

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
WOMEN'S BUREAU

THE EMPLOYMENT OF  
WOMEN IN PUERTO RICO

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

FRANCES PERKINS, SECRETARY

WOMEN'S BUREAU

MARY ANDERSON, Director

BULLETIN OF THE WOMEN'S BUREAU, NO. 118

THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN  
IN PUERTO RICO

BY

CAROLINE MANNING



UNITED STATES  
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE  
WASHINGTON : 1934

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CONTENTS

	Page
Letter of transmittal.....	v
Home work in the needle trades.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Extent of factory work.....	1
Summary.....	1
Method of home-work survey.....	2
Earnings of home workers.....	3
Estimates of management as to time and earnings.....	5
Agents.....	7
Subagents.....	9
Wage agreement frustrated.....	11
Other effects of disorganization.....	12
Drawbacks of home work to managers.....	13
Proposed community workshops.....	14
Comparison with mainland wages.....	14
Assistance by men and children.....	15
Family income.....	15
Homes in which work is done.....	17
Recommendations.....	18
Factory employment in the needle trades.....	20
Men's clothing.....	21
Women's dresses.....	22
Infants' and children's cotton dresses.....	22
Handkerchiefs.....	23
Underwear.....	23
Employment of women in industries other than the needle trades.....	24
Canneries.....	24
Tobacco and cigar industry.....	27
Straw hats.....	28
Stores.....	29
Laundries.....	31
Telephone exchanges.....	33

ILLUSTRATIONS

	Facing Page
Typical native hut.....	Frontispiece
Home-work processes as done in a factory.....	14
Sewing with a hand machine on a board laid on the bed. Worker sits on a box, with knees against the bed.....	15
Squatters shacks on mud flats.....	18
Better type of town houses.....	19

III

THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN  
IN PUERTO RICO

HOME WORK IN THE NEEDLE TRADES

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR,  
WOMEN'S BUREAU,  
Washington, May 7, 1934.

MADAM: I have the honor to transmit for publication a report on the employment of women in Puerto Rico. In connection with the establishment of the Bureau of Women and Children in the Puerto Rico Department of Labor, for which the Federal Women's Bureau lent the services of an industrial supervisor, a survey of the industries of the island was made, with special attention to home work in the needle trades. The effects on the sewing trades on the mainland of the enormous quantities of hand-made garments, handkerchiefs, and other articles produced in Puerto Rico at extremely low wages would be difficult to measure.

To secure information to be applied in the drafting of a code for home workers in the needle trades of the island, hours and earnings were inquired into. The data have been presented at hearings on a code held at San Juan and at Washington.

As stated, the survey was conducted jointly by the Federal and Insular Departments of Labor, Caroline Manning, industrial supervisor of the Women's Bureau, representing the former. The report is the work of Miss Manning.

The cooperation extended by employers, workers, and other persons while the survey was in progress is gratefully acknowledged.

Respectfully submitted.

MARY ANDERSON, *Director.*

Hon. FRANCES PERKINS,  
*Secretary of Labor.*

*A brief summary of the report follows:*

Date: Winter of 1933-34.  
Scope: 323 workers in 262 homes were surveyed.  
Time worked by women:  
Some women worked extremely long hours, days and even nights. In some of the 8-hour day, one-third of the women reported their hours of work in 2 to 3 days and one-third reported their hours of work in 4 to 5 days and one-third reported their hours of work in 6 to 9 days or more.  
Many small, probably ill-paid, home workers were also included.

CONTENTS

Page	
7	Letter of transmittal
1	Home work in the needle trades
1	Introduction
1	Extent of factory work
1	Summary
2	Method of home-work survey
3	Earnings of home workers
5	Estimates of management as to time and output
7	Agents
9	Producers
11	Wage agreement frustrated
12	Other effects of disorganization
13	Drawbacks of home work to managers
14	Proposed community workshops
14	Comparison with mainland wages
15	Assistance by men and children
15	Family income
17	Homes in which work is done
18	Recommendations
20	Factory employment in the needle trades
21	Men's clothing
22	Women's dresses
22	Infants' and children's cotton dresses
23	Handkerchiefs
23	Underwear
24	Employment of women in industries other than the needle trades
24	Canneries
27	Tobacco and cigar industry
28	Straw hats
29	Shoes
31	Laundries
32	Telephone exchanges

ILLUSTRATIONS

Facing Page	
14	Typical native but
14	Home-work processes as done in a factory
15	Sewing with a hand machine on a board laid on the bed. Worker sits on a box with knees against the bed.
15	Squatters shack on mud flats.
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THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN  
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HOME WORK IN THE NEEDLE TRADES

INTRODUCTION

This information on home work was gathered in connection with a survey of the needle trades of Puerto Rico that was made in the winter of 1933-34 under the joint auspices of the Federal and Insular Departments of Labor. This system, said to comprise all but a small part of the entire needlework industry of the island, is of great interest to the mainland, where the markets are flooded with Puerto Rican products covering a wide range of qualities and prices. The home-work information in the following pages was presented at the hearings on a code for the needle trades held at San Juan and at Washington.

EXTENT OF FACTORY WORK

The number of establishments in the needlework industry varies greatly from time to time. A recent report of the Insular Department of Labor gives the number visited as 91. There are 129 such establishments in the following summary of a recent trade list:

Product	Number of factories
Total	129
Handkerchiefs	1 41
Men's suits, pants, or shirts	29
Infants' or children's dresses	16
Women's underwear:	
Silk lingerie	7
Other	16
Household linen	10
Various	10

The Puerto Rico Department of Labor states that 4,723 persons, only 250 of them men, are employed inside the 91 shops it reports.

SUMMARY

A brief summary of the report shows the following:

**Date:** Winter of 1933-34.

**Scope:** 323 workers, in 252 homes, were visited.

**Time worked by women:**

Some women worked extremely long hours, days and evenings. In terms of 8-hour days, one-third of the women finished their bundles of home work in 2 to 4 days and one-third finished them in 5 to 8 days, all but four of the remainder taking 9 days or more.

<sup>1</sup> Many small, probably little more than distributing centers of home work.

**Earnings:**

Earnings per bundle ranged from 10 cents or less to \$4, the median being 65 cents. Only 8 percent of the women earned as much as \$2. About one-fifth (19.2 percent) earned less than 25 cents.

Hourly earnings were extremely low: For 31.4 percent of the women they were less than 1 cent, for 31.1 percent they were 1 and under 2 cents, and for 31.4 percent they were 2 and under 4 cents.

Agents, whose commissions (averaging about 22 percent) greatly reduce the home workers' earnings, also were interviewed. A number of subagents were found.

Unfair practices included payment in groceries; payment in keep; delays in supplying work and in payment; retention by agent of wage increases.

Worries of the contractors were delay in return of work, spoiled goods, and constant cutting of rates by New York firms.

**METHOD OF HOME-WORK SURVEY**

No manufacturer or contractor was able to give a satisfactory answer to the question, "How many home workers do you employ?" A representative answer was, "We do not know who does the work or where it is done." The estimate of 50,000 home workers for the island as a whole must include many persons who work part time and many who are now unemployed.

Neither could the contractors give any reliable information about the amount of work the individual workers received, nor how much each actually earned, or when they were paid. In San Juan 6 employers who give out work to be done in homes furnished the names of 89 of their agents, living in 37 widely scattered towns. They knew how much the agents were paid, but how much of this the agents retained for themselves and how much they paid the home workers no manufacturer or contractor was able to say.

To obtain some definite information about the work done in the homes, 323 women were visited by agents of the United States and Puerto Rico Departments of Labor in the winter of 1933-34. No special plan was followed in selecting the homes to be visited, other than to cover most parts of the island and to find the various operations on all types of garments usually delivered to the homes. The replies of home workers who were working on the same style numbers were so surprisingly uniform, though they were living miles apart, that they inspired confidence in the interview method and the results of the survey.

Schedules were obtained from 323 workers in 252 households. Fewer than 40 percent were mothers of families, and the number of single daughters was about the same. In 145 households there were children less than 7 years old. Yet even in these homes there seemed to be someone besides the home worker who was free to take much of the household responsibility. Aside from washing, domestic duties interfered but little with the business of sewing in most cases, although some were very casual workers, so casual sometimes that their replies could hardly be used in summarizing facts. One-fourth of these home workers had had experience inside of factories.

In 113 of the 252 households the only wage income during the week previous to the agent's visit had been from home work. Though some families had other sources of income, it was likely to be negligible, possibly 3 or 4 chickens, a goat, or a few banana trees. Rarely was there any income of importance. It is small wonder that over half of the women sewed 8, 9, or 10 hours daily when they could get work.

**EARNINGS OF HOME WORKERS**

The discussion with the home workers of rates and earnings was restricted to the last bundle of work completed by the interviewed person. These bundles varied greatly in number of pieces, type of work required, total amount of work on the various garments, and rates paid. In some bundles of handkerchiefs there were several dozen pieces; others consisted of possibly only a dozen handkerchiefs; and in the case of silk underwear 2 or 3 pieces often made up a bundle.

The finest kind of embroidery was required in some cases, while in other bundles the work was coarse and poor. Some work was slow, other work went fast. All these various factors had to be considered in discussing the last bundle of work. The scheduled questions, using the last bundle as a base, included the names of contractor, agent, and subagent, type of garment, material, size of bundle, rate paid per dozen, time necessary to complete a piece or a dozen (or whatever unit of work the worker was best able to discuss), the usual working time a day and variations from day to day. These questions gradually led up to other inquiries about the amount earned for the last bundle of work and the time required to complete it, first in number of days on which work was done and then the hours worked from day to day—reckoned roughly, of course, in many cases. Always an effort was made to allow for interruptions in the home work and to keep the interview on a reasonable basis.

As was to be expected, some of the more casual workers failed to give definite replies, but on the other hand it was surprising how many regarded home work in a businesslike way and were able to make consistent answers throughout the schedule. In cases where incomplete or contradictory replies were made, the schedule was of little statistical value. To reduce the schedule data to a common denominator—or a common talking point—the working time per bundle was reduced (in the office) to units of 8-hour days; for example, if a woman after much questioning reported that she had spent 2 mornings, 1 afternoon, and a long evening sewing quite steadily, her working time was reckoned roughly as 2 days.

That many bundles are small, not large enough to keep a woman working all the week, is evidenced by the fact that about one fourth of the women had finished their bundles in 2 or 3 days and a few had completed them within 1 day. However, another fourth took 6, 7, or 8 days to finish their bundles, and one-eighth had worked on them 2 weeks, 3 weeks, even a month.

The earnings of the 323 women who reported definitely these data on earnings and time worked ranged from less than 25 cents to \$4 a bundle:

Earnings per bundle:	Percent of the women
Less than 25 cents.....	19.2
25, less than 50 cents.....	23.2
50 cents, less than \$1.....	27.6
\$1, less than \$2.....	22.0
\$2 or more.....	8.0

Only 9 women earned as much as \$3 a bundle, and the largest amount was \$4, for embroidering silk slips, earned by a young girl who worked most diligently for 2 weeks on the allotment of 8 pieces.



