

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
Wage and Hour Division  
Washington

MILLINERY INDUSTRY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS 40-CENT  
MINIMUM WAGE

The Millinery Industry Committee under the Fair Labor Standards Act today voted to recommend to Administrator Elmer F. Andrews of the Wage and Hour Division, U. S. Department of Labor, the legalization of a minimum wage of 40 cents an hour for the millinery industry, in which a monthly average of some 21,600 wage earners were employed in 1937. This minimum will increase the hourly wage rates of an estimated 3,500 workers during an average month, should the Administrator approve it after reviewing it in a public hearing as required by the Act.

The recommendation was contained in a letter to Administrator Andrews, in advance of a formal report, from Karl de Schweinitz of Philadelphia, Chairman of the Committee.

The letter:

"Mr. Elmer F. Andrews  
Administrator, Wage and Hour Division  
U. S. Department of Labor  
Washington, D. C.

"Dear Mr. Andrews:

"Industry Committee No. 5 for the millinery industry, authorized under the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to recommend a minimum wage between 25 cents and 40 cents, inclusively, for wage earners in this industry today decided on a minimum wage recommendation of 40 cents an hour.

"The motion containing the 40-cent recommendation was carried by a vote of 14 to 1, L. D. Thompson of Atlanta, one of the members representing the employers, voting in opposition.

"A formal report containing this recommendation, together with a transcript of the testimony, briefs and economic data considered by the Committee in its deliberations, will be forwarded shortly to you for your use in holding the prescribed public hearing on this recommendation.

"In general the millinery industry is not a low wage industry. Data submitted by the Economics Section of the Wage and Hour Division showed that the average hourly rate of the workers is 81.2 cents; 16.3 per cent of the workers receive less than 40 cents an hour. These number approximately 3,500. More than a thousand of these are getting 35 cents an hour or more.

"Testimony on the marketing practices of this industry indicated that retail price adjustments should be minor, if they occur at all, because of this minimum. Your committee was convinced that this industry, in which 83.7 per cent of wage earners already are receiving 40 cents an hour or more, can immediately establish itself on the 40-cents-an-hour basis minimum wage (the objective of the Fair Labor Standards Act) without developments which would 'substantially curtail employment in the industry.'

"The Committee heard witnesses representing the Southern Millinery Manufacturers' Association, the Millinery Manufacturers of New Jersey, Inc., manufacturers of Dallas and Waco, Texas, the Eastern Women's Headwear Association, Inc., of New York City, the Hat Corporation of America, New York City, the Wisconsin Millinery Association, Kaufman and Company of Richmond, Virginia, and the United Hatters, Cap and Millinery Workers' International Union.

"It also studied an able and well-prepared 162-page report of the economics and wage structure of the industry, prepared by the Economics Section of the Wage and Hour Division, based to a considerable extent on the extensive study made public by the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor on May 8, 1939, and on data provided by other government agencies, such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Bureau of the Census.

"The millinery industry, as defined by your order, includes: 'The manufacture of all headwear, except knitted headwear, for ladies, misses, girls and infants, from any material, but not including the manufacture of felt hat bodies of fur or wool.' The committee is of the opinion that in making this recommendation it has fulfilled its mandate under the Act (Section 8 b): 'The Committee shall recommend to the Administrator the highest minimum wage rates for the industry which it determines, having due regard to economic and competitive conditions, will not substantially curtail employment in the industry.' It believes that this recommendation if applied to the millinery industry and universally enforced, will contribute to arriving at the effect desired by Congress of 'eliminating labor conditions detrimental to the maintenance of the minimum standard of living necessary for health, efficiency and general well-being of the workers', and of increasing employment, wages and purchasing power in the interests of the national welfare."

Yours very truly,

/signed/ Karl de Schweinitz

Chairman

Besides the Chairman, the Committee included:

For the Public:

Stanley Marcus, Dallas, Texas  
Miss Rosamond Lamb, Boston, Massachusetts  
Mrs. Elizabeth Brandeis Raushenbush, Madison, Wisconsin  
Arthur R. Wilson, Chicago, Illinois

For the Employees:

Max Zaritsky, New York, New York  
Nathaniel Spector, New York, New York  
Max Goldman, New York, New York  
Joseph Myles, St. Louis, Missouri  
Miss Stella Nelson, Chicago, Illinois

For the Employers:

Walter K. Marks, New York, New York  
L. D. Thompson, Atlanta, Georgia  
George Sherman, St. Louis, Missouri  
Joseph Pearl, Chicago, Illinois  
Harry A. Baum, Jersey City, N. J.

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