

PART IV

WORKING CONDITIONS IN FACTORIES, STORES, AND LAUNDRIES

The executive who clamors against expenditures necessary to make his working force comfortable and contented does not belong to the progressive movement of managers. Good working conditions are beneficial to both employer and employee, and are urged as good business and social policy. Bad working conditions, by causing unnecessary fatigue, waste human energy, and thus increase labor costs. If a manager desires to decrease the costs and problems of a high labor turnover, he must recognize the importance of safe, wholesome, and attractive workrooms. A contented, stable, and efficient group of workers can not be maintained in dark and insanitary shops.

Since a large number of women are serving in the dual rôle of wage earner and home maker, the public and State have a special interest in the welfare of employed women, for any force which unnecessarily wastes and depletes the strength of mothers ultimately reacts on the morale and character of the community. Then, too, as a body of consumers society has a right to insist that the products which it uses should be made and distributed under clean and sanitary conditions.

A survey of the surroundings of the women at work in Delaware disclosed only a limited number of places that were flagrantly bad, yet there was evidence that many employers did not fully appreciate the importance of good working conditions and the significance of the existing State laws applying to the employers of women. Since the majority of the stores and industrial establishments¹ surveyed were comparatively small, many of the employers interviewed attributed their failure to provide more extensively for the sanitation and comfort of their workers to limited capital. However, there is no sound reason why the primary essentials of cleanliness, sanitation, good heating, lighting, ventilation, and seating should not be found in the small as well as in the large plants. The survey was made not from the viewpoint of technicians in plant management but from the standpoint of reasonable and practicable standards necessary for the efficiency and health of the workers.

¹Stores outside Wilmington are not included in the general section on working conditions, but are discussed briefly at the end of the section.