

SHORT TALKS ABOUT  
WORKING WOMEN

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
BULLETIN OF THE WOMEN'S BUREAU, NO. 59

**SHORT TALKS ABOUT  
WORKING WOMEN**

[PUBLIC—NO. 259—66TH CONGRESS.]

[H. R. 13229.]

An Act To establish in the Department of Labor a bureau to be known as the Women's Bureau

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,* That there shall be established in the Department of Labor a bureau to be known as the Women's Bureau.

SEC. 2. That the said bureau shall be in charge of a director, a woman, to be appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, who shall receive an annual compensation of \$5,000. It shall be the duty of said bureau to formulate standards and polices which shall promote the welfare of wage-earning women, improve their working conditions, increase their efficiency, and advance their opportunities for profitable employment. The said bureau shall have authority to investigate and report to the said department upon all matters pertaining to the welfare of women in industry. The director of said bureau may from time to time publish the results of these investigations in such a manner and to such extent as the Secretary of Labor may prescribe.

SEC. 3. That there shall be in said bureau an assistant director, to be appointed by the Secretary of Labor, who shall receive an annual compensation of \$3,500 and shall perform such duties as shall be prescribed by the director and approved by the Secretary of Labor.

SEC. 4. That there is hereby authorized to be employed by said bureau a chief clerk and such special agents, assistants, clerks, and other employees at such rates of compensation and in such numbers as Congress may from time to time provide by appropriations.

SEC. 5. That the Secretary of Labor is hereby directed to furnish sufficient quarters, office furniture, and equipment for the work of this bureau.

SEC. 6. That this act shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage.

Approved, June 5, 1920.

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
JAMES J. DAVIS, SECRETARY  
WOMEN'S BUREAU  
MARY ANDERSON, Director

BULLETIN OF THE WOMEN'S BUREAU, No. 59

# SHORT TALKS ABOUT WORKING WOMEN

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WASHINGTON  
1927

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## LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR,  
WOMEN'S BUREAU,  
*Washington, March 5, 1927.*

SIR: I have the honor to transmit this bulletin, "Short Talks About Working Women."

These talks were in substance published by the Federationist, and the bureau has been asked to publish these short articles in pamphlet form.

Respectfully submitted.

MARY ANDERSON, *Director.*

HON. JAMES J. DAVIS,  
*Secretary of Labor.*



*She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.*

*She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant.*

*She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.*

*Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.*

—PROVERBS XXXI : 13, 24, 27, 31

## WOMEN'S PROGRESS IN INDUSTRY

Since the beginning of the world men have required and have received the help of women in furnishing the sustenance of life to themselves and their families. Before the development of the factory system this help came chiefly through the product of women's labor in the home. Later it came in the form of the contributory wages of women who worked in the factories, mills, and workshops, or, when no better opportunity offered for remunerative labor, the taking of boarders and lodgers was resorted to in order to add to the family income.

The business of making food and clothing for the human family was done chiefly in the home until the industrial development, through the factory system, began. Woman was the preparer of food, the weaver of cloth, the maker of clothing, and these jobs were done within the four walls of the home. In fact many activities which are centered outside the home to-day were once carried on within it. Women members of the family did not receive any stated pay for this work—the only persons paid were the servants employed in these activities. The industrial pursuits carried on within the



home naturally were limited, and many things which are now necessities in that time either were considered as luxuries or were unheard of.

The development of the new manufacturing system caused much of the work done in the home to be taken over by the factory. In the beginning such manufacturing was conducted on a very limited scale. First came the small neighborhood establishment, which was run by the owner with the help of relatives. This gradually developed into the large factory, and finally there came the industrial center as we have it to-day.

In this development women took their part, and they followed the industries out of the home and into the factory. The real change for the women was not the work itself but the manner in which the work was performed and the change from an unpaid occupation to a paid one. In other words, with the development of the factory system women were transformed from the breadwinner taken for granted in the home to the paid breadwinner outside the home.

The factory system has had its largest development within the nineteenth century, and the greatest number of women entered industrial pursuits in the decade 1900 to 1910, this being due largely to the rapid expansion of industry in that period. According to the census figures there were in 1900 five million women in gainful employment, and in 1910 eight million women were working for gain in various occupations. The decade from 1910 to 1920, in which only a half million more women joined the wage-earning ranks, showed nothing like so great an increase as did the former decade, a condition traceable to the fact that the period from 1910 to 1920 was not one of very large industrial expansion.

However, the significance of women's employment lies chiefly in its trend, and from 1910 to 1920 there was considerable change in the numbers of women in the various occupations. We find that domestic and personal service lost women at a slightly higher rate than 2 from every 15, and that agricultural pursuits lost them at the rate of 2 from every 5. There was a striking increase among women in the professional ranks, and in clerical service they more than doubled. Though there was only a small increase in the total number of women employed in manufacturing and mechanical industries, very notable increases of numbers already large took place in the making of clothing, cotton goods, cigars and tobacco, food, knit goods, shoes, silk goods, woolens and worsteds, and iron and steel. In food and in iron and steel the number of women more than doubled.

