UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

BULLETIN OF THE WOMEN'S BUREAU, No. 103

WOMEN WORKERS IN THE THIRD YEAR OF THE DEPRESSION

STUDY BY STUDENTS IN BRYN MAWR SUMMER SCHOOL UNDER DIRECTION OF AMY HEWES

[PUBLIC—No. 259—66TH CONGRESS]

[H. R. 13229]

AN ACT To establish in the Department of Labor a bureau to be known as the Women's Bureau

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That there shall be established in the Department of Labor a bureau to be known as the Women's Bureau.

SEC. 2. That the said bureau shall be in charge of a director, a woman, to be appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, who shall receive an annual compensation of $5,000. It shall be the duty of said bureau to formulate standards and policies which shall promote the welfare of wage-earning women, improve their working conditions, increase their efficiency, and advance their opportunities for profitable employment. The said bureau shall have authority to investigate and report to the said department upon all matters pertaining to the welfare of women in industry. The director of said bureau may from time to time publish the results of these investigations in such a manner and to such extent as the Secretary of Labor may prescribe.

SEC. 3. That there shall be in said bureau an assistant director, to be appointed by the Secretary of Labor, who shall receive an annual compensation of $3,500 and shall perform such duties as shall be prescribed by the director and approved by the Secretary of Labor.

SEC. 4. That there is hereby authorized to be employed by said bureau a chief clerk and such special agents, assistants, clerks, and other employees at such rates of compensation and in such numbers as Congress may from time to time provide by appropriations.

SEC. 5. That the Secretary of Labor is hereby directed to furnish sufficient quarters, office furniture, and equipment for the work of this bureau.

SEC. 6. That this act shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage.

Approved, June 5, 1920.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
W. N. DOAK, SECRETARY
WOMEN'S BUREAU
MARY ANDERSON, Director

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR,
WOMEN'S BUREAU,
Washington, January 5, 1933.

SIR: I have the honor to submit a report entitled "Women Workers in the Third Year of the Depression." This study gives, in a few pages, the industrial experience of 109 women and girls as described by them while students in the Bryn Mawr summer school for women workers in 1932. The study was made under the direction of Prof. Amy Hewes.

Respectfully submitted.

MARY ANDERSON, *Director.*

Hon. W. N. DOAK,
Secretary of Labor.

WOMEN WORKERS IN THE THIRD YEAR OF THE DEPRESSION

INTRODUCTION

Many reports on unemployment have been written during the past three years. Few of them have shown in any detail the changed living conditions forced upon the workers who had lost their jobs, in spite of the fact that the human cost of the breakdown of the economic apparatus is measured in the effect on standards of living. The present study records the changes made necessary in the manner of life of women who suffered unemployment through lack of work. It was made by a group of workers themselves, while students in a workers' school, in an effort to arrive at a better understanding of economic conditions through an analysis of their own experience.

The Bryn Mawr summer school, where these workers were enrolled in the summer of 1932, completed its twelfth session in that year. This school annually brings together an extremely varied group of women wage earners. The hundred or more students who are appointed to scholarships come from all parts of the United States and represent most of the major occupations at which women are employed. They represent, as well, almost every race and color and all the important social, political, and religious creeds. In spite of this variety in their origin, these women have had in common since 1930 the experience of exchanging positions of relative security for periods of enforced idleness or work on short time.

The project here outlined was undertaken by one of the units into which the school is divided. The 22 members of this unit became convinced that it was their obligation, both as students and as workers, to arrive at a better understanding of the predicament into which they had been forced by the economic organization in which they live and work. Many of them recalled the comparative cheerfulness with which they met the first incidents of the period when jobs began to be scarce. They then felt confidence in their ability to come through a short spell of bad weather and regain their former security. As the depression deepened, this confidence gave way to bewilderment and discouragement and finally to a feeling of almost complete helplessness.

Questions as to the why and wherefore of unemployment were uppermost in mind when the opportunity came for systematic study in the school. It was decided to undertake a study of the workers' own experience during the unemployment period as a first step in the understanding of their problems.

The year immediately preceding the summer-school term, that is, the year ended June 1, 1932, was still vividly in mind and the facts of employment and the changes in living and working arrangements

could be easily recalled. It seemed well worth while to analyze this experience because, although there is abundant evidence to indicate that suffering is widespread, there can be only vague notions as to the extent to which standards of living have been lowered, and little is known of the actual program of the empty days when jobs are as hard to find as the proverbial needle in the haystack. The cooperation of the whole school was readily secured, and the results of the study, which was cooperatively made, are presented in this report.

