

**PUBLIC DOCUMENT NO. 102:
FIFTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE
MINIMUM WAGE COMMISSION
OF MASSACHUSETTS FOR THE
YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 1917**

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FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 1917.



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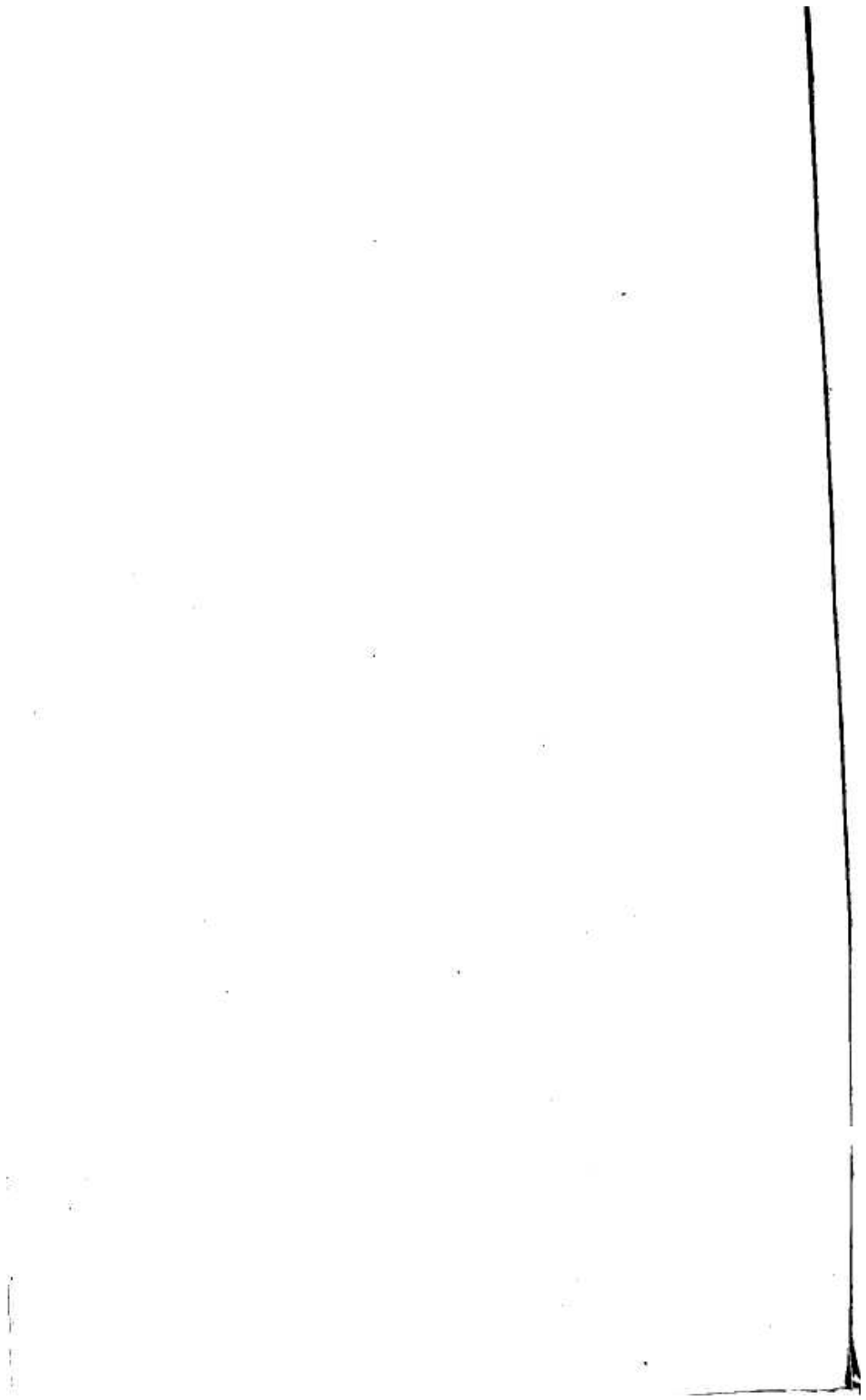
MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION.

EDWIN N. BARTLETT, *Chairman.*

MABEL GILLESPIE.

ARTHUR N. HOLCOMBE.

ELLEN NATHALIE MATTHEWS, *Secretary.*



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

REPORT.

To the Honorable the Senate and the House of Representatives in General Court assembled.

