000 workers, so far as they are experienced, mostly women sewing-machine operators, out of 145,000 employed by the industry. Increases will amount to about \$270,000 a week, if 40 hours are worked.

In the women's and children's apparel industry about 60,000 of the estimated 240,000 workers will benefit by the higher rate. About 85 percent of all wage earners at work on these garments are women. Women's coats and suits already operate under a 40-cent minimum.



### **Jewelry Order Abolishes Home Work.**

In the jewelry industry, it is estimated that about one-third of the 35,000 workers will receive higher wage rates with the new minimum. In a study of this industry made by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics in 1940, it was found that about three-fourths of the workers receiving less than 40 cents were women. There is no doubt, therefore, that a large proportion of women will benefit from the 40-cent minimum.

The order for jewelry blazes a new trail in forbidding home work. (Bona fide handicapped workers still are permitted to work at home.) This action was taken because of the great difficulties in enforcing wage and hour standards where home work is done. The conclusion was reached by the Wage and Hour Division from a detailed study of home work in the industry, based on handbooks in which the employer is required to have home workers keep a record of hours worked. From March 1939 to the end of December 1940, 121 firms requested 12,246 handbooks. Almost a fourth of the firms failed to acknowledge receipt of some 2,800 handbooks as is required. Requests were sent to 81 firms who had acknowledged receipt of handbooks asking that all books completely filled or not in use be returned.

At the time of the hearing, no response had been received from 27 of these firms. Of the other firms, 34 acknowledged the use of home workers. These had distributed about 3,100 handbooks, but their reports failed entirely to account for some 1,350 of them. An examination of the books returned showed many inaccuracies in the records to be kept. It was easy to recognize various methods used to cover failure to pay the minimum. For example, in a number of cases, there was a striking artificiality in the uniformity of the hours reported.

### **Recommendations.**

Minimum rates of 40 cents have been recommended for workers on shoes and

allied products and all motor carriers. The shoe industry currently employs more than 250,000 workers, and about 96,000 of them (the majority women) have been earning less than 40 cents.

The new committee appointed to revise the rate previously established for the woolen industry has recommended that the 36-cent minimum be increased to 40 cents. One of the public representatives on this committee is a woman, Amy Hewes of South Hadley, Mass. This was the thirty-sixth committee to be appointed.

The Administrator finds that no need exists for the employment of learners in the hat industry at less than the minimum wage.

### **Public Contracts Administration**

#### **Orders Revised.**

Wage determinations on Government contracts of \$10,000 or more were amended in three instances, effective in September. The rate of 42½ cents for leather and sheep-lined jackets was extended to all leather, leather trimmed, and sheep-lined garments for men, women, or children. The rate for drugs and medicines was raised from 37½ cents to 40 cents and extended to dentifrices, cosmetics, perfumes, and similar preparations. The rate for tags was raised from 33 to 40 cents. The second and third of these changes were to conform to orders under the Fair Labor Standards Act.

### **Minimum Wage in the States**

#### **Kentucky—Industry Order.**

A directory order for the laundry, dry-cleaning, and dyeing industry in Kentucky becomes effective November 1. This is the first of a series of industry orders which will be substituted gradually for the original blanket wage order covering all occupations. The new order divides the State into 4 zones, the rates for which range from 20 cents to 28 cents.

#### **Louisiana—First Wage Board.**

Preparations are being made to issue the first order under the 1938 State minimum-wage law for women. This will cover the



laundry and dry-cleaning industry, in which the State Department of Labor recently has made a survey of wages and hours. Mrs. Byrne Womack has been appointed to administer the law.

#### **New York—Resort Hotels.**

Resort hotels opened this summer for the first time since the wage order applied to them. The State Bureau of Enforcement, cooperating with the New York State Hotel Association, held a series of meetings in upstate resort areas to explain operation of the order.

#### **Massachusetts—Restaurant Order.**

Women in restaurants in Massachusetts, if classed as service employees, are to receive at least \$12 a week if they work more than 34 hours, or 28 cents an hour if the week is 34 hours or less. The rate for nonservice employees is \$16 for more than 34 hours, or 38 cents an hour for 34 hours or less. (Legal workweek for women in Massachusetts is 48 hours.) Service employees are those "whose duties relate solely to the serving of food to patrons seated at tables and to the performance of duties incidental thereto." All others are nonservice. If

an employer announces to the public a no-tipping policy, all employees then become nonservice. Tips are not to be counted as part of the minimum. The employer is to furnish and care for uniforms if they are required. He may deduct 25 cents for each meal actually furnished, and \$2.75 for a full week's lodging. No learner or apprentice period is allowed. The order became effective September 1.

