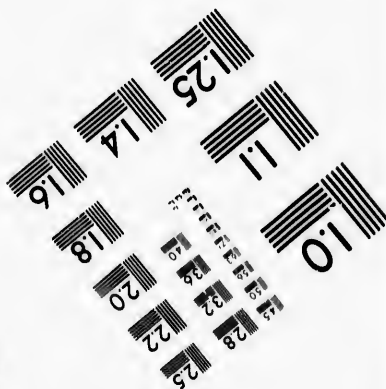
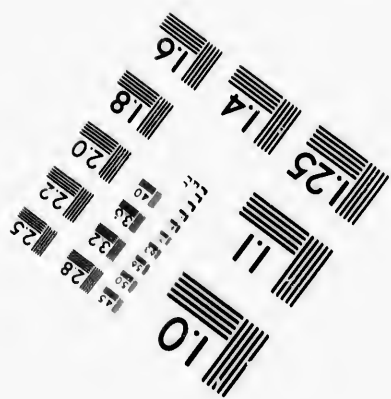
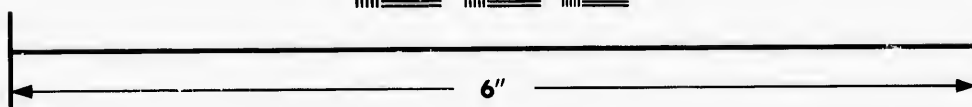
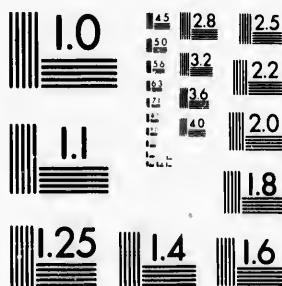


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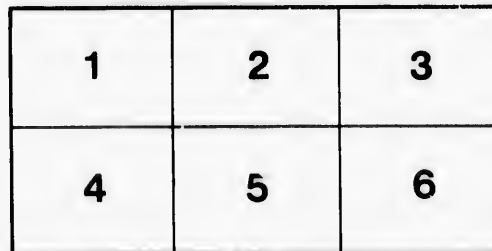
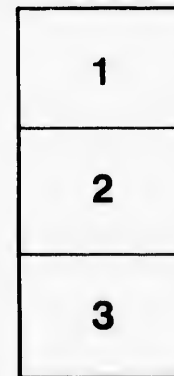
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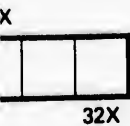
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No. 11.

THE PROGRESS OF LABOUR STATISTICS IN THE UNITED STATES.

By ERNEST L. GOULD, Ph.D.,
Statistical Expert, United States Department of Labour.

THE United States was the first nation to officially recognize the utility of statistics in the investigation of labour problems. Statisticians and economists of both the old and the new worlds had previously applied the method to independent lines of research, but, so far as I am aware, no Government office antedates the foundation of the Massachusetts Bureau of Labour Statistics in 1869. Furthermore, in no other country does the idea seem to have taken such deep root, or to have been carried to so complete a development. Within the last twenty-two years a National Department of Labour and twenty-five State bureaus have been called into existence.

I do not intend to discuss here the organization, powers, and duties of these various institutions. In an Appendix will be found a synopsis of their functions, drawn from the laws creating them. I prefer rather to review the progress which a score of years has disclosed.

One evidence of advance is the wide extent to which the movement has assumed. In the Northern and Middle States, where social conditions are more complex, these institutions have flourished best. Latterly they have struck root in the virgin soil of the West and the industrial regions of the South. Were they not recognized as performing some useful function, their numbers would not have so steadily increased.

The United States afford a peculiarly favourable field of operations. The working classes are, generally speaking, well-organized and intelligent. They are for the most

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part practical, accepting or combatting actualities rather than allowing themselves to be carried away by the glamour of ideas incapable of realization. There is amongst them a growing disposition to seek for accurate information regarding their present condition, and a deepening consciousness that their interests can best be furthered by progressive effort along lines where the necessity of reform is clearly understood. The policy of leaders in the labour movement is to seek for the justification of their aims through ascertained facts, rather than to found them upon considerations of theoretical justice. We may call them practical reformers, moving on step by step, and taking advantage of every opportunity to push their claims. I am speaking generally of course of those who most permanently continue in leadership. These, fortunately, have the ear of the great mass of the wage-earning population.

