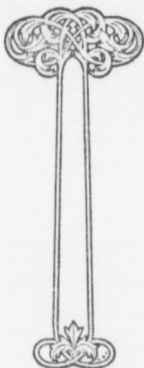


U.P.

Woman - Employment.

January 1976

The WORK of WOMEN and
GIRLS in the DEPARTMENT
STORES of WINNIPEG



Being the report of the Civic Committee of
the University Women's Club of Winnipeg
after a study of the condition of the work
of women and girls in department stores.

WINNIPEG
1914

COMMITTEE

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Report of Civic Committee

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The Civic Committee of the Women's University Club beg to report on their work for the season 1913-14. In response to a circular sent out by the Executive of the Club, fifteen members volunteered for service on this committee, and the organization meeting was held on November 6th, 1913. The only instructions received from the Club were that this committee should proceed to make a study of some form of women's work. Realizing that the committee included no trained social workers, and no members who were free to give a large amount of time to this study, it was decided to narrow the field for the first year's work. After thorough discussion as to various alternative fields of work, the committee determined upon the department stores of Winnipeg as the subject of this inquiry. It should be understood clearly that in the first place the work of only women and girls is considered, and, in the second place, only the work of those women and girls engaged in the four department stores, T. Eaton Co., Robinson & Co., Ltd., Hudson Bay Co. and Carsley & Co. which employ altogether from 2,432 women and girls to 3,200, according to the season.

In undertaking this inquiry, the object of your committee was two-fold, economic and educational. In the first place, it was felt that accurate information as to conditions in Winnipeg would be of great value, it being now the opinion of experts in social science that too great emphasis cannot be placed on the dissemination of the facts in relation to any industry.

Secondly, your committee have tried to ascertain what opportunities are offered to women in these stores, and what training, if any, would better fit them to take advantage of such opportunities.

Before actually commencing our work, your chairman corresponded with social workers in other large centres where this work had already been done, and your committee was much discouraged by the unanimous opinion of these experts that such a study could not be undertaken with any hope of success by volunteer workers. However, your committee felt that not only was it desirable to obtain facts, but that the training involved for those who sought them was an equally valuable object of this work; and it was determined to proceed. The field work in this study was carried out by ten members, the other five members acting in an advisory capacity.

Several of our correspondents recommended to us a book which has been of the greatest value. This is "Saleswomen in Mercantile Stores," by Elizabeth Beardsley Butler, published by the Russell Sage Foundation. This book is a study of the mercantile stores of Baltimore, and, since it was made by a professional investigator who spent several months in her work, it is far more thoroughgoing than anything your committee could attempt. Nevertheless, in its general outlines it was used as a guide for all our inquiries and as a basis for this report. In the matter of the ideal standard for store construction and management we have used this work without making any further study of these matters, and the quotations which follow are without exception taken from this book.

With regard to the sources of information, Miss Butler says: "In undertaking this study I had the aid of both the heads of the establishments concerned and of their employees. Knowledge of the physical conditions was obtained mainly by personal observation. Sometimes I was conducted through a store by the courtesy of a firm, and at other times I entered it as an ordinary customer. The number and occupations of employees were supplied by officers of the stores visited. Information as to weekly wages, details of welfare work, and general facts in regard to nationality of employees were also obtained partly from statements made by officials. In the matter of weekly wages, welfare work and nationality, as well as hours of work and irregular wages, statements were obtained also through intelligent employees who had been for some time in the service of their firms. Here, again, testimony of individuals was not accepted as final without corroboration from co-workers; the agreement of a number of individuals unknown to each other was, however, accepted as final." We quote this because it would be impossible to state more accurately the experience of your committee in making this study.

The department store itself, as well as the employment of women in the mercantile world are developments of the last half century, and are still in process of evolution. There are, however, no final standards for either. In Winnipeg this process of transition may be observed in both these matters. Some of our stores plainly show the addition of annexes forced by the very rapid increase in trade. The woman head of a department now practically established in the largest cities of the continent, is still almost unknown here. In Winnipeg the expansion of trade within the last ten years particularly has been so rapid that conditions change almost from month to month, and any accurate observation is therefore more difficult than in older cities. This is par-

ticularly true of the employees who in this western country form a rapidly shifting element in the industrial world, the women even more so than the men. There are two reasons for this: first, early marriage, and second, the tendency to move further west. This has made it impossible for your committee to give any accurate figures as to the nationality and age of the women and girls under consideration. One thing, however, is noticeable in Winnipeg in contrast with the older centres, and that is the general youthfulness of the women employed in our department stores.