As an illustration of how little some bundles of work netted may be mentioned the young woman who struggled for 2 days embroidering handkerchiefs and had only 20 cents to show for her work; or another who by embroidering a dozen coarse nightgowns earned 12 cents for her day's work. In a few instances the rate for the bundles was as little as 10 cents, or even less. To furnish a fairer picture of earnings, a table showing the amounts received per bundle and the time worked follows.

*Earnings from last bundle of work, by days worked*

NUMBER OF HOME WORKERS

Days worked <sup>1</sup>	Number of home workers reporting	Less than 25 cents	25, less than 50 cents	50 cents, less than \$1	\$1, less than \$2	\$2 or more
Total.....	323	62	75	89	71	26
1.....	4	4				
2.....	40	21	17	2		
3.....	41	12	12	15	2	
4.....	27	6	9	8	4	
5.....	26	2	6	8	9	1
6.....	30	6	5	15	2	2
7.....	30	3	4	9	13	1
8.....	20	2	7	3	6	2
9.....	19	1		8	7	3
10.....	22	2	7	5	3	5
11.....	12	1	1	3	5	2
12.....	8		2	2	2	2
13-18.....	25		3	7	12	3
19-24.....	7	2	1	2	1	1
25 or more.....	12		1	2	5	4

PERCENT OF HOME WORKERS

Total.....	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	(2)
1.....	1.2	6.5				
2.....	12.4	33.9	22.7	2.2		
3.....	12.7	19.4	16.0	16.9	2.8	
4.....	8.4	9.7	12.0	9.0	5.6	
5.....	8.0	3.2	8.0	9.0	12.7	
6.....	9.3	9.7	6.7	16.9	2.8	
7.....	9.3	4.8	5.3	10.1	18.3	
8.....	6.2	3.2	9.3	3.4	8.5	
9.....	5.9	1.6		9.0	9.9	
10.....	6.8	3.2	9.3	5.6	4.2	
11.....	3.7	1.6	1.3	3.4	7.0	
12.....	2.5		2.7	2.2	2.8	
13-18.....	7.7		4.0	7.9	16.9	
19-24.....	2.2	3.2	1.3	2.2	1.4	
25 or more.....	3.7		1.3	2.2	7.0	

<sup>1</sup> Time worked in terms of 8-hour days. Includes fractional parts of days, as 1 and under 2 days, 2 and under 3 days, and so on.

<sup>2</sup> Not computed; base less than 50.

As is usual in piecework, there is no consistent increase in earnings as the time required to complete the bundle increases. The median time, however—half the women taking more and half taking less—was, for less than 25 cents, about 3 days; for 25 and less than 50 cents, 5 days; for 50 cents and less than \$1, almost 7 days; for \$1 and less than \$2, 9 days; and for the small group earning \$2 or more, almost 11 days. All women who earned as much as 25 cents worked longer than 1 day, and only 2 earned as much as 50 cents in a 2-day period. All those who earned \$2 or more had worked at least 5 days. The median of the earnings was 65 cents.

*Estimated hourly earnings on last bundle of work, 323 home workers reporting total earnings and time worked*

Hourly earnings (cents):	Percent of home workers
Less than 1.....	31.4
1, less than 2.....	31.1
2, less than 3.....	21.2
3, less than 4.....	10.2
4, less than 5.....	2.7
5, less than 6.....	2.1
6, less than 7.....	.3
7, less than 8.....	.9

Using the records of actual earnings per bundle and the estimated number of 8-hour days necessary to complete the work, hourly earnings have been reckoned, as an hour is a better unit for gaging work that can be done so easily on a part-time basis. The results of these estimates were surprisingly uniform, but they must be accepted with some caution, as there were no written records of time worked, and it had to be estimated.

Approximately half of the 123 women who were sewing on handkerchiefs were making about 1 cent an hour; 30 percent were earning about 2 cents an hour, and a very few were earning as much as 6 cents. For the group of 323 home workers as a whole, that is, not only those working on handkerchiefs but those on household linens, dresses, cotton nightgowns, silk lingerie, men's pants and shirts, the earnings are somewhat lower than those of the handkerchief workers. Reduced to an hourly basis, almost one-third of the 323 were earning less than 1 cent an hour, about one-half were earning 1 or 2 cents, and comparatively few—slightly more than one-twentieth—were earning from 4 to 8 cents.

The scale of hourly earnings ran somewhat higher in men's pants and shirts than in other lines and was lowest in cotton nightgowns and household linens. None of the 94 home workers in gowns and linens earned as much as 3 cents an hour and almost three-fourths were earning less than a cent an hour.

In silk lingerie most of the women were earning 1 to 2 or 3 cents an hour; in dresses and handkerchiefs few were earning as much as 3 cents.

Hand-made products are or should be luxuries in the mass production of the machine age, but home workers whose earnings average only 1 to 2 or 3 cents an hour are paying the price for the rest of the world that insists on finding exquisite handwork on the bargain table.

**ESTIMATES OF MANAGEMENT AS TO TIME AND EARNINGS**

In several instances contractors or agents with an intimate knowledge of the labor required on various styles estimated the time required to complete the necessary operations; and this time, correlated with the rates per dozen, disclosed shockingly low wages in every case.

**Cotton pillowcases**

Hand scalloping and ornate embroidery, for which the rate is \$1 per dozen pieces. A manager stated, "A girl must be very rapid to make two, working steadily all day." If a girl could make two a day (and no girl doing this type of work reported such an accomplishment) she would earn 16 or 17 cents, less than 2 cents an hour.

**Cotton nightgowns**

(1) A fairly simple design for which contractor pays agent 43 cents a dozen and agent pays home worker 30 cents; the agent's sister, a particularly fast and good sewer, can finish six gowns a day, working from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.; that is, 15 cents for at least 10 hours of work, or about 1½ cents an hour.

(2) A very ornate embroidery design and scallop trimming around neck and armholes. Design consists of 1½ yards of double hemstitching and 120 each of eyelets and embroidered leaves, dots, and stems. The contractor pays \$1.43 a dozen gowns for this work and agent pays home worker \$1.25. The agent estimated that a swift worker might do all the embroidery but hemstitching on one gown in a day, working morning, afternoon, and night. She would earn not over 10 cents for such a day's work, probably averaging about 1 cent an hour.

**Silk lingerie**

(1) A hand embroiderer inside a factory—a good worker—has the record of finishing her work on two silk undergarments in a day. At the rate of \$2 a dozen, her daily earnings are 33 cents, or 4 cents an hour.

(2) On another style the agent herself was sewing. She stated that with great concentration she could do one piece in a full day. The rate being \$1.75 a dozen, she is able to earn about 15 cents a day, roughly 2 cents an hour.

**Handkerchiefs**

(1) Fairly fine and nice. Contractor estimated that a good sewer cannot make over two a day unless she works from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., in which case she might embroider three a day. The rate is 96 cents a dozen, as paid by contractor. Agent keeps 16 cents of this and pays home worker 80 cents a dozen, which would yield 13 or 20 cents a day according to whether 2 or 3 are made, or about 2 cents an hour.

(2) Cotton handkerchiefs retailing in New York at 5 cents apiece (14½ cents a dozen wholesale) have coarse embroidery in four colors in each corner. The contractor estimated that a worker should embroider 2½ dozens a day. At the rate of 8 cents a dozen her earnings are 20 cents a day, or 2½ cents an hour.

(3) In one little shop, inside workers were embroidering on handkerchiefs the same designs as done by home workers. A very good inside worker was finishing eight pieces a day, paid at the rate of 45 cents a dozen. Speeding all day, almost without interruption, that worker was able to make 30 cents a day, or between 3 and 4 cents an hour.

**Infants' dresses**

Infants' dresses with fagoting, hemstitching, and an embroidered design on yoke and hem, the type of garment that retailed in the summer of 1933 in some stores for about \$1 apiece, are made for \$1.50 a dozen. It takes a day to make one of these garments and nets the maker 15 cents, roughly 2 cents an hour.

**Silk blouses**

Home workers receive \$6.50 a dozen for making silk blouses by hand. The agent estimated most carefully that it requires 1½ days

to make 1; that is, 54 cents for at least 12 hours of work, or 4½ cents an hour.

In these 10 cases, as reckoned by someone connected with management, daily earnings ranged from 10 cents through 15, 20, 30, to 36 cents, and hourly earnings ranged from 1 to 4½ cents; one may have reached 5 cents, but the most were around 2 cents an hour. This corresponds quite closely to a statement made by a contractor who had inside embroiderers, that they made perhaps 30 cents a day, not over.

Further, these estimates by management did not differ much from the estimates made from the statements of home workers. In both cases the hand embroiderers and sewers could count on little more than a few cents a day, at the most 2 or 3 cents an hour.

**AGENTS**

Not only were the workers in the homes visited, but the agents who represented the contractors were interviewed. Some agents worked for only one manufacturer or contractor, while others worked for as many as 5 or 6. One agent who was delivering work for three contractors, in three widely separated towns, was himself a contractor for a New York firm.

Altogether, agents supplied data on 197 style numbers on which women were working. The questions asked them related chiefly to the quantity of work, amounts paid by the contractor, the recent increase in rates, their own commissions, usual practice in determining amount of commission, home workers' earnings, and delays in collection of the finished work.

Invoices of goods made out by the contractors were helpful in verifying styles, quantities, and amounts per unit paid by the contractors for the work, and were an excellent check on the statements of the agents. Rarely was there a record showing how much the agents paid the home workers, but statements made by one or more home workers under each agent offered a satisfactory means of checking his oral reports. In this way the business methods of the agents were verified both by contractors' invoices and the experience of home workers.

There was no standard agreement that controlled the agents' business arrangements with the home workers. Whatever they could make for themselves they did. Their demands varied from community to community and from individual to individual.

Illustrative of the haphazard arrangements was the case of two agents who were receiving a straight commission from the contractor for whom they both worked. The commission of one was fixed at 10 percent; for the other it was 5 percent, as she was less capable. However, in addition to this 5 percent commission the latter agent was deducting 6 percent from the amount intended by the contractor for the home workers' earnings, so that as a matter of fact the second agent was getting more per dozen than the more efficient agent who was paid the higher commission.

*Proportion retained by agent of total amount (including commission and wage increase) paid per unit by contractor for work done in homes*

[Total: 197 style numbers]

Proportion of payment retained by agent (percent)	Number of styles	Percent of styles
Less than 10.....	3	1.5
10, less than 15.....	25	12.7
15, less than 20.....	55	27.9
20, less than 25.....	37	18.8
25, less than 30.....	39	19.8
30, less than 35.....	20	10.2
35, less than 40.....	12	6.1
40, less than 50.....	5	2.5
50 or more.....	1	.5

Occasionally the agent kept very little of the amount paid per dozen for the outside work, sometimes as little as 10 percent, but on the other hand a few retained as much as 40 or 50 percent. The average (median) was approximately 22 percent.

In the cases of the 197 style numbers for which complete records were obtained, from the time they left the contractor's shop until finished by the home worker, the agents kept 25 percent or more of the amount paid by the contractor per unit for about two-fifths of the style numbers, 30 percent or more for about one-fifth of the style numbers.

