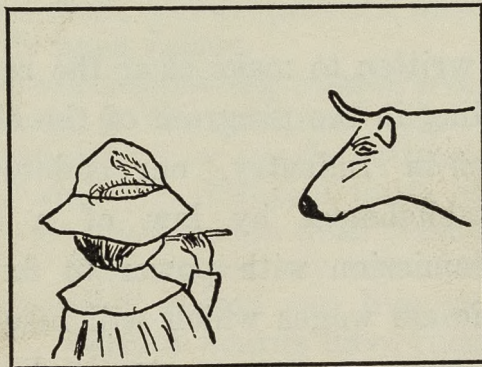


WOMEN'S WAGES
AND THE
COST OF LIVING

331.2:39,6 (115)
OULHOT ✓



There was a Piper had a cow,
And he had naught to give her;
He pulled out his pipe and played her a tune:
"Consider, Old Cow, Consider".

The cow considered very well,
And gave the Piper a penny,
And bade him play the other tune:
"Corn-rigs are Bonny!"

331.
423
097
3
WOM

PRICE 10 CENTS
Reduction when ordered in quantities by Local Leagues
From Committee Headquarters
308 N. Michigan Avenue, Chicago

WOMEN IN
INDUSTRY
COMMITTEE

OF THE
NATIONAL LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS
532 Seventeenth St. N. W.
Washington, D. C.

12-'23-1M



Pamphlet

FOREWORD

This is written to make clear the reasons for our including in the program of the Committee on Women in Industry, our endorsement of "The establishment by law of a Minimum Wage Commission with power to fix and enforce minimum wages which will insure to the working women a proper standard of health, comfort and efficiency."

We hope it will be used in local Committees on Women in Industry, by assigning this subject to one of the members of the Committee. After she has studied the leaflet very carefully, at an informal meeting of the Committee, or of the local League, she can tell the other members, in her own words, about the discrepancy between wages and the cost of living, the remedy and the result.

They didn't have a penny,
And they couldn't borrow any,
And they owed exactly half a cent for coal,
So they said, "Let's run away,"
When a Goose came out to say
They must pay three cents apiece all round for toll.

I

COST OF LIVING

NOBODY has managed to be unconscious of the rise in the cost of living. It has curtailed the luxuries of all but the very wealthy, has pressed very hard upon the salaried clerk, and in spite of a nominal rise in wages, has borne heavily upon Labor.

What can a self-supporting woman live on? Can we find any definite answer to the question? Yes, surprisingly definite. It is astounding how nearly estimates made by independent sources agree, in different parts of the country.

First of all we must decide what items it is really necessary to provide. Suppose we say the minimum is the least sum a self-supporting woman can live on in "health and frugal decency". Various boards have ruled to include these things:

- Board and Lodging;
- Clothing;
- Laundry;
- Car Fares;
- Doctor and Dentist;
- Church;
- Newspapers and Magazines;
- Vacation;
- Recreation;
- Reserve for Emergency;
- Incidentals;
- Organization Dues or Benefit Associations;
- Insurance;
- Self-improvement.

What does it cost to provide these things? Well, we have various estimates. The Woman's Bureau quotes the following:

NEW YORK STATE\$14.80	per week (1918)
PENNSYLVANIA	14.66 per week
TEXAS	14.78 per week
STATE OF WASHINGTON	..	22.10 per week
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	..	16.00 per week (1918)
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	..	19.49 per week (1920)
NORTH DAKOTA	16.65 per week

The Commissions on Minimum Wage have found

MASSACHUSETTS	\$14.40	per week (Brush Board 1921-22)
	13.97	per week (Women's Clothing 1921-22)
	13.75	per week (Muslin Underwear 1921-22)
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA..	16.50	per week (for the mercantile industry in June, 1922)
CALIFORNIA	15.00	per week (1922)
KANSAS	16.93	per week (1921)

THE OHIO COUNCIL ON WOMEN IN INDUSTRY:

OHIO\$17.25 per week (1920-21)

If you wish to study this interesting subject more thoroughly, we can give you material about it, but this will suffice to show you about what it costs to live. Just for the present, if you will remember that these estimates are from \$13.75 to \$22.10 per week, we can see how nearly women receive what they need to spend for necessities, by taking a look at wages.