THE GROUP STUDIED

The group of 109 [1] students whose experience was studied were widely distributed among the millions of women wage earners in the United States. They had come from 17 States, including such distant ones as Washington, California, and Alabama, although the eastern industrial States sent the largest numbers, as in the case of New York with 34 representatives and Pennsylvania with 24. Almost one-half (50, including the 4 workers who had come from foreign countries to attend the school) were foreign born. The majority of the foreign-born workers had been in the United States 10 years or longer. In age the entire group ranged from 4 who were under 20 to 3 who were 40 or over. All but 12 were single, and by far the largest number (81) were living at home. More than half who lived with their families either paid all that they earned into the family exchequer or contributed as much as half of what they earned to the expenses of the family. Slightly less than half (50) were trade-union members.

The distribution among the major occupational groups was as follows:

Industry	Number of workers
Total	109
Clothing:	
Women's and children's	29
Men's	11
Millinery	11
Underwear and miscellaneous	6
Textiles	18
Miscellaneous manufacturing	15
Trade, transportation, clerical work	15
Domestic service	4

EMPLOYMENT STATUS DURING THE YEAR

Industrial conditions in the year ended June 1, 1932, had made steady employment the rare exception in the group. Only 10 workers had known no unemployment during the year. This fortunate group included 7 workers employed in American industry and 3 of the 4 foreign students—the Swedish worker (employed in a Government

[1] There were 110 students enrolled in the summer school. One of these was a miner's wife, a young woman thoroughly identified with industrial conditions and one whose family had been affected by prevailing unemployment, but she was not included in the group studied as she herself was not employed.

clothing factory), the German (a trade-union official), and 1 of the 2 English workers (a Lancashire cotton weaver). All the rest were subject to longer or shorter periods when they were altogether without work or were working on short weeks, or both, as follows:

Character of employment	Number of workers
Total	109
Both wholly and partially unemployed during the year	56
For more than half of the workers in this group the short weeks numbered 16 or more.	
Periods without a job but no short weeks	23
This group includes 2 workers not employed at all during the year.	
Periods of short weeks but never without a job	20
Regular full-time employment throughout the year	10

The periods of employment of the majority of the workers (82) were in connection with a single job, 19 held 2 jobs during the year, 5 held 3 jobs, and 1 held 4. Two workers were without any job during the entire year.

EARNINGS AND EXTENT OF EMPLOYMENT

The extended unemployment that the workers suffered during the year ended June, 1932, resulted in lower incomes than they had earned in the previous year, according to testimony so general as to be almost without exception. For women in all occupations a large majority (68) earned less than $600 (see Table 1), and there was no single occupational group in which half of the workers earned as much as $600. The actual median of the earnings was $480. In the clothing industry, from which the largest number of workers came, half earned less than $400, yet this group contained many highly skilled and experienced women, whose earnings only a few years ago, in spite of a highly seasonal industry, were sufficient to yield a very comfortable living.

A comparison with the earnings of former years shows that the incomes of women in industry have been shrinking at an alarming rate. Decreases from totals that already were so small that they did not make possible an American standard of living mean that workers must go without some of the essentials for satisfactory living. A conspicuous trend is clear in a comparison with results from a study made by Dr. Gladys L. Palmer of the earnings of 609 women workers who attended the four summer schools (Bryn Mawr, Barnard, Wisconsin, and the Southern school) in the summers of 1928, 1929, and 1930.[2]

[2] Palmer, Gladys L. The Industrial Experience of Women Workers at the Summer Schools, 1928 to 1930. U. S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau Bul. No. 89, 1931, p. 50.

