

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
WAGE AND HOUR DIVISION  
Washington

PIECE RATES ISSUED FOR PUERTO RICO

Piece rates for hand needlework in Puerto Rico were set today by Colonel Philip B. Fleming, Administrator of the Wage and Hour Division, who termed them an important step in the Division's efforts to solve problems raised by enforcement of the Fair Labor Standards Act on the Island. The rates will go into effect December 2.

The regulations setting the piece work rates call for the registration of all embroidery and other designs and operations with the Wage and Hour office, El Banco Popular Building, San Juan, Puerto Rico. Piece rates based on N.R.A. rates and on studies made by the Wage and Hour Division are listed for more than 300 hand-sewing operations.

"These piece rates," said Colonel Fleming, "should enable the resumption of hand needlework in Puerto Rico, among the estimated 60,000 needleworkers on the Island, in compliance with the law. The Tariff Commission has instituted an investigation of competition in the American markets of hand needlework products. I am hopeful that this investigation will result in a recommendation to Congress and passage of amendments to our Tariff schedules which will protect this industry in Puerto Rico against Oriental competition. These rates will mean more money to the Island if only half the former volume of work is sent there.

"We recently stopped all violations of the 30 cents-an-hour minimum wage by having the United States District Court on the Island enjoin every contractor. At the same time, a committee under the chairmanship of Msgr. Francis J. Haas of Catholic University, functioning under the recently passed Puerto Rican amendment to the Fair Labor Standards Act, was investigating economic and

competitive conditions in this industry on the Island. The investigation was made for the purpose of recommending minimum wage rates of less than 30 cents an hour if need be which would not cause unemployment and would not cause unfair competition with similar work done in the United States. On November 16 I issued a wage order putting these recommendations into effect December 2.

"The piece work rates issued today are consistent with this wage order. They are initial piece work rates and may be revised if experience so dictates."

The wage order calls for payment of at least the following rates:

12-1/2 cents an hour for work in the home on handkerchiefs, household articles, cotton underwear, infants' wear, needlepoint and hand-hooked rugs.

15 cents an hour for work in the home on silk underwear.

20 cents an hour for work in the home and the factory on children's, ladies', men's and boys' apparel.

20 cents an hour for work in factories on handkerchiefs; household articles; cotton underwear; infants' wear; needlepoint; and hand-hooked rugs.

22-1/2 cents an hour for work in the factories on silk underwear.

The piece work rates issued today are computed to yield at least the above hourly rates.

In addition to the registration of designs, the regulations require certain record-keeping on the part of the contractor in Puerto Rico who receives material from the mainland and sends it out to homes of needleworkers through agents. Contractors are required, for purposes of identification, to fix numbered tickets to the bundles of material given to agents.

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