



eCOMMONS

Loyola University Chicago
Loyola eCommons

Master's Theses

Theses and Dissertations

1947

The Domestic Worker: An Occupational Type

Russell Barta

Loyola University Chicago

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses

 Part of the [Sociology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Barta, Russell, "The Domestic Worker: An Occupational Type" (1947). *Master's Theses*. 44.

https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses/44

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact ecommons@luc.edu.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License](#).

Copyright © 1947 Russell Barta

THE DOMESTIC WORKER:

AN OCCUPATIONAL TYPE

BY

RUSSELL BARTA

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Social Administration
in Sociology

at

Loyola University

1947

VITA

Russell Barta was born in Chicago, Illinois, on December 29, 1918. He was graduated from Quigley Preparatory Seminary in June, 1938. The degrees of Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Sacred Theology were conferred By St. Mary of the Lake Seminary in June, 1940, and June, 1943, respectively.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER I.	DEFINITION AND SCOPE OF PROBLEM.....	4
CHAPTER II.	LEGAL STATUS.....	22
CHAPTER III.	ECONOMIC STATUS.....	36
CHAPTER IV.	SOCIAL STATUS.....	58
CHAPTER V.	CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS.....	72
CHAPTER VI.	OCCUPATION IN TRANSITION.....	77
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	90

INTRODUCTION

Domestic work stands out as unique among the various types of employment in the United States. It can hardly be put in the same class with any other type of occupation. The domestic worker in her role as "servant" is different from other workers, because of characteristics which are peculiar to her alone and set her apart from all other workers--that is, among American workers the domestic is the lowest paid, works the longest hours, is subject to a social stigma, and finds that her relationship with her employer is still based on a master-servant relationship.

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the domestic worker as an occupational type, that is, to discover the characteristics typical of her occupation. The "characteristics" referred to are not those which make household work different as an art or skill from other arts or skills, such as the manual skills of plumbing make it different from the occupation using other skills. Rather, by "characteristics" are meant such things as wages, hours or work and so on. The thesis will be limited to those characteristics which

are the essential elements of any type of employment:

- a. economic--consideration of wages and hours, etc.
- b. legal--statutory aids or handicaps
- c. social--the employer-employee relationship

The first chapter will be concerned primarily with defining what a domestic worker is in relation to this thesis, explaining what will be meant by the occupational type, and giving the "vital statistics" that characterize the domestic worker.

The second chapter will attempt to show how domestic employees as a class are discriminated against in most of the nation's social legislation, both on a federal and state level, and whether this is characteristically different from the legal status of otherworkers.

The third chapter will be concerned with the economic status of domestic workers and will attempt to evaluate their relative economic position, that is, what place they occupy on the economic ladder in regard to wages and how many hours they work in comparison to other workers.

The fourth chapter will be concerned with the social aspects of household employment and the sociological implications of the master-servant relationship.

The fifth chapter will present conclusions of the study and their implications on the livelihood of the domestic worker. Finally, the sixth and last chapter will deal with the changing aspects of domestic service employment which seem to indicate that this occupation is in a state of transition.

The first chapter then, will be concerned with answering these important questions: what is a domestic worker and what is an occupational type? And in order to give a broad picture of the group to be studied, some of the "vital statistics" pertaining to domestic workers will be given.

CHAPTER ONE

In general, a domestic worker is one who is engaged in services of a household nature. This was the interpretation given to "domestic worker" by the Social Security Board under the Social Security Act.¹ For the purposes of this study, the same definition will be used. Such services are of a household nature which contribute to the upkeep and maintenance of the employer's residence, or which satisfy the personal wants and comforts of the employer as a member of a household. "Personal wants" and "comforts" will be limited to the bodily comforts and living wants of a member of the household. Thus governesses who act as tutors or disciplinarians will not be considered as domestic workers. Janitors, who would fall under the definition of domestic worker as stated above will be excluded because they have outgrown the master-servant relationship and are no longer considered a part of the household. Therefore, by definition, domestic workers will refer to cooks, maids, butlers, valets, general housekeepers and laundresses.

¹

Social Security Board Regulation No. 3, Section 403.809.

These workers, then, will be classified under the title of "domestic worker" and will be treated as an occupational type. "Occupational type" is only one of the very many varieties of sociological typology. Sorokin summarized them briefly in his Contemporary Sociological Theories.² In addition to occupational types, there are class types, culture types and social types.

In general sociological typology is a method of characterization and classification. Out of innumerable individuating characteristics of any subject, it attempts to grasp those traits which are typical. The "type" then, is a general image which contains the specific or typical characteristics of a group of social phenomena. For example, the typological method could be used to grasp those traits of capitalism which differentiate it from every type of economic system. As sorokin points out, typology is widely used and seems to be unavoidable. When an historian is discussing the "city-society" of the Greeks, "feudal society," "caste society," or "modern society,"³ he is using this method. Typing is the result of the mind's tendency to classify and generalize social phenomena.

² Pitirim Sorokin, Contemporary Sociological Theories. (New York and London: Harper Brothers, 1928) 719-724.

³ Ibid., 721.

Occupational typology is an attempt to give a general picture of the types of a farmer, a physician, a saleslady, a waitress and so on. An occupational type is a generalized profile of a worker composed of the distinguishing characteristics of his particular kind of employment which made him different in that respect from other workers. The typical marks or traits investigated by occupational typology are only those occupational traits which are considered the essential elements of any job. For example, once known, these occupational characteristics would answer questions like this: What legal privileges or handicaps does the worker enjoy or suffer in his role as worker compared to other workers?; How does the amount of leisure offered by the job differ from that offered by other occupations?; How does the relationship between this worker and his employer differ from the employer-employee relationships of other types of employment.

The occupational type is different from the social type in that the latter characterizes the habits, attitudes, and outlook on life of persons in a given group. The term "social type" refers to the role which a person assumes and to which he is assigned by society.⁴

⁴

Kimball Young, Sociology, A Study of Society and Culture. (New York: American Book Company, 1942) 975.

