

# WOMEN IN ILLINOIS INDUSTRIES

## PART I

### INTRODUCTION

Illinois ranks as one of the leading industrial States of the country. At the suggestion of the Illinois League of Women Voters and because of the industrial importance of the State, the Women's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor undertook a survey of hours and wages of the women workers of Illinois, which was carried on during the late winter and spring of 1924.

Especially valuable assistance was given by the State department of labor, the Federal and State employment service, and the State bureau of social welfare. Helpful advice was also given by local secretaries of the Young Women's Christian Association in some of the towns visited. Most prominent among the cooperating agencies were the employers themselves. In almost every instance they gave free access to their records, and it was their readiness to supply the information desired and to grant access to their plants that made possible the collection of the data presented in the bulletin.

The work of carrying on a representative survey of the women engaged in industry in a State of the industrial importance of Illinois is very considerable. There are large numbers of women employed in Illinois, and, while many are concentrated in or near Chicago, there are plants of real importance employing large numbers of women scattered over the State, even to the extreme southern end. As a manufacturing center Illinois ranks third among the States of the country when rated according to the value of the manufactured product,<sup>1</sup> and recent years have seen a marked and continuous increase in its industrial activities. If the number of wage earners be used as a measure, the rate of growth of manufacturing industries in Illinois during the 10 years from 1909 to 1919—with practically a 40 per cent increase in the number of wage earners engaged in manufacturing within that period of years—was greater than in the United States as a whole.<sup>2</sup>

Industry in Illinois has not narrowed down to any one type which has an overwhelming importance in the State. According to the Census of Manufactures, 23.7 per cent of the total value of manufactured products of the State was accredited to slaughtering and meat packing, but when the value added by manufacture, a figure perhaps more indicative of the amount of industrial activity, is alone considered the percentage drops to only 7.3 per cent of the total for the State. Fifteen other industries contributed more than 1 per cent each to the total value added by manufacture in the State, but a large part of the industrial activity was more or less hidden under the classification of "all other industries," the establishments under this classification contributing more of the value added by manufacture and also employing a larger proportion of the wage earners than did any one industry.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> U. S. Bureau of the Census. Fourteenth Census: 1920. v. 8, Manufactures, 1919, p. 18, Table 10.

<sup>2</sup> U. S. Bureau of the Census. Fourteenth Census: 1920. v. 9, Manufactures, 1919, p. 310, Table 1; v. 8, Manufactures, 1919, p. 14, Table 2.

<sup>3</sup> U. S. Bureau of the Census. Fourteenth Census: 1920. v. 9, Manufactures, 1919, p. 312, Table 3.