*Relation of agent's commission to home-work earnings per unit of work*

[Total: 197 style numbers]

Proportion that agent's commission is of home-work earnings per unit (percent)	Number and percent of styles affected by specified proportions	
	Number	Percent
Less than 20.....	48	24.4
20, less than 30.....	67	34.0
30, less than 40.....	47	23.9
40, less than 50.....	12	6.1
50 or more.....	23	11.7

In two-fifths (41.6 percent) of the styles, agents' commissions were 30 percent or more of home-work earnings per dozen articles; in over one-tenth (11.7 percent) of the styles, agents' commissions were 50 percent or more. Further, the agent handles many dozens while a home worker may be embroidering only 1 dozen, so that the agent's income is determined more by the quantity he distributes than by the commission rate per dozen, which he is free to fix for himself.

Several agents claimed to have a few hundred home workers, but inspection proved that large numbers of home workers were not receiving work at the time of the interview. For the most part the agent seemed to be making a living. Reliable records showed that

one agent's commission was \$125 for one month in the fall of 1933; another's was \$97.73 for 2 months. In 1 month another agent returned 2,097 dozen handkerchiefs to one of the three firms for whom he was distributing work; for each dozen he retained about 2 cents for his own income. Another agent made \$68.21 in a month's period.

Two cases were found where the agents were conducting very small shops with crude equipment. The few employees were either living in or their families were free tenants on the agent's farm. The girls who lived in worked 9½ hours a day. But the worst situation was the matter of wages. While the agent herself was receiving about \$25 a week from her contractor, she was paying only \$6 in wages to all the girls together.

Another agent was making a neat sum by distributing silk lingerie, for which the contractor paid her \$5.76 a dozen to cover all the outside labor cost including her own earnings and those of the home worker. In practice she kept \$2.91 for herself and paid her workers \$2.85 for the embroidery.

Rates for embroidering bridge sets were low. They were paid by the dozen sets, but each set consisted of 1 cloth and 4 napkins, making 60 pieces per dozen sets. The embroidery was coarse, and the rate was as low as 30 cents a dozen sets for the embroidery, the agent taking 16 cents as her commission.

Another style of bridge set was paid by the contractor at the rate of 80 cents a dozen sets. Two agents were found distributing this style, but while one deducted 20 cents as her commission the other deducted 30 cents.

Not only were agents working independently, but contractors perhaps were setting the pace, judging at least by the case of two contractors handling the same style of garment for the same firm in New York. For similar styles with practically the same amount of work one contractor was paying his agents \$3.60 a dozen while the other was paying less than half as much, only \$1.65. For another style handled by two contractors the rate paid by the first was \$5.40 and by the second \$2.75.

### SUBAGENTS

When the amount paid by the contractor or manufacturer is subdivided into earnings for not only the agent and the home worker but an intermediary person, a subagent, who acts in turn as a distributor for the agent, the earnings of one of the groups, agents or home workers, must be correspondingly less.

Subagents usually work in the remoter districts not easily reached by the agent. During this survey, less than a score of subagents were found, and in some cases the information received was so incomplete or proved so contradictory that the final analysis simmered down to only 10 cases or style numbers handled by subagents. These 10 cases, however, were verified by manufacturers' records, statements of agents giving out these style numbers, and home workers receiving goods from the subagents. Unless such corroboration of amount paid and received could be made through each successive stage of handling, no comparison was made of the distribution of the labor cost of the outside work of the manufacturer.

These 10 illustrations may be too few in number to be representative of the entire system but they do indicate a trend. In no case had the manufacturer or contractor any information about the sub-agents; he shirked the responsibility for them as much as he did for the home workers. Of course he knows that there are subagents in the system, but it is immaterial to him whether or not any subagent handles his goods or how many handle his goods.

Style	Total amount paid for outside labor by contractor (per dozen)	Distribution of labor cost showing earnings of—			Percent distribution of labor cost of earnings of—		
		Agent	Sub-agent	Home worker	Agent	Sub-agent	Home worker
1	\$0.41	\$0.10	\$0.16	\$0.15	24.4	39.0	36.6
2	.072	.024	.008	.04	33.3	11.1	55.5
3	.096	.026	.01	.06	27.1	10.4	62.5
4	.24	.04	.02	.18	16.7	8.3	75.0
5	.24	.04	.04	.16	16.7	16.7	66.7
6	.08	.01	.01	.06	12.5	12.5	75.0
7	.24	.06	.02	.16	25.0	8.3	66.7
8	.24	.042	.028	.17	17.5	11.7	70.8
9	.25	.06	.02	.17	24.0	8.0	68.0
10	1.50	.20	.20	1.10	13.3	13.3	73.3

The most amazing example of how this system can work was that of a subagent distributing work on children's dresses. The contractor was paying 41 cents a dozen for outside labor. The agent retained 10 cents as his commission, the subagent 16 cents as his commission, which left 15 cents for the home worker. In this one instance the subagent was making more than the agent or the home worker. Usually, however, the amounts retained by the subagents in lieu of a definite commission were less than those of the agents; but in a few instances subagents retained the same amounts as the agents. There was absolutely no uniformity in the business arrangements. In some cases the subagents kept from 8 to 16½ percent as their part of the income, and in one case 39 percent. Agents kept amounts varying from 12½ to 33½ percent. The part that fell to the home workers ordinarily ranged from 55 to 75 percent of the total.

Another instance showing lack of organization is that of two sub-agents who were distributing work for the same agent. The first sub-agent kept 16½ percent as his commission while the other subagent kept 8.3 percent. The agent was retaining 25 percent of the labor cost allowed for the style handled by the first subagent and was retaining 16½ percent for the work handled by the second subagent.

It was customary for the agents to retain the same amount regardless of whether they themselves distributed the work to the home workers or it was done through their subagents. So the home workers obviously were the ones who suffered a decrease in earnings in order to provide for the payment of the third party. The home workers' incomes decreased in direct proportion to the amounts the subagents were free to deduct for themselves. A contractor was paying a uniform rate of 24 cents a dozen to each of 3 agents, who in turn were paying 18, 19, and 20 cents, respectively, to their subagents. It could hardly be expected in such cases that the subagents or home workers would earn uniform amounts for practically the same work.

Percent sub-agent's earnings are of the agent's earnings	Percent sub-agent's earnings are of the home worker's earnings	Percent agent's earnings are of the home worker's earnings
33.3	11.1	16.7
33.3	11.7	18.1
33.3	12.5	22.2
38.4	16.7	24.7
50.0	16.7	25.0
66.7	16.4	35.3
100.0	18.1	37.5
100.0	20.0	43.3
100.0	25.0	60.0
160.0	106.0	66.7

The relation that the earnings of subagents bear to those of the agents also emphasizes the great lack of uniformity and disorganization in the home-work system. In 3 of the 10 styles that subagents handled, they were earning only 33½ percent as much as the agents. At the other extreme 3 were making as much as the agents (100 percent) and 1 was making 160 percent as much as the agent.

Similar comparisons of subagents' and home workers' earnings continue to show tremendous proportional variations. The subagent's commission ranged from 11 percent of the home-worker's income in one case to 106 percent at the other extreme.

A third comparison of the agents' commissions with the home workers' earnings is another ascending scale of proportional variations in which agents' commissions ranged from 16½ percent to 66½ percent of the home workers' earnings.

One subagent was doing business in a small way by distributing all her work to free tenants on her farm to whom she paid nothing in the way of wages. Once in a while she "would buy a woman who sewed for her a pair of shoes."

#### WAGE AGREEMENT FRUSTRATED

In September 1933 there was an agreement with the employees by the terms of which the employers were to raise wage rates 15 percent to 25 percent, depending upon the article. This agreement has been observed conscientiously by some, but broken by others. It was possible to trace through the hands of the agents 126 styles for which the contractor paid the increase as agreed upon.

It was with surprising frankness that agent after agent admitted that he had kept all the benefits from the recent raise in piece rates for himself and had passed on none of the gain to his home workers. In over one-third of the cases the agent was paying the home worker the full increase as he received it from the contractor, but in almost two-thirds the home worker was receiving none of the increase whatsoever, the agent being the sole gainer.

When questioned on this point only 16.6 percent of the individual home workers reported that they were getting the increase. Others could not tell, due to changes in the style, but the majority felt they were not getting it. Of course, they did not know whether the fault lay with the contractor or with the agent.

Excuses that agents gave for keeping the increase include the following:

Formerly the contractor paid the express charges to agent and return; he has discontinued this since September, so agent keeps the increase to cover such charges.

Agent notified he will lose his commission unless goods are returned within a limited time, so he keeps the increase in case he should ever fail to receive the commission.

One shop manager explained that though he paid the increase for work on table linen, he did not pay it for bed linen, as the agreement did not specify bed linen. Another was not paying the increase because the garments were made of rayon and not of silk.

Before the September agreement, one firm had paid its agents a straight 15 percent commission, but since they were obliged to raise rates 20 percent they had discontinued the commission. Perhaps naturally, the agent regarded the 20 percent increase as his commission, and the women who sewed derived no benefit from the agreement.

In another firm all rates were lowered after the September agreement, so that the new rate plus the percentage raise was no more than the former rate without the increase.

Many firms never made definite commission payments to their agents, so it was quite easy for agents of these firms to regard the increase as their fixed commission—an increase that thus affected the home sewers not at all.

This reference to the agreement of September 1933 is pertinent here as showing how lightly and with what a spirit of evasion this serious agreement has often been treated, a recognition of which is necessary in preparing a code of fair competition in the industry.

#### OTHER EFFECTS OF DISORGANIZATION

Payment of wages in groceries was found in two or three communities. More than one agent had an interest in a neighboring store and always the home worker stated that prices were higher at the agent's store than elsewhere.

One young girl described the situation by saying that she never gets any money, for by the time she finishes a bundle her mother has spent her earnings in groceries. Groceries in lieu of cash are often accepted, especially when the home worker must wait long for the agent to get the cash. The agents as well as the home workers of one contractor were inconvenienced by the fact that the agent's checks were dated 2 weeks later than the date the goods were returned, which meant that all were waiting at least 2 weeks for their pay.

The mother of a home worker who once had an agency sends her daughter to a distant shop to get work, instead of getting work from the local agent, as the agent has a store and exploits her workers by paying them in grocery checks.

Sometimes the home workers discover that they have spent more for groceries than the income from the sewing.

In one district the home workers had to furnish their own thread for sewing seams, though thread for embroidery was furnished.

Sometimes the home workers were at a disadvantage because there had not been a definite agreement on prices. Not until after the articles were returned to the contractor did the agent tell them the rate for the work done.

One woman working on a size-52 slip complained that the rate was no more than for a 16-year size, though there was a considerable difference in inches of fine needlework.

One hundred and seventy home workers reported irregularity and delays in getting work; 123, delays in getting their pay; and 117 complained of the seasonal character of the work and the tendency of the agents to spread the work among too many home workers.

The comments of the home workers were somewhat as follows:

Has to go again and again to agent, hoping he may have been to Mayaguez for more work. Agent does not make trip until the majority of the workers have turned in their work.