For example, in Chicago's Bronzeville there exists a social type called a Race Leader. To him is given the responsibility of advancing the "race." In him the rest of the community expects to find certain personal attributes and qualifications.⁵ Domestic workers could also be studied as a social type; perhaps they share common attributes and outlooks peculiar to their occupational group alone. However, in this thesis they will be treated as an occupational type only with no attention being given to their personality traits.

An occupational type differs from a class type or culture type in the subject typified. Examples of class types would be the "proletariat" or the "middle-class." A study of the "proletariat" would show how ~~his~~ way of life differs from that of the property owning class. Thus occupational typology is concerned with occupations; class typology, with classes.

The occupational type differs from a stereotype in that the occupational type represents a specific identification of a group based on the real and representative characteristics of that group as contrasted with the distorting and fictitious characterizations of groups of the stereotype.⁶ Often, the stereotype arises when

the experience of a person with one or a few individuals of a group results in a reaction toward and characterization of all the members of that group. It is possible to have a stereotype of domestic workers. Very often servant roles in the movies represent the maid as having a low mentality or being frivolous and unreliable. This may reflect the prevalent stereotype of domestic workers; it at least tends to foster and maintain a stereotype.

The occupational type and the stereotype are similar in that each admits of exception. The stereotype, because it is naturally fictitious; the occupational type, because it is a configuration of characteristics which are not true universally, but true typically. The sociological concept of type has the same validity and extension as has the modal average. The modal average is that value or characteristic found most frequently in any series of values; therefore, it is not true universally. However, this fact would neither destroy the validity nor the usefulness of the concept.

The purpose of this study, then, is to investigate those occupational characteristics peculiar to the domestic worker in her role as worker, and to show how they are typical

of this group and how they deviate characteristically from other types of workers. The thesis will be limited to occupational characteristics and will not be concerned with the personality traits of the group, even though they may actually share certain attitudes and habits in common. The thesis will be limited to those characteristics which are true typically and not universally of the domestic.

Although domestic work is still one of the major occupations in the United States, it never has received very much attention until only recently. Most of the studies made of the occupation in the past have been conducted by governmental agencies. Most of the studies have been limited to specific areas and localities. In 1928 the Women's Bureau conducted a survey of the needs and existing practices of household employment in Philadelphia.⁷ This excellent study of wages, hours, and working conditions, however, did not approach the problem from the viewpoint of the occupational type. Besides, since it was conducted in 1928, it has now become obsolete. In October of 1941, Erma Magnus under the auspices of the

⁷

Amey E. Watson, Household Employment in Philadelphia.
Department of Labor Bulletin 93, Washington, D.C., 1932.

Social Security Board made a survey of domestic workers in private homes in Baltimore.⁸ The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship of domestic workers to the Social Security program -- the extent to which they now contribute from wages derived from covered employment, their success or failure to obtain insured status and the measure of protection received by married women in domestic service through the insured status of their husbands. It is a very important contribution to the study of the domestic work and will be used extensively throughout the thesis.

A survey very similar to the Baltimore study was made in Philadelphia in 1940, under the auspices of the National Council of Household Employment and the Committee on Social Security of the Social Science Research Council. The purpose of this study was to gather significant data relevant to the special problems facing domestic workers if and when they should be covered by the social insurance program of the Social Security Act. This study was interested in the length of work experience, earnings, length of periods of unemployment and the practical problem of administering social insurance to this group of workers. The general findings and the conclusions of this study

8.

Erma Magnus, "Negro Domestic Workers in Private Homes in Baltimore," Social Security Bulletin, October, 1941. 4:10.

are similar to those found in the Baltimore survey.

Another important survey was conducted in Chicago
10
in 1941. Its objective was the same as the studies mentioned above. Many of its basic conclusions were identical with the ones arrived at in Baltimore and Philadelphia surveys. However, there were slight variations due to the racial dissimilarity between the groups studied.

In 1945, the Bureau of Old-Age and Survivors Insurance in its program for the development of old-age and survivors insurance, issued a report on the need of domestic workers for coverage and also the administrative difficulties to be anticipated if and when these workers are covered by old-age and survivors insurance. In many respects it was a summary of the studies already made in Philadelphia and Baltimore mentioned above. However, to date it is by far one of the best over-all pictures of the domestic worker and his economic problems, especially old-age security. It differs from the thesis in its approach. It is almost exclusively concerned with the economic status of domestic

9

Erma Magnus, Domestic Workers in Philadelphia. (Mimeographed)

10

Social Security Board, Bureau of Old-Age and Survivors Insurance, Analysis Division, A Program for the Development of Old-Age and Survivors Insurance, Report I, Coverage of Agricultural and Household Employees. Revised April, 1945. Part II, 4.

workers; and even in this respect it does not emphasize the characteristic deviations of this occupation from others.¹¹

In September, 1946, the Department of Labor of the State of New York published a study entitled "Domestic Service Employment in New York State."¹² Although the study is centered on household employment in New York state, much of it has a national bearing since conditions there are in many cases representative of the whole occupation. The study is an overall picture of domestic work in the state with emphasis on working conditions of domestics. It devotes much space to the solutions advanced for domestic service problems. Unlike the other studies mentioned, this study does attempt, although on a very small scale, to compare the economic, social and legal status of domestic workers with other workers.

Recently, the National Bureau of Economic Research released a statistical study of the wages of household employees from 1900-1940.¹³ The stated purpose of this

11

Ibid.

12

New York State Department of Labor, Division of Industrial Relations, Domestic Service Employment in New York State. September, 1946.

13

George J. Stigler, "Domestic Servants in the United States," Occasional Paper 24, National Bureau of Economic Research, New York, N.Y.

essay was "to describe the general characteristics of the domestic service industry, with special attention to trends in employment."¹⁴ The study deals almost exclusively with wages and hours and the factors affecting the income of servants. The study is not concerned with the overall picture of the domestic worker as an occupational type; it throws no light on working conditions in the home nor the coverage of household workers under existing social legislation. Nor does it show how, even in the matter of wages, domestic workers as an occupational group are typically different from other workers.

