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WOMEN'S BUREAU
Bulletin No. 131

INDUSTRIAL HOME WORK
IN RHODE ISLAND

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE
TO THE LACE INDUSTRY

Pamphlet

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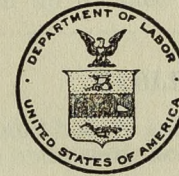
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
FRANCES PERKINS, Secretary
WOMEN'S BUREAU
MARY ANDERSON, Director



INDUSTRIAL HOME WORK IN RHODE ISLAND

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
THE LACE INDUSTRY

By
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INDUSTRIAL HOME WORK
IN RHODE ISLAND

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INDUSTRIAL HOME WORK IN RHODE ISLAND

Part I—INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, WOMEN'S BUREAU, Washington, February 11, 1935.

MADAM: I have the honor to transmit the report of this Bureau's survey of industrial home work in Rhode Island.

As you are aware, the code for the lace industry did not prohibit home work. Special hearings on the subject in March of last year showed the need for more detailed information about the industry.

Having received a request from Rhode Island for a study of home work in that State, where a large part of the lace output is produced, the Bureau sent investigators there, who made a State-wide survey, including pay-roll records and home interviews. The accompanying report is based on their findings.

I acknowledge with grateful appreciation the cooperation of the home workers, the employing firms, and other groups who supplied information for the study.

The survey was conducted by Harriet A. Byrne, assisted by Bertha Blair, and the report has been written by Miss Blair and Miss Byrne. Respectfully submitted.

MARY ANDERSON, Director.

Hon. FRANCES PERKINS, Secretary of Labor.

INDUSTRIAL HOME WORK IN RHODE ISLAND

Part I.—INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

The practice of having work done in the homes instead of in the factory always has been opposed by the Women's Bureau. Its main objection is based on the fact that effective regulation of home work is impossible. For example, the regulation of hours of work that has been satisfactorily enforced for factory workers in many States obviously is out of the question so far as home workers are concerned. Paid by the piece, home workers are tempted to put in longer hours of work than would be permitted in the factory, and they often work far into the night, a custom that has been abolished in many States in the case of factory work. Frequently, too, long hours of night work are made necessary because of the quantity of work sent out by the factory, often late in the day, to be finished and returned the next morning.

The regulation of wages is equally impracticable. Even though rates for home work were the same as for similar work done in the mill, which is rarely the case, many things contribute to make the actual earnings of home workers much less than those of factory workers. Often more is required of the home worker than of the worker in the mill; for example, folding or other preparation for distribution, usually not done by the production employees in the factory. More often, work done in the homes is not carried on in the factory, so that wage rates are not fixed by any standard that the mill might have for its inside workers. The home workers themselves are at a disadvantage through lack of organization, if not lack of communication. Because of this they have difficulty in knowing just what wages they may rightly expect and in making any effective demand for a change.

The prevention of child labor also is practically impossible under a system of industrial home work. It is a temptation in families that eke out their existence by home work to increase their pitifully small earnings with the aid of even very small children.

The importance of regular inspections for violations of the law is fully recognized by the Women's Bureau.

Many codes adopted under authority of the N. R. A. by industries where home work has been the practice call for its complete abolition. In some instances the prohibition has been effective.

Lace is one of the industries that always have employed relatively large numbers of home workers, but the code adopted by the industry included no prohibition of home work. There were special hearings on this particular phase of the industry in March 1934. Testimony was given to show that the earnings in home work were extremely low and that it should be abolished and taken into the factory to make

regulation possible. Employers testified, on the other hand, that as certain processes had always been done in the home, no provision had been made for them in the factory building, and that the cost of such provision would be too great at the present time. Others argued that it would cause great hardship to many women who had worked on lace all their lives and who would not be able to take employment in a factory.

Still another argument presented against prohibition of home work in the lace industry was that in many families it was the chief if not the only source of income, and that to take it away would result in their having to be given relief, either public or private. In this connection one of the largest lace manufacturers interviewed quoted the number of workers he had on his pay roll and the total amount of their earnings for a maximum week some time previous to the visit, indicating the great contribution this amount of money was to the community. These facts had been given previously at the hearings in Washington.

The hearings showed the need for more data about the lace industry. The Women's Bureau, therefore, in answer to a request from Rhode Island for a study of home work there, sent investigators to that State, where a large part of the lace output is produced.

SCOPE AND METHOD

The survey, conducted in April and May 1934, was not confined to home work on lace. The entire State was covered to ascertain in what other industries and to what extent home work was being done.

In Providence and Pawtucket, the two largest cities in the State, which comprise an industrial unit, the junior high schools were canvassed as a source of names of home workers. Inquiries were made also of various social agencies, both public and private. In addition, visits were made to all firms known to give out home work.

Much the same plan was followed in the other communities throughout the State, except that no schools were contacted, the earlier school survey not having produced results of any value. Woonsocket, Westerly and its immediate environs, Newport, Barrington, Bristol, West Warwick and the adjacent town of Coventry, with the village of Washington, all were covered.

The garter industry was the only one in which names were not supplied by the plants; the names of these workers were secured from the school lists. Home workers in the lace industry were so numerous that only half of those whose names were furnished were visited, while in the other industries all home workers were interviewed.

Schedules of information were made out at the homes visited where a woman had been engaged in any form of home work since January 1, 1934. Data in detail regarding home work and other work pursued by members of the families, as well as some personal information, were secured.

In addition to these employees' schedules, data were recorded for the employers interviewed. From 10 of the 11 lace manufacturers distributing home work at the time of the visit, pay-roll data for 1 week or more were obtained.

Statements of public relief received by families scheduled were secured wherever possible.

In Providence, where the manufacture of jewelry is carried on extensively, there has been in the past a great deal of home work in certain branches of the industry. The jewelry code prohibited home work, and as far as agents were able to discover, after a very thorough check on the situation, the prohibition had been effective. There were reports that certain concerns were evading the code by selling the jewelry outright to the home worker for a fixed amount and then buying it back when it had been finished. No instance of this was found by the Women's Bureau agents, and if it was being done it was very much under cover.

Of the home work that was discovered, by far the greatest amount was being done on lace, and this report is primarily a report on home work in the lace industry. Five kinds of home work in addition to lace were found (see p. 20), but the number of workers was relatively small. Some were working on the leaves and stems for artificial flowers. Two factories were giving out tags, and one woolen mill was giving some of its mending to home workers, most of whom had been employed on the same work inside the mill. A few persons were working on garters and a few were doing work for a factory whose specialty was fishing tackle.

SUMMARY

HOME WORK ON LACE

The survey was conducted by agents of the Women's Bureau in April and May 1934.

Eleven lace mills in the State were giving out lace to be finished by home workers, but only 10 were distributing any appreciable amount at time of survey.

Home workers listed on the pay rolls for a selected week numbered 331. Agents visited only about one-half of this number, but the home interviews disclosed about two and one-half times as many workers as were credited to these families on the pay rolls.

Visits were made to 179 households. In all but 44 of them there was more than one home worker, the majority having from two to four. In 45 households children under 16 worked on lace sometimes, the total of child workers being 76.

In 43 families there was no income from any other source than home work. Home-work earnings were at least 20 percent of the total family earnings in nearly 80 percent of the cases.

Amounts received in 1 week ranged from less than \$1 to \$33, earned respectively by a household with only one worker and a household with eight. Almost three-fourths of the households reported earnings from lace of less than \$10 for the week reported; two-fifths had earnings of less than \$7.

HOME WORK OTHER THAN LACE

Articles other than lace on which home workers were found employed were artificial flowers, fishing tackle, garters, tags, and worsted goods.

A total of 58 families, with 292 persons (125 males and 167 females), were visited. In these there were 123 home workers—31 males and 92 females. One-fifth were 16 and under 21, and one-fifth were not yet 16.

In 11 cases the family was entirely dependent on home work.

