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Pamphlet

STANDARDS for EMPLOYMENT of WOMEN . . .

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RECOMMENDED BY THE WOMEN'S BUREAU
 U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
 LEAFLET NO. 1, 1946

FOR

Standards

For Women Workers

THE great changes in women's work that were speeded up by the war have been developing for a little more than a century as the result of transferring industry from the home to the factory. In gradually increasing numbers, women have become wage workers outside their homes, either manufacturing goods or performing services for the public—working in factories, offices, stores, hotels, restaurants, and laundries. They are a large and important part of the labor force in the country. Many thousands of women also are employed by the Federal, State, and local governments, and other thousands work in private households.

Working conditions vary widely as to adequacy, even where legal regulations exist. Collective bargaining in many instances has established high standards for working conditions, wages, and hours. In other instances, employers themselves have set up good working conditions. But when standards depend wholly on voluntary action, they often do not apply to all workers and vary in their adequacy. For this reason, minimum standards should be established by law. The Nation's best interests demand good labor standards for women, many of whom are mothers and homemakers as well as wage earners.

Development of Standards

What are adequate standards for women workers? How are these developed?

Labor standards are not stationary but are influenced by continuously changing conditions. Minimum wage standards are adjusted as prices rise and as new items come into the accepted minimum standard of living. Historically, hours of work have been reduced as factory processes have been mechanized and also as fatigue has come to be recognized as a major factor in the worker's health and efficiency. The development of industrial hygiene has provided a basis for regulating

the use of industrial materials or processes that endanger the health of workers. Thus standards change as a result of advancing scientific knowledge and as a result of growing recognition by both workers and employers of the need for good working conditions.

Good labor standards should be maintained for all workers without discrimination. Certain standards, such as those relating to plant equipment and plant environment, affect men and women equally and obviously are not subject to discriminatory application. With respect to such matters as hours of work, rest periods and lunch periods, and seating, labor legislation in many States is responsible for the existence, in many industries, of better standards for women than for men. However, discrimination against women sometimes exists in regard to promotion, seniority, training, and particularly in regard to wages. Women frequently are hired for beginning jobs on an equal basis with men but do not get equal consideration for promotion. They are often not given the same training opportunities and, even if trained, are not given a chance at the better jobs. Equality in maintaining the right to a job through seniority, and in payment for work done, is too often lacking.

Labor standards are developed through many channels—employers, unions, governmental and private agencies. The following pages present standards which refer mainly to *industrial* and *office* workers. (Somewhat different standards are essential to safeguard women workers in various other fields, such as household employment, agriculture, technical and scientific work, but these standards require special consideration.) Outlined here are the broad basic recommendations for any program concerned with the health and efficiency of women employees. These recommendations do not attempt to deal with details, but they indicate the direction in which the development of good standards should move.

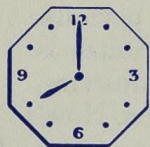
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Working Time

Schedules of 10 and 12 hours a day have given way to fewer daily hours. The 5-day week of 40 hours or even less is now a schedule widely used. Standards for working hours should include:



1. Not more than 8 hours of work a day, and not more than 48 a week; work time over 40 hours to be paid for at time and one-half the worker's regular rate.
2. At least 1 day of rest in 7.
3. Meal periods of at least 30 minutes. No work period of more than 5 hours without a break for meal or rest.
4. A rest period of at least 10 minutes in the middle of each half-day work period, to be given in addition to the lunch period and without lengthening the workday.
5. Some vacation with pay after 6 months on the job; a longer vacation after longer service.
6. Sick leave and maternity leave without loss of job or seniority rights. Maternity leave should cover a minimum of 6 weeks before and 2 months after confinement; with extension of either period on advice of the worker's physician.
7. Time off with pay on chief legal holidays. During the war the need for full production (especially of war materials) expanded the use of night work in manufacturing and elsewhere contrary to past practices generally regarded as basic for health and social reasons. Now that the war demand is no longer overriding, there should be a return to the sounder policy of the prewar years and night work kept to a minimum except in continuous-process industries and in essential services.