In general, then, the studies listed above differ from this thesis because they are almost exclusively economic surveys, neglecting the other aspects of the occupation and secondly, because their approach is different. They do not, nor do they intend, to picture the domestic worker as an occupational type, typically different from other workers. However, much of their statistical data will be used in this thesis.

The importance of occupational activity in an individual's life has been recognized by sociologists. Textbooks abound with generalizations about the importance

¹⁴

Ibid., 1.

of occupational and non-occupational relationships.

However, overall studies of the various types of employment are surprisingly few. Frances Donovan has contributed much to this field with her study of the waitress¹⁵ as an occupational type,¹⁶ and her later studies of the saleslady¹⁷ and the school teacher¹⁷ as occupational types. A description of the nature of these studies is given by R.E. Park in his introduction to the Saleslady:

It is in manner impressionistic and descriptive, rather than systematic and formal. The book she has written...has more the character of a personal narrative and a report of observations than of a systematic treatise.¹⁸

In order to gather information about the waitress, Donovan actually became a member of the group and worked as a waitress. Her studies, then, are autobiographical accounts of her experiences. These studies though very interesting are more or less generalized accounts of personal experiences in three fields of employment.

15

Frances R. Donovan, The Woman Who Waits. (Boston: R.G. Badger, 1920).

16

Frances R. Donovan, The Saleslady. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1929).

17

Frances R. Donovan, The Schoolma'am. (New York: Stokes and Company, 1938).

18

Donovan, The Saleslady, viii.

Although Donovan is looking for typical characteristics, she is more concerned with the personality of the people who made up the occupational group. The questions she seeks to answer are: What kind of people do this type of work? and What are their personal outlooks on life, their personal attitudes and other personality traits?

The method used in this thesis can be stated very simply. A survey will be made of all the important literature available on domestic workers with an eye toward typical characteristics. The characteristics looked for are economic, legislative, and social. These then will be balanced against the characteristics found among other workers. All the important studies made by various agencies of the government, especially the Women's Bureau and the Social Security Board will be used. In conjunction with these, studies made by private agencies were also investigated, especially those done by the Young Women's Christian Association. Many studies, although not directly aimed at household employees, were very useful. For example, the Women's Bureau made a
 19
 survey of women on relief in 1937. Since a good

majority of these women were former domestic workers, this study was very valuable.

The purpose of this study is not to make an exhaustive study of the wages and hours and other characteristics of domestic workers. Rather its purpose is simply to demonstrate that the domestic worker is an occupational type. Therefore, the typical characteristics were sought in the factual data already supplied by other research projects. This thesis, then, is simply an organization of already known facts about domestic workers under the concept of "occupational type."

Domestic workers are drawn from the marginal groups of society, that is, those groups who normally find their employment opportunities restricted. This has been characteristic of the occupation since the early beginnings of this country. Salmon divides the history of domestic
20
service into three phases:

- I.. Early colonization to the time of the Revolution.
- II. Revolution to about 1850.
- III. 1850

During the colonial period service of every kind

was performed by transported convicts, indentured white servants or "redemptioners," "free willers," Negroes and Indians. Since the colonial period indentured servants as a class were gradually to be transplanted by free laborers in the North and Negro slaves in the South.²¹

Then, between 1850-1870, four important political changes occurred which revolutionized the personnel in domestic service and, according to Salmon, consequently its character:²²

1. The Irish Famine, 1846 -- the Irish soon came to form the most numerous and important class engaged in domestic employment.

2. German Revolution of 1848 -- due to the large immigration of Germans to American soil, they became second only to the Irish as regards the number and proportion engaged in household help.

3. United States-China Treaty of 1844 -- As a result of the treaty, in 1890, 16,439 Chinese were engaged in domestic work on the Pacific coast.

4. Abolition of slavery -- Negroes maintained their former jobs, now as free laborers, and soon were competing for domestic jobs in the North.

A glance, then, at the history of domestic employment in this country shows that formerly, the household worker was an indentured servant, an immigrant or a Negro. Although the indentured servant has disappeared, immigrants and Negroes still make up the bulk of those engaged as domestics. Immigrants and Negroes have constituted

²¹

Ibid., 54.

²²

Ibid., 62.

more than half of the female servants since 1900. At present seventeen percent of all gainfully employed Negroes are in the domestic service and forty-seven percent of all persons engaged in such work are Negroes.

There has been a large decline in the number of immigrants in domestic service due to the decline of immigration. Thus while immigrants made up 21.4 percent of the female domestic labor force in 1910, they constituted only 14.7 percent in 1930. However, in 1940, Negroes still constituted 45.3 percent of the total female domestic labor force. In 1940 approximately forty-six percent of all domestics were non-white; in 1944, and 1946, the proportion was approximately fifty-eight percent. Thus the field of domestic employment is entered mainly by those who normally suffer employment restrictions in other fields of endeavor.

Then too, domestic work is chiefly a woman's job. In 1940, ninety-two percent of all domestic workers were

23

Stigler, 7.

24

Social Security Board, A Program for the Development of Old-Age and Survivors Insurance. Part II, 6.

25

Stigler, 8.

26

United States Employment Service, "The Domestic Service Dilemma," The Labor Market. March, 1947, 10.

women. In 1944, this figure dropped to ninety-one percent²⁷ and in April, 1946, to eighty-nine percent. Thus men can assume little if any importance in the field of general household work.

This overwhelming proportion of women in domestic work can be attributed to the fact that traditionally, household work has been the woman's role. Moreover, the weaker bargaining position of women forces them into the low paid occupations.

Household employment has also been an important source of livelihood for the young as well as the aged. Almost one-fourth of the service group was under twenty or over fifty-five years of age.²⁸ This ratio is substantially higher than in all other types of gainful employment. According to the census of 1940, while less than eleven percent of all white working women worked in household employment, the figure for the age group between fifty-five and sixty-four was nineteen percent and the percentage for the age group over sixty-five was as high²⁹ as twenty-three percent.

27

Social Security Board, A Program for the Development of Old-Age and Survivors Insurance. Part II, 7.

28

Ibid., 8.

29

Ibid.