These workers were drawn in similar proportions from the industries represented in the present study. The medians of their year's earnings were as follows:

Year	Median earnings
1928 (4 schools)	$861
1929 (4 schools)	887
1930 (4 schools)	793
1931 (Bryn Mawr)	696
1932 (Bryn Mawr)	480

The medians of the weekly full-time rates for the same workers (yielding depleted total incomes because of the short weeks) also show a great discrepancy between the depression years and those earlier.[3]

Year	Median rate
1928 (4 schools)	$21.65
1929 (4 schools)	23.15
1930 (4 schools)	20.15
1932 (Bryn Mawr)	14.50

TABLE 1.—*Total earnings of previous year in six industrial groups*

Year's earnings	Number of workers						
	Total	Clothing	Millinery	Textiles	Miscellaneous manufacturing	Domestic service [1]	Clerical work, trade, transportation
Total	109	46	11	18	15	4	15
No earnings	2	1		1			
Less than $200	15	7	1	2	1	1	3
$200 and less than $400	27	15		3	4	2	3
$400 and less than $600	24	6	6	6	4		2
$600 and less than $800	25	12	4	2	2	1	4
$800 and less than $1,000	7	1		2	3		1
$1,000 and less than $1,200	4	1		1	1		1
$1,200 and less than $1,400	2	1					1
Unknown	3	2		1			

[1] Earnings do not include any estimate for meals or room.

Only 10 workers of the 109 in the Bryn Mawr summer school were on full-time schedule during the entire year and only 39 had as much as a half year (26 weeks) of full employment. The short weeks were very short indeed, many consisting of only two or three days. This fact accounts for the small total even in the case of workers employed the greater part of the year. The weeks counted include all those in which payment was received for any work, no matter how small the amount.

[3] Palmer, op. cit., p. 39.

TABLE 2.—*Total earnings of previous year and weeks of employment*

Weeks of employment	Number of workers								
	Total	No earnings	Less than $200	$200 and less than $400	$400 and less than $600	$600 and less than $800	$800 and less than $1,000	$1,000 and less than $1,200	$1,200 and over
Total	[1] 106	2	15	27	24	25	7	4	2
No employment	2	2							
Less than 8	7		7						
8 and less than 16	6		2	3	1				
16 and less than 24	12		3	4	2	2	1		
24 and less than 32	10		1	5	3	1			
32 and less than 40	18		1	6	4	5	1		1
40 and less than 48	22		1	4	9	7	1		
48 and over	29			5	5	10	4	4	1

[1] 3 workers were unable to estimate their earnings.

WEEKLY RATES AND YEAR'S EARNINGS

Part-time employment accounts for the fact that even the workers who had higher weekly full-time rates failed to pile up year's earnings sufficient to guarantee them a satisfactory standard of living. For example, only 3 of the 27 workers whose weekly full-time rates ranged from $20 to $35 and over earned as much as $1,000 during the year. Those with lower rates suffered correspondingly in wages received.

TABLE 3.—*Full-time weekly rate and total year's earnings*

Full-time weekly rate	Number of workers								
	Total	No earnings	Less than $200	$200 and less than $400	$400 and less than $600	$600 and less than $800	$800 and less than $1,000	$1,000 and less than $1,200	$1,200 and over
Total	[1] 106	2	15	27	24	25	7	4	2
No weekly wage	2	2							
$5 and less than $10	19		8	7	3	1			
$10 and less than $15	34		5	10	10	7	2		
$15 and less than $20	24		1	3	6	9	2	2	1
$20 and less than $25	12		1	2	4	2	1	2	
$25 and less than $30	8			3		3	1		1
$30 and less than $35	5			2		3			
$35 and over	2				1		1		

[1] 3 workers were unable to estimate their earnings.

The extent to which health and working efficiency may be undermined by the small pay resulting from part-time employment often is not realized even by the workers themselves. A worker employed by a large electrical-supply company possessed ability and experience that enabled her to earn as much as $15 a week; but she totaled only $360 during the year, although employed 52 weeks, an average of $6.92. During the greatest number of weeks her pay envelope contained $4. In spite of her low earnings, this worker, like many another, was forced to contribute $10 for relief, which the company collected by deducting it from her salary.

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SAVINGS AND BORROWING

The ability to save for a rainy day exists only when the worker receives pay during a substantial part of the year. Only 17 of the 109 workers reported that they had accumulated any savings that had not dwindled away by the end of the year. For the most part these savings were small amounts, less than $75 in the cases of 9 of the 17 workers. All these were fortunate enough to have had 32 weeks or more of work.

Periods of extended unemployment and small earnings that made it impossible to save frequently resulted in the necessity of borrowing to meet emergencies. Thirty-four workers reported such borrowing. The amounts ranged from less than $50 in seven cases to over $1,000 in two. Nearly all the sums borrowed were still owing at the end of the year. These obligations, even when small in amount, weighed heavily and greatly increased the discouragement of the workers.

