

HOME WORK

CONTRARY to the general conception that the development of industry has done away with homework, we have seen a great increase in the volume of homework recently. Particularly is this true since the years of the crisis.

N.R.A. Codes Encourage Home Sweat Shops

WIDESPREAD unemployment in all industries, which left millions of family heads breadless, and the inadequate relief given to unemployed workers, has forced many women and children to do homework.

The N.R.A. codes, which were widely popularized as the instrument which would wipe out sweat shops and child labor have increased the tremendous spread of homework, as a method of avoiding the "minimum wage" and so undermining the wage level of the entire working class.

Even Mrs. Elinor Herrick, Director of the New York Regional Labor Board, in an address to the New York Consumers' League which was reported in the N. Y. Times, October 24, 1934, admitted homework to be "the most pressing industrial issue before this State this winter. Women are working for two, three and five cents an hour, because of the confusion characterizing homework prohibitions in some 80 codes. Homeworkers from New York to Texas receive 25 per cent of the wages provided for in the codes."

Some Earn 7.9 Cents an Hour

ABULLETIN of the State Department of Labor, Minimum Wage Division, Hartford, Connecticut, for September, 1934, which concerns itself with homework in the fabricated metal industry in Connecticut, states that earnings per person for the families visited, averaged 7.9 cents per hour.

Some Earn \$7 a Month Per Family

WOMEN and children who work at home on hooks and eyes, fasteners, safety pins and wire, attaching these products to cards earn almost nothing.

Half the families get less than \$7

ROSE WORTIS

for a month's work, declares a recent report of the Women's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor, commenting on Connecticut. The lowest hourly rate allowed for factory work in an N.R.A. code cov-



Rose Wortis

ering one of the products is thirty-two and a half cents. An average of 4.4 persons per family were employed in this home work.

Sweating Children Under Thirteen

ATABULATION collected from 129 families employed as home workers by nine fabricated metal plants, showed that the home workers included 152 children under the age of thirteen, and 12 under the age of five.

In Grace Hutchins' book, "Women Who Work," we read that in New York City, a director of the Consumers' League told the following:

"Jennie Brown, her mother and married sister do piece work at home. They make frogs to trim men's pajamas and are paid 80c a gross. The combined income of all three is about \$4 a week."

Also, "Lucy Wright crochets hats. She is paid 40c a dozen. Her earnings average 80c a week." Grace Hutchins quotes an Italian woman

who, with tears running down her cheeks, expressed herself this way: "All the family work the whole week for so little, we almost starve. All the week stick pins in cards, but more curses than pins go in cards."

Wire Injures Tender Fingers

IN A survey of the National Child Labor Committee made in May, as printed in the N. Y. Post, August 8, 1934, "earnings are as low as 5 to 10 cents an hour. Many child workers have cut and sore fingers from bending the wires that hold artificial flowers together. One eight-year-old, whose tender fingers would not bend the wires, was seen doing it with her teeth."

On July 11, 1934, a Greek-American girl from Haverhill, Mass., wrote an anonymous letter to the N.R.A. She said that children there, were working half the night in their poor homes making lallies' braided hand bags for about five cents an hour, while their fathers had no work.

"Give the Kids a Break!"

"GIVE the kids a break," she wrote, "because I didn't get mine. I made these bags since I was fourteen. Now I'm eighteen, and I'm a girl, and I'm sick and tired of watching little kids lose their fun. Make the fathers go to work. Give the kids a break, if you want them to grow and be real American citizens and not turn their faces against America like they almost made me. So please use all your forces to stop handbags being made in the houses, but instead, in the shops where they belong."

ORGANIZED labor, under the leadership of the American Federation of Labor bureaucracy, has taken no steps to utilize its organized strength in order to do away with this hideous exploitation of women and children in the men's clothing industry.

Sydney Hillman, member of the National Labor Board, and President of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union with a membership of 150,000, has for years permitted a situation where women in Brooklyn

can be seen early in the morning carrying packs of clothing to be made at home at starvation wages. The Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union reports that 80 per cent of custom tailoring work is done in the home, under the homework law, effective July 1, 1934.

THE official government reports show the extent to which homework has developed under the New Deal to provide greater profits for the bosses to live in ease and luxury. It exposes the hypocrisy of the capitalists who on holiday occasions speak about the sacredness of womanhood and motherhood.

It shows that under capitalism, profits are more sacred than human beings, that for the sake of profit, bosses destroy the budding lives of tens of thousands of children.

United Front Against Homework

The Working Woman calls the attention of the militant trade unions and the rank and file opposition in the American Federation of Labor, to the extent to which homework undermines the living standards of the whole working class. It is urged that a united front movement be organized to struggle against homework. This movement would surely meet with response from the intellectual and professional women, as well as from working women.

The Working Woman will do its utmost to reach out to tens of thousands of working women to urge them to join the ranks of organized labor in the struggle for decent working conditions, in the struggle for unemployment relief, as the way to improve their living conditions, and those of their children.

The columns of the magazine are open for a discussion on homework. Women throughout the country are called on to send in articles dealing with this problem.

Working women must insist that their trade unions demand open hearings in the various legislatures, on homework. Women themselves must become the leaders in the struggle against homework.