According to the 1940 census approximately fifty-seven percent of all household workers were either married, widowed, or reported separated from their husbands, as compared with fifty percent for gainfully employed women generally.³⁰

33.6 percent of all household workers were³¹ widowed, divorced, or separated from their husbands.

In absolute numbers this figure is greater than for any other type of employment.

While household employment represented seven percent of the gainfully employed population of the South in 1940, it constituted from three to four percent for the rest of the country. In the South there is a servant for every ten families; in the northeastern states, one for every fourteen; and elsewhere, one for every twenty. Approximately forty-four percent of all household workers are found in the South, while the same area accounts for only thirty percent of the nation's labor force.³² A survey made by the Consumers Purchases Study indicated that even in such low income groups as \$1,250-1,749, as much as two percent

30

Ibid.

31

United States Department of Labor, Women's Bureau,
"Marital Status of Employed Women." Chart.

32

Social Security Board, A Program for the Development of Old-Age and Survivors Insurance. Part II, 6.

of the family income was spent on household help. This is six times as much as for families in the North-central area with similar income.³³

33

Ibid.

CHAPTER TWO

Until the liberalizing decisions of the United States Supreme Court in the spring of 1937, Congress was hardly able to legislate in behalf of any group of American workers except federal employees. Unrealistic decisions by conservative judges made it impossible for Congress to protect wage-earners from exploitation. However, the cataclysm of 1929-33 and the political victory of the New Deal resulted in the government assuming its function of preventing exploitation and equalizing economic opportunities. As a result an unprecedented amount of labor and other social legislation were placed in the statute books not only of the federal government, but also of the state governments.

Unfortunately a whole class of workers has been excluded from federal and state social legislation. It is the purpose of this chapter to show that it is typical of the domestic workers to be excluded from federal and state social legislation. The author does not intend to prove that only domestic workers are excluded from the coverage of some social laws, for there are many instances of other workers being denied the protection some labor or social insurance laws. For example, the agricultural workers are

also excluded from the benefits of the Social Security Act. However, it is typical of the domestic worker to be excluded from every type of social legislation, whether it be federal or state, whether it be a minimum-wage maximum-hour law, or unemployment compensation or workmen's compensation.

The basic social reforms of the New Deal rested on the three-corner foundation stone: the National Labor Relations Act of 1935, the Social Security Act of 1935, and the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1939. The Wagner Act of 1935, better known as the National Labor Relations Act, protected the right of workers to organize and to bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing. The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1939 sought to build a ceiling over hours and a floor under wages. The Social Security Act provided unemployment compensation, old-age and survivors insurance and other benefits.

Unfortunately, domestic workers as a class have been excluded from the protective scope of the National Labor Relations Act and the Fair Labor Standards Act, because, engaged in intra-state commerce, they are outside the reach of congressional action.

The federal old-age and survivors insurance law also excludes domestic workers from its coverage. However, their exclusion from the act was not due to the fact that

domestic employment was outside the scope of the law, but was due simply to the fact that Congress imagined the administrative problems involved too difficult for efficient administration. Thus domestic services performed¹ in a private home were excepted from coverage.

Although the Social Security Act exempts employers of household employees from payment of the unemployment compensation tax, it does not prohibit the states from covering such workers under state legislation. Yet, domestic workers employed in private homes are specifically excluded in all state unemployment compensation laws--with one exception, New York. However, New York protects household workers against temporary unemployment only if the employer employs four or more domestic workers in his home for fifteen days in a calendar year.² Of a total of approximately 186,500 domestic workers in the state of New York, only 12,000 were covered by unemployment insurance in 1945.³

1

Social Security Act of 1935, Section 210: b,2.

2

United States Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, Coverage of Domestic Workers by State and Federal Legislation, May 15, 1946, 4.

3

N.Y. State Dept. of Labor, Domestic Service Employment, 33.

On the state level, where there is no problem of jurisdiction, one might expect the the domestic worker to enjoy full coverage under the social legislation of the states. Most of the states have passed some social legislation, thus giving the protection to those workers, like domestics, outside the constitutionally-limited scope of the federal government. Thus most states have minimum-wage maximum-hour laws, workmen's compensation and unemployment compensation laws. But whereas most other workers are covered under these state laws, again the domestic worker is characteristically excluded.

The Bureau of Medical Economics of the American Medical Association, using data for the years 1929-31, estimated that \$67,294,944.00 was paid for medical care, and \$159,552,024.00 in compensation under state workmen's⁴ compensation. However, during this period domestic workers received no part of this tremendous sum for injuries suffered while performing their occupational duties. Even today, while twenty-six of the state workmen's compensation laws are compulsory, in only three states is it compulsory that household employees be

§

Willis, Harry A. and Royal E. Montgomery, Labor's Risks and Social Insurance. Vol. II. (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1938), 205.

⁵ covered. These three states are Ohio, New York, and California. However, they vary in the extent of their coverage. For example, California makes coverage compulsory only for domestic workers employed over fifty-⁶ two hours a week by one employer. Thus all part-time workers are excluded from compulsory coverage and even those full-time workers who may work less than fifty-two hours each week.

Ohio's workmen's compensation law is also limited in scope, making coverage of domestic workers compulsory only in cases when three or more workers are hired in one⁷ household; otherwise, the coverage is voluntary⁸ for employers of less than three workers. In the majority of homes fewer than three domestic workers are engaged.

Of the three states whose workmen's compensation laws are compulsory for domestic workers, New York has the most extensive coverage. The Condon Bill was approved

⁵ United States Department of Labor, Division of Labor Standards, "State workmen's Compensation Laws," Bulletin No. 78, June 1, 1946, 2.

⁶ Part-time workers are those domestics working for more than one employer.

⁷ Voluntary in this case means it is optional for employer to accept the law; and even if he does not accept it, he does not lose his common law defenses.