Of 51 households reporting home-work earnings, practically three-fifths had earnings for the previous week of less than \$6 and only about one-fourth had earned from \$6 to \$12.

In three of the industries mentioned—artificial flowers, tags, and garters—home work has been prohibited in the codes. It is allowed in fishing-tackle making, and no regulations have as yet been proposed in the manufacture of woolen and worsted goods. Though a minimum of home work was found in Rhode Island in the industries specified, it is recommended that all home work of this sort be abolished.

Part II.—HOME WORK IN THE LACE INDUSTRY

INTRODUCTION

Lace manufacture

The lace that is produced in the Rhode Island mills is largely of the type that is made on the Levers lace machine; that is, the narrow edgings and insertions such as valenciennes and cluny, the wider laces, and lace of the all-over variety recently become popular for dresses. The manufacture of Levers lace in the United States always has had keen competition from abroad, where it is produced so much more cheaply. Beginning in 1909 and continuing until January 1, 1911, a period of 17 months, the industry was stimulated by the removal of all duty on the importation of Levers machines, on which, normally, the duty was 45 percent. An additional incentive to lace manufacture was brought about in 1909 through an increased duty on the importation of all laces made on Levers machines. Firms took advantage of the duty-free machines and imported large numbers from England, the center of the industry at that time. Rhode Island took the lead then and is at the present time the largest producer of lace of this sort among the lace-producing States.¹

Laces most commonly woven on Levers machines are edgings or insertions, generally referred to by the workers as bands, and in weaving these are joined together by connecting threads in a piece called a web. Machines in the Rhode Island mills visited were of the size that produces webs 6 yards in width, the number of bands in the web depending, naturally, on the width of the particular lace being woven. Thirty-six yards is the usual length of the web, though sometimes it is only half that.

Home work on lace

After weaving, the bands of lace forming the web are separated by drawing out the threads that connect them, and this is done almost entirely by home workers. It comprises the largest part of the work that is done on lace in the homes. Some lace is woven with one thread connecting the bands and some with two threads. These threads are pulled out by taking hold of one end of the thread with the fingers, in some cases separating it by a small implement such as a hairpin or a stiletto. With these instruments some workers pick up the ends of several threads at once and thus separate more than 2 bands at a time. This, however, is possible only in so far as the quality of the lace permits. If the thread is of the kind that breaks easily, only one can be pulled at a time. After the bands of the lace are separated they must be folded and tied in bunches before they are returned to the mill. In passing, mention should be made of the fact that these final operations are not required of the workers "pulling lace" in the mills.

The other home-work processes are scalloping, mending, and clipping, none of which was being done to any great extent in Rhode

Island. Scalloping is the process of trimming off with scissors the rough edges of certain kinds of the wider fine lace, lace doilies, and so forth. Some of this had been done in Rhode Island, but relatively little in comparison with the thread drawing. Mending, which is, as the term implies, the process of correcting flaws in the lace, was being done by only one of the women interviewed. Four clippers were included in the study, though there was only one mill where any amount of clipping ever was done. It was an inside operation, usually, but at times there was more than inside workers could handle. Threads on the wrong side of the material, left as a result of the needle carrying the threads from one pattern to another, have to be clipped off. This material is sent to the workers in widths one yard wide and, as when done inside the mill, it is stretched across frames to make it more easily worked on.

There were 11 mills in Rhode Island from which lace was given out to home workers for some finishing process, although only 10 were distributing any appreciable amount at time of survey. In 5 mills no finishing was done, and the lace was turned out in the gray without being bleached or dyed or having bands separated. Since these must be done before the lace is ready for market, it was necessary to send the "gray lace" to some other plant for the finishing processes. Four of the mills sent it to some one of the 11 mills in the State that did finishing and the other sent it to a firm in Connecticut. Further, lace in the gray was sent into Rhode Island from firms outside the State to be finished. The proprietor of one mill stated that 50 percent of the lace finished by his mill came in the gray from New York. Another reported doing finishing for two firms in other States.

Communities included in the survey

The lace mills that gave out the home work were in Pawtucket, Central Falls, West Barrington, Alton, and several small settlements in the Pawtucket Valley section of the State.

Pawtucket district.—Pawtucket has 3 of the 11 mills and Central Falls 1, but no home workers for the latter were scheduled. The workers to whom lace was given lived in Pawtucket, with the exception of some employees of 1 mill who lived in Providence and East Providence, in practically the same metropolitan area.

In East Providence and the section of Providence adjoining it there is a settlement of Portuguese families in which a great deal of lace home work was done. Portuguese families living in Pawtucket were doing it also, and here it happened that more Portuguese families than any other nativity group were working on lace. Altogether, in the 3 mills in Pawtucket slightly over two-fifths of the interviewed persons were Portuguese; a somewhat smaller proportion were native Americans; and the others, one-fifth, were French or French Canadian born.

Members of the households who had employment found it in the industries of which Pawtucket and Providence have such a diversity.

West Barrington.—West Barrington, where another of the lace mills is located, is a comparatively small community situated between Providence and Newport. It is accessible to either city only by bus,

¹ U. S. Bureau of the Census. Fifteenth census, 1930. Manufactures, 1929, vol. II, p. 319.

the fare on which, to the city and back, is prohibitive for most workers. The people in this community were largely dependent for employment on the lace mill and a worsted mill where work had been very irregular. A brick yard, where formerly many of the older men had been employed, had curtailed operations within the last 4 years and had left a number of men in the households visited unemployed. Nearly all the home workers here were of Italian birth or extraction.

Pawtuxet Valley.—The Pawtuxet Valley section, including the town of West Warwick and the part of the town of Coventry adjoining West Warwick, had more lace home workers than any other part of the State. Thread drawing was required on more of the lace made in this section (5 of the 7 mills were distributing lace to home workers) than of that produced in the vicinity of Pawtucket.

In addition to the lace mills the "Valley" is thickly dotted with other kinds of textile mills—silk, cotton, and rayon largely—where the majority of the wage earners were employed when there was work. Employment had been and still was very irregular in these mills, and due to this earnings were very much reduced. At the time of survey, as a result of the policy of restricting production, some of the mills were closed for certain periods during each month. When the mills were not operating and no wages were being paid, the small amount that could be earned from home work was all that some households had to fall back on.

West Warwick is a fairly thickly populated community and home workers for the three local mills lived in the vicinity. Here, as in the Pawtucket area, the largest proportion of interviewed persons were Portuguese. There were also some French, French Canadians, and other foreign born. Less than one-fourth were native white.

The other two mills in this Valley section were in Coventry, on country roads at some distance from the homes of those on whom they depend to do their work. One of these mills distributes all its lace to persons living in West Warwick through a worker who has a truck. The other, at the time the agents were there, was distributing the lace from a building that had been rented for the purpose in the village where a good many of the workers lived. A number of workers, however, lived outside the village and had to have some form of transportation for getting the lace and taking it back to the headquarters in the village.

For many of the inhabitants of this community the only source of employment had been a worsted mill that had shut down in the early part of the year, leaving a large number of people stranded with no employment in sight. Most of the households visited had been affected thus, and some were depending entirely on lace for their income. The large majority of the workers here were native born.

Alton district.—The other 1 of the 11 mills was in a village in the southwestern part of the State surrounded by rural territory. Some of the lace was given out to workers who lived in the village of Alton, where the mill was situated, but more of it went to people who lived in villages several miles away. Some one worker in each village transported the lace to and from the mill and distributed it to the home workers in her village. As was true of the town of Coventry, most of the home workers here were native born.

N. R. A. regulations

In the fall of 1933 a code of fair competition was approved for the lace manufacturing industry which, among other requirements, fixed the minimum wage to be paid to "any of the employees" at \$13 for a week of 40 hours, learners excepted, and made it illegal to operate on a schedule of hours of labor for their employees (with the exception of repair-shop crews, outside sales force, executives, supervisory staff, engineers, firemen, designers, draftsmen, and shipping crews) in excess of 40 hours. This code, unlike most codes where home work has existed to any great extent, did not include prohibition of work done in the homes.