Said the Pie-Man to Simple Simon:
 "Show me first your penny."
 Said Simple Simon to the Pie-Man:
 "Sir, I haven't any!"

II

WAGES

We might begin by looking at some figures in the big industrial State of Ohio—wage rates in 1919.

Please keep in mind, all the time you are reading these wage figures, that the year of 1919 was the year of supposedly fabulously high wages; you remember the silk stockings, silk waist stories which were featured in all the papers. The figures were sent in to the Industrial Commission by the employers themselves. These figures represent the wage rates for the week of greatest employment during the year, and they include bonuses and commissions, and where board was provided it is included in the estimate of the wages. These are the wage rates for adults over 18 years of age. They do not include figures for establishments having fewer than five employees. Figures were reported for 240,630 working women in the state and the workers fell into the following wage groups:

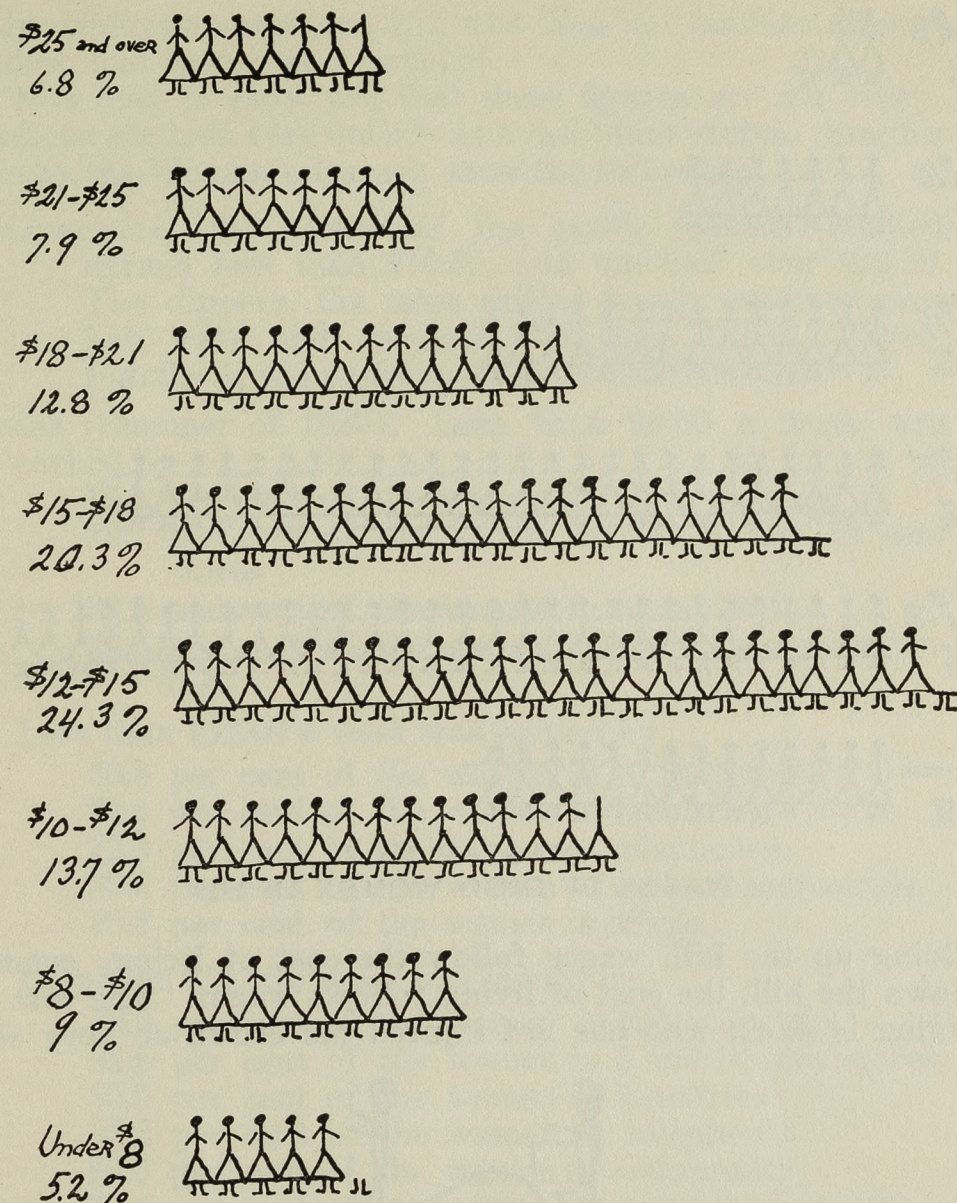


DIAGRAM No. 1

WAGE GROUPS OF OHIO WOMEN WORKERS IN 1919