TRADE-UNION ORGANIZATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Because of the industries included, the trade-union members of the group suffered more unemployment than did those not organized. Clothing workers were by far the largest group in the school, and it was this highly seasonal industry from which the largest proportion of the trade-unionists came. Their experience with unemployment undoubtedly had more to do with the character of the industry than with the fact of organization. More important, it was the practice in many of the union clothing shops to stagger employment in order that a larger proportion of the members might share earnings. Naturally, the effect of this system, when the staggering was week in, week out, was to increase the number of weeks without work for the individual worker.

Two-fifths (24) of the unorganized workers reported no unemployment, in the sense of never being entirely without a job, although often on part time, while only 6 of the 50 trade-unionists held their jobs continuously. More than one-half the trade-unionists had known 16 or more weeks of unemployment, while only about one-quarter of the nonunion workers (15) suffered unemployment for periods of such length.

TABLE 4.—*Amount of unemployment among union and nonunion workers*

Weeks of unemployment	Number of workers		
	Total	Union	Nonunion
Total	109	50	59
No unemployment	[1] 30	6	24
Less than 8	14	3	11
8 and less than 16	22	13	9
16 and less than 24	14	7	7
24 and less than 32	14	12	2
32 and less than 40	6	3	3
40 and less than 48	3	2	1
48 and over	6	4	2

[1] Includes 20 workers who were employed on short time but were never without a job.

EFFECTS OF UNEMPLOYMENT ON THE STANDARD OF LIVING

The standard of living of workers is affected not only by their own unemployment but by that of other members of their families. More than one-third of the 79 workers who had been without a job belonged to households in which two or more members were unemployed in June, 1932. In some cases, women living alone were better off than other women, because they did not share in the support of a group that included a number of unemployed. On the other hand, the unemployed woman worker would have been destitute without the help of other members of her household and had that advantage over the woman living alone. Whatever the living arrangements, the standard of living that they represented became imperiled as unemployment continued. An attempt was made to find out how the various elements of the standard of living had been affected for members of the group studied in the third year of the depression. (Table 5.)

A better understanding of the importance of nourishing food has increased the effort to secure it even at the expense of other items, yet two-fifths of the 79 workers who had been part of the year without jobs reported that they had less nourishing food than in the year previous. When ranked by number of weeks without a job, there was a steady increase (with one exception) in the proportion of women having a lower food standard as the number of idle weeks increased.

Only slightly more than one-fifth of the workers less than 8 weeks out of work reported a lowered food standard, but 5 of the 6 workers out of work 48 weeks and over had less nourishing food.

Ability to maintain the same clothing standard diminished as the number of weeks without a job increased. With less than 8 weeks of unemployment the lowered clothing standard affected only 4 out of 14 workers. The proportion steadily increased up to the group out of work 48 weeks and over, where 5 of the 6 women had a lower standard.

The test of the ability to maintain the clothing standard was absence from the wardrobe of some important article, such as good shoes or a winter coat.

The housing standard was considered lower on any one of the following counts:

1. If the family had moved to secure a lower rent.
2. If additional lodgers had been taken with the same number of rooms.
3. If a mortgage had been increased on a house owned.
4. If the family had been more than two months behind in rent or mortgage payments.

On this basis more than half (46 of the households of the 79 workers) had suffered a lower housing standard.

The postponement of medical care when it was urgently needed was considered an indication of a lower standard of health maintenance. On this count 48 of the 79 workers (61 per cent) had fallen behind during the year.

Thus it was found that in the major elements of food, clothing, shelter, and medical care extended unemployment was breaking down

the standard of living. The extent of the breakdown upon the group of 79 workers who had been out of jobs is summarized here:

Standard of living and unemployment

Type	Unemployed workers with lowered standards	
	Number	Per cent
Food	32	41
Clothing	39	49
Housing	46	58
Medical care	48	61

TABLE 5.—*Lowered food and clothing standards and weeks of unemployment*

Number of weeks without a job	Number of workers		
	Total	With lowered food standard	With lowered clothing standard
Total—Number	79	32	39
Per cent	100.0	41	49
Less than 8	14	3	4
8 and less than 16	22	5	9
16 and less than 24	14	6	6
24 and less than 32	14	9	9
32 and less than 40	6	2	4
40 and less than 48	3	2	2
48 and over	6	5	5

THE USE OF EMPLOYMENT OFFICES

Only eight workers had visited public employment offices when in search of a job. Inquiry brought out the fact that comparatively few workers knew of the existence of such offices. They were, in fact, nonexistent as far as many workers were concerned, because of their location in distant cities. Many of the factory workers who lived in cities where there was a public employment office said that they understood that such offices were for the placement of domestic-service workers only. One worker who had visited two public employment offices insisted that they were "not run right." For the most part, jobs were sought through friends or through trade-union connections. The public agency had not made itself felt as an important resource.