At a hearing held in March 1934 the representatives of the industry argued against the abolition of home work on the ground that it could be regulated in such a way that the provisions of the code would be enforced for home workers as well as for those who worked in the factory. For this purpose the American Lace Manufacturers Association had drawn up an agreement which all employers were asked to have their home workers sign. By signing this agreement home workers promised not to employ other persons unless those persons, too, signed the agreement. The terms of the agreement also evoked a promise from the home worker that she would work not more than 40 hours a week; that she would employ no minor under the age of 16 years to perform any services in connection with the home work; that she would not accept work at a rate of pay that would not permit her to earn the \$13 per week of 40 hours of service. There also were terms by which she agreed to adhere to certain standards of sanitation. (For copy of agreement see appendix.)

NUMBER OF HOME WORKERS

It appeared unnecessary to interview all the home workers on the pay rolls, so it was decided to schedule one-half of those listed by each plant. In addition a few others, such as partners who had not been recorded on the pay rolls, were visited in their homes. The total number of persons whose names appeared on the pay rolls of the 11 mills at the time of the survey was 331.² The number of households visited was 179 and the following discussion will show the actual number of home workers found, many of whose names did not appear on the pay rolls.

A prerequisite to any regulation of home work is the knowledge of just what persons are engaged in it. Members of the industry thought that this could be accomplished by requiring that all home workers sign the agreement, which all the employers said they were using. However, not only was there laxity in having the agreements signed by all the workers whose names appeared on the pay rolls, but for each one that had signed the agreement there were found at least one and a half others that had not signed it. Accordingly, the number of home workers listed on the pay rolls was far from the actual number of persons doing lace home work at that time.

In addition to the 179 home workers whose names appeared on the pay rolls there were in 135 of these households other lace home workers, the total number of persons who actually worked on the lace being

² In the case of 1 firm, with only 5 home workers on its roll, no workers were interviewed and no pay-roll data were secured. The home workers had had no lace since Jan. 1, 1934.

449 instead of 179 as indicated by the pay-roll data. In other words, on the average there were two and a half home workers for every amount on the pay roll, instead of one as the pay roll suggested.

Sometimes, in addition to having several members of the immediate family help with the lace, a woman would give some to a friend or relative, either because she had more than she could do or because the person needed the money it would bring in. This lace in many cases was worked on by more than one member of the second woman's family. Later discussion shows how many of these were full-time and how many were part-time workers, how many were children under 16, and so forth.

The following shows the number of households with each specified number of home workers and the totals resulting:

Home workers per household	Number of households	Number of workers
Total.....	179	449
1.....	44	44
2.....	65	130
3.....	36	108
4.....	18	72
5.....	5	25
6.....	8	48
7.....	2	14
8.....	1	8

In interviewing the home workers of a mill that employed a large number it was discovered by the investigators that every woman visited, with but 1 exception, had a partner with whom she divided the amount of lace she received each week. The agents understood that this was true for practically the entire number whose names were on the pay roll. Several of these partners were visited and scheduled. The home worker whose name was on the roll notified her partner, in most cases a neighbor, when there was lace for her to do.

These facts show how many more persons actually work on lace than are indicated by the names on the home-work pay rolls, and how impossible is regulation if the workers themselves are not known to the management.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Sex

Nearly all the home workers whose names appeared on the pay rolls were women. This was to be expected, as from the earliest days it has been the custom for housewives to contribute to the earnings of a family in this way, and it has been considered a woman's job. However, in addition to the few men whose names appeared on the pay rolls there were grown men in a number of the households who helped with the thread pulling after work or on off days, and there were some who were reported as having no other employment.

The accompanying summary shows that a fourth of the 449 home workers were men or boys and that only a slightly smaller proportion of those at least 21 years old were men. Men formed one-eighth of the adult full-time workers, three-eighths of those working part time.

Time worked	Home workers of all ages				Home workers of 21 years and over					
	Total	Male		Female		Total	Male		Female	
		Number	Per-cent	Number	Per-cent		Number	Per-cent	Number	Per-cent
Total.....	449	116	25.8	333	74.2	295	69	23.4	226	76.6
Full time.....	191	28	14.7	163	85.3	156	19	12.2	137	87.8
Part time.....	258	88	34.1	170	65.9	139	50	36.0	89	64.0

Age

The following table shows that among the 449 home workers in the households visited were 76 children under 16 years of age. These were 17 percent of the total. None of them were reported as being full-time workers at the time the survey was made. The majority (63 of the 76) were 12 years old or more; 2 were only 10 and 3 were less than that. To all appearances the amount of thread drawing done by very young children was small, though it is known that before there was any restriction as to age a good deal of help was expected from very young children. It may be required even now in view of the practical impossibility of checking up on what happens in the homes. Children knew that they should not be allowed to work, but frequently they remarked that they could not see their mothers working late into the night when by pulling threads for an hour or two themselves the work could be finished much earlier. In one community where the junior high school was too crowded to accommodate the children for more than a half day, several were found pulling lace steadily for that part of the day when they were not in school.

A number (17 percent) of the home workers were young people between the ages of 16 and 21 who could find no other work to do. A few of them still were in school and worked on lace only part time, but more than two-fifths of them were working full time. Some of the part-time workers of these ages had jobs and therefore could not work full time on lace. About two-thirds of the 449 workers of all ages were at least 21, and three-fourths of these were women. Some of the home workers were very old, a few being in the eighties.

Time worked	Age and sex											
	Total			Under 16 years			16 and under 21 years			21 years and over		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Total.....	449	116	333	76	28	48	78	19	59	295	69	226
Full time.....	191	28	163	---	---	---	35	9	26	156	19	137
Part time.....	258	88	170	76	28	48	43	10	33	139	50	89

Marital status, nativity, and literacy

Almost three-fifths of the home workers 16 years of age and over were married and three-tenths were single. Only eight of the remainder were separated or divorced.

The proportion of foreign born among the home workers was large (almost two-fifths) though many of them had come to the United States when they were young children. Only 2 of the 76 children under 16 doing home work had been born abroad, as had only 8 of the 78 who were 16 and under 21. However, more of the adult home workers were foreign born than native born. Altogether the percentage of adults who were foreign born was 56. Nearly three-fifths of all the foreign-born were Portuguese, and about one-third were from Italy or Canada.

The younger workers had had greater opportunities as far as going to school was concerned than had the older ones. School laws had been changed considerably since the days when the older members of the family were children, and many parents expressed gratitude that this was so, for the sake of their children. The proportion of the adults who had had no schooling was just over one-fifth. Forty-three workers were reported as unable to read or write. The majority of the illiterate were in the foreign-born group but several of the native born also could neither read nor write. One of these was a woman of 50 years, born in Woonsocket, who had begun work in a textile mill at the age of 8. She had started, as most children did, by becoming a sweeper. This woman's husband also could neither read nor write. He had started to work at 9 years as a sweeper in a mill. Another illiterate woman, born in Massachusetts, had begun work when only 9 years old, her monthly wage in a textile mill being \$3.

Of the 371 reporting where they had been to school, 72 had attended school in a foreign country. The great majority of those who had been to school in the United States had not gone beyond grade school. There were only 47 who had attended high school or were going to high school at the time.

Experience in home work

Practically without exception the only kind of home work that these workers did was lace. Many of the adults said they had done it for a great many years—as far back as they could remember—but there were others who had started within the last few years. About half (109) of the 221 adult women had had at least 10 years' experience, about a third had worked at least 15 years, and 50 had worked 20 years or more. Eighty women had had less than 3 years' experience, and 50 of these had worked less than 2 years.

EARNINGS FROM HOME WORK

Rates

The rates established by the industry for thread drawing to meet the code minimum were 12 cents per gross yards for 1-thread lace and 18 cents per gross yards for 2-thread lace. These rates or their equivalent were being paid by all but two mills, one of which produced 2-thread lace almost entirely and paid at the rate of 16 cents per gross yards, the other of which paid 12 cents per gross yards for the 1-thread lace and 16 cents per gross yards for the 2-thread lace.