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Wages

Workers' standards of living are determined by their earnings. The least they should be assured is a minimum rate of pay adequate to meet the cost of living. But there must also be the assurance that this wage will continue throughout the year. The standard of living depends primarily on an adequate wage rate, plus the guarantee of an adequate annual wage. Such earnings are essential, not only because they maintain a secure and healthy level of living for individual workers, but also because they sustain the Nation's economic stability. To aid in accomplishing these objectives, Federal and State governments to some extent are providing by law for a floor to wages as well as a ceiling to hours. Wage standards should include the following:



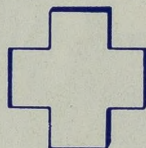
1. The principle of "equal pay": Wage rates based on the job, and not on the sex of the worker or other factors not related to ability to perform the job.
2. Minimum wage rates established through legislation; tips not considered as wages.
3. All protective clothing and other safety equipment, and all uniforms required, furnished and cared for by the employer as part of the cost of production; no worker required to contribute, directly or indirectly, to the cost of supplying or maintaining such clothing or equipment; if the worker does contribute, she is to be reimbursed for any such necessary expenditure by the employer.
4. Wages paid regularly and in full, on a weekly or semimonthly basis, and on a fixed day.

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Other Conditions

Standards adequate to protect the health and safety of workers are essential in all workplaces. These standards should include:

FOR HEALTH



1. Working environment: Adequate ventilation, lighting, and heating, to preserve health and reduce strain and fatigue.

2. Plant facilities: Washrooms, toilets, rest rooms and dressing rooms, drinking facilities, and lunch-rooms where nourishing food is available at reasonable prices. These facilities should meet the needs of the workers and conform to high standards of health and sanitation.

3. Medical services in the plant commensurate with needs of the workers.

4. A program of industrial hygiene to discover and protect against occupational hazards arising from the use of dangerous substances or processes.

5. Lifting heavy weights and other undue physical strain to be eliminated from job requirements to the fullest extent possible.

6. Suitable seats, in adequate numbers, and freedom for workers to use them while working—at all times if the nature of the job permits, and in any event during periods when not actively engaged in performance of duties that require a standing position.

FOR SAFETY



1. Equipment and machinery in good working condition, with adequate guards against injury.

2. Safety equipment and clothing, such as goggles, safety shoes, protective gloves, as needed, maintained in good condition.

3. Safe and uncrowded work space; stairways, floors, halls, rooms, and passageways kept in good condition and adequately lighted.

4. A continuing safety program and training in safety on the job for all workers.

Industrial Home Work . . .

Efforts should be made to abolish the industrial home-work system, with its long and irregular hours, low earnings, and child labor. In nonindustrial States, legislation should prohibit home work. In industrial States where it is now extensive there should be strict regulation of hours of work and wages until prohibitory laws can be passed. Employers who use the labor of home workers can produce in direct competition with factory employers who have higher standards of hours, wages, and working conditions. Home work tends to undermine such standards.

Women's Bureau

● The Women's Bureau in the United States Department of Labor is the agency established by Congress (in 1920) to safeguard and promote the interests of women who work, to formulate standards and policies to improve their working conditions, increase their efficiency, and advance their profitable employment. This Bureau acts as a clearing house for information on all matters pertaining to women workers. It makes special studies of women's employment, analyzes labor legislation affecting them, and advises on any pertinent proposed legislation. For more detailed information about women's work and standards for their working conditions, write to the Women's Bureau, U. S. Department of Labor, Washington 25, D. C.

References

The following list of Women's Bureau pamphlets includes those relating most closely to the subjects covered in this leaflet. Single copies are free on request.

- When You Hire Women. Sp. Bull. 14. 16 pp. 1944. 10¢.
Washing and Toilet Facilities for Women in Industry. Sp. Bull. 4. 11 pp. 1942. 5¢.
Women's Effective War Work Requires Good Posture. Sp. Bull. 10. 6 pp. 1943. 5¢.
Lifting and Carrying Weights by Women in Industry. Sp. Bull. 2. 12 pp. 1941. (Rev. 1946.) 5¢.
The Industrial Nurse and the Woman Worker. Sp. Bull. 19. 47 pp. 1944. 10¢.
Union Series Leaflets:
Seniority Status of Women in Unions in War Plants. No. 1, 1945.
Rate for the Job. No. 2. 1945.
Union Provisions for Maternity Leave for Women Members. No. 3. 1945.
Women's Stake in Unions. No. 5. 1946.
State Labor Laws for Women (5 parts). Bull. 202.
Part I. Analysis of Hour Laws. 110 pp. 1945. 15¢.
II. Analysis of Plant Facilities Laws. 43 pp. 1945. 10¢.
III. Analysis of Regulatory Laws, Prohibitory Laws, Maternity Laws. 12 pp. 1945. 5¢.
IV. Analysis of Industrial Home-work Laws. 26 pp. 1945. 10¢.
V. Explanation and Appraisal. 66 pp. 1946. 15¢.
State Minimum-Wage Laws and Orders, 1942. Bull. 191. 52 pp. 1942. 20¢. 2 Supplements: 1945, 1946.

For sale by Superintendent of Documents
Washington 25, D. C., Price \$2.00 per hundred.

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