Remembering that it cost something over \$17 to live, let us see what percentage of Ohio's women workers received less than specified amounts. Diagram 2 (where each little figure stands for 5,000 women) shows that over one-half of them were receiving less than \$15; over one-fourth, less than \$12.

Just a word about war wages. You may say that wages went up when the cost of living did. But were wages equal to the cost of living at the start? And did they climb as fast?

Under \$8
5%



Under \$10
14%



Under \$12
28%



Under \$15
52%



Under \$18
72%



\$18 and over
28%



DIAGRAM No. 2
WAGES OF OHIO WOMEN IN 1919

Going up the hill, wages follow the cost of living; coming down the hill, the cost of living follows wages. The cost of living is Jack, who has not injured his crown so very ser-

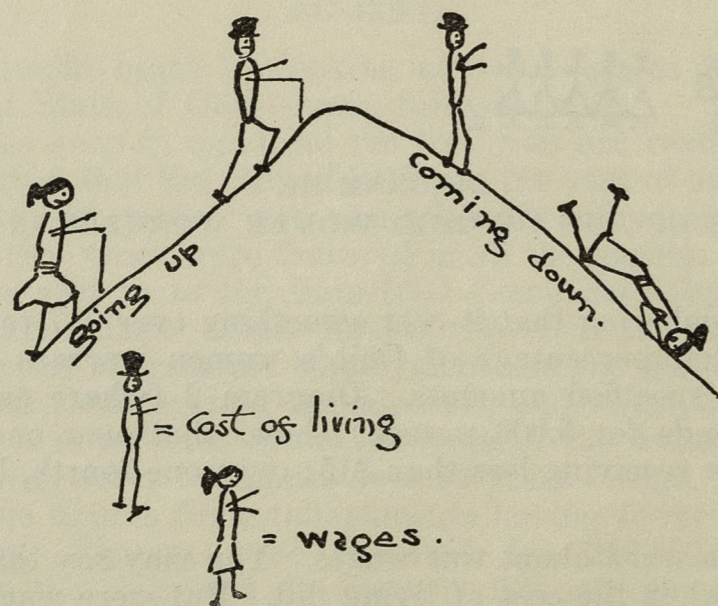


DIAGRAM No. 3—JACK AND JILL

iously; whereas wages are Jill, who does not tumbler after—but first, and faster, and farther!

Now just to show you that these figures are not exceptional, we can look very quickly at a few other states. Studies made by the Woman's Bureau show the following:

PHILADELPHIA, 1919. One-half the candy makers studied earned less than \$10.30, and one-half over \$10.30. The dippers, the most skilled group, received one-half over and one-half less than \$12.62. Three-fourths of the packers received less than \$13.