These rates were considerably higher than those paid before the code became effective, and they were supposed to be high enough to make it possible for the average worker to earn the \$13 minimum wage for 40 hours of work. Employers reported that women doing the same work inside the mill found it easy to do 87 bands of single-

thread lace 36 yards long in 8 hours,³ the amount necessary to earn the minimum. However, with few exceptions the home workers reported that it was absolutely impossible for them to produce enough to earn \$13 in 40 hours at the rates paid, and they gave reasons why the rate paid to workers inside the mill was not sufficient for home workers.

For one thing, actually more work was demanded of home workers than of those in the factories. They were required to return the lace to the mill with each band folded and tied, whereas an inside worker merely dropped each band, as she finished it, in a basket. This folding and tying into bunches actually consumed a great deal of the home workers' time.

Further, many believed that there was discrimination in the kind of lace given to home workers. There is considerable variation in the ease with which threads are drawn. In the first place it is affected by the way in which the lace is woven, being very difficult in lace woven too tightly, as it often comes from the weavers. In the second place, the amount of starch in the lace has an effect on the ease with which the threads are drawn, as too much starch makes the threads break easily and requires more time for the pulling. Home workers believed almost unanimously that the lace sent to them was the kind that takes a long time to separate. Even inside workers remarked that the most difficult lace to work on was sent to the home workers and the easiest was kept for those working in the mill. There was no doubt in their minds as to the impossibility of home workers earning the minimum under the rates paid. One inside worker interviewed said that it was difficult even for her to earn the minimum and that it would be utterly impossible if she had to fold and tie the lace as the home workers did or if she were given lace of so poor a quality.

The method of rate fixing, the workers believed, was equally unfair. It was reported that in one plant home workers had been called into the factory in groups and tested as to their speed. Those selected to work inside the mill and to set the rates for the others were the fastest workers, a not unusual custom when piece rates are being established.

Hourly earnings

It was difficult for home workers to estimate their hourly earnings. To the question as to how much a worker could earn in an hour, the reply invariably was that it depended on the kind of lace. "If the lace is very good," they would say, "we can pull a band of single-thread lace in a few minutes, but if it is poor, that is, woven too tightly or with too much starch in it, it takes an hour and sometimes longer." Thread drawing took 10 and 12 times longer in some lace than in others.

There were, naturally, the usual variations in speed from worker to worker. The time reported by some workers was 4 and 6 times as much as was reported by others. In addition to possessing a native dexterity, some had found a method of pulling as many as 4 and 6 threads at a time, and even more. But there was a difference of opinion as to the feasibility of this method of thread drawing. It was reported that some employers had a definite rule against ever

³ A simple calculation shows that this would be at the rate of 391½ yards an hour, or 6½ yards a minute.

pulling more than two threads because of the possibility of spoiling the lace. Workers for mills where there was no such prohibition reported that they sometimes pulled several threads at once, but that the quality of the lace often was so poor that the threads broke easily, making it difficult to pull more than one at a time. The general impression received by the investigators was that the earnings of home workers could not be greatly increased by adopting this method of thread drawing.

The statements of some home workers regarding the time required to do the work are summarized in the table next presented. A glance at the two columns shows the very great differences in the time required to do the same amount of lace of different quality. Further, a comparison of the figures in either column shows what a great variety there is in the time required by different individuals. The time consumed by some workers per band of 1-thread lace, if good quality, was only 4 or 5 minutes, but others required 15 minutes even for good lace and one took as much as 45 minutes. There were great variations also in the time required to do 2-thread lace.

Hourly earnings have been computed on the basis of the reports as to the time required. These also appear in the following table. The variation in hourly earnings for good and bad lace and between one worker and another is in accordance with the variation in the time consumed. There was no possible way of getting any record as to the proportion of "good" and "bad" lace each worker had had, and therefore no way even of estimating what their average hourly earnings had been.

TABLE 1.—*Piece rate, time required, and hourly earnings of 25 home workers on lace*

Rate per 36-yard band (cents)	Time required		Hourly earnings (cents)	
	For good lace (minutes)	For poor lace (hours)	On good lace	On poor lace
1-THREAD LACE				
3	15	3	12	1
3	45	2	4	1½
3	15	1	12	3
3	15	1	12	3
3	15	½	12	6
3	5	1	36	3
3	4	½	45	6
3	5	½	36	6
3	15	1	12	3
3	5	1	36	3
3	5	1	36	3
2-THREAD LACE				
4	5	2	48	2
4	20	¾	12	5½
4	30	1	8	4
4	15	1	16	4
4	25	¾	9½	5½
4	15	1	16	4
4	10	1	27	4½
4½	10	½	27	9
4½	20	2	12	2
4½	6	½	45	9
4	10	⅓	24	12
4	15	1	18	4½
4½	15	1½	18	3
4½	6	1	45	4½

The following are other examples of the time required to earn the amounts reported:

Husband and wife both worked on lace, the wife full time and the husband helping on days he was not employed by F. E. R. A. It took them 2 days, both working full time (exact hours not reported), to earn \$5.76.

Mother and father and a 21-year-old daughter who had not been able to find employment since graduating from high school put full time on thread pulling. A brother and his wife were reported as part-time workers. These five people worked from 8 a. m. to 11 p. m. one day and from 7 a. m. to 5 p. m. the next day, with time out for meals, to complete 248 bands of 1-thread lace, for which they received \$7.44. Ten percent of this amount went to the contractor for delivery and collection. The time consumed was an average of between 15 and 20 hours for each person. Less time would be required for the better lace, they said.

A mother who worked full time and her 18-year-old daughter who was a part-time worker in a woolen mill together put in 15 hours separating 3,300 yards of lace. For this they received \$2.75. In this particular instance they worked from 4 in the afternoon till 10:30 at night and the mother from 7 to 9 next morning. This woman said that she usually returned the lace the day after she received it.

The mother of a family, a widow, and her 17-year-old daughter, unemployed, together had worked 9½ hours to finish 2,124 yards of 2-thread lace, for which they received \$2.65.

A young married woman who had been laid off from her job in a jewelry factory and had been doing lace for a year worked 30 hours to finish 4,644 yards of lace, for which she was to be paid at the rate of 8½ cents per 100 yards, a total of \$3.87, or about 13 cents an hour.

A woman whose husband was unemployed except for F. E. R. A. reported that they both had worked all Saturday afternoon and all day Sunday until 3 o'clock Monday morning, amounting to at least 20 hours, to finish 110 bands of lace, for which they would receive only \$3.70.

A mother, two grown daughters, and a 20-year-old son, two working steadily from 11 a. m. to 11 p. m. one day and from 6 to 9 a. m. the next, and the other two working intermittently, totaled at least 30 hours but earned only \$2.04, being paid at the rate of 8½ cents per 100 yards.

A mother who had pulled lace over a period of 21 years, and two daughters, one married and the other a 14-year-old, had together put in 20 hours to earn \$2.25.

A widowed mother and her two sons, 17 and 19 years, one of them partially blind, reported that they would work "all day" to finish 2,700 yards of lace, for which they would receive \$2.25.

A wife and husband together had put in 14 hours finishing 26 bands of 2-thread lace. They received \$1.04, equivalent to about 7½ cents an hour.

A mother, two daughters, and a granddaughter of 18 years together worked a total of 24 hours, earning \$1.12, or about 4½ cents an hour. This was on lace that they considered very difficult to separate.

The mother of six small children, with 8 years' experience in lace pulling, had spent 8 hours on 14 bands of lace—lace that was hard to pull, she said—and was paid 56 cents.

These accounts give only a few examples of the time home workers actually spend in earning the small amounts that they are paid. Probably they represent the longest time spent by anyone, as the better lace is done much more quickly.