The trend of women's employment within this decade is particularly significant in view of the popular belief during the war, when

women were the second line of defense, that the number of women in industry was increasing tremendously, a belief not sustained by the census figures of 1920. The idea that such an increase was taking place was due to the fact that every time a woman entered a pursuit not formerly open to women, the publicity given to the change in occupational status caused the public to believe that a large and increasing number of women were seeking employment outside the home. When women dropped out of domestic service or gave up dressmaking to work in a munitions factory or to become street-car conductors, the entire community heard of the new employment, but no one subtracted these women from the ranks of those in their former occupations, and the impression prevailed that thousands of women were entering gainful employment for the first time.

In analyzing the figures one is forced to realize that women are striving to escape from the menial positions to the more pleasant and better paid occupations. Women as well as men must work to live, and women as well as men are constantly striving for a higher attainment. And we can not say that it is sentiment or frivolity or a dissatisfaction with the work of the home and the family that is causing women to become wage earners. With a large majority of them it is a matter of dire necessity.

## RECOGNITION BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

In the decade from 1900 to 1910 there was a growing recognition that women were increasing rapidly in industrial pursuits and that many problems confronting working women should be the concern of the Federal Government itself.

Almost the first official utterance of the National Women's Trade Union League, which had been created at the Boston convention of the American Federation of Labor in 1903, was the passing of a resolution requesting the Federal Government to make an investigation of women in industry. In 1906 three Chicago women—Mrs. Raymond Robins, Miss Jane Addams, and Miss Mary McDowell—went to Washington and appeared before a congressional committee to ask for an appropriation to make a special investigation of women in industry. The appropriation finally was granted by Congress, and the investigation was conducted by Charles P. Neill, then Commissioner of Labor Statistics in the Department of Commerce and Labor. The investigation extended over a period of three years, from 1907 through 1909, and covered many of the industries in which women were employed. The report was published in 19 volumes and laid the basis for an insistent demand for a bureau in the Government whose concern should be the working woman.

In the meantime there was created by the Government the Department of Labor. Just as the Department of Labor is the youngest department in the Government, so the Women's Bureau is the youngest bureau created by law in the Government. Moreover, just as the increasing strength of industrial workers made more compelling the demand for the Department of Labor and finally necessitated the creation of such a department, so with the Women's Bureau—as the women workers entered industry more and more, the demand became insistent that there should be created in the Government a bureau concerned solely with the problems peculiar to working women. The American Federation of Labor at its conventions passed resolutions asking for the creation of a women's bureau, and the president, Samuel Gompers, and the legislative committee were active in the agitation for such a bureau. In 1916 Representative Casey, of Pennsylvania, introduced in Congress a bill to create a woman's division in the Department of Labor, but this bill did not pass. After the entrance of the United States into the World War the Secretary of Labor called a conference of

representative men and women to work out the best way of recruiting labor for war service. An agency called the Woman in Industry Service was one of the several services created in the Department of Labor as a result of this conference, and Miss Mary Van Kleeck was appointed its director.

During the short war existence of the Woman in Industry Service, from July, 1918, until the signing of the armistice in November of the same year, the work of this service consisted mainly in upholding the standards for the employment of women which had been created previous to the war. American labor in general realized fully the necessity of maintaining standards which it had won with much sacrifice. This was a lesson learned from England, where the abrogation of labor standards at the beginning of the war resulted, after four years of continuous war demands, in a tired working nation. Workers may be compared to the runners in a marathon race. If the runners were to start out at full speed they would not last until the race was over; those who know how to conserve their energy are the ones most likely to win. So it is with workers. It is not the sudden spurt which will bring them to their goal of large production, but the long steady effort which makes for endurance to the end. It was a realization of this that was responsible for the adoption by the Woman in Industry Service of the policy of not abrogating the standards that had been created for the employment of women.

As the coming of peace showed no decline in the need for a clear policy and definite information about the conditions under which women should be employed in the industries of the country, the Woman in Industry Service was continued for the fiscal year 1920 through an appropriation by Congress "to enable the Secretary of Labor to continue the investigations touching women in industry." This means of continuation, however, did not provide a permanent future for the service. The granting of the appropriation was dependent entirely upon Congress, the work of the service being classed as a special activity and the service itself not made statutory and, therefore, permanent.

As the result of a special effort on the part of forces interested in the welfare of wage-earning women, a bill to create the Women's Bureau as a permanent organization in the Department of Labor was introduced in Congress. Hearings on this bill were held by a joint committee of the Senate and House, at which representatives from the following organizations gave testimony:

- American Federation of Labor.
- National Women's Trade Union League.
- National Federation of Federal Employees.
- National Consumers' League.

National League of Women Voters.

National Young Women's Christian Association.

Bureau of Labor Statistics, U. S. Department of Labor.

Children's Bureau, U. S. Department of Labor.

Division of Industrial Studies of the Russell Sage Foundation.

University of Chicago Settlement.

Women's Executive Committees of the National Republican Committee and National Democratic Committee.

National Republican Congressional Committee.

On June 5, 1920, Congress passed the bill establishing the Women's Bureau in the Department of Labor "to formulate standards and policies which shall promote the welfare of wage-earning women, improve their working conditions, increase their efficiency, and advance their opportunities for profitable employment." The bureau was given authority "to investigate and report to the said department upon all matters pertaining to the welfare of women in industry."