Store Construction.

Of the four stores under consideration, only one was built for the purpose of a large department store business, having been erected a little over seven years ago. Yet even this building has had to be enlarged but, having been planned originally with a view to this, the enlargement has been managed most successfully. The smallest of the four stores remains unchanged, the building being still adequate, though by no means ideally so. The other two stores have been enlarged by stages; in one, first by the inclusion of other stores and latterly by the addition of a large annex which gives to the interior a modern appearance; the second store is now in a building which was constructed all at one time, but which then housed several departments of the company's business, these departments having been gradually crowded out by the demands of the retail trade. This company is about to erect a costly new building.

A most important feature of store construction is the show window, since it is related directly to the heating and ventilation of the interior. Usually, though not necessarily, vestibules are the same depth as the show windows, and vestibules play a most important part in the heating of the first floor. Only the space which can be spared above the show window can be used for ventilation on that side of the building, and it is usually too small to admit sufficient air to freshen that within. The depth of show windows in Winnipeg varies from approximately five feet to ten feet, this latter figure being found only once, the more usual window being about seven feet.

The general rule is that this show window space is separated from the rest of the store by a wooden partition, and this rule is departed from in only one instance, that instance being of rear windows. In no case are there open transoms above these windows, so that no fresh air is admitted on this wall except from the entrance. The evil result of this is less in Winnipeg than in most large cities, for only one of the four stores is

dependent on front and rear windows for air. Two of the others have windows on four sides, and one has windows on a part of three sides.

The ventilation of department stores is admittedly difficult, especially on the first floor. "We are dealing here neither with small interiors readily freshened by the opening of a window nor with groups of people so small that they may be held responsible for maintaining the air at a quality pleasant to themselves." The direct draft from the open window, especially in our winter months, inflicts a hardship on those people near it, and cross currents from elevator shaft and stairways form very insufficient sources of fresh air. Natural ventilation in a large building fully occupied is admittedly insufficient, and all the stores but one in Winnipeg depend upon natural ventilation. In this one the ventilating plant affects the basement and first floor only. It might appear to the casual observer that the air could be freshened by leaving windows open at night, when the direct draft would inflict hardship upon no one, but for protection in case of fire the windows are kept closed during the night hours. In so far as the height of ceilings affects ventilation, it may be said that Winnipeg stores approximate well to the ideal condition which calls for a height of fourteen feet.

"As an architectural feature the vestibule may be of value; but as contributing to the comfort of employees and as part of the heating plan it is a matter of cardinal importance." This is, of course, even more true in Winnipeg, owing to the severity and length of our winters. The vestibule offers an opportunity to heat the cold air before it reaches the store proper. In order to achieve this satisfactorily, a minimum depth of twelve feet is necessary. No Winnipeg store has a vestibule of this depth, some being as shallow as four feet. The consequent discomfort and even danger to health to those employees who must work near the entrances cannot well be over-estimated. In one store we were informed that girls were frequently away for three and four days at a time with severe colds. As no wage is paid for this time, this condition of affairs, in addition to being a menace to health, diminishes the wage at the very moment when expenses are increased. Other than the section of the store affected by entrances, the heating of the department stores in Winnipeg appears to be quite satisfactory.

In considering the interior arrangements of the store, it is found that, contrary to the general custom in large centres, no store in Winnipeg uses its basement for sale purposes. This at once removes several causes of hardship to employees. In regard to the lighting, it is found that in every case both

natural and artificial light are used on the first floor, one establishment still using gas for its artificial light, but the other three are or incandescent electric lights. On the upper floors, natural light is, speaking generally, sufficient for the daylight hours.

"The kind of flooring which may best be used in stores is still a moot point. Consideration of the subject is recent, and experiment in substitutes for wood are in their infancy. Wood has so far proven the best material for comfort and durability, but it collects dust and is kept clean with difficulty, and neither oiling or waxing has been found satisfactory." In the Winnipeg stores the floors are of wood, and observation goes to show that every effort is made to keep them in satisfactory condition. Only in one or two cases is any floor covering used, and then mainly in the aisles, the second floor of one store being carpeted.