Earnings for selected week

In most cases it was possible to ascertain the earnings of the household from home work for 1 week, though as home work is so irregular it would have been advantageous to have had wage records for a

longer period. The weekly amounts quoted here were, in each case, what was received in the pay envelop the week preceding the interview. In this study, unlike the procedure used in surveys of factory work, the Women's Bureau checked its pay-roll information with the home workers' own records, using the worker's statement in preference to pay-roll data when there was a difference. In many cases the amount reported by the worker was exactly what she was said to have been paid on the factory record. Where irregularities were noted, various reasons could be assigned. Sometimes the worker whose name was on the pay roll had chosen to divide the lace, and therefore the earnings, with someone else; at times, for one reason or another, the factory pay-roll records represented more than a week's work.

Some of the home workers put in full time and some were part-time workers. Among the part-time workers were children who worked on the lace after school or on Saturdays, and persons with other employment who were putting in short hours helped with the lace at their off times. A great many of the home workers gave full time to the work whenever lace was available. Many of these were mothers, who, though responsible for the housework, planned to do a full day's work on lace though usually not in one stretch. Some of them worked several hours at night after the housework was finished.

The table next presented shows the amounts received for a week's work by the various households and the number of home workers whose joint efforts resulted in such earnings.

TABLE 2.—*Week's earnings from lace home work according to number of persons who did the work*

Earnings for 1 week	Number of home workers with pay-roll earnings as specified	Number of cases where home workers actually doing the work were—							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Total.....	174	42	63	36	17	5	8	2	1
Less than \$1.....	1	1							
\$1, less than \$2.....	6	4	2						
\$2, less than \$3.....	8	4	3	1					
\$3, less than \$4.....	10	3	3	4					
\$4, less than \$5.....	14	6	6	2					
\$5, less than \$6.....	16	4	7		5				
\$6, less than \$7.....	16	4	5	4		1	1	1	1
\$7, less than \$8.....	18	5	9	2	2				
\$8, less than \$9.....	18	3	9	4		2			
\$9, less than \$10.....	21	3	8	6	3		1		
\$10, less than \$11.....	7	2	1	1	1			1	
\$11, less than \$12.....	7		2	3	1	1			
\$12, less than \$13.....	12	2	3	4	1		2		
\$13, less than \$14.....	5			3	1		1		
\$14, less than \$15.....	3		1	1			1		
\$15, less than \$20.....	9	1	4	1	3				
\$20 and more.....	3						2		1

In most cases these earnings were received for finishing a quantity of lace less than the amount that the factory considered could be finished in 40 hours. Very seldom were the home workers given enough lace in 1 week to amount to earnings of \$13. This does not mean, however, that combined hours of the workers were not 40 or

more. With few exceptions the actual time spent on the task during the week could not be learned. This is not hard to understand when the situation in the household is taken into consideration. Usually several persons were employed on the lace, and the hours they worked varied from week to week. In most cases the mother worked on the lace, but because of household duties her lace work was interrupted a great deal, making it difficult to say just how many hours she put in. The hours of children, like those of the employed members of the family who helped after work, were not the same from day to day.

In only 42 of the 174 cases did the earnings represent the work of but 1 person. In a majority (57 percent) of the households there were 2 or 3 home workers and in almost a fifth (19 percent) there were 4 or more. The higher earnings were, in practically all cases, the work of more than 1 person. In only 5 of the 46 instances where the earnings were \$10 or more had they been earned by 1 person. The work of 2 persons was represented in 11 cases, of 3 in 13 cases, of 4 in 7 cases, of 5 in 2 cases, and of 6 or more in 8 cases. Therefore, instead of representing the work of only 174 persons for whom week's earnings were reported, the amounts in the table represent the work of 439 persons, or slightly more than 2½ times as many.

Further, in view of the number of persons employed the amounts are very low. In only 20 cases of the 174 were the earnings as much as \$13, the minimum permitted in the industry for 40 hours' work, and in only 1 of these was the worker unassisted. The question raised in connection with the smallness of the various amounts is, How many hours of work were represented? And this is not possible to report with any exactness from the information available.

METHODS OF DELIVERY AND COLLECTION

Contrary to many reports, it was not the general custom for lace to be delivered and called for by the factory. Further, when the factory did deliver the lace, usually the worker was charged for this service.

To only 7 of the 179 households visited did the mill either deliver the lace free or pay for its delivery. In 47 cases the company or someone hired by the company delivered and called for the lace, the home workers being charged for this. Thirty-four of these, employed by 1 mill, paid a fixed amount for each lot of lace received, and the other 13 paid the contractor 10 percent of their earnings.

In the great majority of the households visited the home workers themselves were responsible for getting their lace and returning it. The arrangements were various. Some joined in employing a neighbor's boy or someone else with a car, paying perhaps a dollar a week, perhaps only what their own carfare would cost. The most common practice was for a member of the family to do the transporting. Many walked to the mill for the lace and returned it in the same way, or children went with their wagons. For some home workers the distance to the mill was short, but others walked a mile or more. Not only was the time consumed in going back and forth considerable, but workers reported that often they had to wait a long time or make more than one trip because the lace was not ready when they called the first time.

ECONOMIC STATUS OF LACE-WORKERS' HOUSEHOLDS

Seeing the home workers in their homes and talking with them and other members of their households elicited a great deal of information on the home-work situation that was not available from employers. During these visits, the investigators got a clear idea of the economic problems facing the households at the time the survey was made, the amount of unemployment and irregular employment resulting in reduced income, and the number of persons among whom such income had to be divided.

The kinds of houses in which the lace workers lived varied from very poor and sordid quarters to modern, pleasant, and well-kept homes. The houses ranged in size from 3 to 10 rooms, the conditions being very crowded in some of the larger families. A great many workers lived in frame tenements that housed a number of families. Some lived in 1- or 2-family frame houses that were owned by one of the mills for which some member of the family was working.

The kitchen, which usually was also the dining room, in most households was the principal room, where the family congregated and where the work on the lace was done. Artificial lighting was electric in most houses, but usually the lights were placed high above the heads of the workers and would not be adequate for working at night.

Many times home workers were found busy at work when the agents called. They talked freely of the economic hardships they had experienced during the last few years. To many of them lace had been a blessing when there was no income from other sources, and they hoped it would always be available. Others believed that home work should be abolished, especially since the creation of the N. R. A. and the approval of the code that fixed a minimum wage of \$13 for a week of 40 hours of work. This, they believed, was being enforced for workers in the factory but could never be enforced for home workers.

In addition to getting information as to the earnings from home work, it was thought important to know to what extent households depended on home work as a source of income. For this reason the inquiry included data as to the number of unemployed persons in the household and, for the employed persons, the amount each had received in wages during the week for which home-work earnings were recorded.

In only 13 of the 179 households visited were there no normal wage earners; that is, persons accustomed to working when they could get employment. There were 30 households in which none of those normally employed were working at time of survey. Unemployment was serious and had lasted a long time. Some were out of work because the mill in which they had worked—perhaps as much as 20 years—was shut down entirely. Others had been laid off for various reasons. One man reported that he had had no work that could be called regular for 5 years. The great majority of the workers in these households were or had been employed in textile mills, and here, as is well known, there had been great irregularity for a number of years.

The total number of persons per household varied from 1 to 13. All but 2 households had more than 1 person; in just over two-thirds there were at least 5. Whatever earnings there were, in most cases were pooled. In a few households the unmarried sons and daughters con-

tributed specific amounts for room and board, but in this report on household income the total earnings are used.

The week selected was not necessarily representative of the earnings of each individual. Average weekly earnings over the last several months may have been considerably higher, or much less. For example, several persons employed in textile mills reported that they were working only 3 out of 4 weeks, or even less, and that consequently the earnings reported for the week preceding the agent's visit could not be described as average. These facts should be kept in mind in considering the earnings quoted in this section of the report.