It is of great importance that the Federal Government should interest itself more and more in the human problems of the race. The Department of Agriculture is of tremendous value in conserving animal and plant life, but what is even more essential is the conservation of human life, which in the final analysis brings us to the importance of women. As an individual the woman worker has a right to health and happiness, but this individual right has a much broader significance when we think of her as a mother or a potential mother of the race. It is the duty of the Federal Government to make sure that in our eagerness for expansion of industries and the ever-growing demand for more production we do not exploit these women to their detriment and to the detriment of the country as a whole.

In harmony with the policy of the Government, the Women's Bureau has no mandatory powers nor any laws to administer. We are a Government by the will of the people, and recognize the right of the States to make their own laws. However, the declaration of standards and policies by the Women's Bureau has the force inherent in facts scientifically secured and presented and must influence toward uniformity the industrial standards of the several States.

## STANDARDS FOR THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN

The entrance of the United States into the World War, with the ever increasing number of women in industry and the slogan "Women are the second line of defense," made it necessary not only to maintain standards already set for the employment of women but to raise for the difficult years ahead new standards which should be in advance of some of the labor laws throughout the States and in uniformity with the best practices as tried and approved.

Mary Van Kleeck, Director of the Woman in Industry Service, took up the question of standards with the War Labor Policies Board in order to conform with the standards already adopted. Certain standards, indorsed by employers and labor alike, were agreed upon for the employment of women on Government contracts, but the signing of the armistice prevented them from becoming mandatory.

Realizing that women's work is essential to the Nation in times of peace as well as in times of war, the standards thus agreed upon have been issued by the Women's Bureau, the permanent organization of the Woman in Industry Service, and form Bulletin 3 of its publications. Though formulated after a great deal of thought and the collection of much information concerning the best practices in the employment of women, they are offered merely as suggestions for those employers who are ambitious to lead their competitors in employment relations as in other phases of American industry.

The following is a résumé of these standards:

### HOURS OF LABOR

No woman should be employed or permitted to work more than eight hours in any one day. The time when the work of women employees shall begin and end and the time allowed for meals should be posted in a conspicuous place in each workroom. The half holiday on Saturday should be the custom. There should be one day of rest in every seven days. At least 30 minutes should be allowed for a meal. A rest period of 10 minutes should be allowed in the middle of each working period without thereby increasing the length of the working-day. No woman should be employed between the hours of midnight and 6 a. m.

### WAGES

Wages should be established on the basis of occupation and not on the basis of sex or race. The minimum wage rate should cover

the cost of living in health and decency, instead of a bare existence, and should allow for dependents and not merely for the individual.

### WORKING CONDITIONS

State labor laws and industrial codes should be consulted with reference to provisions for comfort and sanitation.

Workroom floors should be kept clean. Lighting should be without glare and so arranged that direct rays do not shine into the workers' eyes. Ventilation should be adequate and heat sufficient but not excessive. Drinking water should be cool and accessible, with individual drinking cups or sanitary bubbler fountain provided. Washing facilities, with hot and cold water, soap, and individual towels, should be provided in sufficient number and in accessible locations to make washing before meals and at the close of the work-day convenient. Dressing rooms should be provided adjacent to washing facilities, making possible change of clothing outside the workrooms. Rest rooms should be provided. A room separate from the workroom should be provided wherein meals may be eaten, and whenever practicable hot and nourishing food should be served. Toilets should be clean and accessible and separate for men and women. Their number should have a standard ratio of 1 toilet to every 15 workers employed.

Continuous standing and continuous sitting are both injurious. A chair should be provided for every woman and its use encouraged. It is possible and desirable to adjust the height of the chairs in relation to the height of machines or worktables, so that the workers may with equal convenience and efficiency stand or sit at their work. The seats should have backs. If the chairs are high, foot rests should be provided.

### SAFETY

Risks from machinery, danger from fire, and exposure to dust, fumes, or other occupational hazards should be scrupulously guarded against. First-aid equipment should be provided. Adequate fire protection should be assured. Fire drills and other forms of education of the workers in the observance of safety regulations should be instituted. Work is more efficiently performed by either men or women if healthful conditions are established. It is usually possible to make changes which will remove such hazards to health as the following:

- (a) Constant standing or other posture causing physical strain.
- (b) Repeated lifting of heavy weights, or other abnormally fatiguing motions.
- (c) Operation of mechanical devices requiring undue strength.
- (d) Exposure to excessive heat, humidity, or cold.
- (e) Exposure to dust, fumes, or other occupational poisons, without adequate safeguards against disease.

### PROHIBITED OCCUPATIONS

Women should not be prohibited from employment in any occupation except those which have been proved to be more injurious to women than to men, such as certain processes in the lead industries.

### HOME WORK

No work should be given out to be done in rooms used for living or sleeping purposes or in rooms directly connected with living or sleeping rooms in any dwelling or tenement.

### EMPLOYMENT MANAGEMENT

In establishing satisfactory relations between a company and its employees a personnel department is important, charged with responsibility for selection, assignment, transfer, or withdrawal of workers and the establishment of proper working conditions.

Where women are employed, a competent woman should be appointed as employment executive with responsibility for conditions affecting women. Women should also be appointed in supervisory positions in the departments employing women.

The opportunity for a worker to choose an occupation for which she is best adapted is important in insuring success in the work to be done.

### COOPERATION OF WORKERS IN ESTABLISHING STANDARDS

The responsibility should not rest upon the management alone of determining wisely and effectively the conditions which should be established. The genuine cooperation essential to production can be secured only if provision is made for the workers as a group, acting through their chosen representatives, to share in the control of the conditions of their employment. In proportion to their numbers women should have full representation in the organization necessary for collective bargaining.