"The plan of counter and shelf arrangement is especially important on the first floor, because of the great number of employees and the number of small departments and small articles for quick sale. A width of two feet between counter and shelf is necessary, and when this is decreased by too much stock on the shelves or by too large a stock case between adjacent counters, the comfort and, in consequence, the efficiency of the saleswoman is correspondingly diminished." In none of the stores under observation is there less than this minimum. The practice of maintaining aisle counters or show tables is not general in these stores on the first floor, though occasional examples of it may be seen. In these counters the stock is kept in order with difficulty, and the saleswoman herself is hurried and jostled by contact with the crowd. The ideal show table or aisle counter forms a square, and the saleswoman stands enclosed with a cash register, her stock close at hand and manageable. Your committee consider that the use of the old type aisle counter involves a heavy strain on the nervous energy of the saleswoman. If the stock is piled on the shelves behind the counter to a height not easily reached, the strain of lifting is increased. None of the stores offend in this particular.

In visiting the workrooms in three of the stores, your committee found conditions fairly satisfactory as to light, air and general cleanliness. In one store there were unfinished walls and a general roughness of appearance, but it is only fair to say that this firm is making the best of a building ill-suited to its needs, and is about to erect a new building. Several of these workrooms were visited twice, and in the busy season were found to be rather crowded, two stores employ-

ing the undesirable method of placing girls on each side of long tables.

Only one store has an enclosed stairway leading directly to the street. This is a very wide staircase, and is planned for the use of the employes in case of fire. Other stairways are not very wide, and in most cases are of wood and are not enclosed. Under the very complete by-laws which obtain in Winnipeg, various devices for use in case of fire are found, and fire escapes are provided.

Seats for Saleswomen.

“Seats for use in spare moments are essential to the health of working women. The physical strain caused by long hours in a standing position admits of no question, and the cost of such physical strain to the individual has become a matter of social concern. Although in some factories it may be necessary for operatives to stand, the occupation of selling goods is clearly one in which standing is not continuously necessary.”

The provincial law, as amended to the current year, requires seats to be provided for saleswomen. The law reads:

“The Shops Regulation Act.” R.S.M., c. 156, S. 23.

“The occupier of any shop in which are employed
“ females shall at all times provide and keep therein
“ a sufficient and suitable seat or chair for the use of
“ every such female, and shall permit her to use such
“ seat or chair when not necessarily engaged in the
“ work or duty for which she is employed in such
“ shop; and any person offending against any of the
“ provisions of this section shall be liable to a fine not
“ exceeding twenty dollars, and in default of immediate
“ payment, to imprisonment for a period not
“ exceeding one month.”

Your committee find that all the stores provide seats for saleswomen, though it does not appear that they are there in the proportion demanded by the law. However, no exact figures as to the number of seats are available. The observant shopper knows that sitting during business hours is not a prevailing custom in these stores, though in no case are the employees forbidden to use the seats provided. Writers on this question feel that the customer as well as the employer needs education on this point, many shoppers feeling that they cannot be properly served by a saleswoman who is seated. The public needs much education on this subject.

Arrangement for Comfort of Employees.

"The employment of several hundred people in a single plant is both a responsibility and an opportunity for the management. If a man is an employer of women as well as of men, he must provide separate employes' rooms, and make some difference in their equipment. The saleswoman must at times have access to a couch or rest room where she may recuperate. If she is unable to secure this rest, the day is lost to her, with consequent loss of wages, and her employer is inconvenienced because he cannot on short notice find any one to take her place."

Only one of the stores under observation provides a rest room for its saleswomen. This same store maintains also a small hospital, and in addition permits any woman who feels incapacitated to go home after 11 o'clock in the morning or 4.00 in the afternoon without losing a half day's pay. In the other stores the relief of saleswomen who do not feel well depends entirely upon the consideration of the head of the department. Your committee believe as a result of their study that the saleswomen in other stores are generally well treated in this respect, but also believe most earnestly that a rest room containing a couch should be set aside for their use. Many saleswomen with whom members of the committee have talked have pointed out this need.

As far as the condition and adequacy of toilet facilities are concerned, your committee have not made any thorough investigation, feeling that this is a matter which may be safely left to the Board of Health. As to one matter which is of the greatest importance, the location of the toilet rooms, your committee feel that these are located with sufficient convenience for the employees, that they are well ventilated, kept in good condition, and in every case they are, as is proper, on different floors or in entirely different parts of the building from those used by the men employes. In most of the stores employees are free to leave their floor without asking permission, but where this is demanded it is the head of the department who is in these cases a woman who must be asked. The objectionable and, indeed, often prohibitory requirement of a pass from the floor walker does not obtain. Of course, the privilege of leaving the floor must not be abused.