#### **New York—Compliance in Restaurants.**

After a year under the directory order for restaurants in New York, 72 percent of all women and minors were receiving the minimum rates or more. The necessary investigation required visits to 28,500 restaurants of all sorts, in every part of the State. Of these, 11,486 were subject to the order, since they employed women and minors. During the year, more than \$111,000 in unpaid wages was collected and refunded to 8,154 employees. The 3,362 employers (29 percent) who refused to cooperate have underpaid nearly 12,000 workers to the extent of more than \$400,000, but they cannot be prosecuted until the order is made mandatory.

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## Wage-Earning Wives and Unemployment Benefits

A WIFE quits her job to go to another location where her husband has employment. In Iowa or Nebraska, by the official interpretation of the unemployment compensation act, she is disqualified in certain respects for benefits during her jobless period; in Indiana, Michigan, and Utah positive provision of statute disqualifies her for benefits.

This view in applying the law assumes that the employee's cause for voluntarily leaving must be connected with the work, and argues that a married woman who accepts employment comes into the market on the same footing with all other employees.

An opposing view holds that a cause for voluntary leaving does not have to be connected with the work, but may be personal.

The Rhode Island appeal board supports this interpretation with the argument that "It should be the policy of the law to preserve family life wherever possible." Connecticut and Oklahoma share the Rhode Island position, refusing to disqualify a wife under such circumstances. It is noteworthy that Nebraska adopts this view about a husband (though not about a wife) and refuses to disqualify him when he quits a job in order to live where his family lives and be in a better position to support them.

These contrasting interpretations as to what constitutes voluntary leaving of work without good cause are not surprising. They simply follow the usual pattern of wide variance among the States in construing a general provision of law. Nor is it entirely unex-



pected that some States are penalizing marriage ties and family responsibilities when assumed by women wage earners.

But the extent of this special class treatment of women is surprising. At this time, by specific statutes, a woman employed loses certain unemployment compensation benefits because of marriage in 14 States and because of childbearing in 3 States. The grounds for disqualification may be stated in general terms as follows:

1. If dismissed for marriage—Minnesota, Wisconsin.
2. If voluntarily quits to marry—Indiana, Montana, Oklahoma, Oregon, Utah, Wisconsin, Wyoming.
3. If employment discontinued because of marriage [not clear if both dismissal and voluntary quitting included]—Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota.

4. If voluntarily quits to assume housewife's duties—Indiana, Minnesota, Utah.
5. If voluntarily leaves work location to live with husband elsewhere—Indiana, Michigan, Utah.
6. If fails to resume housewife's duties during unemployment when such duties major occupation ordinarily—Iowa.
7. If discharged for pregnancy—Oregon.
8. If voluntarily quits during pregnancy—Utah.
9. For unemployment due to pregnancy—Connecticut.
10. Childbirth period as specified—Utah.

Under the general provision in the unemployment compensation acts that an unemployed person is eligible for benefits when "able to work and available for work," a woman worker may be subject to disqualification because of pregnancy and for a specified period before and after childbirth, whether or not special provision for disqualification on this ground exists in the law.

## Women in Trade Unions

### Progress in Women's Wear.

**T**HE New York Dress Institute, which hopes, with union cooperation, to make New York a style center, issued more than 3,500,000 labels to 800 jobbers and manufacturers in the summer. A special ceremony was made at the City Hall of the sewing of the first 20 labels into dresses ranging in price from \$1.95 to \$295, but all union made. The label reads:

NEW YORK  
CREATION  
N. Y. DRESS INSTITUTE  
Made under Standards of  
I. L. G. W. U.

Mrs. Dorothy W. Anderson has been named executive director of the Dress Institute and will guide the promotion of the label. It is appropriate that a woman should hold this position. Not only do women buy the product, but union figures show that 67,000 of the 85,000 workers in the New York industry are women.

The dress contract signed in February states that "workers . . . have a right to secure efficient shop management." (See

WOMAN WORKER, May 1941, p. 9.) An order by the impartial chairman, effective August 15, established the following main efficiency rules: Employers must prepare work well; bundles must be complete; workers must be given proper instruction; adequate floor service must be supplied; related crafts must cooperate; machines must be kept in good order. If rules are not lived up to, complaints are to be made first to the employer, and, if he fails to comply, they are to be made through the union.