In conclusion it may be said that, aside from the vital importance to the Nation of conserving the health of its women, the greater necessity for control of the standards of women's employment than of the conditions under which men work is due to the fact that women always have been in a weaker position economically than have men. Therefore it is necessary to create an opportunity, as yet not possible of creation by the workers themselves, for the upbuilding of safeguards to conserve alike the industrial efficiency and the health of women, and to make it impossible for selfish interests to exploit them as unwilling competitors in lowering those standards of wages, hours, working conditions, and industrial relations which are for the best interests of the workers, the industries, and society as a whole.



## WOMEN'S WAGES

In the lives of many millions of workers "pay day" has very great significance. On that day there will be money coming in to supply the necessities of living, it may be for one human being, it may be for several. Millions of families depend upon pay day for the maintenance of the home and the persons within that home.

Generally speaking, no food, no shelter, no clothing, no recreation, not any of life's necessities may be had without pay day. Therefore this day is tremendously important, both for the regularity of its recurrence and for the sufficiency of what it brings—the amount of money that a week's labor will produce.

Nothing else is so important in a worker's life as are wages. Wages must sustain life in all of its ramifications; they must be the supporter of homes; they determine the very life of the workers, their health and comfort, their opportunities. Insufficiency of wages probably causes more sorrow and distress than any other one thing in the universe. Every one of us knows the importance of the wage, the salary, or the income; whether it is in the weekly pay envelope, the salary check once a month, or in the cutting of coupons twice a year, the amount that comes in stands for the same things.

The contents of the pay envelope have many demands upon them, and unfortunately they can not always carry all their responsibilities. That is only too true among women workers. The Women's Bureau has made investigations of wages paid to women in 14 States, and the highest median earnings, those of a Rhode Island study in 1920, were \$16.85 per week. The lowest were in Mississippi, surveyed in 1925, and these were \$8.60 per week. The next to the highest, found for New Jersey in 1922, were \$14.95, and the next to the lowest, found for Alabama in 1922, were \$8.80. The median earnings in the other States surveyed were as follows: Ohio, \$13.80; Oklahoma, \$13; Georgia, \$12.95; Missouri, \$12.65; Kansas, \$11.95; Arkansas, \$11.60; Tennessee, \$11.10; Delaware, \$11.05; Kentucky, \$10.75; and South Carolina, \$9.50. In none of the States investigated, except Rhode Island, was the median of the wages received by the women as high as the minimum wage set by law in the State of California.

Perhaps it would be well to define the terms a "median" and a "minimum" wage. The median means that one-half the women are paid below and one-half are paid above the sum mentioned.

Take, for example, Mississippi, whose median of \$8.60 a week means that one-half the women investigated in that State were paid below and one-half were paid above that sum. In States with a minimum-wage law no woman to whom the wage applies can be paid below the wage set by the commission. The time required for learning and the apprentice wage are taken into consideration. Under the minimum-wage system, workers themselves sit on the wage boards with employers and other persons, and bargain for their wages; this method is in conformity with the collective-agreement negotiations of the trade-union organizations. Where there is neither minimum-wage commission nor labor organization, however, individual bargaining prevails. If there are many women looking for work, there is a desperate question of getting a job of any sort whatsoever, and the wages and conditions of work are left to the employer to determine. Compelled by necessity, a woman must work for whatever the employer will pay, and the phrase "individual bargaining" becomes a myth instead of a reality.

For years the theory has stubbornly persisted that women are in industry for only a short time, and that their earnings are of no very great social significance because "the family," the unit of modern civilization, is dependent upon woman not as a wage earner but as a home-keeper. More and more, however, modern industrial studies show that women wage earners have a double social significance. It is found that they are contributing a by no means insignificant proportion of the family wage, in many cases being the entire support of a good-sized family, while at the same time they are fulfilling their age-old function of home-keeper. It is for this reason that any discussion of women's wages to-day should be accompanied by an account of their home responsibilities. Their wages still are based on the old theory that they have no family responsibilities as wage earners, with results disastrous to that life and health for the maintenance of which they are responsible.

"How do they do it?" is the question that recurs again and again in the mind of the investigator as she interviews one girl after another and hears her story of need at home which is relieved only by her earnings; of sick fathers, little brothers and sisters, widowed mothers who have given out after many years of struggle to bring up and educate their families and have passed the burden on to their daughters.

The lower wages for women in industrial occupations have a distinct influence on the wages of men. Any industrial group working for less than the standard which prevails in industry will have the effect of lowering the wage standards for all employees.

#### SHORT TALKS ABOUT WORKING WOMEN

The standard for the determination of wages suggested by the Women's Bureau is that wages should be established on the basis of occupation and not on the basis of sex or race. This is suggested from a well-founded conviction that low wages for women are a distinct menace to the individual woman, to the family, and to the community as a whole. Equality and justice for the woman worker will spell happier and more contented homes and a better citizenship.

## HOURS OF WORK

Every morning between 7 and 8 o'clock hundreds of thousands of women start their day's work in the factories and workshops of the country. Every evening between 5 and 6 o'clock these women finish their industrial work and go home, to housework, helping with supper, and putting the children to bed. They are a valiant army, and the need for their valor is all the greater because the world knows so little about their jobs and the number of hours a day they are working.