Of the 179 households visited, total earnings were reported for 156, and in 43 of the latter there were no earnings from any employment but home work on lace, though 2 or 3 had small amounts coming in from one source or another. In most of the 43 households the economic situation was desperate. There were households with from 1 to 10 persons dependent on the lace money. A few were persons who could not be expected to support themselves by their own earnings and worked on the lace to supplement what they were receiving in public relief, but most of them were quite able to support themselves had there been sufficient work at high enough wages. More than half were receiving relief of some kind, either work relief or direct relief in the form of food and clothing. Some of those who were not getting relief were drawing on what small savings they had.

Other households were not dependent entirely on the earnings from lace, but in almost three-fourths of these the home-work earnings were at least one-fifth of the combined earnings.

Income from work other than home work

In 60 of the households the earnings from employment other than home work represented the work of 1 person. The amounts varied from \$5 to \$31. In 6 cases the wage earner had received less than \$10; in 20, \$10 and under \$15; and in only 11, as much as \$20.

The first part of table 3 shows the household earnings from work other than home work in relation to the number of persons whose work they represented. The other shows these earnings in relation to the number of persons dependent on them for support.

In 54 households where, in all but 2 cases, at least \$15 had been earned at other than home work, the earnings represented the work of at least 2 persons. In 22 of the 29 households where the earnings were as much as \$30 the work of at least 3 persons was represented.

When considering these earnings in relation to the need for additional income from home work it is necessary to keep in mind the number of persons dependent on these earnings for support. This number, as already stated, was five or more in over two-thirds of the households.

There were at least 5 persons (10 in 1 case) in 6 of the 8 families where the earnings had been \$5 and under \$10. In all but 2 of the 20 families with earnings of \$10 and less than \$15 from 4 to 8 persons depended on these earnings, and in each of them only 1 person was working on other than home work. In all the 22 households where the combined earnings were as much as \$35 there were at least 2 people working and at least 4 people to support. Eleven of the twenty-two had households of eight or more persons.

TABLE 3.—Week's earnings of families from work other than lace home work, (1) by number of persons whose earnings are represented and (2) by size of family

Total earnings of families from work other than home work	Total families	Number of families in which persons contributing were—				
		1	2	3	4	5
Total ¹	114	60	31	16	5	2
\$5, less than \$10.....	8	6	2			
\$10, less than \$15.....	20	20				
\$15, less than \$20.....	27	23	4			
\$20, less than \$25.....	14	8	6			
\$25, less than \$30.....	16	2	13		1	
\$30, less than \$35.....	7	1	2	4		
\$35, less than \$40.....	5		1	4		
\$40, less than \$50.....	10		3	6	1	
\$50 and more.....	7			2	3	2

Total earnings of families from work other than home work	Total families	Number of families in which the members were—								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 or more
Total ¹	114	1	6	13	8	20	24	12	13	17
\$5, less than \$10.....	8		1	1		2	2		1	1
\$10, less than \$15.....	20	1		1	6	4	4	2	2	
\$15, less than \$20.....	27		3	6	1	5	3	4	3	2
\$20, less than \$25.....	14		2	3		3	1	4		1
\$25, less than \$30.....	16			2		3	4	1	2	4
\$30, less than \$35.....	7						3	1	1	2
\$35, less than \$40.....	5				1				1	3
\$40, less than \$50.....	10					2	4		1	3
\$50 and more.....	7					1	3		2	1

¹ Excludes 43 families with no earnings other than from home work.

Income from home work and other work combined

The preceding discussion gives some understanding as to why these families felt it necessary to do home work, which in numerous cases amounted to earnings that increased considerably the total income.

TABLE 4.—Week's earnings of families and proportion that lace home-work earnings were of total

Total family earnings	Number of families	Number of families in which home-work earnings formed of total earnings—								100 per cent
		Less than 10 per cent	10, less than 20 per cent	20, less than 30 per cent	30, less than 40 per cent	40, less than 50 per cent	50, less than 60 per cent	60, less than 70 per cent	70, less than 80 per cent	
Total reporting.....	156	10	23	34	23	15	6	1	1	43
Less than \$5.....	13									13
\$5, less than \$10.....	19				1	1				17
\$10, less than \$15.....	10		1				1			8
\$15, less than \$20.....	21	3	5	3	3	2	1	1		3
\$20, less than \$25.....	21		2	3	5	7	2		1	1
\$25, less than \$30.....	17		1	7	6	2	1			
\$30, less than \$35.....	15	1	2	5	3	2	1			1
\$35, less than \$40.....	11		2	7	2					
\$40, less than \$45.....	7		3	2	2					
\$45, less than \$50.....	5	1	1	2	1					
\$50, less than \$55.....	6	2	1	3						
\$55, less than \$60.....	6	2	2	2						
\$65, less than \$70.....	3		3							
\$70 and more.....	2	1				1				

Excluding the 43 families where there were only earnings from home work, in 25 of the 42 where total earnings amounted to less than \$25 the earnings from home work formed at least 30 percent of the total. However, in only 21 of the 71 families with total earnings of \$25 or more did the earnings from home work amount to 30 percent of the total.

The following table shows the various amounts received in total earnings by 156 families for one selected week, the median earnings being \$23.50 and the average number of persons per household 5.6.

TABLE 5.—Week's earnings of lace home-work families from all types of employment, by size of family

Total family earnings	Number of families	Number of families in which the members were—									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 or more
Total reporting.....	¹ 156	2	19	18	12	26	27	15	16	10	11
Less than \$5.....	13		9		1	2			1		
\$5, less than \$10.....	19		2	3	3	5	1	2		2	1
\$10, less than \$15.....	10	2	2	1		1	1	1	1		1
\$15, less than \$20.....	21		4	4	2	3	5	2	1		
\$20, less than \$25.....	21		1	4	5	4	2	2	2		1
\$25, less than \$30.....	17		1	3		3	4	3	2		1
\$30, less than \$35.....	15			2		3	2	4	2	1	1
\$35, less than \$40.....	11			1		1	4		2	2	1
\$40, less than \$50.....	12				1	2	1	1	2	2	3
\$50 and more.....	17					2	7		3	3	2

¹ Includes 43 who had earnings from no other source than home work.

Ninety-three families had earned \$20 or more during the week, but 60 of these had 6 members or more and 30 had 8 or more.

Relief

Of the 43 households in which no one had other employment than home work at the time of interview, 25 had received relief in some form during the preceding year, either direct or work relief or both. Relief had been given to 16 other families during the year, but whether or not they were dependent entirely on lace at the time is not known. A great deal was said about lace home work in connection with the relief situation. Relief workers stated that relief in some form would have to be given to many families if the lace home work were abolished, and that it would mean considerable drain on public funds. Workers themselves hoped to avoid asking for relief and thought of lace home work as the means of maintaining their independence even if what they received was very little.

Part III.—HOME WORK OTHER THAN LACE

INTRODUCTION

In the intensive survey of the industrial home-work situation in Rhode Island, little home work but that on lace was found. The other industry in the State that had given out much home work before this was prohibited by the code was jewelry. In Providence, the largest jewelry manufacturing city in the State, leads as to home workers were secured through various agencies and were followed up, but in no case was any jewelry home work found. The secretary of the Code Authority for the medium- and low-priced jewelry industry said that in his opinion the prohibition was being obeyed by at least 99 percent of the industry.

The industries in which some home work was being pursued at the time of the survey and the cities in which workers were found were as follows: Artificial flowers, Providence; garters, Pawtucket; line and twine, Ashaway; tags, Pawtucket and Central Falls; and worsted goods, Providence.

Artificial flowers

The work on artificial flowers was given out for the most part to persons employed in the factory or to those who had been employed there, and these took it home to members of their families or to friends. Sometimes the factory workers helped on this work at home. The work done was only on stems and leaves, mainly sticking and branching. Sticking is the process by which the leaves are glued to the stem, while branching consists of covering the wire stem with a narrow strip of cloth or paper.