Home worker must wait after she returns her work until perhaps the last bundle of the lot is in, especially if it is a special order that the agent is particular about.

Agents do not get their pay immediately on delivery of the work, so all must wait.

Irregularity of agent's return of finished work causes irregularity in pay of home worker.

Home worker must wait sometimes for more thread or perhaps for collars or pockets before she can finish the dresses.

Home worker finds it expensive making futile trips for work, as she has to pay bus fare.

Agent waits before returning work until she has enough finished to warrant expense of trip to factory.

Agent goes to San Juan only when she has collected plenty of work to make it pay.

Home worker had to wait 2 weeks for her pay because agent could not collect the bundles from the other workers.

#### DRAWBACKS OF HOME WORK TO MANAGERS

Contractors as well as home workers had difficulties. One manager complained that work sometimes was tied up for 6 or 7 months. It was not unusual for managers to have hundreds and even thousands of dozens of articles scattered over the island waiting for the home workers to finish them. The case of cotton nightgowns seemed especially troublesome in this respect, and more than one agent complained of his difficulties in persuading the women to take this type of work. Shelf after shelf in the headquarters of the agents was filled with large rolls and bundles of coarse cotton nightgowns—all cut and waiting for someone to be willing to embroider them. One man summed up the situation when he said: "The work is too cheap for the women who know how to sew; none but the women who live far up in the hills work on them."

A contractor distributing cotton gowns complained that the work gets cheaper and cheaper. New York firms insist on contracts with constantly lower rates, though the patterns are more ornate. A contractor has no choice but to accept the terms offered. A gown that now costs the agent 35 cents a dozen to make and embroider wholesale in New York at \$1.75 a dozen and retails at 3 for \$1.

Another worry of management is spoiled goods. This is referred to in the report of Puerto Rico made by the Brookings Institution: "The proportion of spoiled work and of seconds in the garment trades

is very much larger than upon the mainland. This evil reaches its maximum in case of sewing given out to be done in the workers' homes."

Because of delays and spoilage unavoidable in the home-work system, two local managers who were having much or most of their embroidery done inside their factories expressed a decided preference for the factory work, which could be efficiently supervised. It was more satisfactory for several reasons—cleanliness, speed, and quality. When they do give out home work, neither of these managers intrusts his work to agents, preferring to deal directly with their home workers from the factories. Both feel that in the long run the earnings of the inside workers will suffer from the competition of home work not regulated in any way.

### PROPOSED COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

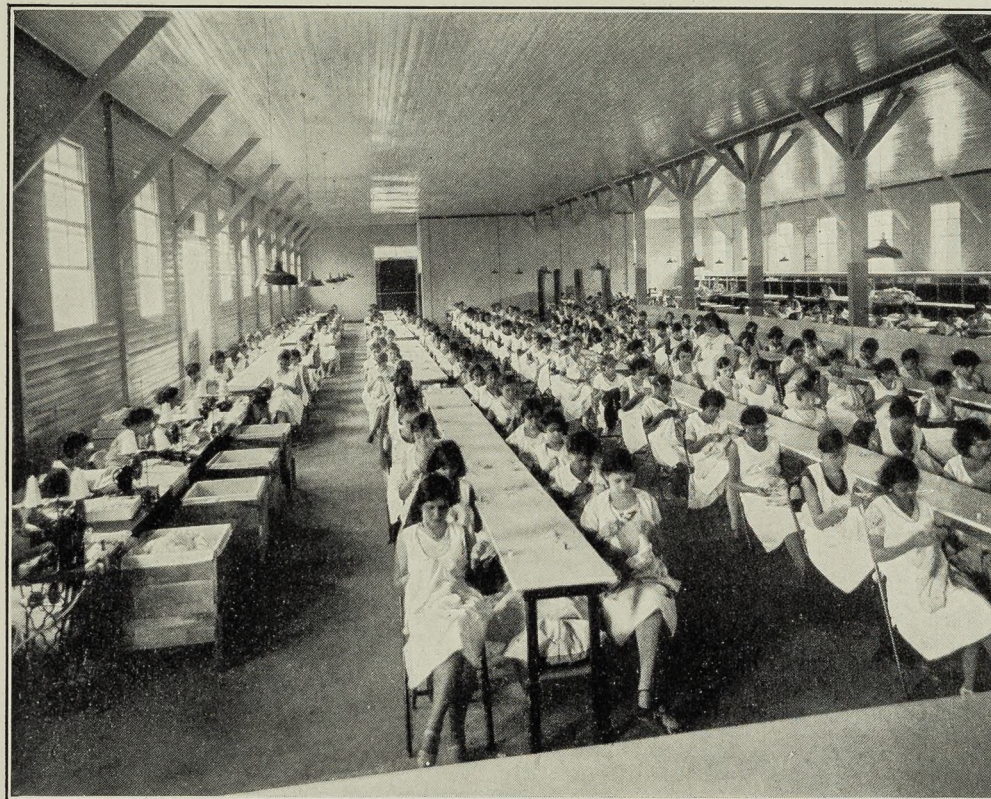
That home work is not necessary has been demonstrated successfully by one outstanding firm. Gradually within the past few years they have taken the work out of the homes in the towns and hills and have centered it in workshops conveniently located in towns. Beginning with 1 factory they are now operating 5. These employ about 1,500 workers, most of whom are hand embroiderers, as there is almost no machine work on their products. The accompanying illustration shows one of their workrooms, typical of all, where consideration has been given to conditions of work. It is well organized and the shop is light and immaculately clean. The arrangement of chairs and tables is convenient and comfortable and all modern sanitary conveniences are provided.

This firm estimates that at present not one-tenth of their embroidery is done outside the shop. Furthermore, they trust none of their home work to agents, but require such home workers as they have to come to the factory for materials, where their work is supervised to some extent. The added expense in overhead of maintaining their workshops has been more than offset by the increased speed in production, improvement in quality of work, and the reduction of spoilage and loss.

In view of the success of this firm in establishing central workshops, one of the solutions suggested for the home-work problem is the community workshop. Again and again during the interviews with the home workers they expressed a preference for factory work, and about one-fourth of the women had worked in factories at some previous time. Many were eager to get back into the shop. They referred to the steadier employment; they felt that it was easier to work there, and that factory earnings were more satisfactory. If community workshops are established, and there seems to be good reason for making such an experiment, the home workers undoubtedly will be cooperative.

### COMPARISON WITH MAINLAND WAGES

Unquestionably, wages are low in Puerto Rico, but on two occasions during the survey employers complained of competition from the mainland. Both had been contracting with New York firms for the manufacture of children's dresses and both had refused to renew their



HOME-WORK PROCESSES AS DONE IN A FACTORY.



SEWING WITH A HAND MACHINE ON A BOARD LAID ON THE BED. WORKER SITS ON A BOX, WITH KNEES AGAINST THE BED.

contracts because they could not compete with home-work conditions in Pennsylvania.

Another New York manufacturer who still had contracts in Puerto Rico was sending quantities of children's dresses to Texas, where Mexican women were engaged in the home-work embroidery at earnings not unlike those of the Puerto Rican women. In a recent study of women workers in Texas by the United States Women's Bureau, about two-thirds (65.2 percent) of the 89 women home workers interviewed for whom an estimate of hourly earnings on infants' and children's garments could be computed, averaged less than 5 cents an hour. Twenty-six of these women received less than 3 cents an hour and 10 of them even less than 2 cents. Only 5 women had hourly earnings as high as 10 cents.

Not only in home-work embroidery but in factory work are conditions in some parts of the mainland little better than those in Puerto Rico. For example, in a study made by the Women's Bureau of wages in 1932-33 before the N.R.A. code became effective, 29.5 percent of the women in cotton-dress factories in New Orleans and 19.2 percent of those in Atlanta were earning less than \$3 a week. At about this same time factory wages in the needle trades in Puerto Rico, as shown in the report of the Insular Department of Labor, averaged \$3.32.

#### ASSISTANCE BY MEN AND CHILDREN

Although most of the home workers were women, a few young men were scheduled, most of whom were very adept in handling the needle, especially in hemming handkerchiefs. In one family two brothers were supporting the household in this way when there was no work in the fields. By sewing fast every moment, together they were averaging about 2 cents an hour, and by working from sunrise until long after sunset together they earned about 50 cents a day.

A considerable number of children (29) were making contracts with the agents and were held directly responsible by the agents for the sewing done in their homes, as if they had been adult workers. Only 6 of these 29 children were enrolled in schools,<sup>2</sup> which left most of them with much free time for sewing, and it was not unusual to find them working 7, 8, 9, and 10 hours a day, frequently prolonging the workday 1 or 2 hours into the evening. The earnings of the children are petty amounts, not unlike those of their elders. Half of the 25 who were able to give definite information about the amount of work done counted on less than 50 cents a week when they were busy, while 9 with the highest earnings usually made from \$1 to \$1.50 a week. Estimated hourly earnings computed on this basis showed that the majority were earning about ½ cent or 1 to 2 cents an hour.

#### FAMILY INCOME

As might be expected, the amount of earnings from home work in the family increased as the number of home workers increased. In about two-thirds (65.4 percent) of the families with but 1 home worker

<sup>2</sup> The public schools are not equipped to accommodate all the children, so many thousands of them are not enrolled.

the week's income from this type of work was less than \$1, and in more than one-third (36.6 percent) of the families with 2, 3, or 4 home workers the combined home-work earnings were equally low. Almost one-third of the families with 2 or more home workers had an income of \$2 or more a week from their combined earnings, but less than one-tenth of those with but 1 home worker earned as much as this.

In most of the families there were other wage earners. Many of the men were agricultural laborers in the cane fields, the coffee plantations, and tobacco fields. But this work was so seasonal that they were little more than casual laborers. In November and December, when these families were visited, many men were idle or working so little and so irregularly that their income was almost negligible.

Adult male laborers in the cane fields in 1933 averaged \$3.60 a week and not quite 10 cents an hour; in tobacco planting their average earnings were \$1.46 a week and 4.7 cents an hour. When it is taken into consideration that labor in the fields is very seasonal and uncertain, it is clear that the \$3.60 or \$1.46 a week is for a few weeks only and that often the laborer has no income whatever for weeks at a stretch.

For obvious reasons the cost of living is low, comparatively speaking, in Puerto Rico, but a diet study made in 1933 by the University of Puerto Rico and the Insular Department of Labor shows that such wages quoted above are at a starvation level.<sup>3</sup> The cost per person per week for native foods and other common as well as nourishing articles of diet was \$3.19 in March 1933, since when there has been a rise in prices.

Besides these laborers some men tried to eke out a living by fishing, and a few were peddlers. Others in recounting their various sources of income mentioned such small items as two hens, or a pig. The gardens, found only occasionally, were pitifully small; a clump of banana trees and space for a few legumes was about as much as any of the country dwellers had. And 132 families had nothing but what the various members made in wages.

In over two-fifths of the 247 families reporting, only 1 wage earner was employed in the week previous to the survey, and in a great many cases this was a home worker. In a third of the cases there were 2 or 3 employed, and 12 families had 4 wage earners, this being the maximum with one exception—a family with more than 10 members that had 6 wage earners. During this week there were no wage earners in 15 households.