There is an old saying that "man's work is from sun to sun, but woman's work is never done," and when you realize the many demands, in addition to the hours in the factory, that are made upon the young girl and the adult in helping to maintain the home, the old saying becomes a reality.

The Women's Bureau has made investigations of the hours of employment of women in industry in 18 States of the Union—Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, New Jersey, Ohio, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. These studies cover approximately 2,600 establishments and 230,000 women. Of course the bureau has not been able to include every establishment in each of these States, but it has sampled so fairly that the facts are representative of the hours worked by the women in the States surveyed.

More than one-third of all the women surveyed had a weekly schedule of 48 hours or less, though only about 7 per cent worked not more than 44 hours. Nearly two-thirds had a week longer than 48 hours, and over one-fifth were scheduled for a week of 54 hours or more. Some of the women included in the surveys had exceedingly long hours, 3,709 being employed on a weekly schedule of 60 hours or more. The States varied greatly in the proportions of women in the several hour classifications. Of all the States Rhode Island had the best record for the short week, with something over two-thirds of its women scheduled for 48 hours or less, followed by Illinois with 62.0 per cent, and New Jersey with 55 per cent, falling in this hour grouping. At the other end of the scale are Georgia and Mississippi, each with 26 per cent of the women scheduled to work 60 hours or more.

In regard to the short working day, one of 8 hours or less, the States as a whole made a poorer showing than in the case of weekly hours, since only one in five of all the women had the 8-hour day or one shorter. More than one-half (55 per cent) of the women had a daily schedule of 9 hours or more, and one-sixth of them had a day of at least 10 hours. Not far from 2,000 women were expected to work 11 hours, or even longer, each day. Iowa, Illinois, and Maryland each showed approximately one-third of the women workers to have a day of 8 hours or less, and South Carolina with 84 per cent of its women scheduled to work 10 hours or more daily, Georgia with 64 per cent, and Mississippi with 57 per cent so scheduled, head the list in the matter of the long workday.

It will be seen from these figures that there is a great difference in hours of employment. In some States a limitation set by law tends to make the hours more uniform within the State, but even then they may differ radically from those in the same industries in other States. For example, the 48-hour week prevails in the textile industry in Massachusetts, but in the Carolinas a 10-hour day is the custom and in the mills which work at night an 11-hour schedule is not uncommon. Moreover, even where there is a legal limitation we do not necessarily find uniform hours, since some plants work to the full limit allowed and others have a much shorter schedule. Where there is an hour law applying only to certain industries in a State, a much shorter day is likely to prevail in other industries not coming under the law.

In general it may be said that many manufacturers have recognized the futility of the long, fatiguing day and have gradually come to realize that an 8-hour day is just as productive as a longer shift. Employers have been heard to say that they did not institute the 8-hour day because they felt charitably inclined, but because it was good business. One very striking experience was reported by a manufacturer of lamps. He said that during a slack period when he wanted to decrease his output of 5,000 lamps a week, he shortened the plant's hours from 50 to 44. In spite of the six hours decrease the number of lamps produced remained the same. Since no loss of production resulted, the manufacturer was convinced that a decrease in hours does not decrease output and from that time he operated permanently on a 48-hour schedule. Many experiences of this kind have been had throughout the country.

The reasons advanced by one employer for having instituted the shorter workday was that a neighboring plant which was doing the same kind of work was on a shorter hour schedule and he could not get sufficient labor to run his plant unless he had an equally short day.

Employers frequently say that under the shorter schedule workers are more interested in their work, less illness occurs, and labor turnover is reduced. Perhaps one of the greatest wastes in manufacturing is a high labor turnover with much new help to be broken in, and the 8-hour day has been one of the influential factors in reducing this labor cost.

There are other important reasons, from the workers' standpoint, for a shorter workday. The noise and speed of machinery, the faulty ventilation and light, the complexity or the monotony of the job, all of which go with the present-day industrial life, necessitate shorter hours of employment to prevent the workers from becoming unduly fatigued. The need for a gradual reduction of the working day has been recognized, and no one any longer thinks in terms of 14 or 15 hours of work a day. The attention is now directed toward the 8-hour standard. Moreover, the workers desire the shorter day in order to have time for participation in community life and the job of citizenship. To be informed, that one may be a useful citizen, takes time, and the working population of the country has a right to enough leisure for this purpose. In fact, it would seem that the Government, for its own protection, might see that sufficient time is given to all its citizens to exercise their functions as useful members of society.

Extreme subdivision of industrial processes, with the resulting monotony for the worker—one of the greatest factors calling for the reduction of the long day—is a matter to be considered, particularly in connection with women, because women are employed very largely in the industries where the subdivision is the greatest, such as the garment, the boot and shoe, the electrical-supply, and the textile industries. For example, many women are engaged in the stitching of long straight seams all day, the tacking of pockets, the pasting of lining stays in shoes, or the running of 30 to 40 looms in a textile mill. None of these operations requires any great skill, and they mean, therefore, the same kind of work from morning to night, from one week to the next. Because of the great monotony attending the work through subdivision, the workers should have some interest besides the work in the factory. What is more reasonable and constructive than for them to have a real interest in the home, the community, and the country, something extremely difficult for the exhausted workers who, under the long day, spend practically all their waking hours in the factory.

