

## CHAPTER V

### HOURS OF LABOR

Of the many lessons which the World War taught industry, none is more clear-cut than that long hours do not pay. The experiences of the war strengthened the scientific basis for restriction of hours and gave an impetus to legislation. Yet in spite of a general tendency in the United States toward a shorter workday—a tendency which made especially rapid progress from 1915 through 1918—the old ideal of “eight hours for work, eight hours for rest, eight hours for what you will” has not yet been realized by the majority of American wage-earners.

Beginning in the spring of 1915, an active movement for the eight-hour workday swept the country, which, according to figures compiled by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, reduced to eight the working hours of 3,462,000 persons between January 1, 1915, and June 30, 1919. The movement began in Bridgeport, Conn., in 1915, when a series of “eight-hour” strikes swept through that hive of war industries, not ceasing until the factories of the city were practically on an eight-hour basis. It spread mainly among machinists in 1915 and 1916, though anthracite coal workers had obtained a straight, and railroad employees a basic, eight-hour day before the United States entered the war. Eight-hour agitation was strengthened during the war by the government’s attitude and by the requirement of eight hours’ work on government contracts, even though the latter was regularly waived and overtime at higher rates permitted. “The eight-hour day is an established policy of the country,” said the President’s personal mediation commission, and the government’s chief wartime arbitration agency, the National War Labor Board, was favorable to the principle. Important industries going on an eight-hour basis during the war included the garment trades, the lumber industry in the Northwest, newsprint paper, ship-