In 199 families it was possible to get detailed information on the earnings of each wage earner for the week previous to the interview. In most cases the earnings had been so little that the figure was not difficult to obtain. In more than a fifth the total family earnings had been less than 50 cents, and 14 of these families reported no earnings. In almost four-fifths of the families earnings amounted to less than \$3. Among the families with the higher earnings only 16 had a total of \$5 or more.

<sup>3</sup> A Report on Wages and Working Hours in Various Industries and on the Cost of Living in the Island of Puerto Rico During the Year 1933. Puerto Rico Department of Labor, Bul. No. 5.

*Week's income of home workers' families*

Family earnings	Home workers' families	
	Number	Cumulative percent
Total.....	199	100.0
No earnings.....	14	7.0
Less than 50 cents.....	29	14.6
Less than \$1.....	72	36.2
Less than \$2.....	128	64.3
Less than \$3.....	156	78.4
\$3 or more.....	43	21.6

The very few incomes of \$10 or more invariably were due to some salaried person in the family, such as a teacher, salesman, or chauffeur. But few families were so fortunate, and in at least 65 cases, or 58 percent, of the 112 with only wages as an income, the only income had been from home work. Though this large proportion had been dependent on home work, in five other families there was no income from any source in that week. In 15 there were no earnings from home work though other income was received and in 22 others the home work yielded less than 30 percent of the total family earnings.

#### HOMES IN WHICH WORK IS DONE

More often than not, the dwellings of the home workers in the remotest country districts were one-room huts raised on stilts, some entirely of thatch, others with a thatched roof. In the towns also many dwellings were poor, sometimes a patchwork of boards, zinc, and tin. Not infrequently they had been built by squatters on muddy tide flats, impossible to reach when the tide was in.

Whether frame houses in town or native huts in the country, they invariably were small, about two-thirds having not more than two rooms. These were crowded, as it was not unusual to find 4, 5, and 6 persons living in one room, or 6, 7, and 8 persons in two rooms. Furniture was scant, some homes having only a wooden bench, a hammock, a charcoal stove, and one or two cooking utensils.

About two-fifths of the families visited were living on the ranches where members of the families were employed for a small part of the year at least. Some of them were free tenants living in homes furnished without charge by the company or rancher, but other laborers had built their own homes on ranch property, sometimes paying a rental fee for the strip of land and sometimes not.

In the villages and towns about as many were renting their homes on a monthly basis as were living in their own homes. Rental for the smaller houses ordinarily was \$2, \$3, or \$4 a month.

In many cases modern conveniences were entirely lacking, even in town dwellings. In the country particularly the water supply was a problem. Roof drainage and cisterns were the most common source of water in town and country, but over 50 families were



dependent on irrigation ditches and rivers, often at inconvenient distances. Nineteen families were buying the water they used from neighbors; one was paying a flat rate of 25 cents a month, but the customary price was 1 cent a can. It was common to see men, women, and even children walking along the highway carrying heavy 5-gallon cans of water. One home worker went to the "waterfall", half an hour's walk over uneven ground, three times a day. Even many city dwellers went to the neighbors or the public faucet for the water they used. The effort needed to keep home and family clean under such conditions can hardly be imagined, yet many succeeded.

Drainage also was bad. Fifty-two dwellings had no toilet conveniences and only nine had sewer-connected toilets. The majority had shallow unscreened privies, almost half of which were described by the investigators as "dirty" or "filthy."

To add to the distress in 15 homes there was illness of a contagious nature while the home worker was sewing or had garments in the house. Tuberculosis and measles led the list of diseases, while others were syphilis, scarlet fever, "running sores", whooping cough, and chicken pox. A schedule of one such home reads: "Home worker, affected with tuberculosis, sewing on cotton nightgown while propped up in hammock hung across the one room. House a native hut, dark and smoky. No toilet, no water; brought water from distant cistern. Mother in this family was doing the laundry for the village teacher."

In contrast to the insanitary conditions found, many homes were in good repair, light, clean, and sanitary.

Common safety is reason enough for insisting upon the rigid control of home work (if there must be home work) and all would agree in demanding sanitary conditions, but the remoteness of many dwellings complicates the problem and makes the necessary, frequent inspection of the premises practically impossible with the present force of sanitary and health officials in the insular government service.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of prevailing practices in the home-work system that are haphazard, unbusinesslike, and often vicious, there is recommended a reorganization that would provide—

(1) For complete elimination of subagents.

(2) Placing agents on a definite salary basis, as a foreman in a factory. The agent acts more or less as a foreman for outside workers, for not only is he a distributing agency but he accepts responsibility for quality and the satisfactory return of goods.

(3) Making the manufacturer or contractor directly responsible for the payment of wages to the home workers. This can be done by centering in the office of the contractor the bookkeeping of the agents, now often rather meager and crude—

- (a) By making out the invoice slips in the name of the home workers instead of agents.
- (b) By pay envelopes to the individual home workers, envelopes to bear entries not only of names but of dates and amounts.
- (c) By receipts for amounts to be signed by home workers and returned and entered in the books of the contractor and filed.

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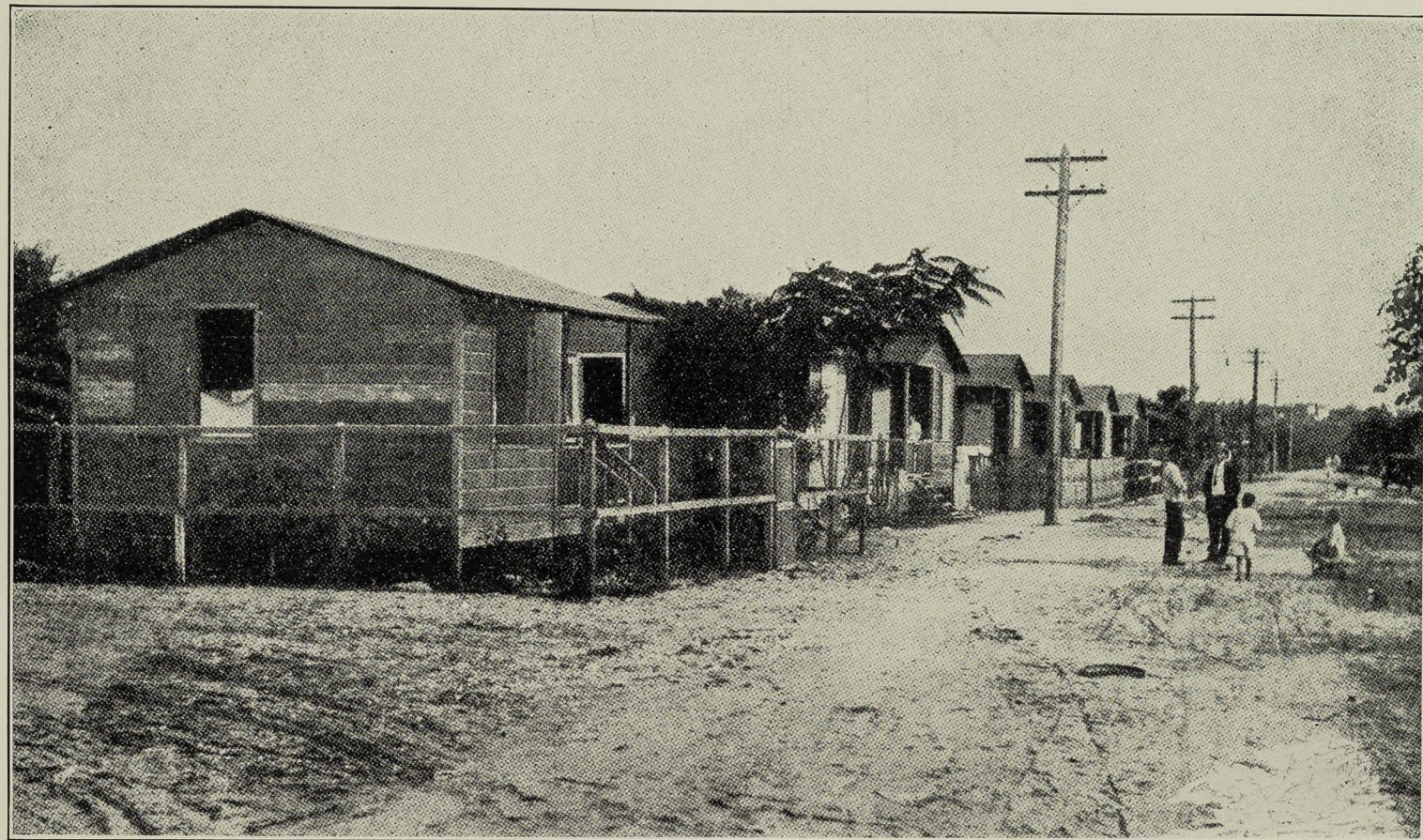
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BETTER TYPE OF TOWN HOUSES.

(4) Elimination of all home work done on machines.

(5) Progressive elimination of sewing, embroidery (hand operations), and the like now carried on in the homes. For example, at the end of 3 months after this code becomes effective, 25 percent of the hand sewing and embroidery of each shop, exclusive of sample making, should be carried on inside the factory or shop. At the end of a year from the effective date of the code, 50 percent to be inside the shop; at the end of 2 years, 75 percent to be within the shop. Experience during the first year or so would demonstrate when complete elimination could be feasible, for complete elimination is the only goal to work for.

(6) The formation of a continuing piece-rate board composed of an equal number of representatives from employers, employees, and the public, which shall determine fair rates of pay for various operations and qualities of goods. These rates shall apply equally to work in the homes and work in the shop, and shall be fixed so as to yield no earnings less than the minimum established in the code.

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### FACTORY EMPLOYMENT IN THE NEEDLE TRADES

Before the World War the needle-trade industry in Puerto Rico was of little importance, but since that time it has doubled and in some lines it has trebled in value. Even in the present depression, shipments of cotton garments to the mainland increased from 1,382,000 dozen in 1932 to 2,264,000 dozen in 1933.<sup>4</sup>

The Cotton Code Authority calls attention to the fact that this development was particularly marked in the last months of the year after the N.R.A. code for the cotton garment industry became effective on the mainland.

With this gain in production there has been an increase in employment. The census of 1920 showed roughly 16,000 in the cotton garment industry; the census of 1930 showed 40,000. In each case it was estimated that not over a fourth of these were employed in factory work, the great majority—over 75 percent in 1920 and over 80 percent in 1930—being home workers.

The past 18 years has witnessed a great change in the quality of work shipped from Puerto Rico. As most of the garments have grown coarser and cheaper the work too has become poorer. Eighteen years ago the needle work was fine, but today much of the commercial embroidery is inferior. From the workers' point of view there is justification for this. In the "palmy days" of 1920-21-22, the home workers often earned as much as \$1 a day, occasionally \$1.50, but now if they earn 10 cents a day they do well and the time and incentive for nice work are things of the past. With this mushroom development of the needlework industry workers have been recruited who have had little experience and have but slight skill in handling the needle, and the industry has been too busy to train employees. The managers have taken whom they could get, and whereas formerly all the work was done in the towns, it now is scattered in the country districts and hills. The loss in production time in having it so scattered is said to vary in some small lines from 4 to 6 weeks.