⁸ U.S. Dept. of Labor, Women's Bureau, Coverage of Domestic Workers by State and Federal Legislation, 3.

on March 30, 1946 and became effective January, 1947. This bill amended the existing law by including among the hazardous occupations for which workmen's compensation is mandatory certain domestic workers. The household employees who come under the amendment are all those who work for the same employer forty-eight or more hours per week and are employed in cities and villages of at least 40,000 population. This law extends to full-time regularly employed domestic workers the same protection, medical care and compensation which the law gives to other industrial workers. However, household employers are not subject to the final provisions of the law like other employers. Should the household employer required by law to carry workmen's compensation insurance, fail to do so, he becomes personally responsible and liable to pay an award that may be rendered in favor of the employee; this award can be entered in the Supreme Court as a regular judgment. Furthermore, the employer can be subjected to a civil suit, in which case he may not use the traditional common-law defenses.

While twenty-seven of the state compensation laws

are at least elective,¹⁰ only in two states, Connecticut¹¹ and New Jersey, is coverage of domestic workers elective. In Connecticut employers are prescribed to come under the Act if they regularly employ five or more employees, unless a written stipulation to the contrary is made. In New Jersey, if the employer or employee does not accept the Act he must give written notice to that effect to the opposite party, with the result that the common-law de-¹²fenses are abrogated.

Thus while twenty states make their workmen's compensation laws compulsory for other workers, and twenty-seven made their laws at least selective, only five states of the forty-eight offer some protection to domestic workers against occupational accidents. In thirty-one states, it is true, that they may be covered by the law; however, coverage is purely voluntary on the part of the employer. It is optional for the employer to come under the Act in these states and he does not lose his common-law

¹⁰ Elective means that if the employer rejects the Act, he loses all rights to use the common-law defenses if sued.

¹¹ U.S. Dept. of Labor, Division of Labor Standards, Bulletin No. 78, 2.

¹² U.S. Dept. of Labor, Women's Bureau, Coverage of Domestic Workers by State and Federal Legislation, 3.

13

defenses by failing to do so. Thus in reality domestic
workers in these states receive no protection at all.

14

Finally, there are eleven states which make it impossible entirely for domestic workers to receive any protection under their workmen's compensation laws by definitely excluding them from coverage and not even
15
permitting voluntary coverage.

13

The states with such an arrangement are the following:

Arizona	Kansas	Missouri	Rhode Island
Arkansas	Kentucky	Nebraska	South Carolina
Colorado	Louisiana	Nevada	South Dakota
Florida	Maine	New Mexico	Utah
Georgia	Maryland	North Carolina	Virginia
Idaho	Massachusetts	North Dakota	Washington
Illinois	Michigan	Oregon	Wisconsin
Indiana	Minnesota	Pennsylvania	

14

United States Department of Labor, Women's Bureau,
Old-Age Insurance for Household Workers. November,
1945, 12.

At least in Washington, D.C., the payment of compensation in case of accidents to domestic employees is far from a general practice. Among 447 employers, only eight percent reported that they had made compensation provisions for their workers. This data was taken from a survey of household workers in 1940 as reported in the above publication.

15

These states are:

Alabama	Montana	Oklahoma
Delaware	New Hampshire	Vermont
Iowa	Texas	West Virginia
Mississippi	Tennessee	Wyoming

Thus while most states have compulsory workmen's compensation laws, or at least, elective for their workers, it is typical of the states to exclude domestic workers from the same coverage given other workers and expose them to occupational injuries without the protection of social insurance.

The position of domestic workers in regard to maximum hour laws is just as undesirable. Forty-three states have some kind of maximum hour regulation, but these laws of general coverage again do not cover workers in household employment.¹⁶ For example, Kentucky has put a ceiling on hours for women working in any laundry, bakery, hotel, factory, or restaurant; but domestic workers are exempted¹⁷ and have no statutory provisions limiting their hours of work. California demands that women work not longer than forty-eight hours a week, or eight hours a day. This law applies to workers in manufacturing, laundries, hotels, public lodging or apartment houses, hospitals, barber shops, restaurants, and the like, but no provision whatsoever

¹⁶ U.S. Dept. of Labor, Women's Bureau, Coverage of Domestic Workers by State and Federal Legislation, 1.

(Alaska has a special maximum hour law establishing a sixty-hour week for female domestic workers.)

¹⁷ State of Kentucky, Revised Statutes of 1946, (337.380).

is made for domestic workers.

As a matter of fact only the state of Washington has a maximum hour law applicable especially to domestic workers. The state of Washington's special maximum-hour law for household employees contains four provisions:

1. It covers both male and female employees;
2. It prohibits their employment over sixty hours a week, including all the time the employee is on call and not free to follow her own pursuits;
3. It provides that in case of emergency such employees may be employed longer than sixty hours;
4. It enforces this law by making its violation a misdemeanor.

The Industrial Welfare Committee of Washington has suggested a schedule of five ten-hour days and one six-hour day and one four-hour day, on Sundays and Thursdays, respectively.

Thus while 43 states offer their workers some protection against intolerably long hours, only one state has done the same for domestic workers. It is typical, therefore, of domestic workers that in their role as workers they receive no state safeguards against long hours.

18

State of California, Labor Code of 1937 (1350).

19

U.S. Dept. of Labor, Women's Bureau, Coverage of Domestic Workers by State and Federal Legislation, 1.

20

Industrial Welfare Committee of the State of Washington, ~~Order~~ Order No. 33.

As far as minimum wage laws on a state level are concerned, only one state, Wisconsin, has enacted minimum wage legislation for domestic workers. Out of all the states which place a floor on wages below which it is not lawful to employ their workers, only eight states do not expressly exclude domestic workers from coverage: Oregon, California, Colorado, Kansas, Utah, Oklahoma, Washington, Wisconsin.²¹ This does not mean that these states offer protection against low wages; it only means that a minimum wage could be set up for domestics, if the state so desired, within the framework of existing legislation.

In other words, all other states which offer some protection to their workers in the form of minimum wage legislation, expressly deny domestic workers the same protection. For example, in Kentucky all industries, trades and businesses are subject to the minimum wage regulations of the Commission of Industrial Relations; however, domestic workers are excluded.²² In New York, one of the more progressive states, minimum wage rates

21

U.S. Dept. of Labor, Women's Bureau, Coverage of Domestic Workers by State and Federal Legislation, 1.