The 8-hour day takes on an additional significance for women workers because in so many instances they have home responsibilities, which, when industrial hours are short, naturally constitute more of an interest and less of a burden for the women. After all is said

and done, the woman is the center of the home. Upon her devolves the routine of home life, and if time and means are not sufficient for the maintenance of the home the whole family suffers, the woman perhaps most of all. Men frequently have home responsibilities, but it is a well-established fact that women, on the whole, carry much the heavier burden. Special emphasis, therefore, must be laid on the fact that the problem of home responsibilities makes a shorter working day of even greater necessity to women in industry than to men, since the time that the average working woman puts in at the factory does not cover all of her day's work.

The data compiled from various State studies made by the Women's Bureau indicate that the great majority of working women live at home or with relatives. The highest proportion encountered in any State was 94 per cent in South Carolina and the lowest was 83 per cent in Arkansas. From interviews by agents of the Women's Bureau in the homes of many of these women it is safe to say that the majority of them have very definite home responsibilities in the form of washing, cleaning, cooking, mending, and the care of children. The investigations prove conclusively that married women and mothers of families return to their homes at the end of the day, from the stores and factories in which they are employed, to meet all those duties to which the average housewife devotes most of her day.

Nor is the married woman the only woman upon whom this burden falls. The daughter living at home is expected to help with the housework, and even the girl who is living by herself finds it necessary to do her own washing and sewing and cooking in order to make an inadequate wage go as far as possible. Because of the problems always present with women, which necessitate their doing a large share of housework, it is obvious that the shorter workday is of even greater importance to them than it is to men. In the words of Miss Josephine Goldmark—

The limitation of working hours, therefore, which assures leisure, is not a merely negative program. It limits work, indeed, to make good the daily deficits, and to send back the worker physiologically prepared for another day. It frees the worker from toil before exhaustion deprives leisure of its potentialities. It thus fulfills a reasoned purpose. As the physiological function of rest is to repair fatigue, so the function of the shorter day is to afford to working people physiological rest—with all that is implied further by way of leisure.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Goldmark, Josephine. *Fatigue and efficiency*. New York, 1917. P. 287.

## WORKING CONDITIONS

Proper working conditions within factories, mills, and stores are another of the pillars on which rest the health and well-being of the workers. Working conditions comprise one of the three main divisions—the others being wages and hours—which have such tremendous influence upon industry as a whole.

If a worker is compelled to work in insanitary and badly lighted workshops, under a strain because of incorrect posture at work, exposed to the risk of dangerous machinery or fire hazard, inhaling dust, fumes, or other poisonous air, the health of such worker is steadily undermined and his efficiency lessened. He becomes discouraged; he can see no escape from the surroundings he is enduring; his general attitude toward life becomes one of indifference. His work suffers on account of it, and his home and family suffer even more.

In the investigations conducted by the Women's Bureau there has been found the same situation in regard to working conditions as obtains in wages and hours, that is, a tremendous variety of standards—some employers making little or no effort to conform to the best, not even fulfilling the law, while those with the finest conditions, and the best wages and hours, usually very much exceed the requirements of the law or of accepted standards. Many employers have recognized that the conditions in the factory have a very decided effect upon the efficiency of the workers, and through scientific research and by engineering processes they have eliminated much of the waste which naturally follows poor conditions of work. Others are still backward in improving conditions.

It is evident from investigation that poor working conditions generally accompany low wages and long hours. Where you find one you will usually find the others. Like excessive hours, poor working conditions are wasters of human energy. The employer and the worker who have realized this fact are well upon the road to eliminate this waste in their particular industry.

One of the chief hazards to health is due to the failure to draw off the dust fumes and gases which cause difficulty in breathing, irritation to skin, and many other forms of poison to the system. Nothing is more injurious to the health of the worker than bad air—rooms which are too cold, too hot, too humid, not ventilated. There are devices in use which can largely eliminate these hazards. Continuous standing and continuous sitting both are harmful. Not



having a chair to sit upon causes much unnecessary strain and fatigue which could be relieved by this convenience. On the other hand, for those who have to sit at work constantly, rest periods which enable a worker to get up and stretch the muscles are very helpful. The constant risk from unguarded machinery and the danger from fire hazard should be speedily removed even in establishments not yet ready to make other improvements. All these conditions have their disastrous effect upon the health and efficiency of the workers, whether men or women.

There is great necessity to study bad conditions in regard to whether they are more injurious to women than to men. By a careful study of a large number of cases of lead poisoning among men and women over a considerable period of time, evidence was produced which established the fact that lead poisoning is more injurious to women than it is to men. It may result in sterility, or in more of the children being born dead, or in more of the babies dying during the first year of life. Therefore it is more dangerous for women to contract lead poisoning than it is for men, and some occupations in industry where lead is used should be prohibited to women. However, careful, scientific investigation should be made before any occupation is prohibited. The Women's Bureau recommends, in its Standards for the Employment of Women, that they should not be prohibited from employment in any occupations except those which have been proved to be more injurious to women than to men.

At the present day the demand is frequently made that women should be given equal opportunity with men in all occupations, in all industries, and that no industrial legislation should be passed for women alone. We have heard longer, and just as loudly, from those who say that women belong to the home and should not be permitted to enter industrial occupations. Neither of these opinions is just to working women; they are not based on facts. The exponents of the creed first mentioned must pause before a presentation of the case for better protection of working women based on a scientific study of the effect on their health, and that of future generations, of exploitation, long hours, low wages, and improper working conditions. The working women themselves, as well as their employers, will not be content with a sentimental or idealistic appeal that is not based upon facts. The facts should be collected and presented strongly and clearly.