Thus far in this report, emphasis has been laid on home work in the needle trades, because it seems to overshadow most other lines of women's employment both in abuses and numbers involved. However, the establishments that are distributing centers for the home work usually have a few inside employees engaged in laundry operations, stamping, examining, sorting, and so forth, and the following is a brief analysis of the current wages of factory workers in the five most important branches of the needle-trade industry.

<sup>4</sup> Monthly Summary of Foreign Commerce of the United States, pt. II, December 1933, p. 61. U. S. Department of Commerce.

### MEN'S CLOTHING

In the men's clothing industry the managers are Puerto Rican citizens who operate their plants quite independently of New York firms, and in contrast to other lines of garment manufacture most of the sewing is done inside the factories. Comparatively little of this production reaches the mainland.

Excerpts from a memorandum prepared for the hearing of the N.R.A. code for the men's clothing industry in Puerto Rico give a picture of wages current in this industry in the fall of 1933. Wages are not discussed separately by sex in this memorandum, but it is predominantly a woman's industry, as four-fifths of the 872 employees were women in the 11 men's clothing factories forming the basis of this wage analysis. Further, since the sewing departments are composed almost entirely of women, earnings quoted here emphasize the sewing occupations, including both hand and machine work.

Four hundred and fifty-one sewing employees in the coats and pants factories averaged \$4.20 for the week; 194 in shirt factories averaged \$5.23. Average hourly earnings were fairly similar in the two branches of the industry, 13½ cents in the first case and 14.7 cents in the second.

The following summary shows the distribution of a week's earnings in the most frequent dollar groups for a limited number of employees who worked fairly full time, as well as of hourly earnings for the entire group of those in sewing occupations.

Summary of earnings of hand and machine sewers in the men's clothing industry

Employees working 40 hours or more			All employees		
Week's earnings	Number	Percent	Hourly earnings (cents)	Number	Percent
Total.....	261	100.0	Total.....	645	100.0
Less than \$3.....	25	9.6	Less than 8.....	80	12.4
\$3, less than \$4.....	36	13.8	8, less than 10.....	61	9.5
\$4, less than \$5.....	36	13.8	10, less than 12.....	92	14.3
\$5, less than \$6.....	54	20.7	12, less than 14.....	128	19.8
\$6, less than \$7.....	53	20.3	14, less than 16.....	93	14.4
\$7, less than \$8.....	38	14.6	16, less than 18.....	90	14.0
\$8 and more.....	19	7.3	18, less than 20.....	41	6.4
			20, less than 25.....	47	7.3
			25 and more.....	13	2.0

Of the total group in various sewing operations 261 were reported as having worked at least 40 hours during the pay-roll week, which may be said to represent an average full-time week in this industry. About one-tenth (9.6 percent) of these earned less than \$3 in the 40 or more hours; almost three-fifths (57.9 percent) earned less than \$6; only 7.3 percent earned as much as \$8. The most common earnings were the two groups comprising \$5 and under \$7.

From the summary of hourly earnings it is apparent that well over half (56 percent) earned less than 14 cents an hour and the most usual earnings ranged from 10 to 18 cents. Eighty employees earned less than 8 cents, some even less than 5; only 60 averaged as much as 20 cents.

### WOMEN'S DRESSES

Less important in point of numbers employed is the manufacture of women's dresses. There are many dressmakers in Puerto Rico who supply the ordinary demands of the island and some stores carry ready-to-wear dresses shipped from the mainland. Only 2 or 3 factories, controlled largely by New York concerns, are engaged in the manufacture of ladies' dresses or blouses, and their product is exclusively for export trade. The factory-made dresses are designed by New York stylists and are sometimes beautifully hand-embroidered. This hand work is done in the homes,<sup>5</sup> the machine work and finishing being done in the factories.

Though wages range higher for factory work than for home work, an analysis of factory pay rolls for a busy week in the fall of 1933, covering about 150 women, all of whom had worked 40 hours or more, shows almost a third (32.9 percent) to have earned less than \$5; about the same number (31.7 percent) earned \$5 and less than \$7, and somewhat fewer (29.2 percent) earned \$7 and less than \$10. Only 6.2 percent earned as much as \$10. None earned less than \$2. Work is more or less seasonal in this industry and these wages represent conditions of a fairly busy week. Further, women who worked less than 40 hours are excluded from this summary of earnings.

These dresses compete in the States with high-class garments made in New York, Connecticut, and other dress centers, but the labor cost in Puerto Rico is decidedly low. For example, the amount paid for making one style—a silk print dress, with elbow sleeves, pleats in skirt, and trimmed with large buttonholes and bows—was 33 cents, which included 22 cents for machine sewing and 11 cents for hand finishing. This dress was retailing in one store for \$12.50.

The sewing cost for making a simpler linen sport model was 84 cents a dozen for the skirts and 96 cents a dozen for the blouses. The average worker was said to be able to make about 9 such skirts a day.

### INFANTS' AND CHILDREN'S COTTON DRESSES

For the most part the managers of the factories making children's garments were contractors only, depending on orders from New York firms, and their production was shipped to the mainland. Except for power-machine sewing, the work was done largely in the homes.

One of the most important lines of garment manufacturing is infants' and children's cotton dresses, usually of a cheap or ordinary quality and shipped by thousands of dozens to the mainland. Eleven factories make most of these (though others make them as a side line) and each is a modern machine-equipped plant. In the busy season about 1,500 women are said to be employed as inside factory workers, but the number working in their homes on children's garments could not be estimated. The consensus of opinion seemed to be that home workers far outnumbered factory workers.

Earnings were lower for the factory workers in this branch of the industry than in women's dresses or men's clothing.

<sup>5</sup> One firm had parts of over 1,000 dozen dresses scattered in houses on the island where they were to be embroidered.

In one representative plant, for example, the median for 131 machine sewers was \$3.01, and of 22 finishers only 3 earned as much as \$3, while the usual wage of time workers engaged in such jobs as sorting and examining was less than \$4 and only 2 of the 30 pressers earned as much as \$5. Altogether the median for the 189 employees on piecework was \$3.57, and for the limited group of these (176) who had worked the full schedule of 48 hours it was not much higher—\$3.74.

In another factory, employing 132 women, wage conditions were similar. The range in earnings of 52 women on piecework who had worked the full schedule of 48 hours was from \$1.81 to \$6.27, the median for the group being \$3.72. The median for sewing-machine operators was \$3.71. Of 19 pressers 16 were paid less than \$3, and no examiner received as much as \$4.

In only one plant was the scale of earnings higher than the usual \$3 to \$4 average described. In this exceptional case the median of the week's earnings was \$5.45 for all pieceworkers and \$5.82 for the more than 200 full-time pieceworkers. For machine sewers it was \$6.50, though for hand finishers it was as low as \$3.91.

### HANDKERCHIEFS

There is little inside work in the so-called handkerchief factories for they are hardly more than distributing centers, almost without exception operated by native Puerto Ricans or Syrians who contract with New York firms that control the business. Inside factory work consists of cutting yard goods to size, stamping designs for embroidery, occasional machine operating, and in some cases laundering the handkerchiefs before shipment. The usual rates for washing handkerchiefs are ½ cent to 1 cent a dozen and for hand pressing from 1½ to 3 cents a dozen, the rates varying not only with size and style but with firm standards.

Of 480 inside workers listed in handkerchief factories, over four-fifths were engaged in laundry operations. The median of a week's earnings for the total was \$3.73. The most frequent earnings were \$3 to \$4 and \$4 to \$5. About one-third earned less than \$3 and about one-fifth \$5 or more.

### UNDERWEAR

Work in underwear factories was much like that in handkerchief plants, and various employers in this line agreed that inside work averaged around \$2 to \$3. In fact, they seemed to regard \$3 as a very good wage, declaring that it was all the industry could bear under the terms of present contracts with New York firms. In both handkerchief and cotton-underwear lines there were many complaints of Chinese competition.

### EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN IN INDUSTRIES OTHER THAN THE NEEDLE TRADES

Aside from the needlework trades the women of Puerto Rico are found in their customary occupations in other manufacturing, in stores, laundries, and telephone exchanges. During the first year (1933) that the Bureau of Women and Children was functioning in the Department of Labor, special studies were made of the employment of women in the laundries, stores, and canneries of the island, and an analysis was made of a week's pay roll in the tobacco and cigar industry, straw-hat making, and telephone exchanges. The following pages are a summary of these studies, and with the report on home work they picture the main activities of wage-earning women in Puerto Rico.

#### CANNERIES

##### Earnings and time worked

The recent hurricane had wrought such havoc in the island orchards that some of the canneries did not attempt to operate in 1933-34. However, records were secured in six canneries visited, and these are the basis of the following statements.

Except in the case of employees paid by the hour, few cannery pay-roll books indicated how many hours per day or per week the employees had worked. The women were employed for the most part either in preparing the fruit or in packing it. The packers invariably were on an hourly rate of pay. In the three canneries reporting this varied from 5 to 11 cents, with 8 cents an hour the most common rate, paid to about one-third of the packers.

Though the 8-hour day and 48-hour week are the legal limits of employment for women in cannery work, 89 of the 129 packers for whom records of hours were obtained had worked more than 8 hours on at least 1 day in the pay-roll week. Fifty-nine of these had worked more than 8 hours on 6 days of the week, and 20 others had worked overtime on 5 days. Eighty-eight had exceeded the 48-hour week. Seventeen of these women had worked over 48 and under 54 hours, 29 had worked 54 and under 60, while 42, almost half the 88 reporting, had worked 60 hours or more, a few as much as 67 hours. The most usual week for the overtime group was 60 to 61 hours.

That some of these overtime days had been excessively long is shown in the following summary:

Length of overtime workdays	Number of workdays of hours specified
Total.....	475
Over 8, less than 9 hours.....	29
9, less than 10 hours.....	138
10, less than 11 hours.....	216
11, less than 12 hours.....	65
12, less than 13 hours.....	24
13 hours.....	3

Of the total 475 days on which the 89 women had worked more than 8 hours, about three-fourths had been 9 and under 11 hours, yet many days had been as long as 11 to 13 hours.

Of 1,073 women in canneries for whom wages and days worked were reported, 921 were pieceworkers engaged in preparing the fruit, and for this large group the employers had no records of hours worked. To make any correlation between wages and the time required to earn such wages, it was necessary to use as a measure of time the days on which the employees reported for work, though such days may have been anywhere from 2 or 3 to 13 hours long. Employers seemed to feel that since these workers were on a piece-rate basis it made no difference how long they worked, but the hour law does not exempt pieceworkers.

