

the time came. They accepted the second item and added that piece workers must be put on same basis as time workers, and that these findings must apply to all minors. Since employers' objections were few and their co-operation exceedingly hearty, it is generally supposed that the decree of the commission, which cannot fail to have the support of the public, will receive, on the whole, the same response from employers as if it were obligatory. But it is to be hoped that the Massachusetts Legislature will arrange in its next session for effective enforcement of such carefully made decrees.

Objections Usually Advanced Against Minimum-Wage Legislation.

Four objections are constantly urged and may be answered in the following way:

Does such legislation discriminate against the unfit? The law in each of the above localities provides that one or the other of the supervising bodies may issue licences to the physically disabled or unfit, providing for them a rate below the minimum. It was stated last year that in England, of the 300,000 employes covered by the legislation only 125 had received such a special license out of the 200 (approximate) who had applied. The chief factory inspector at Melbourne, the Board of Trade office at London, and Prof. M. B. Hammond of Indiana, who made an extended investigation of the Australian system, are authors of the following statements: (1) "Legislation which fixes a standard wage undoubtedly has the effect of displacing the unfit. Our experience, however, shows that this dislocation is not serious, and that, as a rule, things regulate themselves fairly well. * * * I do not think there is any evidence that philanthropic agencies have ever been called upon to increase their work through minimum-wage legislation." "So far as the Board is aware, there has been no general dismissal of workers as a result of fixing minimum rates; and even where these workers have been dismissed on this account it has frequently been found that this has been due to misunderstanding of the act and not to its actual provisions." "Although the legal minimum wage does unquestionably force out of employment sooner or later than would otherwise be the case a certain number of old, infirm and naturally slow workers, it is easy to exaggerate the working of the minimum wage in this respect."

Does not the minimum tend to become the maximum and also the average wage? The same three high authorities have answered this question, too. "It is frequently asserted in this State (Victoria) that the minimum becomes the maximum, but our official figures show this is not the case. * * * I regret that I have not figures which will precisely answer your question, but a careful comparison will show that the average wage in a trade is invariably higher than the minimum wage." "The Board (of Trade, English) is not aware of any general tendency among employers to reduce rates to the minimum allowed by law in cases where higher rates have been paid in the past. On the contrary, there is reason to suppose that the better organization of the workers which has been observed to have taken place in the trades to which the act has been applied tends to prevent the legal minimum rate from becoming in fact the maximum." "That the minimum wage fixed by the Board tends to become the maximum in that trade is often asserted, but it would not be easy to prove. Employers have frequently said to me that they believed there was a tendency in that direction, but they have seldom been able to furnish evidence to that effect from their own establishments. At times I have found on inquiry that not a single man in their own plants was receiving the minimum wage. The employers' opinions seem to be more the result of a priori reasoning than the result of actual experience. Nor, on reflection, is it easy to see why the minimum should become the maximum. The determinations do not compel an employer to hire or to retain in employment any worker. His is free to dismiss any man whom he believes incapable of earning the minimum wage, or he can send the employe to the chief factory inspector for a permit to work at less than the minimum fixed by the Board. There seems to be no reason why under this system there should not be the same competition among employes as under the old system to secure the most efficient and highly skilled workmen, and there is no reason why such men should not get wages based on their superior efficiency. * * * In New Zealand * * * statistics as to wages, tabulated in 1909 by the Labor Department, showed that in the four leading industrial centers of the Dominion the percentage of workers in trades where a legal minimum wage was fixed who received more than the minimum varied from 51 to 61 per cent."

Have industries been driven out of various localities by such legislation? The Board of Trade declares itself unaware of any such tendency. The two gentlemen from whom we have quoted before are emphatic in their denial. "Industries have not been paralyzed nor driven from the State, as was freely predicted by extreme opponents of the wages boards' plans. There is only one instance of the kind to be found in the records

(of Victoria). On the other hand, there has been a steady growth of manufactures." And he proceeds to state that in 1896 there were in Victoria 3370 factories and 40,814 workers, while in 1910 there were 5,302 of the former and 83,053 of the latter.

Standards for Determining Legal Minimum Rates.

A brief review of the standards determining what legal minimum rates should be fixed is interesting. The Oregon law begins: "Whereas, the welfare of the State of Oregon requires that women and minors should be protected from conditions of labor which have a pernicious effect on their health and morals, and inadequate wages and unduly long hours and insanitary conditions of labor have such a pernicious effect; therefore * * * it shall be unlawful to employ women in any occupation within the State of Oregon for wages which are inadequate to supply the necessary cost of living and to maintain them in health." The commission has made no definite announcement of what is necessary for maintenance in health other than what may be inferred from their decrees. Eight dollars and twenty-five cents is the minimum pay per week permitted for any adult woman worker in Oregon. The Massachusetts bulletin (page 20) contains this statement: "The lowest total for human conditions for an individual in Boston * * * is \$8.28 * * * the wage board is convinced that the sum required to keep alive and in health a completely self-supporting woman in Boston is in no case less than \$8, and in many cases may rise to \$9 or more."

The Situation in Maryland.

The situation in Maryland can be stated briefly, because while we are not in a blissful state of ignorance as to the wages of women workers, we have by no means comprehensive data on the subject. Three figures are available. The Federal Government in 1910 made a report on two separate groups of women. One, 335 in number, was in the canning industry. The average for these was \$3.85 per week. The other, a group of 500 women in "selected industries," averaged \$5.27.

The writer was one of a number of people who last year made a wage study preliminary to the introduction in the 1914 General Assembly by the Consumers' League of Maryland, of a bill which would have established such a commission as those active now in a majority of States with similar statutes. Five hundred and thirty-six girls were personally visited and studied, all of them interested in the purpose and eager to co-operate. They constituted a representative group in Baltimore city. Their average wage has seemed at first thought surprisingly high, but when analyzed becomes a serious matter:

- 7 per cent. received less than \$4.
- 26 per cent. received less than \$5.
- 46 per cent. received less than \$6.
- 66 per cent. received less than \$7.
- 85 per cent. received less than \$8.
- The average is \$6.16.

Estimates of the local living cost for an independent working woman were made by a study of lodging-houses, and the separate items per week were as follows:

Room and board.....	\$4.50
Lunches.....	.60
Carfares.....	.60
Laundry.....	.50
Clothing.....	.90
Vacation and savings.....	.20
Recreation.....	.10
Medicine, dentist, doctor.....	.50
Incidentals.....	.10
Total.....	\$8.00

There are, of course, variable items on this list depending on the physique or temperament of the girl. Four dollars and a half may be high for lodging. It is true that, at a cost of privacy, that is, by sharing a room, a woman may secure quarters for \$3 and \$3.50, but those investigated at that price (with the exception of those in charitable working girls' homes, which are, of course, one form of subsidizing modern industry,) were most undesirable. Some single rooms were seen at \$4, but they were few, and in several cases the landlords anticipated immediate raise in charge. The clothing estimate is probably too small, as it is the lowest of several that were made by those who understand a working girls' needs. Ninety cents a week means only \$46.80 a year. The highest estimate given was \$1.25 a year, or \$2.40 a week. Another, more moderate, but inclusive, was \$1.75 a week, or \$90 a year. For medicine, etc., a majority of those reporting invested \$25 or more in the year that had just passed. To earn \$10, which is the least sum necessary for a week's vacation, a girl must save 19 cents a week. A like sum is a ridiculously small

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