The February contract called for no wage changes, but the rise in living costs since then made advances necessary. The bases of settlement of rates were increased by 10 percent for most workers; \$2 to \$4 a week for time workers were negotiated late in the summer.

In Los Angeles, workers in 25 dress shops were awarded a general 15-percent increase by a mediation board. Minimum hourly rates are to be as follows: Operators, 75 cents instead of 63 cents; finishers, 55 cents instead of 47½ cents; pressers, \$1 instead of 75 cents. In October 1940,



women's earnings on dresses other than cotton averaged 59 cents throughout the State. Wage negotiations are to be reopened whenever living costs increase by 5 percent. At about the same time the first contract covering the sportswear industry was signed by about 40 firms. This provided a 5-percent wage increase, 1 week's vacation with pay, new wage negotiations if living costs increased, a 37½-hour week after January 1, 1942. More than 2,500 workers were involved in these contracts.

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

Union contracts in the textile field had provided vacations with pay for about 100,000 employees of 171 firms by May 1, a feature also included in many more recent contracts. Increases in living costs led to a raise of 7 cents an hour for 25,000 employees of a woolen manufacturer in late summer. The minimum was raised from 40 to 47 cents. This example was followed by 35 other mills with about 10,000 employees. At least 20 other recent contracts provide wage raises. Reports for 8 show about 7,000 workers covered. The contract with a synthetic-yarn plant provides health insurance for union members, financed jointly by union and employer and providing two-thirds pay for a maximum of 12 weeks' illness a year. Full pay is to be given in cases of lost time due to sore eyes caused by fumes.

A 2-year contract covering all union full-fashioned-hosiery mills provides from 10- to 22-percent increases for 30,000 workers, and will add \$4,500,000 to their annual earnings, with further adjustments if living costs rise. A week's vacation with pay is given to every worker after 9 months' service. Workers displaced by technological changes are to have first chance to fill other positions in the mills. A study by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in 1938 showed that women were 55 percent of all workers in northern mills, where most union plants were situated; women averaged 57 cents an hour in union plants, 48 cents in nonunion.

#### **Progress for White-Collar Workers.**

Studies by the Women's Bureau show women's earnings to be generally low in stores. In 1937, average earnings of women in department stores in four States and the District of Columbia ranged from \$13.50 to \$16.60; in limited-price stores, from \$12.40 to \$14. In Michigan in 1941, women in department and dry-goods stores averaged \$16.58; in limited-price stores, \$13.58. In all cases, part-time workers were excluded. It is interesting to compare these earnings with minimum rates established for women in a few recent union contracts:

Madison, Wis., department store, \$18 after 1 year. (45-hour week.)

St. Louis, Mo., 5-and-10-cent stores, \$12 for first 3 months, \$15.50 after 6 months, \$18 after 3 years. (48-hour week.)

Tacoma, Wash., variety stores, \$18.25 to \$21.50.

King County, Wash. (county seat, Seattle), grocery stores, \$17.50 for first 6 months to \$25 after 18 months. (8-hour day, 9 on Saturday or day before a holiday, the extra hour being taken from another day.)

Wage increases of 6 cents an hour (a 20-percent increase) and 12½ percent for piece work were secured in a closed-shop contract covering 160 employees of a New York directory publisher. A renewed agreement covering 80 workers on press clippings provided additional sick leave, two more paid half-holidays, and severance pay. A 2-year contract with a New York City department store covering about 1,600 workers provided an average 15-percent increase and larger drawing accounts.

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

A New York City local of cafeteria employees reports gains secured for its members in the past 5 years; bus girls have advanced from \$10 for 54 hours to \$16 for 45; counter girls from \$15 for 54 hours to \$19 and \$20 for 45; dishwashers from \$12 for 54 to \$18 for 48 hours.

Some 700 workers in one hotel in New York, and 5,000 in 140 cafeterias, have secured wage increases of \$2 and \$3 a week. The cafeteria contract provides a closed shop, hiring through the union, and a week's



vacation with pay. Wages of waitresses in 15 St. Louis hotels have been raised by from 70 cents to \$1 a week, while 90 women at lunch counters in limited-price stores secured increases of up to \$4 a week.