KANSAS (Summer of 1920). Less than \$9.00 a week was earned by

- 19.3 per cent of the women in all industries
- 79.7 per cent of the women in the 5 and 10 cent stores
- 32.5 per cent of the women in restaurants
- 26.8 per cent of the women in clothing manufacturing

Less than \$12.00 a week was earned by

- 50.6 per cent of the women in all industries
- 75.6 per cent of the women in laundries
- 72.3 per cent of the women in telephones
- 50.6 per cent of the women in general mercantile
- 40.6 per cent of the women in offices.

Less than \$15.00 a week was earned by

- 70.0 per cent of the women in all industries
- 99.6 per cent of the women in 5 and 10 cent stores
- 93.5 per cent of the women in laundries
- 93.2 per cent of the women in telephones
- 89.0 per cent of the women in restaurants
- 73.6 per cent of the women in general mercantile
- 72.6 per cent of the women in clothing manufacturing
- 57.2 per cent of the women in offices

More than one-half of the women were receiving less than \$12.00 a week.

RHODE ISLAND: Half the women studied received less than \$16.85; nearly one-fourth less than \$13. Nearly one-fourth of the women in the paper box industry and more than one-fourth of those in the 5 and 10 cent stores received less than \$10 a week.

GEORGIA, 1921: Weekly average for weavers was \$13.59; for spinners, \$13.99.

A survey by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in 1919, summarizing the wages of more than 400,000 wage earners in 21 industries throughout the United States, showed the average earnings of women workers as follows:

	(Per week)
Confectionery.	\$10.25
Paper box	10.89
Overalls.	12.26
Hosiery and underwear.....	13.04
Pottery	13.22
Foundries	14.19
Men's clothing.	14.80
Cigars	14.87
Confectionery—machine dippers.	
California	\$ 9.39
Georgia	9.29
Illinois	10.25
Indiana	6.85
Iowa	13.34
Kentucky.	5.94
Maryland	7.80
Massachusetts	10.33
Michigan.	5.96
Minnesota	8.15
Missouri	9.15
New York	9.16
Ohio	8.16
Pennsylvania	9.70
Wisconsin	9.38
Button-hole makers.	
All.	\$14.65
Connecticut.	12.75
New Hampshire	14.19
Ohio	11.88
Tennessee	9.48
Overall Operators.	
All.	\$12.12
Indiana	10.37
North Carolina	10.69
Ohio	10.91
Tennessee	8.99

MINNESOTA:—In a report published in 1920, by the Council of National Defense and the Minnesota Bureau of Women and Children, the relation between wages and the standard of living possible was estimated as follows:

Wage Group
Below \$10.00 per week
\$10.00—\$14.00 per week
\$15.00—\$19.00 per week
\$20.00 and over

Economic Class
Below subsistence line
Minimum subsistence
Normal subsistence
Normal standard

In a field study made by these organizations, 17,459 wage earners were found receiving less than \$10.00 a week, and over 34 per cent of all the women wage earners studied received less than a minimum subsistence wage. Among the factory workers, 43.8 per cent received less than a subsistence wage.

The Massachusetts Minimum Wage Commission found in 1919 that three-fifths of the women in the canning industry were paid under \$9 a week, and nearly two-fifths under \$8.00.

This is probably sufficient data on wages to show you what a large proportion of wage-earning women must do without many of the necessities in our list on page three.

III

HOW DIFFERENCE IS MADE UP

But if it costs between \$13.75 and \$22.10 to live, and there are so very many women receiving under \$9, and under \$10, and under \$12, and under \$15, then how is the difference made up? Suppose we adapt Mr. Felix Frankfurter's answer to this question to the Ohio figures, for example. It would then sound like this:—

Employer: I am to pay to you and you are to receive from me \$12 per week. You are to give to me and I am to receive from you all your working energy, which has been legally ascertained to consist of not more than 50 hours a week, nine hours a day.

Employee: But, sir, this working energy, of which you are to receive the total, costs at the very least, over \$15. How are we to get the balance?

Employer: You can get it in one of three ways: (1) Members of your family engaged in other industries will supply it rather than see you starve; or (2) you can get it from a "friend"; or (3) you can get it from public or private charity.