In attaching leaves to the stems the workers sat at a table with piles of leaves and wire stems and a glue pot before them. With great rapidity the stems were stuck into the glue and immediately placed on the leaves. After this was done, and the glue had dried, the stems were covered with paper or cloth, wound around in spiral fashion. The stem was twirled by the right hand as the covering was held by the left, and in less time than it takes to describe it the covered stem, with its attached leaf, was completed.

Garters

Home work on garters, commonly spoken of as "stringing", differed from home to home. Sometimes it consisted only of assembling the various parts of garters and sometimes sewing was necessary. Children as well as adults could do this work.

One woman told of four different processes on garters in which she was engaged. First she put on the buttons, then she bent the loops, next she put the loops on, and finally she sewed the pieces together, including the ribbon. For this work she was paid 21 cents a gross pair, and to do that number took 3 hours of her time.

Another woman, the owner of an electric machine, was paid 36 cents a gross pair for making a complete garter, including, in addition to the processes just listed, attaching the strips of elastic, sewing the parts together by a continuous machine process, and then cutting the garters apart and fastening off the threads. This work took her from 2 to 3 hours per gross pair.

Fishing tackle

Sewing fish lines onto cards ready for distribution, and tying cord in round, flat bunches about 8 inches in diameter, were engaged in by women employed at home for a fishing-tackle concern. In most cases only women who were physically unable to do factory work were employed as home workers by this company.

Tags

Tags were strung in many different ways, depending on the style of the tag. In some cases the cord was only put through the hole of the tag, in others there was a single knot made, and in some a double knot. Other varieties of tags were prepared for use by inserting wires or hooks. Work on tags was engaged in by families in which several members, including all the children, could assist.⁴

Worsted goods

In the mending of worsted goods only women, many of whom had been menders in the mill, were employed. The work consisted of mending all imperfect places left in the goods as woven on the loom. This was accomplished by weaving by hand, using the same kind of yarn in the defective places as that of the material. In some cases there were knots or slubs, imperfections in the goods, that had to be pulled out. When the work was delivered to the homes of the women—always to the very room in which the work was to be done, since the bolt of material was very heavy—all places to be mended, slubbed, or burlled were marked by crayon.

N. R. A. codes—Home-work regulations

In the code for the wool-textile industry that applies to the manufacture of woolen and worsted goods, no cognizance was taken of home work in the industry, and no prohibitory or regulatory plans such as are included in the Lace Code have been made. Home work on tags was to have been prohibited after May 1, 1934, but at that time a stay for 1 month was granted, and another stay permitted home work until January 1, 1935, when an amendment to the code prohibiting home work became effective. In the narrow fabric industry, which includes the manufacture of garters, and in the artificial flower and feather industry, home work has been prohibited since May 1, 1934. Firms making fishing tackle were allowed to continue giving out home work, with the provision of paying a specified rate as given in the code.

THE HOME WORKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

As may be seen from the preceding description of the processes done at home on the various articles, very different degrees of skill are required. For stringing tags and for such a process as assembling

⁴ While this report was in proof (spring of 1935), word was received from the State that all work on tags had been taken into the factories.—*Editor*.

garters no great skill is demanded, but in the mending of worsted goods only expert workers can be employed. Since this is true, it is not surprising to find children working on tags and garters, and for the most part only older and experienced women engaged in mending worsted goods. The workers on artificial flowers, while not needing skill such as that demanded of cloth menders, must be somewhat more skilled than the tag or garter stringers.

Lists of home workers were secured from 5 firms, the total number being 69. Fifty-eight families⁵ were visited to secure information regarding home work on the 5 types of articles just described.

While interviewing the home workers, facts were secured regarding the family or household composition. In 35 of the households there was a normal family group—father, mother, and children; in 4 there were husbands and wives but no children. Relatives or others were present in 10 of these 39 groups. The remaining 19 households were constituted as follows: In 14 there were no fathers and in 5 no parents, 3 of the latter being composed of adult brothers and sisters. In 2 cases a woman was living alone. Some of the widowed mothers were doing home work to support young children; others were adding to the family income.

In the 58 households included in the study there were 292 persons, 125 males and 167 females, the size of household ranging from 1 to 12. Thirty-two of the households were composed of from 1 to 4 members, but in 8 there were 9 or more. Children under 16 were found in 35 of these family groups, but more than 3 such children in only 10 families. The 10 families in which there were 4 or more children were the largest households, with as many as 7 to 12 members.

As would be expected, in many of the households there were persons other than the parents who were 21 years of age or more. Probably the number of persons at least 21 who still were at home with their families was greater than would have been found under circumstances other than the extraordinary one of widespread unemployment. In 15 of these 58 households there were as many as 4 persons at least 21 years old, and in 8 of these there were 5 or more such persons.

Four-fifths of the households for which living status is reported were renters. Of the 50 reporting the size of their dwellings (which ranged from 1 to 12 rooms) and the numbers of persons in their respective households, 7 lived in 3 rooms or less. In 2 of these households there were 1 or 2 persons, and in the other 5 there were 3 or 4. Twelve of the 16 families with 6 or more rooms were composed of at least 5 persons; 7 households had as many as 10 members.

All but 2 of the 52 households reporting on lighting had electricity in the home. Toilet facilities were reported by 41 home workers. In all but 2 cases the toilet was inside; in 8 of the 39 cases it was shared with other families.

In most cases the room used for home work was the kitchen; in 4 a special room was set aside for the purpose.

In the 58 families there were 123 home workers—31 male and 92 female. Three-fifths (61 percent) of these workers were at least 21 years of age, and of the remaining 48 half were under 16. Only 2 of the workers on woolen goods were under 21, in contrast to 46 of those on other articles.

⁵ Includes 3 whose addresses were secured from school lists.

As would be expected from the large number of women working alone at mending worsted goods, 34 of the families had only 1 home worker. In the 24 in which there were 2 or more, there were 24 persons under 16, almost the same number 16 and under 21, and 42 who were 21 or older. Children under 16 doing home work were found in 14 of the 24 families where there were 2 to 8 home workers.

Seven in 10 of the home workers were native-born, many of them of foreign parentage. Those of foreign birth, ranked by number, were Italian, English, Polish, Lithuanian, Irish, and Portuguese.

Of the 99 home workers 16 or more years of age, 41 were single, 45 married, 11 widowed, and 2 separated.

Of the 112 home workers who reported on schooling, both sexes included, 10 had had none. All these were illiterate. Of the 102 who had had some schooling, 92 had received their education in the United States, the majority having gone no farther than grade school.

There were more part-time than full-time home workers—72 and 51, respectively. Naturally the number of home workers, especially part-time workers, increased with size of family. In the 32 families with fewer than 5 members there were 29 full-time and 22 part-time home workers; in the 26 with 5 or more members there were 22 full-time and 47 part-time workers.

Three in 8 of the women and girls reporting had done home work for 5 or more years, 2 women for at least 15 years; another 3 in 8 had begun such work within the past 2 years. In the case of the men and boys, as would be expected, the greater proportion—two-fifths—had taken up the work within the past 2 years, though about one-fourth had done home work for 5 years or more.

EARNINGS

It will be seen from the following discussion that the economic conditions in many of the homes visited were very serious. In some cases the families were entirely dependent on their earnings from home work, and where there was income other than this, many families were receiving only part of their normal income.

Employment status of families

Only 6 of the 58 households had no wage earners under normal conditions. Of the 52 that usually had wage earners, 8 had no one employed at time of survey. In the 44 that had 1 or more of their usual wage earners employed, these ranged in number from 1 to 5.

In all but 5 of the 27 families that normally had 1 wage earner, such wage earner still had work at time of interview. Where 2 persons usually were employed (11 families) 5 still had 2 members at work but 2 had no one employed. The 8 households where usually there were 3 employees now had 3 employees in only 1 case, while in another case all 3 wage earners were out of work. In only 3 of the 6 households that usually had 4 or more wage earners were all of them still at work, but no such families had all their workers unemployed. To sum up, only three-fifths (31) of the 52 families had the same number of persons at work as were employed under normal conditions. Eight of the 52 families had no one employed.

