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**DAVID A. MCCABE**

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NO. 2

JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY STUDIES  
IN  
HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

Under the Direction of the  
Departments of History, Political Economy, and  
Political Science

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THE STANDARD RATE IN AMERICAN  
TRADE UNIONS

BY

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE .....	vii
INTRODUCTION .....	9
CHAPTER I. The Piece Scale .....	18
I. Differentiation of the Rate .....	19
Form of the product .....	23
Materials used .....	49
Physical conditions .....	54
Price of the finished article .....	55
II. Definition of Work .....	58
Auxiliary work .....	59
Payment of helpers .....	61
III. Abnormally Difficult Conditions of Production....	65
The turn system .....	69
CHAPTER II. The Standard Time Rate .....	77
I. Rate Grouping by Kind of Work .....	82
II. Rate Grouping by Competency .....	94
III. The Union Rate and Actual Wages .....	106
Provision for payment above the minimum..	106
Union policy and the minimum .....	108
Wages and efficiency .....	114
CHAPTER III. The Area of the Standard Rate .....	120
I. Area of Piece Scales .....	121
Local scales .....	124
Sectional scales .....	128
National scales .....	142
II. Area of Time Rates .....	163
Local rates .....	163
Sectional rates .....	166
National rates .....	171
Conflict of rates .....	178
III. Comparison of Piece and Time Rates .....	181
CHAPTER IV. The Form of the Rate .....	185
I. Attitude of the Unions .....	185
II. Objections to Piece Work .....	212
III. Acceptable Conditions for Piece Work .....	225
APPENDICES .....	233
A. Calculation of Output in Mule Spinning .....	233
B. Premium and Bonus Systems of Payment .....	235





## PREFACE

This monograph had its origin in an investigation carried on by the author while a member of the Economic Seminary of the Johns Hopkins University. It was submitted as a dissertation in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy from that institution in June, 1909. Some portions of it have been amplified and other parts rewritten since that time, but the discussion has not been brought beyond that date.

The chief documentary source of information has been the collection of trade-union publications in the Johns Hopkins Library. This documentary study has been supplemented by personal interviews with national trade-union officials and with local union officers and employers of labor in a number of industrial centers. The writer wishes to record here his deep appreciation of the patience and kindness of the many union officers and employers who have supplied him with information. The writer desires also to express his deep indebtedness to Professor Jacob H. Hollander and Professor George E. Barnett, under whose guidance the study was undertaken and carried on, for valuable suggestions and criticism at every stage of the work.



## THE STANDARD RATE IN AMERICAN TRADE UNIONS

### INTRODUCTION

By the term "standard rate," as employed in the present monograph, is meant a rate of wages fixed by a trade union as payment for a given product or for work of a given duration in a particular trade or branch of a trade, and binding on the members of the union engaged on that product or in that branch of industry.<sup>1</sup> It may thus be either a piece rate or a time rate. In either case it is "standard" because it rests uniformly and impersonally upon all the members of the union whom it is designed to affect; it is applied to the work the member is engaged upon, not to the individual member himself. The union does not ordinarily rate each individual separately according to his personal qualifications or circumstances, but fixes one rate as a standard for the group. In the few cases in which a union fixes rates separately for individual members,<sup>2</sup> the rates are "union" rates, but they are not standard rates in the sense in which this term is here used.

<sup>1</sup>The use of the term in this sense differs somewhat from the practice of American trade unionists. "Standard rate" is not often used by unionists, the term "union rate" being more commonly employed. When used, it is usually in reference to the time rate only, although even here the term "minimum rate" is more common. In a few unions, however, the term "standard rate" is still occasionally used to denote the rate received by the average workman, or by the bulk of workmen, irrespective of whether this be the established minimum. Some years ago, it was customary in a few trades to refer to the amount which the workman of average skill was expected to earn in a day under the piece-work system as the "standard rate"; but this usage barely survives, if at all (see below, p. 80). Finally it should be noted that in applying the term "standard rate" to the prevailing type of union rate herein described, the present writer is following the usage established by Sidney and Beatrice Webb in "Industrial Democracy" (1902 ed., p. 279).

<sup>2</sup>For a description of such cases, see below, p. 77.