These statements apply to the saleswomen, the floor cashiers being subject to the rigid rule that their cash registers must not be left without an attendant. This results in cashiers on the upper floors having to send a messenger to the office to ask for relief, and naturally this amounts almost to a prohibition. One girl reported to us that on occasions she has

had to wait one hour for relief. It seems to your committee that some system of periodic release from cash registers could be arranged for each cashier without undue difficulty.

In all four stores hot water is provided in the washroom, this being generally considered an important point, and being especially so in Winnipeg owing to the hardness of the water. In only one store was liquid soap used, and your committee confess to a feeling of astonishment that the roller towel, which has so generally been prohibited, should still be in use in washrooms of all four stores. We would recommend that paper towels be substituted, the roller towel being a menace to the public health.

As in all the Winnipeg stores a full hour is given at noon, and as the distances are not so great as in the larger centres, the need for a lunch-room in the stores is not so urgent. One store discontinued its lunch-room from lack of patronage, many of the girls preferring to go out in order to get fresh air. On the other hand, in the store which has a bright, airy lunch-room, where food is served at cost, about 25% of the employes lunched there the day before we made a visit. In the third store which sets aside a room in the basement where the employes may eat lunch brought from home, and where a woman employed by the firm will make tea and coffee if the saleswomen provide it, 40% of the employes brought their lunch, and that, though the room, while clean and warm, offered no special attraction. From these instances your committee are inclined to believe that a well-regulated lunch-room, where nourishing meals could be procured at cost, would result in benefit to the health, and therefore increase in the efficiency of the employes.

Cloakrooms are provided in all the stores, consisting for the most part of a hook and small shelf for the hat for each employee. In three stores these rooms are in the basement, in the fourth on the main floor. In every case they appeared to be clean, warm and well ventilated, and in the large establishments are watched from the office of the time-keeper. Lockers and, in some cases, special rooms are provided for the heads and assistant heads of departments.

With regard to welfare work which is now so much recommended by social workers, only one store—the largest—has any organized service. This store maintains three nurses of whom one has charge of the store hospital, and the other two visit the homes of employees who may be absent two days, or as soon as illness is reported. These outside nurses report cases needing assistance, and many stories might be told of the generosity of this firm in dealing with its employees. In one other store where the old-time paternal relation still exists

in large measure, stories were also related of generosity to employees in times of stress. In another store your committee found that help to sick employees was given frequently, but by their fellow-employees under the lead of the manager of the department. This is a practice much to be deplored, as tending to make too great a tax on the weekly wage.

So great an authority on the matter as Mrs. Florence Kelley, General Secretary of the National Consumers' League, pronounced as a feature unique on this continent the pension system which has within the last two years been put into effect in the store which has so thoroughly organized its welfare work. To any woman employee who has been in its service fifteen consecutive years and who has reached the age of forty, this firm will give a retiring pension commensurate with the term of service and the amount of salary. This pension ranges from four dollars to eight dollars weekly, and will be paid for life, so long as the pensioner does not marry, does not enter any employment similar to that which the company gives, and leads a moral life.

A feature of life in the department stores which cannot, strictly speaking, be called welfare work, but which, nevertheless, since it concerns the happiness of the employees, may be noticed here, is the existence of clubs and athletic associations. As might be expected, these are most highly organized in the largest store which has a very live athletic association with the usual clubs, and various clubs inside the store in which the employes pursue different social activities. The other two large stores adopted the athletic field idea, but in neither case has it worked out as we hoped; and one of these stores has a social organization which gives dances and entertainments during the winter season. In all cases these clubs are maintained and managed by the employes themselves, men and women sharing in them, the management contributing generously to the expenses.

Hours of Employment.

When it is realized that the only prohibition on the hours of labor contained in the Shops Regulations Act of Manitoba is that a young person, by which is meant a boy under 14 or a girl under 16, shall not work more than 74 hours in any one week, it is greatly to the credit of the employers of labor in the stores in Winnipeg that the hours in force compare favorably with those in force in any city on the continent. In the matter of early closing we are most distinctly in the lead, as only the smallest of the four stores which caters to a special trade requiring it, remains open Saturday evening,

or evenings during the Christmas season. Even in this small store extra help is engaged to relieve the regular staff on the long days.