Another important fact, which must not be lost sight of, is that American employers of labour are much less secretive, and more ready to furnish information affecting their own and the interests of those they employ than in other countries. I do not claim for them, *a priori*, any credit on this ground. In the beginning they were cautious enough, but they have learned from experience that what would in many places be considered a business secret may be disclosed without any resulting harm, provided it is done impersonally, and in a way that the source of information cannot be identified. Impartiality, fair-dealing, and a respect for confidences bestowed have not only disarmed suspicion, but engendered even willing co-operation. This happy result is due in an especial degree to the tact, the fairness, and the scrupulousness of Mr. Carroil D. Wright. He was called to office at a period when the feeling in regard to bureaus of labour statistics was very different from that prevailing to-day. First in the field, and divining correctly the future possibilities of this branch of inquiry, he took care to win the confidence and inspire the respect of employers and labourers alike. Not only has this enabled him to extend his efforts from a local to a national sphere, and to accomplish really admirable statistical results, but his conduct has strengthened the hands of those who wished other States to follow the example of Massachusetts, and furnished the best answer to opposing interests and prejudices. Had his judgment been less enlightened, his sense of obligation less strong, the progress of American labour statistics might have been indefinitely retarded. In America, therefore, four factors in combination account for the wide extension indicated at the beginning of this paragraph. They are: first, the desire of the labourer to make ascertained facts the basis of his claims; second, the comparative willingness of employers to contribute information; third, the presentation of facts without any particular advocacy; lastly, the proved utility of these agencies in influencing wise legislation, and in promoting a better understanding between capital and labour.

Concurrently with the growth of these bureaus of labour statistics in point of numbers, there has been an appreciable augmentation in their resources. The commissioners of sixteen of them have kindly furnished me with data showing the annual appropriations made for the maintenance of these departments during the first year of existence and also for the present year. The figures include salaries of officials and clerks, office and travelling expenses, in fact, all items of outgo except the cost of printing the reports.

This latter has not been included, for the obvious reason that the expenditure varies greatly according to the size of the volume published and the number of copies printed.

State.	Designation of Bureau.	Date of Creation.	Amount of appropriation for first year of existence.	Amount of appropriation for the current year.	Increase.
			dollars.	dollars.	dollars.
United States ...	Department of Labour ...	1885	25,000	168,270	143,270
Massachusetts ...	Bureau of Labour Statistics ...	1869	9,500	10,800	1,300
New Jersey ...	Bureau of Statistics of Labour and Industries	1878	5,700	7,700	2,000
Illinois ...	Bureau of Labour Statistics ...	1879	3,000	8,500	5,500
Indiana ...	Bureau of Statistics ...	1879	3,500	11,000	7,500
Michigan ...	Bureau of Labour and Industrial Statistics	1883	8,500	11,500	3,000
Missouri ...	Bureau of Labour Statistics and Inspection	1883	4,000	8,000	4,000
New York ...	Bureau of Statistics of Labour ...	1883	6,700	25,000	18,300
Connecticut ...	Bureau of Labour Statistics ...	1885	9,000	9,000	—
Kansas ...	Bureau of Labour Statistics ...	1885	3,000	4,000	1,000
Colorado ...	Bureau of Labour Statistics ...	1887	3,200	3,200	—
Maine ...	Bureau of Industrial and Labour Statistics	1887	2,500	3,500	1,000
Minnesota ...	Bureau of Labour Statistics ...	1887	3,000	6,500	3,500
Nebraska ...	Bureau of Labour and Industrial Statistics	1887	2,100	4,000	1,900
Rhode Island ...	Bureau of Industrial Statistics ..	1887	4,000	5,000	1,000
North Dakota ...	Department of Agriculture and Labour	1890	4,500	4,500	—
TOTAL ...			97,200	290,470	193,270

This table makes an interesting exhibit. The amount of money spent originally in this branch of social inquiry was a respectable sum. Nevertheless the total is now three times as large. One can hardly maintain that usefulness advances in direct ratio to increased resources. Still it may be safely assumed that enlarged subsidies would not be accorded without compensatory results. To my mind these figures express a growing public consciousness that reliable statistical investigation must replace speculation in the treatment of so-called social problems.