A recent contract for the New York headquarters of a social agency establishes for maintenance workers a 40-hour week with time and one-half for overtime; minimum salaries of from \$18 to \$29 a week; 3 weeks' vacation with pay after 1 year's service, and 3 weeks' sick leave, cumulative to 60 days; maternity leave; and separation allowance. Some employees of the organization elsewhere work for as little as \$15 for 54 hours. As a nonprofit organization, these employees are not covered by the Social Security Act.

#### Progress in Other Industries.

The Providence (R. I.) local of the International Association of Machinists has followed that of Bridgeport (Conn.) in admitting women. (See *WOMAN WORKER*, March 1941, p. 6.) This includes assemblers, polishers, packers, and machine operators making small tools and gages.

The 20,000 employees of one of the chief meat packers have received a raise recently, making an increase of 10 cents above levels prevailing before April 1 for all workers paid on hourly basis. The rate for common labor was advanced from 67½ to 72½ cents. Cannery wage increases reported, secured in 11 contracts covering more than 10,500 in 8 States, were from 2 cents to 10 cents an hour in some cases, \$2 a week in 1, from 7 to 27 percent in others.

Basic rates of 50 cents for women and 65 for men are incorporated in a contract with

a parachute manufacturer; also 25- and 30-percent increases and vacations. In a metal-toy factory, 800 workers gained a 5-cent-an-hour raise, vacations with pay, the check-off, and closed shop.

#### British Union Welcomes New Women.

A resolution welcoming the new women workers into the British National Union of General and Municipal Workers was a prominent feature of the recent Biennial Congress of that great organization. The resolution was in part as follows:

This Congress welcomes the great increase of women membership into the Union since its last meeting and records its belief that only through strong trade-union organization can women receive the full advantage both of the wage agreements which have been entered into and the various statutory and permissive orders which have been issued to safeguard economic standards and conditions of work \* \* \*.

In moving the foregoing, Dorothy M. Elliott, National Women's Officer, spoke in part as follows:

It is something to be proud of that we today say that, as a Union, we represent 80,000 women members. Particularly is it a case for pride when we can remember not so very long ago we were talking in terms of 19,000 and 20,000 women members \* \* \*.

Not only is it a steady growth in numbers, in which we can have confidence, because we believe that we can retain it at the end of this conflict, but also the quality of that membership is something of which we can be proud \* \* \*. I have never in my experience of the trade-union movement seen a better generation of women than the young women of 20, 21, and 22 today who are taking their full share of responsibility in the workshops, and who are organizing and holding together the membership for which they are responsible \* \* \*. \* \* \* we are as a Union raising the wage level of women \* \* \* breaking down the distinction between women's work and men's work, and saying it is all work which is being done with skill, \* \* \* requiring skill and knowledge and care \* \* \*.

## Disabling Illness of Women Workers

**E**MPLOYED women workers are more frequently disabled by illness than employed men are, but less frequently than either housewives or the unemployed workers (both men and women). These conclusions are based on data in a study of a million and a half individuals aged 15 to

64, part of the National Health Survey of 1935-36. Rate of disability was based on the proportion of persons disabled on the day of the visit to the family.

It was found that 2 in every 100 male workers, between 2 and 3 in every 100 female workers (in each case both employed



and unemployed), and about 5 in every 100 housewives, were disabled. The difference between men and women workers was greatest in the age group 25 to 34; between women workers and housewives, in the group 15 to 24. Among unemployed workers, including persons on work relief and those newly seeking jobs, the rate for both men and women was more than twice that of employed workers. When workers were classified as manual and nonmanual, rates for manual workers, whether men or women, were found almost a third higher.

Differences in rates between male workers, female workers, and housewives may reflect differences in occupational hazards and in susceptibility due to sex. Differences in rates between female workers and housewives, and differences in rates between the employed and the unemployed, may result at least in part from a type of selection, better health making it easier for a woman to secure and hold a job. In this connection it is worth noting that, except for confinement, the greatest excesses in disability rates of housewives over female workers were for chronic diseases and impairments, smaller excess mainly for acute diseases. The excesses in disability rates of unemployed over employed persons (of each sex) also were greater for chronic than for other diseases.

#### Injuries to Illinois Women Workers.

Nearly 3,000 cases of industrial injury to women were closed in Illinois in 1940, having cost more than \$360,000. Among these were 9 deaths and 1 case of permanent total disability. Practically 30 percent of the cases resulted in permanent partial disability, including 68 instances of disfigurement, while 70 percent caused temporary disability only. Three-fourths of the compensation money was paid for permanent partial disability and disfigurement, only one-fifth for the temporary cases.