The regular day in three of the stores is from 8.20 a.m. to 6 p.m. In one store the day runs from 8.20 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. These hours are further shortened in the summer season by weekly half-holidays. One store closes for Saturday afternoon during June, July and August. Two others close Saturday afternoon during July and August, and the fourth store, while remaining open Saturdays, gives each employee a half day every week or, if preferred, a full day every second week.

The question of overtime work is almost negligible in the Winnipeg stores. Each store requires one night's work at stocktaking, and for this no payment is made. But if any additional time is required it is paid for, and in any case supper is provided. Practically no other overtime is ever asked for.

The practice with regard to vacations varies greatly in the different establishments. The largest store allows no vacation with pay to employees of under five years' standing, there being no rule as to the time which may be taken without pay. From five to ten years one week with pay is given, and after ten years two weeks with pay. At the other extreme is the smallest store which gives one week with pay to employees under two years' standing and two weeks with pay after that time; also one week without pay must be taken by everyone after stocktaking. Of the remaining stores one allows two weeks with one week's pay and the other one week with pay to all employees of one year's standing or over. All the statutory holidays are given with pay and one store gives an extra day following Christmas.

The problem of enforced vacations arises chiefly in the workrooms of the stores where the nature of the work done is seasonal. The usual workrooms found in department stores are millinery rooms, dressmaking and alteration rooms, and workrooms for the curtain and drapery department. It will be seen that these supply needs which arise only periodically and the resulting problem is not peculiar to any one city but is a standing feature of this industry. In Winnipeg, as in other places, the dull seasons are January and February and July and August and the enforced vacations at either of these times varies from year to year with the volume of business done. They are perhaps shorter in Winnipeg than in the older centers owing to the rapid expansion of business.

The seasonal unemployment which exists among the saleswomen is different in nature from the enforced vacation of the workroom employees. The latter are summoned back to work

when there is work to do, but the dismissed saleswomen have no assurance that they will be re-employed. This makes it extremely difficult to measure this unemployment, but the store managers' statements and the figures given us of the numbers employed at different periods agree that the variation in the sales staff between December, the busiest month, and February, one of the dullest, runs from 25 per cent. to 33 per cent. of the maximum figure.

Organization of Working Force.

In order to have an intelligent comprehension of the wages paid it is necessary to have some knowledge of the organization of the force with its various grades which though they are sharply defined may yet be successfully attained by the enterprising employee.

In large department stores, that is to say in three of the four stores under consideration, each department is a unit. Each of these units is charged with a fixed share of the general overhead expenses of the store and must make a profit on its own sales. This has a direct bearing on the wages paid in that department and results in a variation in wage in the different departments, merchandise which admits of a large margin of profit on the sale being able to bear a larger wage cost. This will be clear at once if one compares the margin of profit on the sale of ready-to-wear clothing and the sale of notions.

At the head of each department is the manager who has complete control and is responsible only to the general management though he must have regard to the general rules established for the conduct of the store. In some cases in Winnipeg a manager will have charge of two or three departments. These managers are also the head buyers.

The assistant buyer, or head stock, in each department is second to the manager, and is generally the senior saleswoman in her department. She does not as a general rule in Winnipeg do any independent buying but she very often accompanies and advises the head buyer being from her close contact with customers in a position to know the general demand. In most of the stores in Winnipeg this is the highest position that a woman may hope to attain in salesmanship. One of the stores has a rigid rule that no woman can be a manager. One other has no woman manager. A third has one woman who is the real head of a department and the fourth store is one of a chain of stores in different cities and the buyers or department managers are not so important a factor in each store. In this store there are four departments with women at the head and the management told your committee that as between men and

women for department heads the only question was that of the efficiency of the individual.

Where the workroom is connected with a department the manager is in control of the workroom also. As a rule in the Winnipeg stores, the heads of the workroom are women and they appear to be experienced and highly paid employees who have practically, at least, complete control of their force.

By far the largest occupational group in the department stores is made up of women engaged in selling. Among these the only ranking is that which results from the experience and ability of the individual. Below the sales force come the juniors who are first cash or messenger girls, then wrappers, then stock girls and lastly cashiers, this last group including only those girls who operate the cash registers in the departments, other cashiers belonging to the office force. Your committee feeling that the office staff represents an altogether different element among self supporting women, have not taken it into account in this inquiry.