In an investigation in a middle-western State it was found that in the cigar factories a large group of women packers and labelers stood at work, no seats being provided for them. The food-manufacturing establishments investigated provided no seats whatsoever.

In one of the establishments of this group, employing the largest number of women, only 10 seats were provided for 229 women. If proper equipment had been installed more than 200 women could have either sat or stood while at work. In the retail bakeries there were no seats for the saleswomen.

In the laundries most of the work was done standing. The women who remained in the laundries to eat their luncheons tried to recover from their morning fatigue by lying on the tables. It has been proved that menders, markers, folders, and flat workers can sit at work in a laundry. It would seem practicable for many others to do so if different equipment were installed.

In the kitchens of restaurants in the State in question there were no stools. Women were found resting on a garbage can. In some of the dry-goods and five-and-ten-cent stores seats were provided, but their use was frowned upon by the floorwalkers. Facilities for the provision of clear and cool drinking water were not always in evidence; a place in which to hang extra clothing and one in which to wash up after the day's work was not provided in all cases. And many of these shortcomings are found in other States.

One of the greatest of disease carriers is the common towel. In investigations in various States it is found even in these days that a roller towel or other common towel is furnished by the employers, though there may be a law forbidding the practice. Such things may seem small, but they have a real place in industrial life in regard to health, cleanliness, and sanitation. Is anything more important in factories where food is being prepared—where candy is being made, or crackers are being packed, or other food products are being manufactured—than that the work should be done in the cleanest and most healthful way possible? It means much to the health of the whole community, the buyers of these products, if clean, sanitary measures are practiced, and it is of tremendous concern to the workers.

Ventilation, cleanliness, lighting, seating, service facilities—all are important factors in the organization of a plant. Industrial experts agree that an excellent investment for any plant is money spent on good lighting and good ventilation, on scientific and comfortable seats for use whenever possible, on safety devices for the prevention of accidents, on service facilities such as sanitary drinking and washing arrangements, a satisfactory lunch room, rest room, cloak room, and first-aid equipment.

What do these things mean in human lives and health and happiness? You must know the stories of individual working women if you are to appreciate their full significance. You must know in terms of human experience what it means to a woman to spend her

days in a factory where the workroom is not clean, the floor is caked with dirt, the corners are cluttered with débris and papers, the walls are festooned with cobwebs, and the windows are speckled with dirt; where the men who chew tobacco spit on the floor; and where the room is never systematically cleaned, but instead a porter sweeps when he "gets around to it" and the workers help when they have time. You must know in terms of headache and eyestrain what it means to face the window as you sit at work, and on dark days to have an unshaded electric light glaring in your eyes.

The biggest question confronting the Nation to-day is the industrial question, and every citizen should interest himself to recognize and to understand the difficulties confronting employer and worker, so that we may have just and lasting solutions to the many problems. Working conditions particularly need scientific study, and the employer, the employee, and the public should welcome the facts gathered by investigation.

## THE WOMEN WORKERS

Since the human factor in industry naturally is the most important from the point of view of production, the workers' energies, which contribute so essentially to output, should not be subjected to undue wear and tear in the industrial field. Too frequently the management is prone to overemphasize the importance of care and improvement of machinery and neglect the care and consideration of the workers who operate such machinery. In consequence the employers suffer the penalty of crippled production arising from the fatigue, ill health, or other disaffection of employees whose interests have not been sufficiently considered.

Apart from the poor mechanics of the question, the nature and requirements of the workers are of much greater significance than are the structure and care of machines, since the well-being of the workers is imperative not only for the success of industry but for the structure that is at the foundation of industry, namely, a healthy society.

The wages, hours, and working conditions of women are the greatest questions concerning the central figures which all these things affect, the women themselves. But the public is interested to know, also, whether those women are native born or foreign born, young or old, married or single. Do they live at home, with home duties and responsibilities, or do they board, with only their own livelihood to consider? These also are important questions affecting the woman worker, and no one can appreciate fully the problems connected with women in industry who does not regard the women not only as wage earners but as human beings. To understand the needs of women at work it is necessary to learn the conditions under which they live, to analyze their home responsibilities in addition to the responsibilities of their work in the factories, to know their obligations to dependents and their requirements of living. Such facts have been presented in most of the 60 reports published by the Women's Bureau since its inception. In addition to wages, hours, and working conditions, personal data have been secured by means of cards distributed among the women, who themselves answered the questions. More important still were the visits made by the agents of the bureau to the women in their own homes, at which times were secured authentic data in regard to home conditions and responsibilities.

In a study made by the Women's Bureau in the shoe industry in Manchester, N. H., entitled "The Share of Wage-earning Women in Family Support," the question of the responsibility of men and women toward the home resolved itself into a complicated situation of joint responsibility by several wage earners for the upkeep of the home and the support of others. Usually it was not a question of the entire support of others—only 31.2 per cent of the men and 3.2 per cent of the women were found to be carrying alone the economic responsibility of the family—but everyone was contributing something to the family of which she or he was an integral part.

