

**FIRST ANNUAL REPORT OF THE
MINIMUM WAGE COMMISSION
OF MASSACHUSETTS, NO. 102,
DECEMBER 31, 1913, PP. 5-67**

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VARIOUS

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FIRST ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

★ MINIMUM WAGE COMMISSION

OF

MASSACHUSETTS.

FOR THE SIX MONTHS ENDING DECEMBER 31, 1913.



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MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION.

H. LARUE BROWN, *Chairman.*

ARTHUR N. HOLCOMBE.

MABEL GILLESPIE.

AMY HEWES, *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 the following report, covering the period from July 1, 1913, when the commission took up its duties, to Jan. 1, 1914. To it is appended the report of the secretary, summarizing the work carried on during that period, and containing an analysis of the results obtained, together with other information regarding the work of the commission.

SURVEY OF MINIMUM WAGE LEGISLATION.

Minimum Wage in Other Countries.

Systems of minimum wage legislation have been in operation in New Zealand since 1894, in Victoria, Australia, since 1896, followed by the inauguration of somewhat similar systems in the other Australian States and in the Australian Commonwealth, and in Great Britain since January, 1910. Australasian legislation has in general followed one of two types. According to the Victorian system, minimum wages are established in specific occupations or industries through conferences known as wages boards, which consist of equal numbers of employers and employees, presided over by an impartial chairman. The determinations of the boards are reported in the government "Gazette," and the wages fixed by the board become at once legally binding. The second method, which is in operation in New Zealand, is that of establishing minimum wages through compulsory arbitration

courts. Compulsory arbitration, at first considered merely as a means for the peaceful settlement of industrial disputes, has become a mechanism for establishing minimum wages through the necessity under which the courts have found themselves of specifying minimum rates in the course of determining the conditions under which employment in the given industry or occupation shall continue. In practice, the operation of the conciliation or arbitration courts with regard to minimum wages has been very similar to that of the wages boards of the Victorian system.

In England the determinations are made by boards known as trade boards, composed of equal numbers of employers and employees, with a chairman and other members appointed by the Board of Trade. The determinations of the trade boards are made binding by order of the Board of Trade. The act at first applied to the four trades of tailoring, box-making, lace-making and chain-making. It has since been extended to cover several other occupations. As in Australasia, the rates of wages fixed apply to both men and women in the occupations in question.

Minimum Wage in Massachusetts.

Successful as the application of the minimum wage principle had appeared to be in other countries it was not until 1911 that agitation for an application of the principle in this country took public form in Massachusetts. In that year representatives of several groups of persons who were interested in social and industrial questions within the State presented to the Legislature a petition asking for an investigation with reference to the desirability of attempting minimum wage legislation in this State. As a result of their efforts a resolve was passed providing for the appointment of an investigating commission "to study the matter of wages of women and minors, and to report on the advisability of establishing a board or boards to which shall be referred inquiries as to the need and feasibility of fixing minimum rates of wages for women and minors in any industry."¹ The commission appointed in pursuance of the

¹ Chapter 71, Resolves of 1911.

resolve was known as the Commission on Minimum Wage Boards, and consisted of five members: Henry Lefavour, chairman, Richard Olney, 2d, John Golden, Elizabeth G. Evans and George W. Anderson. Under the direction of Miss Mary W. Dewson as secretary, an investigation was made into the condition of employees in confectionery factories, retail stores and laundries. With reference to an analysis of the results obtained, the commission made the following general statement: —

A large number of women of eighteen years of age and upward are employed at very low wages; it is indisputable that a great part of them are receiving compensation that is inadequate to meet the necessary cost of living.¹

In order to remedy the state of affairs revealed in the course of its investigations, the commission recommended that a permanent commission of three members be appointed, to be known as the Minimum Wage Commission, which should inquire into the wages paid to the female employees in any occupation in the Commonwealth, if the commission should have reason to believe that the wages paid to a substantial number of employees are inadequate to supply the necessary cost of living and to maintain the worker in health. If, after such investigation, the commission should still be of the opinion that the wages paid fail to meet the demands specified, the commission should then establish a wage board composed of six representatives of the employers and six representatives of the employees, with a number of disinterested members to represent the public. The wage determinations agreed upon by the board, if approved by the commission, should be declared the minimum wages for the occupation.

The Legislature of 1912, having received the report of the preliminary commission, passed an act (chapter 706, Acts of 1912)² embodying in general the recommendations made, but substituting publicity for the penalty for failure to pay the rates determined. The present commission was appointed

¹ House No. 1667, report of the Commission on Minimum Wage Boards, p. 12.

² Appendix No. 1.