These beginning positions are the positions usually held by the children or very young girls. There being in Manitoba no prohibition as to the employment of children in stores, it is much to the credit of the management of the various establishments that no children under fourteen are employed with the knowledge of the management unless perhaps at Christmas time in one of these stores. The managers themselves declare that this is not a question of humanity but of business acumen in that the employment of cheap labor in the stores is actually a costly proceeding. In spite of the stories to the contrary your committee have not been able to find any children under fourteen in any of the stores. In the case of the one store, if any such employment occurs it is in response to the request of the parent customer at the holiday season, the relation of customer and proprietor in this store being rather intimate. The other stores require all young employees to bring a signed statement from their parents as to age, and your committee is satisfied that an effort is really made to prevent the employment of children, and one store, at least, maintains machinery to carry this out.

With regard to girls between the ages of fourteen and eighteen all stores require that the girls live at home or with friends who will be responsible for them, and as in the previous rule, it is believed that an effort is made to live up to it and the machinery provided in one case for the previous rule is used for this also.

Your committee find that in the month of February, 1914, which is not only one of the dull months of the year but is no doubt affected by the general slackness of business, the num-

ber of women and girls employed in these four stores were as follows:—322, 20, 190, 1900. This is increased in the ratio given above at the busiest season of the year.

Coming now to the all important question of the wages paid in these stores, your committee have found them to be so much better than they know they are popularly believed to be, that they wish to state clearly just how these figures about to be given were obtained. In every case they were secured from the management by your chairman and one other member of the committee who, before they went to the different stores, made some study of the points involved and the questions for which answers were desired. In every case the managers were most frank in dealing with us, and showed every willingness to co-operate in our inquiry. In only one case were we permitted actually to examine the wage cards. In two other cases the wage figures were read to us from books of the Company. In the fourth case we were given a signed statement which purported to be taken off the books of the Company and which the manager amplified for us during discussion. Information as to the wages of various departments was readily given, except in one store where we were permitted to have general figures only. We believe these figures to be correct, first from the manner in which they were given, and second from the fact that we have been unable to find contradictory evidence. At the same time we recognize that this evidence is rather difficult to obtain, the women employees not caring to answer questions freely with regard to their own wage, but we offer these figures as generally true of the wage of women in department stores here.

Your committee desire to call attention to two general conclusions which they have drawn from their inquiry. First, that the wage of saleswomen, particularly of experienced saleswomen, is about the same in all four stores, for where the actual figures differ other indirect additions bring it up to the general level. Second, saleswomen of average efficiency in Winnipeg are earning at least nine dollars a week.

It is perfectly true as so often reported that there are girls earning five, six, seven and eight dollars a week, but in every industry there must be an apprentice stage and these figures represent that stage. More than one manager told us that he did not want six dollars a week girls, he wanted efficient saleswomen who would earn the higher wage but he had to train the younger girls for these positions. Your committee have no conclusive figures as to the number earning each wage, but from the departments examined in detail your chairman is of the opinion that these lower paid workers constitute only

a fair and legitimate percentage of the whole. They are practically the unskilled workers who are being given an opportunity to enter the skilled group.

The beginning point of the wage paid to women and girls working a full day in Winnipeg is \$5.00 a week. In comparison with the figures in Miss Butler's book this is a high beginning point, her point being \$2.00 a week. The maximum point is a little more difficult to state adequately. There is at least one woman earning \$50.00 a week and there are probably half a dozen others approximating this point but these are the exceptional women. For the great mass of saleswomen the high point is probably \$20 a week and the general average of the experienced and efficient first grade saleswomen may be found between fifteen and eighteen dollars.

Only one store in Winnipeg has adopted the principle of a minimum wage scale. In this store girls of fourteen and fifteen are started at \$5.00, those of sixteen get \$6.00 and those of seventeen, \$7.00 or \$8.00. When the age of eighteen is reached \$9.00 a week is paid and there is in this store no woman in any kind of employment eighteen years of age or over who is not receiving this minimum except the waitresses who got \$7.00 and their meals, and the girls in the millinery workroom who are in the apprentice stage, but are often over eighteen.

This minimum is further augmented by the regulation gradually being put into effect that the girl over eighteen who is in her second year of service must receive \$10.00 a week, and the weekly wage rises in this proportion till the sixth year of service, by which time the wage is \$15.00.

We append herewith figures in more detail with regard to the different classes of women employees.

Salaries.

1—Waitresses.—

- A. \$7.00 with two meals.
- B. None.
- C. \$7.00 with two meals.
- D. \$6.92 with two meals.