22

State of Kentucky, Revised Statutes of 1945 (337.010)

have been established for laundry occupations, beauty service occupations, the restaurant industry, cleaning and dyeing industry, hotel industry, but none has been established for domestic workers.

California has a minimum wage law administered by the Industrial Welfare Commission, created in the Division of Industrial welfare in the Department of Industrial Relations. Minimum wages have been set for the manufacturing industry,²³ For workers engaged in personal service²⁴ in salons, beauty shops, baths, etc., for workers in²⁵ the public housekeeping industry like hotels, and for²⁶ workers employed as laundresses. Many other types of workers are covered by minimum wage rates. But here again no minum wage has been established for household workers.

23

State of California, Department of Industrial Relations, Industrial Welfare Commission Order No. 1, effective 6-29-42.

24

State of California, Department of Industrial Relations, Industrial welfare Commission Order No. 2, effective 11-23-42.

25

State of California, Department of Industrial Relations, Industrial Welfare Commission Order No. 5, effective 6-28-43.

26

State of California, Department of Industrial Relations, Industrial welfare Commission Order No. 6, effective 6-21-46.

Wisconsin is the only state that has minimum wage rates now in effect for domestic workers. It applies to adult women and minors. The wage of domestic workers working fifty or more hours per week is computed on a weekly basis as follows: if board only is furnished, \$6.00 per week; if board and room are furnished, \$4.25²⁷ per week.

The wage of domestic workers working less than fifty hours per week are computed on an hourly basis as follows: 28

- a. Minors 17 years of age and over:
 - No previous experience in domestic service \$.16
 - After three months experience .18
 - After six months experience
 - In cities with population 5000 or more .22 $\frac{1}{2}$
 - In cities with population less than 5000 .20
- b. Minors between 16 and 17 years of age:
 - No previous experience in domestic service .16
 - After six months experience .18
- c. Minors between 14 and 16 years of age:
 - No previous experience in domestic service .16
 - After twelve months experience .18
- d. Allowance for board and lodging:
 - In cities with population 5000 or more
 - Per week for board \$4.50
 - Per week for lodging 2.25
 - In other parts of state
 - Per week for board 4.00
 - Per week for lodging 1.75

27

State of Wisconsin, Industrial Commission, Wage Regulations for Adult Women and Minors in Domestic Service. Form c-5a.

28

Ibid.

Obviously these wage rates are very low. However,²⁹ they are being revised. The tentative wage rates are:

- a. The wage of domestic servants working forty-five or more hours per week shall be computed on a weekly basis as follows:
 - If board only is furnished \$12.00
 - If board and room are furnished 8.00
- b. The wage of domestic workers working less than forty-five hours per week shall be computed on an hourly basis:
 - In cities with population 3500 or more \$.45
 - Elsewhere in the state .40

We have seen that domestic workers are usually excluded from all federal and state social legislation. Since household employers are not engaged in interstate commerce, they are eliminated from the coverage of most federal laws. Although the states could provide them with full coverage, it is the exceptional state that does. Most states in the union have passed some social legislation in order to prevent the exploitation of the workers within the state; most have attempted to mitigate somewhat the workers insecurity. However, it is typical of the domestic worker that she be excluded from the coverage of these laws and that she be denied the same protection given to other workers.

CHAPTER THREE

Census reports as well as studies made by the Social Security Board and the Women's Division of the Department of Labor establish household employment as one of the lowest paid groups among non-manufacturing occupations both as to wage rates and total annual incomes. Except for the agricultural worker, the domestic workers stands at the bottom of the income scale; the household employees remuneration is only a little above that of the farm laborer, whose earnings are lower than those of any other gainfully occupied group in the nation.¹

This chapter is not meant to be a statistical study of wages and hours; rather, borrowing its statistical data from other studies it simply intends to point out the typical wages and hours of domestic workers and show how in general they are characteristically lower, the hours characteristically longer. This chapter does not intend to show that only domestic workers are poorly paid and that only they work very long hours; but rather that domestic employees as a rule usually are the poorest paid and generally work the longest hours.

¹

Social Security Board, A Program for the Development of Old-Age and Survivors Insurance. Introduction, 1.

Two factors complicate and make difficult any evaluation of the domestic worker's relative economic status. The first is the lack of accurate wage data for household workers on a nation-wide basis. The difficulty of securing such data from each household and the general lack of interest in this group of workers accounts for the lack of specific wage data relative to household employees. Even Census data on wage incomes are not considered very reliable, especially for low-income workers. A recent study made by the Bureau of Old-Age and Survivors Insurance of the Social Security Board, in which wages reported by individuals to the census were compared with wages reported for the same persons for social security contribution purposes, revealed that there was a marked net tendency to understatement of wages to the Census. The degree of understatement tended to vary inversely with the amount of wages involved.²

Even during the war there was not available any data for domestic workers on a nation-wide basis, except scattered studies in a few cities.

The second complicating factor, with few exceptions, is that household employees also receive payments in kind.

²

Ibid., 12.

And yet the proportion of the household wage bill which is met by payments in the form of shelter, food and other remunerations in kind, is at present not known. Frieda S. Miller, director of the Women's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor, testifying before the House Ways and Means Committee, commented on the low annual cash incomes of domestic workers with this observation: ³

These figures (census wages data) do not reflect any additional remuneration in the form of room and board; but at that the cash wages of numerous workers as reported by the Bureau of the Census compelled substandard living for them and their families.

During the war the wages of some domestic workers in general reached unprecedented heights. In the latter part of 1944, the Women's Bureau found from a study of newspaper want-ads that weekly wages offered for general household workers ranged as high as \$36.00; and for cooks, as high as \$46.00. Monthly wages offered in eighty-six advertisements ranged as high as \$160.00 a month. However, at the same time that such unusually high wages were being offered for domestics, the same group of advertisements gave evidence of very low wages. Thus rates as low

3

Statement of Frieda S. Miller, Director, Women's Bureau United States Department of Labor, before the House Ways and Means Committee in support of certain amendments to Title II of the Social Security Act, April 9, 1946. (Mimeographed).

at \$12.00 per week were found in some cases; monthly wages as low as \$40.00 were also found being offered.