The condition which was found to have the greatest effect on the proportion of the wage contributed to the family was the relationship of the contributor. Practically 100 per cent of the men and women who were husbands and wives, or fathers and mothers, contributed all their earnings, irrespective of amount, to meet the expenses of the family. On the other hand, the single man's and single woman's contribution of all earnings occurred in a much smaller proportion of cases; in fact, only 34.6 per cent of the men who were sons contributed all their earnings, a proportion considerably less than that of the daughters, 59.9 per cent of whom contributed all theirs. As the husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, as already stated, practically always contributed all their earnings, a greater proportion of working women than of working men definitely assumed extensive home responsibilities.

In proportion to their ability, moreover, the daughters assumed a much more complete responsibility. They earned far less than did the sons, yet their contributions were practically the same. In these cases it is the women who are merging themselves more completely in the family group by contributing all their earnings, while their brothers, although contributing substantially the same amounts, are retaining something for their own use. The sons are assuring themselves of a degree of independence and an opportunity to strike out for themselves, both practically denied the daughters, whose obligations in many cases are not of their own choosing and who are carrying cares and responsibilities resulting from the tendency of present-day life to leave old age without provision of support.

In another report of the Women's Bureau, *The Family Status of Breadwinning Women in Four Selected Cities*, of the 31,481 working women in these cities who reported on the number of wage earners in their families, 27 per cent were in families having no men wage earners and 21 per cent were classed as the sole breadwinners in their families. Of the single working women, three-fifths were living with their parents; the remainder were maintaining their own homes, boarding and lodging, or living with other relatives.

The four cities analyzed from the standpoint of working women in the report mentioned—Butte, Wilkes-Barre, Passaic, and Jacksonville—may be taken as more or less representative of the country as a whole in the matter of family status of the eight-and-one-half million working women in the United States. The fact that the four cities studied—in the West, the East, and the South—had the same problems connected with the working women, would suggest their existence in every civic community in the country. Additional evidence of the universal character of these problems is the fact that the proportion of women gainfully employed did not rise nor fall to any great extent through the presence or absence of the so-called woman-employing industries. In every city and town many women must earn a living, not only for themselves but for dependents, and if they lack opportunities in the more desirable directions they must enter any avenue of gainful employment that may be available. Facts brought forth in this report arrest the attention of all persons interested in the question of family support and care of children, since in the four communities almost two-fifths of all the women who were 14 years of age and over were gainfully employed. The importance of analyzing the relations of working women to the family and to the community is apparent.

Interviews with women in stores, mills, and factories furnish pathetic stories. Many women whose husbands work regularly volunteer the information that their families could not live on the husbands' earnings, to say nothing of extra comforts or advantages for the children. Many a woman's reason for working is that she may help her husband, son, or brother so that he may "get somewhere," however poor may be her own prospects; many another's is the greater compulsion that invalid mother and little brothers and sisters have no means of support but what she, the daughter, provides. There is remembered the case of a woman who had been a widow for four years and whose husband had been an invalid for five years before his death. She had five children, and at the time of the visit two were too sickly to work and two were under 14 years of age. Only one, a boy of 17, was able to help in the support of the family. Such a situation is not unique, but it serves as an illustration of the kind of home responsibilities which many wage-earning women are obliged to carry.

In general, so meager is the income of the average wage-earning woman, so many are the demands upon it, whether she is married or single and whether she is aiding in the support of others or not, that very careful calculation is necessary to enable her to meet the various industrial and personal exigencies which arise. Home responsibilities of a financial and domestic nature in many cases com-

plicate her existence beyond the possibility of individual adjustment. Accordingly, not until there shall be guaranteed to all working women a rate not only covering their living expenses but allowing some margin for dependents or savings for future emergencies, and not until shorter working hours for women prevent the expenditure of too much of their time and energy as wage earners, and not until sufficient wage to support families is paid to men, will the economic status of women in shops, mills, and factories be improved and their health and happiness as individuals in the community be insured.



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- No. 1. Proposed Employment of Women During the War in the Industries of Niagara Falls, N. Y., 16 pp. 1918.
- No. 2. Labor Laws for Women in Industries in Indiana. 29 pp. 1918.
- No. 3. Standards for the Employment of Women in Industry. 7 pp. 1919.
- No. 4. Wages of Candy Makers in Philadelphia in 1919. 46 pp. 1919.
- \*No. 5. The Eight-Hour Day in Federal and State Legislation. 19 pp. 1919.
- \*No. 6. The Employment of Women in Hazardous Industries in the United States. 8 pp. 1919.
- No. 7. Night-Work Laws in the United States. 4 pp. 1919.
- \*No. 8. Women in the Government Service. 37 pp. 1920.
- \*No. 9. Home Work in Bridgeport, Conn. 35 pp. 1920.
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- No. 17. Women's Wages in Kansas. 104 pp. 1921.
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- \*No. 20. Negro Women in Industry. 65 pp. 1922.
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- No. 34. Women in Alabama Industries. 86 pp. 1924.
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- No. 42. List of References on Minimum Wage for Women in the United States and Canada. 42 pp. 1925.
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- No. 45. Home Environment and Employment Opportunities of Women in Coal-Mine Workers Families. 61 pp. 1925.
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- No. 50. Effects of Applied Research Upon the Employment Opportunities of American Women. 54 pp. 1926.
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\* Supply exhausted.