2—Messengers, parcellers, stockgirls, cashiers, comprising the junior group—

- A. \$5.00-\$8.00.
- B. \$5.00-\$6.50.
- C. \$5.00-\$7.00.
- D. \$5.00-\$8.00.

3—Saleswomen.—

	Min.	Max.	Av.
A.	\$9.00	\$25.00	†\$14.00
B.	8.50	20.00	11.00
C.	8.00	15.00	10.50
D.	*6.00	15.00	10.30

These wage figures are subject to augmentation, as before said, in stores C and D by indirect methods. Store D gives a commission on all sales of one half of one per cent and this may amount in the departments where sales are high to as much as three dollars a week, and is never lower than fifty cents. This firm is at work on a scheme to equalize the commission. No other store in Winnipeg pays a commission, and, after discussing the question with saleswomen of experience, your committee is of the opinion that a straight salary is the better plan, as making for more equality of service to all shoppers.

Store C augments its wage by permitting its employees to purchase goods for themselves at a substantial reduction from the retail price. This privilege is stated to be worth on the average from \$1.00 to \$1.50 a week.

Fines, if they were exacted in Winnipeg stores, would make another modification of the weekly wage, but no store does exact any direct fine. However, the penalty for lateness without good excuse is a half day's absence, with consequent loss of pay. The rule with regard to lateness is not, your committee think, enforced with any undue severity, one store even allowing a half hour a week for street car vagaries.

In only one store is anything approaching a bonus given, and in this case it has no regularity, and is not given as payment for service. If the yearly profits warrant it, a sum is set aside for distribution, and is distributed as the head of the establishment judges best. This last year this bonus totalled a very considerable sum.

One other modification of wage must be mentioned. One store, as has been said, gives a lunch at cost. This is really an extension of the purchasing power of the wage.

† Too exact comparison must not be made from these average figures, as they are not in every case based on the same data. Store A. is the one from which we obtained no details, and the average was given by the management and includes the higher salaried women who are outside the regular saleswomen group. The other figures are actual averages compiled from the detailed wages of women in typical departments.

* In regard to the beginning point for saleswomen in store D, the management informs us that there is now in force a rule that any girl selling goods must be paid at least \$7.00 a week, exclusive of commission. The figure given was obtained last February. Also we are informed that in April the average wage of all women employees, including commission, was \$11.60.

The contract of employment has an indirect bearing on the question of wages, in that it is not the custom to give or require notice. The smallest store is an exception, in that it gives one week's notice, or one week's pay, on dismissal. The other three stores oblige their employees to sign a contract on entering the service that they may be dismissed or may leave without any notice or compensation of any kind.

Hardships of the Occupation

There are three principal ways in which the work of department stores bears heavily upon the women and girls employed therein: first, the constant standing; second, the bad air; the third, the nervous tension.

With regard to the first which is by far the greatest hardship, we have already given the provisions of the excellent law of the province. Were the provisions enforced, and could the customers be educated to the point of being sometimes served by a clerk who was seated, this hardship would practically disappear from Winnipeg stores.

The second hardship is one which is found in many public buildings other than the department store, and will probably not disappear until our methods of ventilation are completely revolutionized. This hardship generally bears with most severity on the cashiers of the tube system, who, as a rule in large stores, work in the basement. Only one store here has girls so working, and an effort is made to help relieve this strain by having them work week about in the basement and in an upstairs office.

This particular group suffer an additional strain from the glitter of the brass tubes and the constant noise. Your committee suggest that this strain might be relieved by painting the tubes, and that some system of periodic rest, such as is afforded telephone operators, should be arranged.

The ordinary shopper probably does not appreciate the extent of the nervous strain under which saleswomen suffer. To begin with, they must work at high pressure to keep up their sales because their wage and their promotion generally bear a fairly direct relation to the amount of sales. The saleswomen must be able to turn readily from one form of sale to another and to make out quickly the requisite sale slips. There are pay and take, C.O.D., deposit account, transfer and charge sales, all requiring different methods. Moreover, in each sale several operations are involved. There is the handling and measuring of the goods, the clerical work and the return of money or parcel or both to the shopper. In all these things speed and accuracy are the first consideration. This hardship

is incidental to the business, and can only, your committee think, be lessened by the thoughtfulness of the individual shopper who too often does not realize all that is involved in a seemingly simple operation, and so increases the tension by displaying irritation.

To these hardships may be added the lack of a rest room in these stores which do not maintain one.