Median of a week's earnings of women in canneries, by days worked

Days worked	Number of women	Median week's earnings
Total.....	1,073	\$2.58
1.....	<sup>6</sup> 102	0.71
2 and 3.....	<sup>7</sup> 63	1.26
4.....	302	2.05
5.....	105	2.69
6 and 7.....	<sup>8</sup> 501	3.59

From this table it is apparent that almost half the women (46.7 percent) had worked 6 or 7 days, or a full week. Another representative group, 28.1 percent, had worked 4 days. The median of the earnings—that is, the midpoint at which half the women earned more and half earned less—was 71 cents for those who worked only 1 day. For those working 6 or 7 days it was not 6 or 7 times the 1-day average, but only \$3.59 for the week. The following table shows the distribution of earnings:

Distribution of a week's earnings of women in 6 canneries

Week's earnings	Total		Women who worked on—					
			4 days		5 days		6 days	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total.....	1,073	100.0	302	100.0	105	100.0	479	100.0
Less than \$2.....	311	29.0	138	45.7	9	8.6	5	1.0
\$2, less than \$3.....	344	32.1	162	53.6	64	61.0	111	23.2
\$3, less than \$4.....	243	22.6	2	.7	24	22.9	210	43.8
\$4, less than \$5.....	129	12.0	—	—	7	6.7	115	24.0
\$5 and more.....	46	4.3	—	—	1	1.0	38	7.9

<sup>1</sup> Includes all women with days worked reported.

Almost three-tenths (29 percent) of these women earned less than \$2, including practically all who had worked 1, 2, or 3 days, almost

<sup>6</sup> Some of these women worked a ½ day.

<sup>7</sup> 37 women worked 2 days.

<sup>8</sup> All but 22 women worked 6 days.

But here and there were conditions that were forgotten were the walls and ceiling in the room almost entirely covered with tiny flies. Here the floors were decidedly messy, and the women stood

half (45.7 percent) who had worked 4 days, and even a few who had worked 5 and 6 days. Included in this group of 311 who received less than \$2 were 120 women who were paid less than \$1, most of whom had worked on 1 day, 17 on 2 days, and 1 on 3. Fourteen women who were paid less than 50 cents had all worked on 1 day only.

Of course some of these lower earnings may be due to short days, but on the other hand it has been shown that some days were excessively long. There is no way of knowing how many women who earned from \$2 to \$3 in a 6-day week worked 48 hours or less and whether any worked 60 hours or more. Not until records are kept of hours actually worked by each employee can satisfactory appraisal be made of cannery earnings.

The majority of the women who worked 4 days earned \$2 and under \$3, as did the majority who worked 5 days. The most usual earnings of the 6-day workers were \$3 and under \$4, though not far from a third earned more than this. The highest wage was that of a packer who earned as much as \$7 in the week.

That wages were higher for the women packers, most of whom were on an hourly basis of pay, than for those preparing the fruit, chiefly pieceworkers, is evident from the following summary of the 6-day workers.

*Comparison of a week's earnings of packers and preparers who worked 6 days*

Week's earnings	Packers		Preparers	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	87	100.0	392	100.0
Less than \$2			5	1.3
\$2, less than \$3	1	1.1	110	28.1
\$3, less than \$4	21	24.1	189	48.2
\$4, less than \$5	44	50.6	71	18.1
\$5, less than \$7	21	24.1	17	4.3

While over three-fourths (77.6 percent) of the preparers earned less than \$4, only one-fourth (25.3 percent) of the packers did so.

### Working conditions

Best of mainland conditions prevailed in some canneries. There were pleasant workrooms, immaculately clean, convenient, light, and airy, and the age of the building did not necessarily determine the standard of working conditions.

As in other canning areas, the managers apparently had widely differing standards as to what constituted a sanitary workroom and comfortable working conditions. Most of the structures visited were well built, with lofty ceilings, wide aisles, and large window areas; adequate gutters drained the concrete floors and white paint had been generously used around work tables, supporting pillars, and rafters. The work moved without confusion along the preparation tables, to the canning line, and into storage quarters.

But here and there were conditions very different. Never to be forgotten were the walls and pillars in one cannery, originally light but at the time of the visit almost entirely covered with myriads of tiny flies. Here the floors were decidedly messy, and the women stood

so close together at the work benches that elbow touched elbow and in order to have freedom of motion for the paring knife they stood somewhat sidewise to the table. In addition, the aisles were so narrow between the rows of women that it was almost impossible for helpers to edge their way through what was supposed to be a passage-way. Confusion was everywhere and the room was filled with noise.

### Washing facilities

In most cases there was no special work clothing, the women working in the clothes worn from home, but one cannery not only provided all necessary aprons but at the end of the day required the women to leave them in the cannery, where they were laundered.

In the corner of one cannery a tub of water served for washing knives, trays, and hands. The water was said to be changed once a day, "oftener if necessary." Not many miles away was a cannery where running water supplied at frequent intervals near the worktables provided adequate and convenient washing facilities.

### Toilets

In one cannery a matron was in charge of the toilets, which were beautifully clean. Contrasted to this were others indescribably filthy. Some managers were most apologetic for this condition, but others blamed the women entirely for their ignorance and untidy habits. Yet if one cannery can have toilets in a sanitary condition, it would seem that others employing the same kind of labor might maintain decent standards.

### Seating

In most canneries seats for employees were conspicuous by their absence. For hours at a stretch, from early morning to nightfall, hundreds of these women stood at the worktables peeling and sectioning grapefruit or removing the waste from pineapples.

It was claimed that the women preferred to stand, as they could work faster, but in one case where benches were provided most of the women were using the benches, while others varied their positions, standing or sitting as they pleased.

Though a health certificate is required for each cannery employee, almost none were on file.

All the canneries were managed by Americans with mainland experience, and it is a pity that some of them, in establishing business concerns on the island, had not followed the best standards in working and sanitary conditions.

## TOBACCO AND CIGAR INDUSTRY

The vast bulk of cigars produced in Puerto Rico are machine made, and the equipment and organization of large factory units compare favorably with machine plants on the mainland. Following the custom in the States, women operated the cigar-making machines, and with the stampers, labelers, or packers they were earning as high wages as any group of industrial women on the island. For an average week of 36.9 hours the average earnings of 470 women, including all departments, were \$7.57. Moreover, the earnings of the cigar makers, that is, the machine operators, were higher than those of all women, 264 of them averaging \$8.50 in a week averaging 37 hours. One hundred



sixty-three women in the making department had worked 40 hours or more, and of this full-time group only 8 earned less than \$8. In fact, all but those few had earnings of \$8 and under \$10.

Scattered over the island are scores of small factories making cigars by hand, like the "buckeye" shops of the mainland. Most of them employ not more than 1 to 3 cigar makers, but there were one or two hand plants employing 100 or more makers. In the small plants especially work is very seasonal, so that sometimes there may be no one at work and at other times only one or two. Hand making is a man's job, and the women in hand plants are on the less skilled jobs such as stripping the tobacco.

Earnings of the men hand makers averaged much lower than those of the women machine makers. In one representative hand plant the men averaged \$5.82 for a week of about 44 hours, in contrast to the women full-time machine operators whose earnings have just been described as almost uniformly \$8 and under \$10.

Far more women were employed in tobacco stemmeries than in cigar factories, a few hundred in the latter, a few thousand in the former. While women's work is fairly steady in cigar factories with machine equipment, it is most seasonal in the stemmeries, lasting not over 3 or 4 months at most; and while the women cigar makers earn decent wages, the women stemmers earn very low wages. In the 29 stemmeries reported, the earnings of 3,077 women, mostly stemmers, averaged \$2.29 in a week that averaged 44 hours.

There were great extremes in the size of the plants where women were employed as stemmers. Fifteen of the stemmeries employed only 1 to 4 women, 6 others employed fewer than 100, and 8 employed approximately 100 to 500.

### STRAW HATS

There were 5 straw-hat factories operating in Puerto Rico in 1933. Two of these had fewer than 20 employees, but the others had about 80, 100, and 180. The seasonal element must be reckoned with in this industry, as most of the product is shipped to the mainland, where it competes with hats made in the States.

The following summary of earnings in a typical week reported by agents of the Puerto Rico Department of Labor shows average wage conditions in the industry.

*Hours and earnings of women in hat factories*

Number of factories.....	5
Number of women.....	221
Average hours per week.....	39.4
Average earnings per week.....	\$4.60
Average earnings per hour.....	\$0.117

The number includes those who had worked undertime, so the average hours worked by the group were somewhat less than 40. The week's average earnings for the women were \$4.60, decidedly less than a dollar a day. Average hourly earnings, which give a more definite picture, were about 12 cents. Translated into earnings for a 40-hour week the average woman could expect not more than about \$4.70.

The next summary is based only on those employees who worked 40 hours or more during the week and represents wages at their best,

somewhat above average conditions. More than half of the women (54.8 percent) had worked such time.

Earnings	Percent distribution of women (121)
Total.....	100.0
Less than \$4.....	28.9
\$4, less than \$6.....	31.4
\$6, less than \$8.....	20.7
\$8, less than \$10.....	14.0
\$10, less than \$12.....	2.5
\$12, less than \$14.....	2.5

The range in women's earnings for 40 or more hours' work in the pay-roll week was from less than \$2 to \$13 and under \$14, but the most representative earnings were \$3 and under \$6, received by 50.4 percent of the total. One-fifth of all (20.7 percent) earned \$6 and under \$8.

### STORES

The 8-hour day and 48-hour week are the legal standard for employed women in Puerto Rico and the majority of the stores had adopted this as their working schedule, yet apparently the law was violated more by mercantile establishments than by any other industry. Twenty-six of the 106 stores inspected had women employees whose weekly hours were more than 48, and 58 stores had daily schedules of more than 8 hours. This does not mean that all employees in these stores were working overtime, for sometimes two groups of saleswomen in the same store were working different shifts of hours, possibly one totaling 48 or less and the other more than 48.

The scheduled weekly hours ranged from a few hours a week for part-time employees to as many as 50, 55, and 60 hours for a limited group of full-time employees. However, 48 was the most common schedule, and though slightly more than one-fourth of the schedules exceeded 48 hours, clearly a violation of the law, about one-fourth were less than 48.

Variations in daily hours were as marked as in the weekly totals. A few schedules called for less than 6 hours, while others called for as many as 9, 10, and 11. Though the 8-hour day was the most common, 31 percent of the schedules called for a shorter day and 36.6 percent called for days longer than 8 hours.

Most of the stores were open Saturday evenings, the women generally working only 1 or 2 evening hours, though a few worked 3 or 4 hours. Such practice would, of course, require a rearrangement of many daily schedules in order to keep within the 8-hour limit.

In some stores with a 9- to 10-hour Saturday, the other days of the week usually were 8 hours; in some stores with an 11-hour Saturday, the other days frequently were 9 hours. In either case the week exceeded 48 hours. In some stores Saturday overtime was avoided by operating two shifts, and certain other firms, to compensate for the long Saturday, gave the employee time off on some other day. About twice as many firms violated the daily limit as violated the weekly limit.

Another provision of the hour law sets a 4-hour period as the limit for continuous work. In 46 stores work periods of more than 4 hours were found, many between 4 and 5, others as long as 5 hours.