After all, when the community has for working women "homes" that are not self-supporting, and that have "campaigns" for funds to run them, you and I are making up that difference, are buying that working energy and making a present of it to the employer; and the charity work the doctors do, as they think, for the girls, and the hospitals and institutions, supposedly for the girls, are really buying this working energy and making a free gift of it to the employer, instead of his paying for it himself, out of his profits.

IV

WHO SHOULD PAY THE DIFFERENCE?

"It is the employer, and the employer alone," says Mr. Frankfurter, "who receives the benefit of the woman's working energy, which can not be produced or maintained by less" than some definite amount per week. "That is the minimum cost of her labor. It provides only for such quantity of food as will preserve her working energy and for such shelter and clothing and maintenance as will save it from destruction or impairment."

Surely the employer should at least pay the worker what it costs the worker herself to furnish the energy the employer is purchasing. Mr. Frankfurter goes on to say: "If the status were that of slave owner and slave, instead of employer and employee, the owner would have to expend at least this much to keep the slave in fit condition for her work; or if we look upon a human worker in a factory as a mere piece of physical machinery, this weekly sum would represent the minimum actual cost of the coal and repairs it would require for operation."

V

WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT IT?

But is there any way the employer can be made to make up the difference? Is there any way to make wages come up to the cost of the necessities the worker must have? There are three ways:

FIRST. When women workers are scarce, then the employers compete with each other for workers, and the result is that wages go up. The trouble with this way is that there are so many workers, so many more workers than jobs most of the time, that it takes a lot of work to begin using these

extra workers, and to use enough of them, so that wages begin to go up. We saw it happen during the war more than ever before, but now as work is scarce and workers are plentiful we see the wages coming down again.

SECOND. The workers, instead of relying on having a scarcity of workers, can club together and say that they will agree to a wage only as a body and not one by one, because that way they can manage to get a better wage. This is the method used by trade unions, and it is the very best method, but it has worked much better in the case of men than for women. It does not work so well for women because they are slower to realize what it could do for them, and this is partly because most women expect to be in industry just a short time, and then to be married and have a home of their own.

THIRD. The third method is for the state to step in and say it has a right to protect itself by insisting on healthy citizens and cannot afford to see them broken down in health, and the state can pass laws providing that women workers are to be paid enough to live on "in health and frugal decency".

Dr. Leiserson says: "As a matter of fact, there is always a minimum wage; either it is set by the state or by the union, or in absence of such a minimum it is set by the employers themselves. Without a union and without a law, this minimum is set by employers below a living wage."

The name "Minimum Wage Bill" is perhaps confusing; it really means that even the very lowest (or minimum) wage must be sufficient to cover the cost of necessities for the worker.

VI

LEGISLATED MINIMUM WAGE

1. WHERE TRIED. Twelve states and the District of Columbia and Porto Rico. These are:

Arizona	Minnesota
Arkansas	North Dakota
California	Oregon
Colorado	Utah
Kansas	Washington
Massachusetts	Wisconsin

Such a method is the one used in Great Britain, seven provinces in Canada, in Australia, Argentina, France, Norway, and during the war in Germany and Austria.

2. FORM. The standard minimum wage bill provides:

(a) The Governor appoints a commission of three, representing employers, employees, and impartial public. (The standard bill stipulates that one of these must be a woman.)

(b) This commission investigates trades in which it has reason to believe wages are below the cost of living, and in each trade in which the investigation points to this being the case, appoints

(c) A trade board. This board has three members representing the employers, three representing the employees, and three representing the impartial public.

Diagram No. 4 perhaps will make this form a little more clear. We have represented three trade boards; there will, of course, be any number, one for each industry.

