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HANDICAPPED WORKERS RETURNING TO "SHELTERED WORKSHOPS"

Despite more general acceptance of their abilities, normal job opportunities for handicapped workers today are decreasing from the peak reached during the war-time and reconversion periods. As a result, intensified Federal wage and hour enforcement activities are necessary to protect the interests of both labor and management as handicapped workers return to jobs in charitable, non-profit "sheltered workshops."

This was reported today to Wm. R. McComb, Administrator of the Wage and Hour and Public Contracts Divisions, U. S. Department of Labor, by the Divisions' Advisory Committee on Sheltered Workshops, following a week-end meeting in Washington. Representative of labor, management and the Government, the Committee was formed in 1939 to advise the Administrator with respect to application of the special exemptions the Wage and Hour Law provides for organizations operating workshops for the training of handicapped persons. Under the Wage and Hour Law, handicapped persons who work in such workshops must be paid the minimum wage required by the law, unless the workshop first secures the Administrator's permission to pay a lower wage.

"Unless the Divisions increase their nationwide vigilance of wage and hour controls, established for protection of both workers and employers, the cause of rehabilitation so materially advanced under the Wage and Hour Law may be injured," the Committee chairman, Colonel John N. Smith, Jr., Director of the Institute for the Crippled and Disabled of New York, declared. Another member, Peter J. Salmon, Secretary, The Industrial Home for the Blind, Brooklyn, New York and Federal Government consultant on the care of civilian and veteran blind, referred to the "considerable body of information and experience" which the Committee and the Divisions have developed and "which has resulted in increased wages and salaries for the personnel of charitable, non-profit agencies."

According to Colonel Smith, the ultimate goal of workshops—the placement in private industry employment of trained handicapped workers—was attained at a "highly satisfactory rate" during the war-time and reconversion periods. However, he said, expansion of the labor market now means that some handicapped workers, chiefly the partly-trained, must return to sheltered workshops to complete their training if they hope to earn their own living in private industry. Many handicapped veterans also are being trained in sheltered workshops.

"Our task now," he told Mr. McComb, "is to see that the increased pressure on sheltered workshops does not mean a weakening of the standards under which we have been operating."

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