Another and surer sign of progress is the improved character of the work done, judged from a scientific standpoint. The earlier reports of many of the bureaus are rather crude. The value of material presented is not much greater than that of hearsay evidence in a court of law. In fact the interviewer rather than the statistician seems to be at the desk. This is not remarkable when one reflects that this kind of investigation is a comparatively new thing, and that many of the commissioners selected, though animated by the best intentions, had very little previous training to qualify them for the exercise of their functions. It can be said of those who have continued at their post that the quality of their work has improved as their official experience widened. Discursive and superficial treatment of a great variety of topics has given place to concentrated statistical effort upon one or two. Both sides of controversial subjects are more fully and impartially stated, and special pleading reduced to a minimum. The annual meetings of the Commissioners have promoted this educative process.

Up to date about one hundred and fifty separate reports emanating from the different bureaus have appeared. It would require too much space to enumerate the various subjects which have undergone treatment. At any rate it would be superfluous to attempt it, as the United States Department of Labour will shortly publish a complete topical analysis.

In round numbers one hundred and thirty thousand volumes of labour reports are annually produced in the United States. What becomes of all this literature? The question has been frequently asked me, and I have myself referred it to the different labour commissioners. The general trend of the response is, that about seventy per cent. go directly into the hands of working people, the remainder being absorbed by newspapers, public libraries, members of the legislature, college professors and teachers, lawyers, clergymen and manufacturers. It must be remembered that in the United States public documents are free and supplied upon demand. People who are interested enough to ask for them are pretty sure to read them. Quotations in legislative halls, in the press, in the pulpit, and from the proceedings of labour organizations show that their contents become more and more widely known.

The function of bureaus of labour statistics is mainly educative. It is, therefore, a difficult matter to estimate exactly the amount of influence they have exercised. A great deal of useful legislation stands as the direct result of their efforts. In Massachusetts, the establishment of a board of arbitration and conciliation, and laws relating to factory inspection, the length of the working day, the employment of children, employers' liability and accidents to labour; in Rhode Island, the weekly payment of wages and fire-escape laws; in Maine, the ballot reform and "labour day" enactments; in New York, the creation of a board of arbitration for industrial disputes; in New Jersey, the encouragement given to building associations; in Michigan, the ten-hour law, the prohibition of child labour, adequate provision against accidents, and a factory inspection Act; in Kansas, the establishment of industrial arbitration tribunals, payment of wages in cash, increased protection to miners, modification of the

mechanics' lien law, and an enactment favouring the creation of co-operative societies ; in Connecticut and other States, many useful measures in which labour is more or less directly interested, owe, if not their initiative, at least their passage to the active endorsement of the respective bureaus.

A final and most hopeful sign of progress is a marked growth of public confidence. It is a common mistake to suppose that bureaus of labour statistics were created to advocate solely the claims of working men. Labour organizations have everywhere demanded their foundation, but have always regarded them as organs of enlightenment, not as agencies of propaganda. None have more clearly understood that a disregard of the scientific function would lead to inevitable disaster. They have conceived them capable of accomplishing principally four things. First, to efficiently collect information, and impartially present it. Second, to furnish thereby scientific bases for legislation. Third, to ascertain if existing labour laws are properly enforced. Fourth, to educate public sentiment. Such a conception of duties throws an interesting side-light upon the labour movement in America.

Public confidence has been shown in the addition of other functions than the investigation of the labour question as a social problem. The Massachusetts bureau is entrusted with the State census, and I violate no confidence when I say that the present Federal census came very near falling to the lot of the United States Department of Labour. In some other States factory and mine inspection is carried on under the supervision of the Labour Commissioners. Leaving open the question whether such added prerogatives enhance or diminish the importance of the purely social function, it is nevertheless clear that their imposition implies a compliment to integrity as well as a trust in efficiency.