The three large occupational groups in which these injured women had worked were manufacturing, service, and trade. Those in manufacturing suffered relatively

more permanent injuries, those in trade relatively less, as the following shows:

Occupational group	Percent distribution of—	
	All cases	Permanent partial cases
Manufacturing.....	42	50
Service.....	26	26
Trade.....	25	19
Other.....	7	5

Falls of persons were the leading cause of all injuries to women, followed in importance by handling objects—such as those that were sharp, rough, or too heavy—and by machinery. Among permanent partial cases, machinery led, causing 35 percent of all injuries.

Of the women whose age was reported, 30 percent were under 25, and 49 percent 25 but under 45. Those whose injuries were permanent were slightly older. About half the women received the minimum weekly compensation of \$8.25 provided by law, since women's wages tend to be low. Forty percent averaged regular earnings of less than \$14.50 a week, 63 percent averaging less than \$16.50.

#### Hazards in Wisconsin Women's Jobs.

Two general types of occupational disease liable to occur in a great number of women's occupations are dermatitis (or skin irritation) and disabilities such as bursitis, synovitis, neuritis, tumors, or felons. Causes of dermatitis may be repeated handling of such common materials as food products, or of soap or other cleaning compounds, as well as of a great variety of other materials; the latter group of disabilities may result from repeated motion or repeated pressure or shock involved in certain jobs. A detailed report of cases of occupational disease settled in Wisconsin in 1940, while not by sex, indicates the industry and job of the persons involved. Cases occurring in jobs usually held by women are considered here.

There were 52 cases of dermatitis reported, affecting vegetable trimmers, sewing-machine operators, office and sales workers, hotel or restaurant employees, beauty operators, nurses, and household workers. Disabilities caused by repeated motion, pressure,



or shock were not so numerous, but affected workers in quite as wide a range of jobs. Heat prostration was reported by a waitress, a laundry flat-work ironer, and a teacher.

None of the foregoing resulted in permanent impairment, and in most the loss of time was less than 20 working days. However, dermatitis caused considerable loss of time in certain instances, as follows: Dress-maker, 122 working days, caused by the tex-

tiles used; sewer in shoe factory, 93 days; nurse, 91 days; two beauty operators, average of 57 days, caused by a hairdressing preparation; cook, 51 days, caused by repeated contact with dishwater. A file clerk lost 61 working days with neuritis due to repeated motion. Two sewing-machine operators lost an average of 30 days because of tumors due to repeated shock from the motion of the machine.

## Women's Adjustments as Defense Shifts Jobs

THE rapid employment increases due to the defense program are not without their acute phases of readjustment and even unemployment, often depending on location of the workers in relation to the jobs to be filled, or on the probable ability to fit into new types of work if certain industries contract as others expand.

In June 1941, there were approximately 38,383,000 persons in civil work other than agriculture, a new all-time peak  $3\frac{1}{2}$  million above that of June 1940, and nearly 2 million above June 1929. (Not including persons employed by W. P. A. and N. Y. A., or in C. C. C. camps; nor those in the armed forces.)

In the face of this improvement special problems still exist, and three recent studies show types of shifts that occur in industry but may be intensified by the defense program, for example: Older skilled workers who must shift to a new industry to find jobs;<sup>1</sup> workers left stranded by plant shut-downs in an industrial town;<sup>2</sup> workers in relief families.<sup>3</sup>

### Mobility of Weavers.

To determine the extent to which workers highly skilled in one industry might fit into the expanding defense industries, records were examined of nearly 900 weavers, one-fifth of them women. These lived in three cities: Manchester, N. H., where one mill

employing some 17,000 closed in 1935; Paterson, N. J., where there have always been a large number of broad-silk mills, many very small; and Philadelphia, with both large and small textile mills and also many other industries.

These weavers were in general middle-aged, with long work histories but with little experience outside of textiles. Nearly two-thirds of the women were 40 or older. More than half of them had begun working before 1910, a fifth before 1900. Three-fourths of them had been weavers about 10 years or longer, a third about 20 years or more. In the period from 1926 to 1935, about two-thirds of the women had made no change in industry. In Philadelphia over two-thirds of the weavers, and in Paterson, with many small plants, almost all the weavers, changed employers in this 10-year period. In Manchester, however, three-fifths of the men and four-fifths of the women worked for only one employer during the decade. In Philadelphia, where the opportunity to vary occupations was the greatest, the grade of skill of the jobs secured by weavers usually was less good than that of weaving. A few women in Philadelphia had been able to develop a schedule of dovetailing work in radio factories and textile mills in their respective busy seasons in such a way as to give them fairly regular employment throughout the year.

