

### PART III

## WAGES IN FACTORIES, STORES, AND LAUNDRIES

In any discussion of wages consideration must be given to the various elements which cause fluctuations in the earnings of the individual—fluctuations which are duly reflected in the earnings of the workers as a group. To the worker the subject of wages has always been one of great importance, since it involves not only the support of the individual but quite often the maintenance of others who are dependent on her.

As in other State studies made by the Women's Bureau, analysis of the wagesituation in Delaware has been made from two main angles: What women wage earners received for a current week and what they received for the year immediately preceding the investigation. As previously stated, a representative week during the fall of 1924 was selected, and a week corresponding as nearly as possible to the date of the current year's pay roll was chosen for 1923, special effort being made to secure records from the books of the identical plants covered in 1924. Moreover, managers of establishments which had been in operation for a year or more were asked to give the agents of the bureau the names of their steadiest women workers. To obtain records of approximately one-fifth of the women whose names appeared on the pay rolls of the various plants, but to include only workers employed in the establishment for at least 44 weeks of the year, was the system governing the collection of such data. It is apparent that the week's wage assumes a new significance when contrasted with the yearly budget, and it is only by giving such important factors full consideration that a true picture of the wage situation is presented. The earnings of a picked group of women over a period as long as a year delineate rather accurately the general trend of industrial wages in the State for that time.

Because of the public demand stores employed a steady force throughout most of the year, and it was not difficult for them to choose a normal week. This is true also of most laundries, although occasionally there is rush work when all employees must stay beyond the scheduled hours. There were manufacturing plants in Delaware, however, which had not operated on their regular schedule for weeks previous to the period for which pay rolls were taken, and this fact accounts largely, no doubt, for the excessive amount of lost time and the consequent low earnings received by women in several of the industries included in the survey.