Some investigations which have been successfully undertaken afford a conspicuous evidence of public confidence. Let me instance two of such to illustrate my point. In the State of Connecticut a prevalent feeling had grown up that the profits of capital in industry bore a disproportionate ratio to the share of wages. In order to establish the truth or falsity of the idea, an investigation was made, several hundred manufacturers cordially co-operating by putting into the possession of the bureau the most private information regarding their business affairs. The Commissioner asserts that not a single complaint has been made to him of secrets violated or of harm done.

But the most remarkable feat yet performed, is the recently concluded investigation of the United States Department of Labour, which was pursued in Europe as well as in America. The subject matter of the inquiry related to an analysed cost of production of plain units of manufacture in the industries of coal, coke, iron, steel, glass, cotton, woollen, silk and linen goods, the relation of the labour cost to the total cost of manufacture, the earnings, efficiency, and cost of living of the working people employed. Here is a line of facts, pregnant with interest in connection with tariff matters, yet they are exceedingly difficult to obtain because of the notion that trade secrets might be exposed, or commercial interests injuriously affected. Nearly three

years of patient effort was necessary to place the department in the possession of adequate information, gleaned by its experts directly from the books of several hundred American, and a hundred or more European industrial establishments. This data when published will give really accurate knowledge upon comparative conditions of competition. In time it will undoubtedly exercise an important educative effect. It has had absolutely nothing to do with existing fiscal legislation, for the reason that the results of the inquiry have not yet been published. I have cited these cases to show that public confidence must exist in a very large degree to enable such difficult and delicate lines of inquiry to be successfully prosecuted.

I believe it to be true that a large part of industrial strife and social discord is due to a misconception of the facts involved. Agencies consecrating themselves to the acquisition and dissemination of reliable knowledge cannot fail to cultivate a better understanding, and to operate powerfully in the interest of social peace. Such being the work American bureaus of labour statistics are seeking to perform, let us wish for them a success as conspicuous as their mission is exalted.

APPENDIX.

Giving a Résumé of the Provisions of the Laws defining the Duties of the several Commissioners of Labour.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR.—The general duties of this department are to acquire and diffuse among the people of the United States useful information on subjects connected with labour, in the most general and comprehensive sense of that word, and especially upon its relation to capital; the hours of labour; the earnings of labouring men and women; and the means of promoting their material, social, intellectual, and moral prosperity. The Commissioner is also specially directed to make investigations concerning the cost of producing staple articles at home and in the foreign countries exporting such articles to the United States, showing the elements of cost, the wages and hours of labour of working people, the profits of the manufacturers, and the comparative cost of living and kind of living in different countries; the effect of custom laws; the effect of the state of the currency on the custom laws, and on the agricultural industry of the country, especially as regards the mortgage indebtedness of farmers; concerning what articles are controlled by trusts, or other combinations of capital, business operations, or labour, and what effect such combinations have on production and prices; concerning the causes of,

and facts relating to, disputes between employers and employed, as they may occur ; concerning what, if any, convict-made goods are imported into the United States, and where from. He shall also obtain such information upon the various subjects committed to him from foreign nations as he may deem desirable. He shall also establish a system of reports by which, at intervals of not less than two years, he can report on the general condition, so far as production is concerned, of the leading industries of the country.

MASSACHUSETTS.—The law creating the Bureau provided that its duties should be to collect and present statistical details relating to the departments of labour in the State, especially in relation to the industrial, social, intellectual, and sanitary condition of the labouring classes, and the prosperity of the industries of the State.

[The provisions of the laws of New York and Kansas are the same as those of Massachusetts.]

ILLINOIS.—The duties of the Board of Commissioners are to collect and present in biennial reports statistical details relating to all departments of labour in the State, especially in relation to the industrial, social, intellectual, and sanitary condition of the labouring classes, and to the prosperity of the industries of the State. The enforcement of the laws relating to the inspection of mines is also entrusted to the Board.

INDIANA.—The duties of the Bureau are to collect and present, in biennial reports, statistical details relating to all departments of labour in the State, including the penal institutions, and particularly of the number of labourers and apprentices ; their wages, hours of labour, savings, nativities, ages and sex, and their general condition ; the number and character of accidents ; the sanitary condition of institutions where labour is employed ; the effects of different kinds of labour and of intemperance upon the labourer ; the restrictions, if any, upon indentured apprentices ; the proportion of married labourers who live in rented rooms, and the average amount of rent paid ; the size of labourers' families ; the amount of property owned by labourers coming into the State from foreign countries, on their arrival, and the length of time they have resided in the State ; concerning co-operation, labour difficulties, trades unions, and their effects upon labour and capital ; with such other information as the Bureau may be able to collect relating to the condition of the labouring classes and the prosperity of the industries of the State.