It will be recalled that Great Britain afforded a spectacular instance of the transfer of hosiery workers to munitions factories,

<sup>1</sup> The Mobility of Weavers in Three Textile Centers. Gladys L. Palmer. In *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, May 1941.

<sup>2</sup> After the Shutdown in Howland, Maine. Everett Johnson Burr, Jr. In *The Southern Economic Journal*, July 1941.

<sup>3</sup> Employability of Pennsylvania's General Assistance Case Load in April 1941. Pennsylvania Department of Public Assistance. June 1941.



with planned proportional curtailment in hosiery production during the period of shifting. Many of these appear to have been relatively youthful workers.

In general, several factors make especially difficult a shift of the American workers surveyed into other industries now building up their labor force. There is lack of adaptability due to age and to long experience in a single industry. Weavers usually are promoted from less skilled jobs in the same mill. Many of the women, especially in Manchester, were married and could move only if it were desirable that the family move. Weavers usually are part of a family the other members of which are customarily employed in textile mills, often the same mill. Here again the entire family must be considered, particularly since the factories affording new occupations often are at too great a distance to enable the same residence to be kept.

#### **Plant Shut-Down.**

A pulp and paper-bag mill in a small town in Maine closed in the summer of 1938, leaving more than 200 workers without jobs. In July 1939, 150 of them were located and asked what adjustments they had made. Of these, 43 were women, with an average age of 31 years; all but two of them were married. Of the 150 workers, 90 percent had dependents to support, slightly more than 3 on the average, one-fourth of them had 5 or more; 9 women were the sole support of themselves and dependents.

All the women were semiskilled workers; and all but one earned 27 cents an hour, the rate having been reduced in the spring of 1938. At the time of the interview, two of the women had factory jobs within 50

miles of the town, and one had a temporary job as a waitress. The others were without work. All but 17 of the men were working at the time of the interview, but most had been forced into jobs requiring little or no skill, usually highly seasonal and paying low wages.

#### **Workers in Relief Families.**

In April 1941 there were 76,000 general assistance families in Pennsylvania with one or more employable members—that is, persons 18 or older able to work and available for employment. Of the approximately 83,000 potential workers in these families nearly 11,000 were women. Recognizing that there are varying degrees of employability, depending on age, sex, race, physical condition, education, occupational background, and duration of unemployment, a careful study was made of the 83,000 persons involved to ascertain their possibilities of fitting into jobs.

Only about a fourth of the women were classified as skilled, semiskilled, or white-collar workers, occupations the most likely to fit into the defense program. More than two-fifths were service workers. Two-fifths of the women were Negroes, more than one-third were 45 or older, nearly a tenth were physically handicapped; all in groups that have some deterrent to immediate employment. Least employable, on the whole, were those with no occupational classification, more than one-fourth of the total. These include young persons with little or no work experience and persons who, because of age or other handicap, could not be assigned to any specific occupational classification.

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## News Notes

### **Government Labor Officials Meet**

**S**PECIAL sessions on labor standards under the defense program and labor supply and defense needs were important features of the annual conference of Inter-

national Association of Governmental Labor Officials held in St. Louis in September. President of the Association Frieda S. Miller, Industrial Commissioner of New York, stated that the certain prospect of great increases in employment of women



emphasized the need to preserve and extend legal standards of hours and wages. She stressed the responsibility of these officials to guard the gains of democracy in the major areas of their experience and technical knowledge, namely, the conservation of the workers' health and income and the maintenance and extension of labor standards.

Any requests for relaxation of the labor standards should be treated as individual cases and their need and ultimate effect examined objectively. The defense program calls for many new employees. It was pointed out that greater numbers at work automatically increase the amount of industrial sickness and accident. Such a program is accompanied, too, by crowding, speed-ups, employment of inexperienced workers, use of new machines and unfamiliar chemicals, all of which are factors subject to control. Labor officials have an urgent responsibility to promote methods of assuring mechanical safety in plants and to keep abreast of the health hazards from new chemical processes.

Moreover, lack of sufficient rest and recreation results in alarming increases in illness, often with permanent injury to the worker and decline in output and industrial efficiency. In their work to preserve and extend the standards which personify democracy, governmental labor officials realize that they are maintaining public morale and adding to the efficiency of our economic system.