Private agencies were used by nine workers, four of whom had also visited public agencies. Stories of exploitation by fee-charging agencies were not lacking, and a feeling of prejudice against them was general. The situation represented a widespread ignorance of facilities for placement and a completely unorganized labor market. Outside the largest cities, with only two exceptions, no contact had been made with any placement agency whatever.

PROGRAMS FOR DAYS WITHOUT WORK

The urgent need of a job induced 23 of the total 109 workers who had lost employment in their industry to use some of their enforced leisure and hard-earned money for training in a different line of work.

These workers had come chiefly from seasonal trades, clothing and millinery, which also showed the highest numbers of unemployed.

Since industrial work is almost always learned on the job in this country, there are few opportunities to train for employment in this field unless one first finds a job. Seven of the twenty-three workers had visited public offices, but as these offices were not connected with training centers they did not secure there any advice about retraining for work where labor was needed. To several of them the best chance for security appeared to lie in clerical work, so they spent their precious savings on lessons in stenography and typewriting, occupations already overcrowded.

The majority, however, put all their effort into getting back their old jobs or securing others in the same industry. A genuine liking for the trade in which they had already acquired experience and skill prevented them from taking steps to leave it. When the workers were members of trade-unions, there were additional ties to hold them to the industry.

Besides the time required for job hunting, it was necessary to fill the enforced leisure time with other occupations, but it was generally found that leisure under these circumstances is not always enjoyed. Some of the workers who had long wished for the time to study said that they were too anxious to concentrate their minds on books. The character of some of the activities undertaken during the time they were unemployed, and the number of persons reporting each kind of activity, are listed here for the 79 workers who were without a job part of the year:

Type of activity	Number of workers
Household tasks not otherwise performed	78
Lecture courses and concerts (when free)	77
Study courses	57
Distribution of relief	52
Sports	35

Members of trade-unions and of social and church clubs and societies participated in their activities more fully when out of a job in most cases, but it was difficult to separate their employed from their unemployed time in this connection.

PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

The most revealing fact about the employment status of the group studied is indicated by the following classification of the total 109 workers with regard to their employment prospects as they stood in July, 1932:

Outlook	Number of workers
Total	109
No job in prospect	40
Indefinite prospect, "when work begins"	30
Definite job promised	38
No report	1

When it is remembered that the unemployed members of this group are able-bodied, experienced workers, all of them in the heyday of their powers and more than "willing to work," and that they have been deprived of the opportunity to use these powers through no fault of their own, it will be seen that their concern with an economic system that withholds from them the chance to produce is profound. They themselves are becoming aware of this. Their sense of justice and the urge of their youth underlie their growing determination that the future shall bring to them and to all workers greater security and a better chance to work than was theirs in 1931–32.

WHEN JOBS ARE HARD TO FIND

The students who developed the project for this study of unemployment discussed with one another their individual experiences. The significance of the general situation revealed itself with peculiar poignancy in the cumulative effect of the stories of the individuals whose experience is summarized in the foregoing statistical analysis. The theme of the effect of unemployment was later found suitable for practice in expression in English, and a number of brief personal histories resulted. A few of these have been selected almost at random as the best kind of illustration of the facts that have been generalized in this study. Limitations of space have made it necessary to abbreviate them, but they stand here otherwise unedited.

CASE No. 1

I worked in the automobile industry in a shop in which were made oil gages, gas gages, panel gages, nearly all the electrical equipments on the dashboard for the different types of cars. In the time of depression not many people have money to purchase an automobile. Consequently, our work became very slack.

Late in the year of 1931 I found myself thrown with other workers into the whirlpool. I refused to take a man's job which would have taken from him, his wife, and his children his weekly wage. This was a maneuver of the bosses to produce as much and even more if possible at half the cost. Before this we had received a 10 per cent cut and our weekly bonus had been taken from us. I did not know what to do or which way to look when I left the shop, for I knew it was impossible to get another job. But I could not be the cause of some people starving even though it meant a job for me.