Your committee have interviewed a number of employees in each store, most of them being those who had spent some time in the service of the firm, and have found, on the whole, the details of life in the stores as given by the managers corroborated from this different viewpoint. They have also found a general loyalty to the firm which speaks well for conditions in the stores, this loyalty existing even where suggestions for improvement of conditions were freely made. With one exception the women interviewed expressed the opinion that some training preliminary to entering the store would greatly benefit those who enter this part of the industrial world. There was a general feeling also that the opportunities for advancement were continually offering for the woman who had made herself thoroughly efficient. In fact, the belief appears general that the advancement is limited only by the limitations of the individual, and that the department store offers a big field for women. It is a feature of the stores in Winnipeg that very rapid advancement may be hoped for owing to the frequency of marriages in this western country.

Another difficulty encountered by women employed in the department stores, as, indeed, by all women working in Winnipeg, is the difficulty of finding suitable rooming or boarding houses. It would be impossible to overstate this difficulty, and stories so appalling as to be almost unbelievable have been told by different women of their experience in the search of a home.

One or two general considerations arising out of conversations with both employers and employed should be noted. The first is the relation between the general wage and the cost of living. A wage to be considered as adequate minimum should provide for the adequate minimum of food, proper lodging, car fare, clothes, recreation and possible sickness. Your committee have not attempted to make a thorough investigation into the cost of living, and there are no accurate figures available for the cost to the women under consideration. Social workers in the city place the minimum from eight to nine dollars. If this is correct, it will be seen that the efficient adult saleswomen in Winnipeg are earning this minimum. It

might be added that what information we have been able to gather goes to show that the minimum is nine dollars rather than the lower figure.

The second consideration, your committee feel, must be referred to out of justice to the women employed in the stores. This is the charge made with great frequency and equal carelessness that much immorality exists among them. Your committee have made careful inquiry in various directions, and can positively state that every effort is made by the general management and the department heads to keep the stores free from women whose conduct is in the least questionable. Grave injustice is done a large body of women working in one store against whom this accusation is particularly made. In this case, as in all the others, your committee, after investigation, beg to state that these careless statements have no foundation in fact.

Out of the difficulties of the present situation, as expressed by both employees and employer, have come two suggestions which your committee beg to offer in concluding this report.

First we heartily recommend to the school board that some attempt should be made first in the night schools, and later amplified into a department in trade schools, to evolve some course which would fit the girls who intend to enter department stores to begin at a higher point than they can now do and also to make more rapid progress once they begin. It seems clear to your committee that the opportunities in this business are many, but equally clear from the point of view of the management as well as from the saleswomen themselves that not many are equipped to take advantage of them. A knowledge of general department store methods, of ways of keeping stock, of the various routine operations in selling, of the principles which make for good salesmanship, a training in mental arithmetic, in the courtesy due to customers, in the advantage of proper dress and manner, and a working knowledge of the various kinds of goods they may expect to sell would in the opinion of those who may be termed experts, greatly facilitate the progress of women in department stores. One of the stores has made a beginning in this work and teaches its new employees the routine of salesmanship and some of its psychology. It is now undertaking to give its younger employees who lack it, some necessary training in the rudiments of primary education. Admirable as this effort is, it cannot from the nature of things be made as thoroughgoing as a course in the schools. When it is remembered that as many as 3500 women and girls work in these four stores alone in the course of a year, it will be seen that there is a pressing need of such training.

The second suggestion arises out of the dearth of proper boarding houses for the business women of the city. In this situation your committee believe lies a real danger to the community. We have heard with great satisfaction of plans which have been made by another women's organization for the erection of hostels and hope that the fulfilment of the project will not be long delayed. But we beg to suggest that in the meantime a great service would be rendered if some body of women interested in community service in Winnipeg would compile and maintain a list of boarding houses to which business women might with safety be recommended. The existing situation is one not peculiar to Winnipeg. One of the largest stores in Philadelphia maintains a woman official whose duty it is to keep a watchful eye on the boarding houses which shelter employees of this firm. The results obtained from this inspection have so impressed the manager of one of our large stores that he is considering introducing it here. It seems to your committee that if the Local Council of Women which from the large number of women it could reach would have special facilities for doing this work, could be induced to prepare a list of proper boarding houses of varying standards and place that list at the disposal of the business women, it might accomplish much good for the community pending the erection of proper hostels.

This report has been submitted to the managers of the four stores under consideration and the figures herein contained as they concern his particular store have been approved by each manager.

WINIFRED L. COPELAND,
Convenor.