At another session of the conference, reports were given of the year's progress in minimum wage, situation of women in industry, regulation of home work, social security developments, factory inspection, and other subjects affecting workers. The report on women in industry stressed the need for continuing to secure for the women workers everywhere the benefits of reasonable legal regulation, and for increasing attention to adequate living conditions for women workers, especially in areas where defense industries have caused crowding.

The conference passed resolutions urging vigorous enforcement of labor standards,

continuing the benefits of the democratic way of life, and the extension of such standards where nonexistent.

### **Benefits of New York Home-Work Order**

The artificial-flower industry in New York has been stabilized and workers much helped by an order forbidding home work, according to a recent report based chiefly on a special survey made about a year after the effective date.

In 1937, prior to the order, there were four home workers to every three women working on artificial flowers in shops, and in 1938, 70 firms in this industry employed 1,118 home-work families. The prohibitory order became effective May 2, 1938, and by 1939 there were 45 firms holding home-work permits and only 272 special certificates outstanding. Excepted from the prohibition were certain workers unable to adjust to factory work because of handicap or because needed at home to care for another. This order has been challenged a number of times, but always upheld. (See *WOMAN WORKER*, September 1940.)

The fears of employers that the order would disrupt the industry proved unwarranted. More than three-fourths of the firms involved had practically no problem of adjustment. Employers supporting the order said that it stabilized the industry by reducing unfair competition; that factory work was more efficient and scientific and less wasteful. Although 1939 was not so good a season as 1938, in the 68 firms which previously had employed home workers the number of factory workers had increased 44 percent, while in 69 firms having no home workers there was a 2-percent decline.

The adjustment of the home workers was studied also. In more than half of 337 families visited, at least one of the former home workers was in outside employment. Only 5 of the 24 families who had some trouble in making the change said that when they went into the factory they were worried about their children. Other reasons given for difficulty in the worker's adjustment were



physical disabilities, nervousness about factory work, and inability to speak English. Of the home workers going into factories, three-fourths preferred it to home work. In the families in which no home worker had secured outside employment, some said they did not need it. Others gave reasons for not seeking such work that would have allowed them special certificates under the order.

For those continuing to do home work under special certificates, average earnings were \$12.15 a week compared with \$9.80 before the order. This increase was due to the terms of the order, which required that the pay for home work be at the same rate as for similar work in the shop.

Only 13 percent of the families now were on relief, as compared to 24 percent of the home-work families in 1937.

### Household Workers' Earnings and Outgo

Average earnings of \$8.25 a week and average expenditures of \$5.76 were shown by accounts kept over a 3-month period by nearly 200 household workers. The project, sponsored by the Y. W. C. A., was carried out by women in 13 States, most of them in the northern part of the Mississippi Valley.

On an average, one-fifth of earnings went for clothing; nearly one-tenth was contributed to the worker's family; and almost as much went for medical services. Contributions to the family increased quite consistently with higher earnings. A little more than one-twentieth was expended for food (more often for meals in restaurants) and housing. This indicates that most women received room and board besides a cash wage, but bought an occasional restaurant meal on days off. If an average of savings could be maintained steadily for a year, the amount would be about \$130, but this cannot be counted on, as in another 3 months some emergency might require greater expenditures.

General earnings varied directly with size of city, being \$6.27 in places of 25,000 population or less and practically \$12 in those of

500,000 or over. Total expenditures also averaged more in larger cities, though there was no direct relationship between size of city and amounts spent for most individual items.

### Wage and Hour Bills Introduced in 1941

Wage and hour bills, with provisions similar to the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act, were introduced in 29 State legislatures in 1941. No bill of this type was adopted but in the following 5 States a wage-hour bill passed one house: Connecticut, Indiana, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island. Puerto Rico adopted a wage-hour bill. (See *WOMAN WORKER* for July.)

Some of these bills in the form in which they were introduced constitute a real threat to existing labor standards. Unlike the model wage and hour bill, they provided for the repeal of present laws which regulate the hours of women workers and establish minimum wages. Under existing minimum-wage laws, orders have been issued setting minimum wages well above the initial statutory rates proposed in State wage and hour bills and providing important regulations to safeguard these minima.

All these orders would be wiped out if the present wage laws were repealed, and women workers would be deprived of the protection that they have had for years. If the model wage and hour bill were followed, the gains that have been made during the past 30 years would be preserved until equally high standards could be established under the new type of law for both men and women.