3. METHOD.

(a) Each trade board gets together and comes to an agreement about the cost of living for a girl working in that trade; they can decide that it isn't the same all over the state, and set a different figure for different locations. The employers' representatives sometimes have purchased wardrobes and brought them to the meetings of the board, and there the girls have a chance to explain, for instance, why the cheaper things won't do, because they don't wear, etc., etc. The boards are a great education and bring to light many facts. Miss Ethel Johnson, secretary of the Massachusetts Commission, says: "The boards contribute, although on a small scale, towards the solution of some of the serious industrial problems of today. In so far as they succeed in bringing together groups with conflicting views and inducing them to recognize the community of their interest and their mutual obligation to the commonwealth, in so far as they succeed in replacing prejudice with understanding, suspicion with confidence and respect, they are helping to remove some of the underlying causes of industrial unrest," and Miss Mary Van Kleeck calls the trade board "democratically organized machinery".

Of course the decision reached by the board is a compromise—it doesn't entirely satisfy anybody—but a compromise is reached and reported to the commission, and the commission can then decree that no wage lower than that amount shall be paid in that industry.

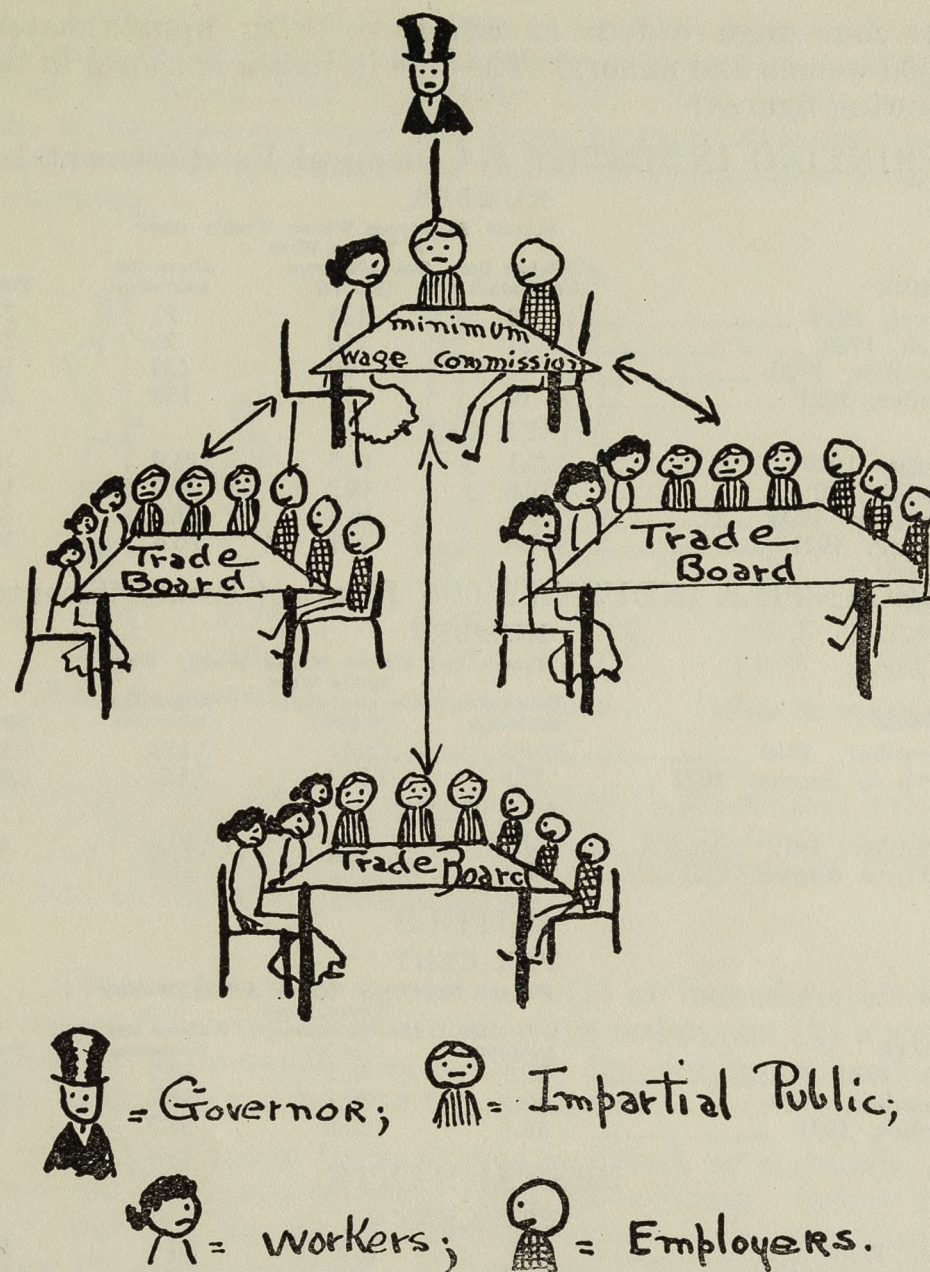


DIAGRAM No. 4
HOW THE STANDARD MINIMUM WAGE BILL WOULD WORK

(b) Provision is made for a lower wage for minors, apprentices, for aged and infirm or mentally deficient workers, but the percentage of these lower wages allowed any one employer is limited so that this exception cannot be abused.

4. RESULTS.

(a) In Massachusetts, by the summer of 1920, 72,900 women workers had had their wages raised by the Commission. In the District of Columbia, by December, 1921, there