Thus despite the high wages offered in some cases, many extremely low wages were still being offered. Thus although monthly wages ranged up to \$160.00 a month, the average for this group was \$92.25. The same is true of weekly wages, which despite high levels, averaged (median) ⁴ \$20.25. Thus this weekly median wage of \$20.25 still ranked the domestic worker as one of the poorest paid workers despite the premium on domestic workers during the war.

On the basis of recent sampling of newspaper want-ads, such West Coast cities as San Francisco and Los Angeles were offering as much as \$156.00 monthly for general household workers and up to \$200.00 monthly for ⁵ cooks. Seattle appeared to pay much the same rate. In Philadelphia, monthly wages for general household workers ranged up to \$130.00, while in New York City, \$132.00 a month was offered on the same basis.

However, these high wage levels must be tempered

4

Mary T. Waggaman, Wartime Job Opportunities for Women Household Workers in Washington, D.C., Bureau of Labor Statistics, Editorial and Research Division, 1.

5.

United States Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, Old-Age Insurance for Household Workers, November, 1945, 6.

by the exceedingly low wages offered at the same time. Thus in the West Coast cities mentioned above, monthly rates as low as \$70.00 were being offered; in Philadelphia, wages as low as \$78.00 a month were found. Thus while one can find rather high wages being offered domestic workers, one finds co-existing with these very low wages, indicating that low wages among household employees still prevail. For example, in Washington, D.C., one can find ads offering \$12.00 per week, \$15.00 per week and \$18.00 per week; in Birmingham, Alabama, \$16.00, \$14.00, and \$13.00 per week and even \$2.00 per day, this in March of 1946.⁶

The author made an analysis of 411 newspaper advertisements for domestic workers in Chicago published in the Chicago Tribune, the Daily News and Chicago Sun during two two-week periods from September 29 to October 12, and from November 1 to November 15, 1946. Monthly wages offered ranged as high as \$160.00 and weekly wages as high as \$50.00. Nevertheless, low rates also prevailed. Thus monthly wages as low as \$60.00 were found and in the case of weekly rates, as low as \$15.00. The average (modal) monthly wage was \$130.00, the average (modal)

⁶

Article in the Birmingham News, March 26, 1946.

weekly wage, \$32.00.

Thus although one can find exceptionally high wages being offered domestic workers, one can also find low wages still prevailing. As regards the high wage levels reached by some domestic workers, it must be recalled that these are war-time rates and cannot be taken as typical of normal earnings in the occupation; it cannot be assumed that the better rates recently paid will persist if there is a substantial amount of unemployment. Accordingly, the prevailing peace-time rates for the occupation are the significant rates, and these rates are very low.

The Old-Age and Survivors Insurance Bureau survey in Baltimore in 1941 revealed very low wages for domestic workers. The study was conducted by the Bureau during the first three weeks of January, 1941. Interviews were carried on in the homes of the domestic workers themselves and the homes in which they were employed. In all, 1211 persons were interviewed. For various reasons, seventy-two schedules were discarded, and the final sample included 1093 Negroes and forty-six white women. Analysis of the sample was limited to data on Negro women because of the predominance of Negroes in domestic service in Baltimore.⁷

⁷

Magnus, Negro Domestic Workers in Baltimore, 2.

Weekly cash earnings ranged from less than \$2.00 to slightly more than \$18.00 for all women in the sample. The median earnings of women holding full-time jobs were \$8.89; for part-time workers median earnings were \$5.73 and for regular day workers, \$4.83. There was no marked concentration in any one wage group. This lack of concentration and also the wide range of earnings reflect absence of standardization of wages in domestic service and indicate the extent to which individual agreements between employer and employee define the economic status of workers employed⁸ in private families.

Although the weekly cash earnings as well as the daily and hourly rates were known for the great majority of the women interviewed, the data allowed for only rough estimates of the annual cash earnings. This was due to the absence of detailed reports on unpaid vacations, of regular day workers and periods of unemployment of less than one month's duration. Estimates of annual cash earnings were possible for only 255 women -- slightly more than thirty percent of all women who held regular jobs at the time of interview -- who had been at their

present full-time jobs for more than twelve consecutive months. The earnings of these women ranged from about \$300.00 to more than \$900.00, with a median of \$497.00.

9

The author emphasizes that

these estimates cannot be applied to the whole sample group, since they undoubtedly overstate the average annual earnings of average household workers in the sample, who did not have full-time employment throughout the year.

It should be noted that the typical weekly wage of these workers, \$8.89 was very close to the typical weekly wage of \$9.10 found among domestic workers in Washington, D.C. in 1940. And while household workers were averaging \$8.89 per week, workers in other occupations were averaging considerably higher wages. Thus in February, 1941, one finds workers in manufacturing averaging \$28.58, workers in the retail trades averaging \$21.73, workers in the hotel industry receiving \$15.61 on the average. Thus regardless of how poorly paid other workers may be, domestic workers as a rule are always the poorest paid. It should be noted, finally, that these workers in Baltimore for the most part are non-resident workers; thus they received no added remuneration in the form of shelter.

9

Ibid.

10

United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Monthly Labor Review, March, 1941.

The 1940 Census reports show for the country as a whole median cash earnings of \$312.00 for experienced women household workers employed full-time in that service for the year 1939.¹¹ This figure does not reveal the wide variation in different sections of the United States. For instance, for one section of the country the median was just under \$150.00 a year, in another \$164.00, and the highest median cash earnings reported were \$566.00. These figures do not reflect any additional remuneration in the form of room and board, but at that the cash wages of numerous workers as reported by the Bureau of the Census compelled substandard living for them and their families.¹²

Compare the median of \$20.25 a week as reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics with the median weekly earnings of \$8.10 for such workers in 1940 according to a YCWA survey. The Bureau of Labor Statistics report was an analysis of the weekly rates offered in a group of 323 out of 562 Washington newspaper advertisements for women household workers in the fall of 1944.

¹¹ United States Dept. of Labor, Women's Bureau, Old-Age Insurance for Household Workers, 8.

¹² Ibid.