The families in which 1 or 2 members normally were employed varied in size from 2 to 10 persons. Five of the smaller households—those made up of 3 or 4 members—had no wage earners at work.

RETURNS FROM HOME WORK

Rates of pay

Piece rates reported for home work were varied. For sticking or branching artificial flowers the rate paid was 5 cents a gross. Women who worked on fish lines received 6 cents a dozen for sewing them onto cards and 9 cents a gross for tying twine into circular bunches.

The rates paid for work on garters depended on the number of operations performed: Assembling paid only 10 cents per gross pair, whereas 36 cents was paid when the complete garter was made. The rates paid for stringing tags varied with the kind of tag, being from 10 cents to 30 cents a thousand. In worsted goods the piece rate was not disclosed, but from the pay-roll records of the firm the average hourly earnings were found to be 46 $\frac{3}{4}$ cents. These were computed on the time worked reported by the home workers.

Two items under the control of the employing companies—the delivery of the material and the payment for the work—varied from plant to plant. Two companies (the worsted and the line and twine) always delivered and collected the material; the tag company sometimes made deliveries but more often the home workers both called for and returned their work; the others always let the home workers do the transporting. Payment generally was made weekly, though there were cases of payment on the completion of the job.

Hourly earnings

The table following shows the hourly earnings from home work on tags or flowers computed on the time estimates of the workers. The lowest hourly earnings reported for branching or sticking the stems of artificial flowers were 10 cents; the highest were 60 cents. For work on tags the hourly earnings ranged from not quite 3 cents to 10 cents, the latter being very similar to those of lace workers.

TABLE 6.—*Piece rate, time required, and hourly earnings of home workers on flowers and tags*

Rate	Time spent on the work			Hourly earnings		
	Fast	Average	Slow	Fast	Average	Slow
STICKING OR BRANCHING FLOWERS						
	<i>Minutes required</i>			<i>Cents</i>		
<i>Cents per gross</i>						
5		30			10	
5		30			10	
5	10		20	30		15
5	5		15	60		20
5	15		20	20		15
5		15			20	
5	10		15	30		20
5		7 $\frac{1}{2}$			40	
5		20			15	
STRINGING TAGS						
	<i>Hours required</i>			<i>Cents</i>		
<i>Cents per thousand</i>						
15		2			7 $\frac{1}{2}$	
12	1 $\frac{1}{2}$		2	8		6
10		1			10	
12	1 $\frac{1}{4}$		1 $\frac{1}{2}$	9 $\frac{3}{4}$		8
18		2 $\frac{1}{2}$			7 $\frac{1}{2}$	
12		4			3	
12		2 $\frac{1}{2}$			4 $\frac{3}{4}$	
10	2 $\frac{1}{2}$		3 $\frac{1}{2}$	4		29 $\frac{1}{2}$
10		3 $\frac{1}{2}$				
30	3		4	10		7 $\frac{1}{2}$
20		3 $\frac{1}{2}$				

Week's earnings

Not all the workers reported their earnings for 1 week for the home work pursued, but this information was obtained from 51 families. The earnings reported were, in almost three-fifths of the cases, the earnings of one person. In some of the others they represented the earnings of several persons, in 1 case of as many as 8. Three-fifths of the amounts reported were less than \$6, slightly more than one-fourth were \$6 and under \$12, and the remaining 6 were \$12 or more. One family had earned as much as \$21 by home work. This amount represented the pay of 5 home workers, 4 adults and a girl of 15, in a family of 7. This \$21 was their sole income for the week, as no one had any other work.

TABLE 7.—*Week's earnings from home work other than lace according to number of home workers in family*

Week's earnings from home work	Total families	Number of families where home workers were—					
		1	2	3	4	5	8
Total	51	30	5	8	3	4	1
Less than \$3	12	3		5	2	2	
\$3, less than \$6	19	13	3	2	1		
\$6, less than \$9	8	7	1				
\$9, less than \$12	6	4	1			1	
\$12 and over	6	3		1		1	1

Total income from home work and other jobs

Thirteen of the forty-four families with week's earnings from all sources reported had earnings of less than \$10. In 7 of these there were only 2 or 3 persons, but in 4 there were 4 persons and in 2 there were as many as 8. Twelve families had earnings of \$35 or over; in all but 1 of these there were at least 5 persons, and 4 had as many as 10 in the household.

Eleven of the forty-four families depended entirely on home work; 20 families received less than one-fifth of their total earnings from this source. In 10 of the 11 cases where home work was the only source of income, the total earnings were less than \$10.

In 14 of the fifty-eight families no occupation other than home work was engaged in by any of the members, one of these being the family of 7 persons before mentioned. In 13 of the 37 households where other jobs were held and week's earnings were reported, the total earnings from such jobs were less than \$20, and in 6 of these cases there were 5 or more persons. In 12 cases the total earnings from other sources were \$30 or more, all these families having at least 5 members.

Relief

Two families in which the sole income was from tags and another in which the income other than from tags was less than \$5 were being given relief. Others reported that they needed help badly and had applied for relief. One family, composed of mother and three children aged 22, 15, and 14, had received only \$67.50 in direct relief from December until the date of interview in May. In another, composed of a mother and daughter, the mother was elderly and the daughter, who at one time had been employed in a textile mill, had lost her employment because of ill health. The father in the third family,

in which there were mother and six children from 17 years down to 1 year of age, had been given work by the Civil Works Administration from December until this work ceased on April 1, after which he worked under the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. For the C. W. A. employment he received \$162.50, and for the F. E. R. A. \$27. In addition to this the family had had \$50 in direct relief.

APPENDIX—AGREEMENT DRAWN UP BY LACE MANUFACTURERS FOR HOME WORKERS TO SIGN

AMERICAN LACE MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION
1457 Broadway, New York City

Administrative agency in cooperation with the Administrator in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Fair Competition for the Lace Manufacturing Industry promulgated by the President of the United States, pursuant to Title I of the National Recovery Act.

No home work is to be given to any person who does not sign and comply with the following agreement.

LACE MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY COMMITTEE.

Date.....

I,
(Name of home worker)

residing at
(Address)

do hereby agree to perform work for the
(Name of mill)

at my home and upon the following terms and conditions:

- (a) that the work will be performed by me, the signer of this agreement;
- (b) that no minor under the age of 16 years will be employed by me to perform any services in connection with my work for the aforesaid manufacturer;
- (c) that I will not at any time work longer than 40 hours in any one week;
- (d) that I will maintain my home wherein the work is performed clean and sanitary;
- (e) that no person residing in my home is afflicted with any contagious or infectious disease;
- (f) that I agree to allow my home to be inspected by representatives of the American Lace Manufacturers Association or the manufacturers for whom I am doing the work at any time between 9 a. m. and 5 p. m.;
- (g) that I will comply with any regulations as to sanitation as may be promulgated by the American Lace Manufacturers Association or the manufacturers with whom I am making this contract;
- (h) that in the event of my employing any assistants at any time, I will require such assistant to sign an agreement similar and identical with this;
- (i) that the merchandise delivered to me by the said manufacturers shall at all times be the property of the said manufacturer, and that I shall assume full responsibility for the return of same to the said manufacturer except in the event of same having been destroyed by fire;
- (j) that I will not accept work from the said manufacturer or any other manufacturer at a rate of compensation which will not permit me to earn a minimum of \$13 per week for 40 hours of services within a week;
- (k) that I understand that the provisions of the Code of Fair Competition for the lace manufacturing industry issued under the National Industrial Recovery Act provides that employees must not be employed in excess of 40 hours in any one week, and therefore I fully understand that this provision of the law intends that I shall not be employed in excess of a total of 40 hours per week even though I may be employed by more than one manufacturer.

In signing this agreement I certify that I have read all of the foregoing and agree to comply with same.

Signed.....

An agreement must be obtained from every person performing work at home.