The Massachusetts Minimum Wage Commission herewith respectfully submits its fifth annual report, which contains an account of its proceedings and investigations during the year ending Dec. 31, 1917, together with recommendations for such additional legislation as the experience of the Commission has shown to be necessary. To it is appended the secretary's report, summarizing the activities of the Commission's field and office force during this period and giving the expenditures of the department for the fiscal year ending Nov. 30, 1917. A tabular summary of the recommendations made under the authority of the minimum wage law up to Jan. 1, 1918, is contained in the appendices.

CHANGE IN THE PERSONNEL OF THE COMMISSION.

In October, 1917, the second term of Commissioner Arthur N. Holcombe expired. Mr. Holcombe, one of the earliest advocates of minimum wage legislation in this country, and a member of the Commission from the time of its establishment, was obliged to decline reappointment on account of his absence in Washington in the service of the United States government for the duration of the war. Pending the appointment and confirmation of his successor, he has up to the close of the year continued to give a portion of his time to the work of the Commission.

MINIMUM WAGE LEGISLATION IN THE UNITED STATES IN 1917.

The year which has just come to a close has been one of unusual significance in the history of minimum wage legislation in this country. With the action of the Supreme Court of the United States in April, affirming the decision of the Oregon Supreme Court which sustained the constitutionality of a compulsory minimum wage law for women, the most serious impediment to the enforcement of similar legislation throughout the country has been removed. The effects of this decision have already been seen in the presentation for argument, after delays of from one to three years, of similar cases which were pending in the Superior Courts of Arkansas and Minnesota and the Supreme Court of Massachusetts. Decisions upholding the legislation were rendered by the Arkansas court on June 4, and by the Minnesota court on December 21, and action relative to the Massachusetts case,¹ which was argued on December 12, is expected in the near future.

Notwithstanding the setback to the extension of minimum wage legislation resulting from the delay in the action of the United States Supreme Court with regard to the constitutionality of the Oregon law, statutes providing for the establishment of minimum wages were enacted during the past year by the legislatures of two States, namely, Arizona and Colorado. In addition, an act was passed in North Dakota establishing a commission authorized to investigate wages and working conditions of women and minors and to recommend legislation for the improvement of such conditions. The Arizona law, approved on March 8, establishes a compulsory minimum wage of \$10 per week for all women employed in stores, offices, restaurants, hotels, laundries and manufacturing establishments. In Colorado a preliminary investigating commission was appointed in 1913, but its power expired two years later, and a bill which passed the legislature in 1914, creating a permanent commission with power to establish and enforce minimum wage standards, was

¹ *Holecombe et al. v. Creamer et al.*

vetoed by the Governor and in consequence never became operative. The present law, which went into effect on July 20, 1917, gives to the State Industrial Commission, a body already charged with the administration of the laws relative to hours of labor and workmen's compensation, the power to establish compulsory minimum wages and "standards of conditions of labor and hours of employment" for women and minors employed in any occupation.

In States where minimum wage laws were already in force a number of new orders or recommendations have been put into effect during the past year. Among the most important of these rulings were those affecting women employed in canneries in Oregon, mercantile establishments and laundries in California and Kansas, and in the men's clothing and furnishing goods trades in Massachusetts. In addition to the establishment of orders concerning occupations hitherto unaffected, revised orders for minors and apprentices have been entered by the Industrial Welfare Commissions of Oregon and Washington. While there have been as yet no increases due to the recent rise in living costs in the minimum rates already operative, it is reported that a strong effort is now being made in Oregon and Washington to have existing minimum standards increased for all occupations.¹

MINIMUM WAGE LEGISLATION IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES, 1914-17.

An event of the past year of perhaps almost equal significance to the immediate future of minimum wage legislation as the upholding of the constitutionality of the Oregon law has been the passage, as a war measure, of the British act which provides for the establishment of minimum wages for farm laborers. The enactment of this and similar regulations in other European countries during the years 1914-17 not only gives evidence that the economic conditions result-

¹ On Jan. 7, 1918, a proclamation was issued by the Industrial Welfare Commission of Washington, calling upon the employers in that State to grant a voluntary increase of wages to their employees "to cover this period of the greatly increased cost of living with which we are now burdened." Unless employers respond satisfactorily to this appeal the Commission states that it "will be compelled to take such other action within its power as may be necessary to secure the desired result." The complete text of this proclamation is reprinted in Appendix No. 2.