I would get up early in the morning and go to different factories in the hope of getting a job. But I met everywhere the same answer, "No help wanted." There was only one thing for me to do, and that was for me to go home.

My parents live on a farm and they too have a struggle for a living. They work long hours and have to sell their crops for sums insufficient to provide a decent standard of living. They are forced to sell all they have, such as butter and eggs, and there is no surplus with which to buy clothes, not to mention medical care or dental work. We have no longer the comforts of life. The telephone has been disconnected; movies, books, rides in the evening are no longer possible for us.

I was planning to get married, but I could not quite pick up courage enough to take this step with no security and maybe bring children into the world only to starve.

In October, 1931, I tried and luckily succeeded in getting domestic work. I have the privilege of going out evenings. I get my room and board and $8. It isn't a large wage, but I am able to buy a few clothes and send some money home to my family.

CASE No. 2

I have been working in the railroad yards for seven years. The conditions are very bad. I would have to take charge of two or three women. The railroad yard looks very complicated to new people and there is very little difference on the outside between a parlor car and an ordinary coach. These new girls would be given an armful of tidies and told to go in the cars and put them on the chairs. Naturally these girls would go in a coach and put them on. When a parlor car was ready for service these tidies were missing. I was called to find the girl, take the tidies off the coach, jump off the car, run down and over a dozen tracks, hop on another, and that is not as easy as it sounds. As soon as the girls did get on to the work the boss would find fault and discharge them.

I soon found out that he was providing jobs while a friend pocketed the employment fees—men $5 and women $3 or $4. I notified the grievance committee. A meeting was called and both the boss and the mechanic got discharged.

The season begins to get dull, no passengers are traveling in parlor cars. Help is laid off. Seniority counts. Slowly it reaches the older employees. I was laid off and couldn't help the family any longer.

CASE No. 3

My employer was among those who lost heavily in the stock market and in 1930 he was forced to discontinue his neckwear shop in New York City. With the loss of my job went all my independence. I did not realize my helplessness until I began to hunt for another job.

Months passed and I could not find work. I met the same answer everywhere I applied—"No help needed." Finally I had to consent to work for a contractor under the most unfavorable conditions, such as poor ventilation and poor lights, with drastic cut in wages. Even this unpleasant work did not last long. He could not get sufficient work to keep his place going, and in 1931 the shop was closed down. Since neckties are not essential, this industry is particularly hard hit, and I have been out of work for almost a year.

I have stayed with my brother, who is also a victim of unemployment. During the last year we had to economize a great deal on clothes, recreation such as the theater, concerts, week-end vacations, and once in a while buying a nice book. We had planned to take a radio in the house, but this plan has entirely failed to materialize. We had to cut out dental work and changing eye glasses. So far we have managed to keep up a little place we call home. What is in store for us we don't know.

CASE No. 4

Being a strong and fast working girl (this is what the garment industry needs), I was a success. I made a nice wage and could afford to live decently. I had a comfortable room, good clothes, and recreation such as plays, concerts, good movies, and an opera once in a while. This was until 1930.

When the first cut in wages came, the workers in the shop (most of them married men afraid of losing their jobs) agreed to it. The boss, becoming more powerful, wanted us to work longer hours and also on Saturdays. This made me mad. So like Adam, in the play "1931," I quit, thinking that the next step would be better. I traveled from shop to shop, and one was worse than the other. Finally, I realized that it was no use to waste time; all the shops were alike.

I remained in one where the workers attracted me because they were class-conscious union workers. When we did not have enough work for a whole week, we divided it equally. My wage was small, just enough to exist on: Room, food, and a cheap dress which I made for myself. All recreations were stopped. The worst part of all, what hurts me most, is that I can not help my old mother who lives in Europe and has no income, but depends on her children in rich America.

CASE No. 5

The biggest material loss which I have suffered so far is the loss of an independent little apartment just a year ago. I could not keep on paying rent any longer. I rented a bigger apartment jointly with one of my sisters who had the same problem. She has two young children. We share the cost of living jointly. Even though there is harmony, I lost part of my independence and privacy.