Pay-roll data were secured for 410 women employed in the various occupations of mercantile establishments. All were on straight weekly rates, \$5 and \$6 being common, and practically all had worked a full week. The distribution of earnings for these few hundred women follows:

*Week's earnings of women in mercantile establishments*

	Number	Percent
Total.....	410	100.0
Less than \$3.....	10	2.4
\$3, less than \$4.....	44	10.7
\$4, less than \$5.....	41	10.0
\$5, less than \$6.....	61	14.9
\$6, less than \$7.....	127	31.0
\$7, less than \$8.....	51	12.4
\$8, less than \$9.....	26	6.3
\$9, less than \$10.....	15	3.7
\$10, less than \$11.....	15	3.7
\$11, less than \$12.....	2	.5
\$12, less than \$13.....	9	2.2
\$13 and more.....	9	2.2

Earnings for the store group as a whole, which includes all occupations, massed at \$6 and under \$7, indicating a rate of only about a dollar a day. Representative numbers were found also below and just above the \$6 group but elsewhere the numbers were scattering. Thirty-eight percent earned less than \$6 and 31 percent earned \$7 or more.

The median wage of saleswomen, who constituted about three-fourths of the entire group, was \$6.35. The median for cashiers was somewhat lower, \$5.90, but for office workers it rose to \$7.80. The few miscellaneous jobs were chiefly of a domestic-service nature or in alteration departments.

*Median of a week's earnings of women in mercantile establishments, by occupation*

	Number of women	Median earnings
Total.....	410	\$6.40
Saleswomen.....	295	6.35
Cashiers.....	59	5.90
Office workers.....	45	7.80
Miscellaneous.....	11	( <sup>9</sup> )

*Week's earnings of saleswomen in San Juan and Santurce compared to other places*

Week's earnings	Saleswomen in—			
	San Juan and Santurce		Other places	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total.....	168	100.0	127	100.0
Less than \$4.....	1	.6	41	32.3
\$4, less than \$6.....	8	4.8	58	45.7
\$6, less than \$8.....	125	74.4	20	15.7
\$8 and more.....	34	20.2	8	6.3

<sup>9</sup> Base too small for the computation of a median.

The earnings of saleswomen were higher in San Juan and Santurce than elsewhere, only 5.4 percent in the capital and vicinity, in contrast to 78 percent in other places, earning less than \$6. In San Juan and Santurce about three-fourths of the women earned \$6 and under \$8, and one-fifth earned at least \$8, but in other places almost one-third earned less than \$4, some even less than \$3.

Perhaps in stores more than in other types of industry one expects to find observance of high sanitary standards. But even here there were cases of carelessness. In 11 stores there were no drinking facilities and none were convenient, while in 15 other stores employees were expected to patronize neighboring soda fountains or other stores. In a few establishments where there was no water supply employees solved the problem by bringing thermos bottles from home. Water filters were in use in the majority of the stores, though in 3 cases these were described as insanitary. Though regulations of the Insular Board of Health prohibit the use of common cups and common towels, at 5 of the filters were common cups for anyone to use, whether employee or customer. Not only were there common cups but in 6 stores there were common towels. One clean towel a week was the rule in one store and some looked as if they had been in use much longer. In other stores many employees supplied and kept their own towels. Paper towels were said to be supplied by certain firms, but on inspection some of the containers were empty.

The condition of some of the toilets was inexcusable, and in 4 cases there was no toilet or none was conveniently near. A summary of the inspection reports indicates that 30 toilet rooms were dirty and 24 were dark, while the majority were without adequate ventilation. The plumbing was dirty in some and in 13 cases it was in poor repair. In 37 no paper was supplied. All these undesirable conditions were in great contrast to the scores of toilets reported as "clean", "light", "airy", "in good repair."

### LAUNDRIES

A survey of 59 commercial laundries in 10 cities and towns of the island showed that 133 men and 224 women were employed in these establishments. For the most part they were very small concerns, over one-half of them employing only 2, 3, or 4 persons; only one laundry had as many as 50 employees.

The use of modern machinery was very limited. There were only 3 or 4 washing machines and laundry work still was a hand industry. Much of the work was paid for on a piece-rate basis. For example, \$1 was a usual rate for ironing half a dozen men's linen suits, though other rates quoted for the same job were as low as 80 cents and as high as \$1.50. For ironing shirts a usual rate was 5 cents apiece, though others were as low as 2 and 3 cents. Rates paid for washing also were on a piece basis, 35 and 40 cents being a not uncommon rate for washing a dozen suits.

Many of the small laundries were in connection with dwellings and ill adapted for the purpose. Rooms were crowded and occasionally a door was the only source of ventilation and light. As most of the washing was done in the patios the floors were dry, but pressers complained of the constant standing on tile floors.

Only occasionally did the laundry owners keep any audit of the business or pay-roll records, so it was necessary to rely almost solely upon statements made by managers and employees.

There were no definite data as to the number of hours worked daily or weekly; hours were far from uniform and varied from day to day, depending on the changing volume of work. However, in the larger and better-organized plants the 48-hour week seemed to be general.

A large proportion (85 percent) of the 206 women reported had worked on 4, 5, or 6 days, three-fourths of these 5 or 6 days.

- 15.0 percent worked less than 4 days.
- 21.4 percent worked 4 days.
- 35.0 percent worked 5 days.
- 28.6 percent worked 6 days.

Earnings were reported for 203 women, of whom three-tenths earned \$3 and under \$4 and almost a third earned \$4 and under \$5. None earned as much as \$8.

*Week's earnings of women in laundries*

	Number	Percent
Total.....	203	100.0
Less than \$3.....	30	14.8
\$3, less than \$4.....	61	30.0
\$4, less than \$5.....	65	32.0
\$5, less than \$6.....	33	16.3
\$6 and more.....	14	6.9

The most usual earnings of the women who worked 3 days were \$2 and under \$3, of those who worked 4 days \$3 and under \$4; 5 days' work yielded \$4 and under \$5 most commonly and 6 days' \$5 and under \$6. Considering the earnings only of those who had worked a fairly full week, of 5 or 6 days, wages naturally ranged higher than for the entire group, yet a few of these earned only \$2 to \$3.

*Week's earnings of women who worked 5 or 6 days in laundries*

	Number	Percent
Total.....	127	100.0
\$2, less than \$3.....	5	3.9
\$3, less than \$4.....	24	18.9
\$4, less than \$5.....	51	40.2
\$5, less than \$6.....	33	26.0
\$6, less than \$8.....	14	11.0

These laundry employees gave some information about themselves and their families, and as is usual in this industry the workers were not young. Of the 161 who gave their ages only 4 were under 20 and 60 were 40 or more.

*Age of women laundry workers*

	Number	Percent
Total.....	161	100.0
Under 20 years.....	4	2.5
20, under 30 years.....	36	22.4
30, under 40 years.....	61	37.9
40, under 50 years.....	46	28.6
50 years and over.....	14	8.7

Some of these women had had long experience in the industry, 42 of 146 reporting experience having worked in the trade 10 years or longer; but 77 had worked less than 5 years, and 47 of these even less than 2.

Fifty of the women were married, and 60 were widowed, separated, or divorced. That many of them were carrying heavy home responsibilities is evident from the number of their children. Seventy-seven were mothers of children under 14 years. Of those reporting the size of the family, 27 had 1 child, 21 had 2 children, 13 had 3, 10 had 4, and 6 had 5 to 8. Forty-seven of these mothers were widowed, separated, or divorced.

### TELEPHONE EXCHANGES

The telephone company in Puerto Rico probably has instituted more of the so-called "welfare measures" than any other industrial company employing women. Two weeks' vacation with pay is granted after 1 year's employment with the company. Sick leave of 2 weeks with full pay is allowed, the allowance increasing as service increases, and free medical service may be given in the home.

In the spring of 1934 there were 23 student operators, some of whom had served much more than the usual 3 months' apprenticeship and had been waiting long, even a year in some instances, for vacancies among operators to occur. With one exception the students were paid at the rate of \$15 a month for 4 hours' work a day.

The telephone company provides for a regular progressive increase in wages. Beginning with the third class, wages for operators having completed student apprenticeship are \$30 a month for the first year; in the second class wages begin at \$35 and increase to \$37.50 and to \$40 or more over a period of years, the promotions depending on the ability of the operator. In the first class the wages begin at \$50, but there are few opportunities for promotion to class 1, as the number of supervisors or chief operators who are paid these higher rates is limited. Just over two-fifths of the operators were on a \$37.50 rate, the most common wage, and only one-third of the operators had rates higher than \$37.50. Ten of 97 operators for whom monthly wage rates were reported were in the third class, earning \$30 a month.

The rates of pay of five supervisors ranged from \$50 to \$75 and those of chief operators from \$85 to \$97.

The agency system was found in several of the smaller cities. By placing the exchange in a dwelling house, 24-hour service is assured subscribers at a minimum labor cost, for, though the company's contract is with one person, the entire family shares the responsibility of the service. In some cases the income of the operator is on a percentage basis, depending on the number of stations served, which may be 1 or 50.

The 8-hour day and 48-hour week are the standard, but actual hours sometimes vary from this. The 4 hours required on Sunday are supposed to be compensated by time off on a week day, but in practice this often fails. The hours of night operators are from 10 p.m. to 7 a.m.

The spread of hours within which the working period fell was often much longer than 8 hours. Many who actually worked 8 hours had lunch periods of 2 hours, customary in Puerto Rico, which gave them an overall of 10 hours. But for 14 of the 45 operators with hours worked reported the overall was 11, 11½, or 12 hours. For example, 6 operators began work at 9 a.m., and though they worked only 8 hours it was 9 p.m. before their work was done. For others the day stretched from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., or from 6:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

One of the inconveniences of telephone work is the long interval between the two work periods. Many had the 2-hour break referred to, but for others the interval was 3, 3½, or 4 hours.

TELEPHONE EXCHANGES

The telephone company in Puerto Rico probably has installed more of the so-called "wellness measures" than any other industrial company employing women. Two weeks' vacation with pay is granted after a year's employment with the company. Sick leave of 2 weeks with full pay is allowed, the allowance increasing as service increases, and free medical service may be given in the home.

In the spring of 1934 there were 28 student operators, some of whom had served much more than the usual 3 months' apprenticeship and had been waiting long, even a year in some instances, for vacancies among operators to occur. With one exception the students were paid at the rate of \$15 a month for 4 hours' work a day.

The telephone company provides for a regular progressive increase in wages. Beginning with the third class, wages for operators having completed student apprenticeship are \$30 a month for the first year, in the second class wages begin at \$35 and increase to \$37.50 and to \$40 or more over a period of years, the promotions depending on the ability of the operator. In the first class the wages begin at \$30, but there are few opportunities for promotion to class II as the number of supervisors or chief operators who are paid these higher rates is limited. Just over two-fifths of the operators were on a \$37.50 rate, the most common wage and only one-third of the operators had rates higher than \$27.50. Ten of 37 operators for whom monthly wage rates were reported were in the third class, earning \$30 a month.

The rates of pay of five supervisors ranged from \$40 to \$75 and those of chief operators from \$85 to \$97.

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.....	11	2
.....	14	2
.....	14	2
.....	14	2
.....	14	2
.....	14	2

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