The State wage and hour bill is not intended to be a substitute for State hour laws that place an absolute limit on the number of hours for which women may be employed. The overtime provision of the State wage and hour bill requiring, as does the Fair Labor Standards Act, the payment of time and one-half the regular rate of pay for hours beyond the basic week doubtless would discourage long hours, but it does not prohibit them as do State hour laws for women.



The model wage and hour bill expressly provides for the nonrepeal of these laws as well as of State minimum-wage laws.

### Women Earn More in South Carolina

Increases in wages of women in South Carolina factories give striking testimony to the effectiveness of the Fair Labor Standards Act. These women received over 2½ million dollars more in the year ending June 30, 1940, than in the previous fiscal year. During the second fiscal year, the basic minimum under the Fair Labor Standards Act was increased from 25 to 30 cents.

Early in this period a rate of 32½ cents was set for seamless hosiery and cotton, silk, and rayon textiles, South Carolina's outstanding industries. As a result, per capita wages paid to white women in all manufacturing increased from \$589 to \$680, in textiles from \$625 to \$696. Employment of white men and women in all manufacturing declined somewhat, that of men more than women so that the percent of women rose from 30 to 33. Employment increased in textiles, where some 31,500 women were found, 88 percent of all in manufacturing.

## Recent Publications

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

- THE LEGAL STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, JANUARY 1, 1938. Bul. 157.—United States Summary. 89 pp. 15¢.
- EARNINGS AND HOURS IN PACIFIC COAST FISH CANNING INDUSTRY. Bul. 186. 30 pp. 10¢.
- LABOR STANDARDS AND COMPETITIVE MARKET CONDITIONS IN THE CANNED GOODS INDUSTRY. Bul. 187. 34 pp. 10¢.
- SAFETY CLOTHING FOR WOMEN IN INDUSTRY. Special Bul. No. 3. 11 pp.

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

- WOMEN IN WAR INDUSTRIES IN GREAT BRITAIN. 22 pp.
- SERIES OF STATE BULLETINS ON LABOR LAWS FOR WOMEN: Kentucky, 25 pp.; Maryland, 23 pp.; Michigan, 25 pp.; New Jersey, 27 pp.; New York, 38 pp.; North Carolina, 24 pp.; Ohio, 31 pp.; Pennsylvania, 27 pp.; Tennessee, 23 pp.

### Other Department of Labor Publications

- LABOR LAWS AND THEIR ADMINISTRATION. 1940. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Bul. No. 690.
- LABOR OFFICES IN THE UNITED STATES AND IN CANADA. May 15, 1941. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Bul. 681.
- FACTS ABOUT CRIPPLED CHILDREN. Children's Bureau. (Mimeographed.)
- PROTECTING PLANT MANPOWER. Practical Points on Industrial Sanitation and Hygiene. Division of Labor Standards. Special Bul. No. 3.
- CONTROL OF WELDING HAZARDS IN DEFENSE INDUSTRIES. Division of Labor Standards. Special Bul. No. 5.

<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.

### Other Publications

THE RELATION OF HOURS OF WORK TO HEALTH AND EFFICIENCY. New York Department of Labor, Division of Women in Industry and Minimum Wage. August 1941. (Mimeographed.) A summary of literature on the subject. Summarized briefly in the New York Industrial Bulletin, May 1941.

WOMEN AT WORK. A Brief Introduction to Trade Unionism for Women, by Mary Agnes Hamilton.

An early organization of British working women was the Women's Trade Union League founded in 1874 by Emma Paterson, a bookbinder. Her work was carried on by Mary Macarthur, Margaret Bondfield, Lady Dilke, Gertrude Tuckwell, and others. With the ultimate aim, the admission of women into the unions with men, the grim fact was that women, not by any wish of their own, were dangerous to trade union standards. It was realized that wages must be raised first in the "sweated" industries where women predominated. This led to the fight for Trade Boards, originally set up in a bill piloted through the House of Commons by Winston Churchill and passed in 1909.

By 1939, women were found in most of the principal unions, although their proportion varied. In recent years the rate of unionization for women has increased faster than the rate for men, though the proportion of men is still much greater than that of women. The problem arises again of protecting women who are entering men's industries and jobs because of the war, and at the same time protecting the union standards that have been built up. Women's position on the whole is better than in 1914-18, as regards wages, hours, and conditions of work, and there is a far stronger public opinion in favor of equal treatment than there was in that war.