My husband lost his regular job three years ago. He worked in the jewelry line, which is a luxury and therefore one of the first to dispense with in times of depression. Later, for more than a year, he worked as a money collector for jewelry sold on a weekly installment plan for much lower wages. But this job also ceased to be. He was an ever-smiling, good humored, high-spirited young man. But since a year his contented, happy, almost childish continual smile slowly dies away and a strange line of worry takes its place. His pride is hurt to see that he is not able to contribute anything to the household.

My own job in a dressmaking shop is just as insecure. Every time less work, longer lay-offs, less income, which makes the outlook for the future still darker.

CASE No. 6

Since the six-months' strike in New Bedford in 1928 my entire family has suffered quite severely from unemployment. Right after the strike was settled we all went on short time. The textile mill where I worked only started up to finish the order that was in stock, which only lasted about three months, and then finally closed down for good.

Then started my search for another job, which meant going from one place to another, getting one or two days' work in a week and sometimes not getting one day's work in about five weeks. Every morning it was the same story, "Where shall I go?" This mill was slowing down, that mill was laying off girls. It just seems as if there was no place for me to go. Things were going worse all the time. This last year about 20 mills have gone out of business, making it almost impossible to get any kind of a job at all. We have had to run our rent on for some time and have had to have city help so that we could have a little something to eat.

CASE No. 7

When in 1930 six members of my family and I arrived in this country, everything seemed to be fine. A nice 6-room furnished flat was awaiting us in Chicago. My brothers and sisters, who had been living in this country for several years, were happy, healthy, and working. I got work in a millinery shop and attended evening school. Everything was pleasant and comfortable. We heard of unemployment, but I never realized its effects. It seemed so far away from us that I never gave a second thought to it.

About the end of June, 1931, one of my brothers lost his job in a butcher shop. In July, 1931, when over 100 banks closed, we lost all our savings. The rent was too expensive compared to our income, but the landlord lowered the rent and my sister, brother-in-law, and baby came to live with us, so we managed to remain. The office where my brother-in-law worked closed up in bankruptcy in November, 1931, so he also joined the ranks of the unemployed. My sister's baby was 4 months old at that time. Before Christmas, there was hardly any work, but I found a place in a millinery shop where a friend of mine worked. We had to take work home after eight and a half hours' work in the shop in order to make $1.50 or $2 a day. My sister helped me in the evening, so she learned the trade. She was glad to do this work, though it was hard and she had to work until 2 or 3 a. m. in order to make $2 or sometimes $2.50.

While the public evening schools were open I believed America was a fine country to live in, having free schools, libraries, and parks. But in November, 1931, when evening public schools closed down and never opened again, I suffered a great loss. It was school after the long, hard working day that kept energy and life in me. It made me forget the evils of the world and put before me a task: "Learn and master the language; now is your time."

When the school closed, I heard that the teachers had not been paid for eight months. I thought it ridiculous that a rich and great city like Chicago couldn't pay its teachers. I began listening and questioning. I found that it isn't necessary for the children of the poor to go to school.

There's a long road before me, full of unknown facts which I hope some day I shall know and they shall guide me to a better life.

CASE No. 8

We have always been financially comfortable so we could provide the necessities and a few luxuries of life. My father was a furniture dealer on a small scale; he sold furniture on the installment plan to people of the working class.

After the closing down of the factories in 1929 thousands of people were thrown out of work, among whom were many of my father's customers. This destroyed my father's business and he found himself with no means of supporting a wife and two children.

I was working in a cigar factory for $13 a week, but about this time my salary was cut to $10. I was forced to leave because of my health, and this left the whole family without any money except the little my father could still collect.

After borrowing from all his friends and relatives, he managed to rent a store to sell all kinds of confectioneries. We made a meager living from it and with the tax the Government has recently put on all candies, we make still less. We are scarcely able to provide food and clothing for the family, while the work is unending and tiring. We have been going on like this for the past year and see no way of bettering our conditions, our one hope being that economic conditions in this country will improve.

CASE No. 9

The depression has awakened me to the things which are going on around me, things I never thought existed in the world. We are told that the Government is made by the people and for the people. We toil all day for meager wages. It has made me think there must be a way out.

I wanted to become a citizen. I went to the Y. W. C. A. night school. But I could not concentrate. I was worried about getting laid off. I was very discouraged.