were four wage orders in effect, covering approximately 12,500 women and minors. The rise in wages is shown in the following figures:

PRINTING INDUSTRY (14 Identical Establishments)

DATE	NUMBER			Total
	Below the minimum	The minimum (\$15.50)	Above the minimum	
August, 1919	79	123	71	273
March, 1920	31	118	96	245
December, 1920	13	30	139	182
October, 1921	10	39	159	208
	PER CENT			
August, 1919	29.1	45.0	25.9	100
March, 1920	12.6	48.2	39.2	100
December, 1920	7.1	16.5	76.4	100
October, 1921	4.8	18.8	76.4	100

MERCANTILE INDUSTRY (197 Identical Establishments)

DATE	NUMBER			Total
	Below the minimum	The minimum (\$16.50)	Above the minimum	
November, 1919	1,305	2,041	2,172	5,518
March to August, 1921	573	1,902	2,572	5,042
	PER CENT			
November, 1919	23.6	37.0	39.4	100
March to August, 1921	11.3	37.7	51.0	100

HOTELS

DATE	PER CENT			Total
	Below the minimum	The minimum (\$16.50)	Above the minimum	
June, 1920	55.0	16.1	28.9	100
December, 1920	46.3	20.7	33.0	100
October, 1921	43.1	23.6	33.3	100

RESTAURANTS

DATE	PER CENT			Total
	Below the minimum	The minimum (\$16.50)	Above the minimum	
June, 1920	34.5	30.6	34.9	100
December, 1920	33.2	22.5	44.3	100
October, 1921	32.8	23.5	43.7	100

FIVE AND TEN CENT STORES (7 Identical Establishments)

DATE	NUMBER			Total
	Below the minimum	The minimum (\$16.50)	Above the minimum	
November, 1919	115	109	34	258
November, 1920	66	124	55	245
October, 1921	65	118	52	235
	PER CENT			
November, 1919	44.6	42.2	13.2	100
November, 1920	26.9	50.6	22.5	100
October, 1921	27.7	50.2	22.1	100

Perhaps it would help to have a picture of this last table, showing the change in the percentage in these different groups from November, 1919, to October, 1921. Note the decrease in the proportion receiving less than the minimum, and the increase in the percentage of those receiving more than the minimum.