[The provisions of the law of Michigan are similar to those of Indiana.]

MISSOURI.—The duties of this Bureau are to collect and present statistical details relating to all the departments of labour in the State, and especially in relation to the industrial, social, intellectual, and sanitary condition of the labouring classes, and the prosperity of the industries of the State ; and also to insure the inspection of all mines, factories, warehouses, workshops, foundries, machine shops, and other manufacturing establishments where persons are employed, for which purpose a State Mine Inspector and a State Factory Inspector are attached to the Bureau.

CONNECTICUT.—The duties of the Commissioner are to collect information upon the subject of labour ; its relation to capital ; the hours of labour, and the earnings of labouring men and women ; and the means of promoting their material, social, intellectual, and moral prosperity.

COLORADO.—The duties of the Commissioner are to collect and present, in biennial reports, statistical details relating to all departments of labour in the State, such as hours and wages of labour ; cost of production ; the estimated number of persons depending on daily labour for their support ; the number of those employed in the several industries of the State ; the effect of labour-saving machinery on hand labour, &c. It is also his duty, where a difference has arisen between an employer and his help, of a greater number than twenty-five, and a strike has been caused or is likely to result, to visit the place, when requested to do so by fifteen working people, and seek to mediate between the parties.

MAINE.—The duties of the Bureau are to collect and present statistical details relating to all departments of labour in the State, especially in relation to the social, educational, industrial, and sanitary condition of the labouring classes ; also to inquire into the causes of strikes, lock-outs, and other disturbances of the relations between employers and their help.

MINNESOTA.—The duties of the Bureau are to collect and present, in biennial reports, statistical details relating to the different departments of labour in the State, and especially in relation to the social, industrial, intellectual, and sanitary condition of the labouring classes. The Commissioner is also required to visit factories, workshops, and other places where people are employed at any kind of labour, and see that all laws regulating the employment of children, minors, and women, and all laws established for the protection of the health and lives of operatives are enforced.

NEBRASKA.—The duties of the Bureau are to collect and present statistical details relative to manufactures, industrial classes, and material resources of the State ; and especially to examine into the relations between labour and capital ; the means of escape from fire at factories ; the protection of life and health in factories and workshops, mines, and other places ; the illegal employment of children ; the exaction of unlawful hours of labour from any labourer ; the educational, sanitary, moral, and financial condition of labourers ; the cost of food, fuel, clothing, and building material ; the causes of strikes and lock-outs, as well as kindred subjects pertaining to the welfare of industrial interests and classes.

RHODE ISLAND.—The Commissioner, who is also *ex officio* superintendent of the Census, is required to collect and present statistical details in relation to the condition of labour and industry in the State, and especially in relation to the social, educational, and sanitary condition of the labouring classes, with such other information as he may deem useful.

NORTH DAKOTA. -The duties of the Commissioner are to collect and present, in biennial reports, statistical details relating to all departments of labour in the State, such as the number of employed ; their wages, hours of labour, and cost of living ; the operation of labour-saving machinery upon hand labour ; the sanitary condition of shops and dwellings ; the number, condition, and habits of Chinese in the State ; the number, condition, and employment of inmates of penal institutions in the State ; a description of labour organizations in the State, &c. The Commissioner is also the State Statistician, and as such is required to collate and present statistics showing local indebtedness ; the assessed valuation of property ; the amount of mortgage indebtedness ; and general agricultural and mining statistics. It is his duty to look after and devise means to advance immigration to the State, and to promote the settlement of the State. It is also his duty, where a difference has arisen between an employer and his help of a greater number than twenty-five, and a strike has been caused, or is likely to result, to visit the place when requested to do so by fifteen labourers, and seek to mediate between them. The Commissioner also has charge of any exhibit of the products and resources of the State which may be made at any fair or exhibition in the United States.

