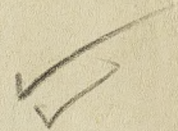


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Study Leaflet Series, No. 2

Minimum Wage Legislation

WOMEN IN INDUSTRY COMMITTEE
of the

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

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MINIMUM WAGE LEGISLATION*

- I. ARGUMENT FOR MINIMUM WAGE LEGISLATION FOR WOMEN:
- A. The great majority of wage-earning women and girls support themselves and contribute something to the support of others.
 - B. If a wage-earning woman is not paid enough to cover a reasonably comfortable room, decent clothing, adequate food, and something for health, recreation and savings, her power of resistance may be lowered, her capacity to bear healthy children is affected, her health is undermined, her industrial efficiency is reduced.
 - C. Her bargaining capacity is less than that of her employer and less than that of men workers because
 - 1. There are not so many jobs open to women.
 - 2. Women are often not especially trained.
 - 3. They are not expected to remain permanently in industry.
 - 4. They are not in the habit of making bargains.
 - 5. They are not efficiently organized into trade unions.
 - D. Some industries in which a low grade of skill and a seasonal demand prevail, have relied upon sweated home work, which is dangerous to the public health and disastrous to the home life of the workers. Legal minimum rates seem the only remedy for this evil.
 - E. Such legislation protects the "good employer" against "unfair competition."
- II. THE CONTENT OF THE MINIMUM WAGE LAWS IN THE UNITED STATES. A few states have minimum rates prescribed by the act itself. The better laws provide for
- A. A permanent state commission.
 - B. Subordinate wage boards.
 - C. Careful investigation into cost of living.
 - D. Declaration of minimum rates by the commission.
 - E. Licenses for handicapped women.
 - F. Investigation into compliance with the laws.
 - G. Prosecution of violations.
- III. THE METHODS EMPLOYED BY WAGE COMMISSIONS:
- A. The budget for an individual worker is estimated.
 - B. The wage scales of successful enterprises in the industry are studied.
 - C. The relation of the wages bill to other labor costs is ascertained. The rate recommended is a result of all these considerations.
- IV. THE RESULTS OF LEGISLATIONS:
- A. The industrial efficiency of both employers and employees has been stimulated.
 - B. Industrial disputes have been prevented.

*The Committee on Women in Industry is under obligations to Miss Breckinridge, of the University of Chicago, and Miss Dewson, of the National Consumers' League, for assistance in preparing this leaflet.

- C. Fair competition has replaced cut-throat competition.
 - D. The minimum has not become a maximum.
 - E. The workers have not been dismissed. The labor turnover has been reduced.
 - F. The self-respect of women workers has been fostered.
 - G. In some cases trade unionism has been stimulated.
- (An excellent discussion of the results of legislation will be found in the summary of the Report of Lord Cave's Committee, issued by the National Consumers' League, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York City.)

V. THE CONSTITUTIONALITY.

- A. The state courts and the laws.
- The acts passed by the states have been upheld by every state supreme court before which the question has been raised. When it was first taken to the United States Supreme Court the court divided four to four (Mr. Justice Brandeis not sitting). The United States Supreme Court has more recently held the act of Congress creating a commission in the District of Columbia invalid by a vote of five to four.

VI. HISTORY OF MINIMUM WAGE LEGISLATION.

- A. The idea of a compulsory minimum wage is not new. It was discussed in the British Parliament in 1795. Beginnings of modern minimum-wage legislation: 1894 in New Zealand, 1896 in Victoria, the great "Trade Boards Act" of 1909 in England. All these acts apply to men as well as to women.
- B. In the United States the principle has been recognized by statutory enactment in twelve states and by Congress for the District of Columbia.
- C. France (1915), Norway (1918), and Argentina (1917), and seven Canadian provinces also have legislation dealing with this problem.

VII. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING.

Encyclopaedia Britannica, New Volumes, Vol. III. Article on "Trade Boards."

Bulletin of the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics No. 285, "Minimum Wage Laws of the United States."

Bulletin of the United States Women's Bureau No. 16, "State Laws Affecting Working Women."

See United States Women's Bureau Bulletins No. 2, 10, 19, 21, 22, 24, 26, 29, Women in Industry in Indiana, Virginia, Iowa, Rhode Island, Georgia, Maryland, Arkansas, Kentucky.

National Consumers' League. Report of Lord Cave's Committee on the British Trade Board Acts, 1909-1922: the Success of minimum wage legislation (summary of an impor-

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tant British Blue Book). From National Consumers' League Office, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York City, or 308 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, price 25 cents.

Brief for the Minimum Wage. A copy of this important document may be obtained free of charge for any public or school library, or may be purchased by individuals at \$1 per copy from the National Consumers' League, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

VIII. SUGGESTIONS FOR CLUB PAPERS.

1. A Working Woman's Budget in Our Community.
Estimate a budget (individual) for a working woman in your own community and compare it with the general rates of pay prevailing in leading industrial establishments.
(Write to the United States Commissioner of Labor Statistics and ask for a copy of the Standard Budget for Single Women and the work out the cost of the items in your own community.)
2. The Success of the Legal Minimum Wage in other Countries.
Study the Consumers' League Brief listed above and the Report of the Cave Committee.
3. Arguments for and against the Constitutionality of the Minimum Wage.
Read the decisions in the two minimum wage cases: *Stettler vs. O'Hara*, U. S. Supreme Court Reports, Vol. 243, p. 629, and *Adkins et al vs. the Children's Hospital*, U. S. Supreme Court Reports, Vol. 261, p. 525, and then see if some lawyer will not come to one of your meetings to discuss this subject for you.
4. The Present Status of the Minimum Wage Question in the United States. (Write to Miss Ethel Smith, Women's Trade Union League, New York Avenue, Washington, D. C., for material.)

Resolutions Relating to Minimum Wage Legislation Adopted at Des Moines Convention, National League of Women Voters April, 1923

WHEREAS, the National League of Women Voters for three years has incorporated in its body of standards the principle of minimum wage legislation for women in industry; and

WHEREAS, the United States Supreme Court has rendered an adverse decision in the case of the District of Columbia Minimum Wage Law, be it

RESOLVED, that we encourage in every way possible in states now operating under minimum wage laws the firm continuance in their administration, leaving to orderly litigation the validity of each state law; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this convention express the hope that the women of the country may take counsel together to decide what steps should be taken to retain and extend for women in industry the necessary protection afforded by minimum wage legislation.