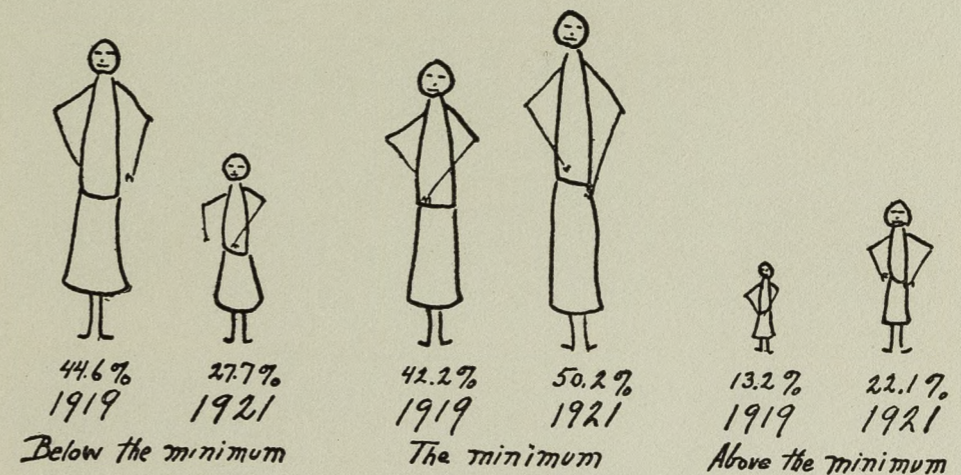


DIAGRAM No. 5

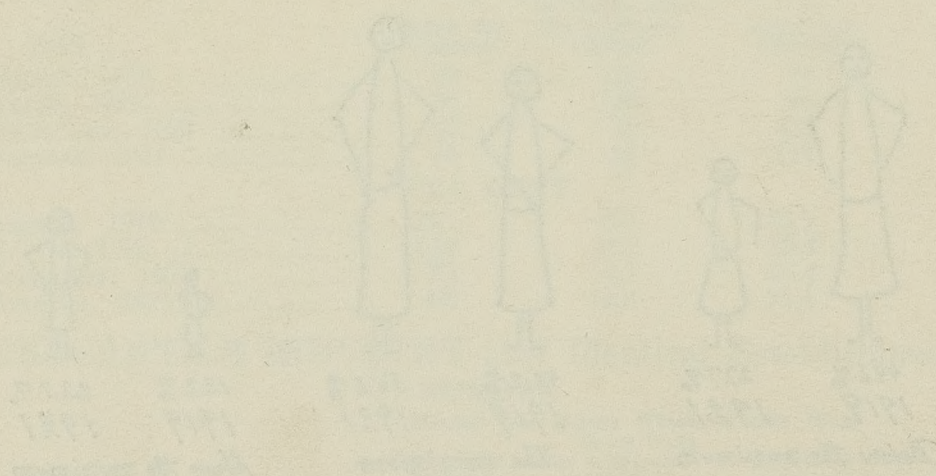
PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN WORKERS IN 5 AND 10 CENT STORES IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA BY WAGE GROUPS, IN 1919 AND 1921, SHOWING INCREASE IN PERCENTAGE RECEIVING MORE THAN THE MINIMUM.

These tables show two things—(1) an immediate increase in wages following the minimum wage order, and (2) a steady tendency to increase wages above the minimum level—the minimum does *not* become the maximum.

We have given these figures in detail, as a sample, and have not the space to quote from other states. Suffice it to say that the reports of other minimum wage commissions show the same tendency. For example, the California report shows that whereas in 1914, before the Commission had made any rulings, 69 per cent of the women workers in the mercantile industry received less than \$12 a week, in 1922, only minor workers (2.05 per cent of the entire number of workers) receive less than \$12 a week.

There are other results, besides this important rise in wages. The high overtime rates in California have resulted automatically in eliminating the 12 and 17-hour working days in the fruit and vegetable packing industries. The report for the District of Columbia shows a decrease in the employment of children.

Faint, illegible text at the top of the page, possibly bleed-through from the reverse side.



Faint, illegible text in the middle section of the page, likely bleed-through.

Faint, illegible text in the lower middle section of the page, likely bleed-through.

Faint, illegible text in the lower section of the page, likely bleed-through.

Faint, illegible text in the bottom section of the page, likely bleed-through.