In June, 1931, I worked in a silk-crêpe lingerie shop, sewing lace on garments, paid by piecework. After working 9 or 10 hours a day I could hardly straighten myself. But the rush season lasted only six weeks. Then the girls were laid off.

Then I went to work in a rayon underwear factory, eight and a half hours a day. We had steady work for only one month. Then we would sit all day and wait for work. Sometimes we spent car fare and lunch money and went home without making a penny. Other days we made a dollar a day. There were 25 girls on seaming and they got together to discuss the situation. They agreed to go to the boss and demand a higher wage.

The forelady said she could get girls to work for 12 hours a day; that if we wanted to keep our jobs we must be satisfied and get back to work. In January, 1932, the majority of the girls were laid off. Again we sat looking at each other. They came and examined our work every few minutes and found something wrong with it. Then came the lay-off.

I got a job in a knitting factory where a friend of mine worked. Work was not very steady but I was more at ease. Sometimes I put in only two or three days a week. I went without many things, such as medical care, recreation, books and magazines I would like to read. I buy only the clothes I need most.

CASE No. 10

Up until the fall of 1928, I had a very good job in one of the garment factories in Detroit. I made good wages and was somewhat contented. I lived in an apartment which had all modern conveniences, went to the summer resorts for week-ends, attended shows and concerts in the winter and also to the evening classes of the Y. W. C. A., and contributed generously to charity and church.

In 1928 the firm for which I worked merged with another and moved from the city, leaving approximately 400 persons without jobs.

One day I heard that one of the larger factories was needing operators. I was hired, but unfortunately the work went slack just a few days before the end of eight weeks. Again I found myself on the streets and in the employment offices looking for work.

Unable to find a satisfactory job, I decided to go home to a Pennsylvania mining town and stay with my mother. At home living conditions were different from those I had been used to in the city. There was no bathroom, no gas. We had to do our cooking over a coal or wood fire even in the hottest weather. After six months of that kind of living I was becoming more and more dissatisfied.

One day I found myself in a bus bound for Detroit, in hope of finding and taking any kind of a job that would happen along. I secured a clerical position with the Y. W. C. A. at a salary which was just about half of that I was used to getting. However, I didn't complain. I was glad to have a job and thought myself very fortunate.

In the fall of 1931, the budget of the "Y" was cut below a minimum which necessitated a reduction of wages and laying off of workers. So I am without a job to-day.

I don't know what the future holds for me and my dependents. I can't find work, therefore I can't buy things other workers are producing. I can not go to shows or concerts and I can not contribute to charity, and I may find myself without the most important things after my savings are exhausted.

PUBLICATIONS OF THE WOMEN'S BUREAU

[Any of these bulletins still available will be sent free of charge upon request]

*No. 1. Proposed Employment of Women During the War in the Industries of Niagara Falls, N. Y. 16 pp. 1918.
*No. 2. Labor Laws for Women in Industry in Indiana. 29 pp. 1919.
No. 3. Standards for the Employment of Women in Industry. 8 pp. Fourth ed., 1928.
No. 4. Wages of Candy Makers in Philadelphia in 1919. 46 pp. 1919.
*No. 5. The Eight-Hour Day in Federal and State Legislation. 19 pp. 1919.
No. 6. The Employment of Women in Hazardous Industries in the United States. 8 pp. 1921.
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*No. 8. Women in the Government Service. 37 pp. 1920.
*No. 9. Home Work in Bridgeport, Conn. 35 pp. 1920.
*No. 10. Hours and Conditions of Work for Women in Industry in Virginia. 32 pp. 1920.
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*No. 12. The New Position of Women in American Industry. 158 pp. 1920.
*No. 13. Industrial Opportunities and Training for Women and Girls. 48 pp. 1921.
*No. 14. A Physiological Basis for the Shorter Working Day for Women. 20 pp. 1921.
No. 15. Some Effects of Legislation Limiting Hours of Work for Women. 26 pp. 1921.
No. 16. (See Bulletin 98.)
No. 17. Women's Wages in Kansas. 104 pp. 1921.
No. 18. Health Problems of Women in Industry. 6 pp. Revised, 1931.
No. 19. Iowa Women in Industry. 73 pp. 1922.
*No. 20. Negro Women in Industry. 65 pp. 1922.
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*No. 22. Women in Georgia Industries. 89 pp. 1922.
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*No. 65. The Effects of Labor Legislation on the Employment Opportunities of Women. 498 pp. 1928.
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