

# THE MINIMUM WAGE FRAUD

By ROSE WORTIS

WITH the advent of the new Roosevelt administration in Washington and the election of Lehman as Governor of New York State, the capitalist class, through its mouthpiece, the newspapers, began an intense campaign to convince the workers that the election of the new administration will lead to a return of prosperity. As a "humanitarian" and "liberal," Roosevelt has devoted a great many of his speeches to show his concern for the working class and especially the women workers.

over the bill. The American Federation of Labor union bureaucrats—Mr. Dubinsky, Rose Schneiderman, Mr. Fox of the neckwear workers, gave prominent interviews about sweat shop conditions and the need for the minimum wage law.

During the past couple of weeks, since the attention has been turned toward the Industrial Recovery Act, everybody seems to have forgotten about the minimum wage law.

## **Recovery Act Means Greater Misery**

The Recovery Act, just like the minimum wage law, has one intent and purpose: to create false illusions in the minds of the workers, to paralyze their fighting spirit and to misdirect the discontent of the workers with their starvation wages, and lowered standard of living.

The Recovery Act, just like the minimum wage scale, does not bring any relief to the workers but on the contrary will mean more slavery for the workers generally and particularly for the women workers.

Realizing that these glaring facts



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are beginning to create disillusionment among the workers, steps are now being taken by the government to revive the campaign around the minimum wage law in New York State. Last week they announced the appointment of a minimum wage board, supposedly of representatives of the employers, the public and the workers. In reality this board is a *bosses' board*. The workers had nothing to do with the choice of the representatives, and have nothing in common with them.

The Laundry Workers Industrial Union with a membership of more than a thousand, which has recently conducted a strike, was entirely ignored. This shows that the women workers can expect out of these minimum wage laws.

## **Minimum Wage Campaign Revived**

What is the meaning of industrial commissions that will decide on the wages to be paid? The cloak and dressmakers of New York have found out for themselves what these commissions mean. These investigation commissions such as Governor Smith's commission in the cloak trade, the various commissions and arbitrators in the dress trade brought lower wages and more starvation for the workers.

Further, even these so-called fair minimum wage scales are just recommendations, which the employers have the full right to disregard. After nine months, as the bill reads, they *may* be made mandatory, which in other words means that this commission, consisting of representatives of the bosses and some politicians will have to decide whether they are to become a law or not.

## **We Need Labor Legislation**

As far as the workers are concerned, of course, we are for a real minimum wage scale, which should specify the minimum wages to be received by the workers in a given industry on a basis that will provide decent food, shelter, clothing and recreation for the workers and their dependents.



The conditions of the women workers in New York have reached the point where spontaneous strikes of unorganized workers are taking place almost daily throughout the state. The discontent is becoming so widespread that the bosses and their government must resort to such schemes as the Minimum Wage Bill in an effort to prevent the workers from developing a struggle for better conditions.

It must be clear to the workers, however, that laws regulating the conditions of the workers, even tho they may be good laws, are not enforced. Women workers in the overwhelming majority of the dress shops are slaving 50 and 60 hours per week. In many factories they are working seven days a week. It is nothing unusual in the garment center to find girls and women still at their machines at 8 and 9 o'clock at night.

## **Labor Laws Violated**

These violations of the law occur not somewhere in a deserted spot, but right in the center of the city in the face of the labor inspectors who are supposed to work for the enforcement of the laws of the state. This proves that in order for these laws to really benefit the workers, it is necessary for the women workers to be organized and thru their organized strength to force the bosses to abide by the laws of the state.

The Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union, the Laundry Workers Industrial Union, the textile workers, metal workers and many other workers who have gone out on strike for better conditions support labor legislation for minimum scales for women, but at the same time do not depend on the bosses to alleviate the conditions of the workers. The workers in these trades are persistent with the work of building their unions as instruments for the enforcement of union conditions, for they realize that neither the Recovery Act nor the so-called minimum wage laws will gain anything for the workers unless they organize their ranks.