Of 564 women included in the YWCA study, the majority were Negroes. The median of the weekly cash wages of the full-time workers living-in was \$9.35 for the white women and \$8.85 for the Negroes.¹³

TABLE I

GEOGRAPHICAL PATTERN OF MONEY EARNINGS

REGION	MEAN EARNINGS	MEDIAN
North East	\$527.00	\$504.00
West	473.00	419.00
North Central	375.00	335.00
South	248.00	205.00

14

In New York, in 1940, there was a very wide gap between the wages of domestics and those of women employed in other jobs. While full-time domestics were receiving approximately \$10.00 a week, women factory workers averaged \$17.20, women in beauty shops earned \$16.79, women in cleaning and dyeing establishments received \$15.49 and

¹³ U.S. Dept of Labor, Women's Bureau, Old-Age Insurance for Household Workers, 7.

¹⁴ Stigler, 13.

15
women employed as laundresses received \$15.55.

A survey was made of 560 domestic workers in Philadelphia in the spring of 1940. For full-time workers the average (median) cash wages paid were \$8.32 per week. Of all full-time and part-time workers with private families about 68.2 percent received wages of \$7.00 and more per week, and ninety-one percent received wages of \$5.00 and more per week.

The median cash wage for resident workers was \$9.46 and for non-resident workers \$8.89; the median wages were a little higher for Negroes than white women and lower than wages reported for workers working in other service industries. 16

Since 81.5 percent of the full-time and part-time workers held their present job more than twelve months, it was possible to compute the cash wages for the past year. It was estimated that the median cash wages for 1939 would have been \$432.64 for eighty-one percent of the women whose job lasted longer than twelve months.

The cash wages for the past year ranged from \$150.00 reported by two part-time workers to \$624.00 and over for about twenty percent of the full-time workers; and to \$780.00 or over for about six percent of the full-time workers. The median weekly cash wages received by regular day-workers were \$495.00. 17

15 N.Y. State Dept. of Labor, Domestic Service Employment in New York State, 22.

16 Magnus, Domestic Workers in Philadelphia, 4-5.

17 Ibid.

More figures on the low earnings of household employees were compiled by the Social Security Board from a random sample of domestic workers registered with the State Employment offices in four cities: Cincinnati and Lakewood, Ohio; Wilmington, Delaware; and Washington, D.C., covering 1,734 workers in 1936, 1937, and 1938.¹⁸

The most frequent weekly cash wage reported in any city in any year was from \$5.00 to \$7.00. Daily rates ranged from \$.50 to \$3.50 with the largest single group between \$2.00 and \$2.50 a day. In each city hourly rates reported were from \$.25 to \$.30 for ninety percent of the workers were paid on such a basis.

In 1939, questionnaires were sent to all YWCA branches in Illinois; this resulted in 263 usable reports from thirteen communities including Chicago and vicinity.¹⁹ All but twenty-three of the women reporting dined at the place of employment, and the majority were general workers.

Women living-in received from \$3.50 to \$20.00 a week, over half of them earning between \$7.00 and \$11.00; wages tended to be higher in Chicago and vicinity where the average was between \$11.00 and \$12.00 as compared with \$8.00 in other communities.

¹⁸ U.S. Dept. of Labor, Women's Bureau, Woman Worker, July, 1939, 19: 7. ¹⁹ Ibid.

Wages for the small group of workers living-out ranged from \$3.50 to \$12.00; such women had to pay at least for lodging, in some cases meals and carfare, so their position compared very unfavorably with the low paid workers who lived-in. The YWCA proposed a wage scale of about \$11.00 for those workers living out; almost seven/tenths of those living-out would have had their wages raised by the adoption of such a minimum.

A similar questionnaire survey for white domestic workers was made in Houston, Texas. Thirty replies were used. Wages ranged from \$5.00 to \$12.00 a week with seventy-five percent earning less than \$8.00. More than two-thirds of the girls contributed to the support of their families and more than forty percent gave at least fifty percent of their earnings to their families.²⁰

In a study of unattached women on relief in Chicago in 1937, large proportions of the women who had done domestic work had been paid low cash wages; more than fifty percent earned below \$30.00, and less than twenty percent had earned as much as \$15.00. The average for the group was \$25.00 per month.²¹

20

Ibid., 7-8.

21

Harriet A. Byrne and Cecile Hillyer, "Unattached Women on Relief in Chicago, 1937," Bulletin No. 158. United States Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1938.

In contrast to these large proportions of workers with such low earnings, less than twenty percent of the women in other fields of personal service had earned below \$30.00, and well over one-third had earned \$60.00 or more; the average for this group was \$52.00.

TABLE II
WEEKLY WAGES FOR DOMESTIC WORKERS LIVING-IN

CLASSES	LOW	HIGH
Housekeepers and general maids	\$2.67	\$ 8.35
Cooks	2.30	13.86
Laundresses	2.39	11.60
Nurses	2.25	15.90
Others	2.52	11.20

22

A comprehensive effort to find out what domestic workers were paid was made by the United States Employment Service in 1937. In January of that year, the USES asked its offices in every state to estimate, on the basis of the levels at which placements were then being

22

The above chart summarized the survey of wages of domestics made by the United States Employment Service in 1937. The "low" income means the lowest average in any state; the "high" means the highest average in any state.

made, the prevailing weekly wage for various classes of domestic workers. In no fewer than twenty-nine states, the average wage paid housekeepers and general maids living-in was less than \$5.00 per week. In New York state the average was \$8.35 a week, the best average wage, not minimum, recorded in the United States.²³

Wages for full-time general housekeepers in the homes of Fortune magazine readers show considerable spread; over seventy-five percent of them receive less than \$50.00 a month, and the average wage is slightly over \$40.00. This nation-wide figure breaks down into striking regional extremes: in the New England and Middle Atlantic section, the average wage for a housekeeper was \$50.00; in the western half of the South it was \$29.00. The nationwide average again breaks down into striking extremes based on population; in cities of more than one million, the average wage for a houseworker was \$47.00; in communities between 5,000 and 25,000, it was \$39.00.²⁴

23

As reported in P.M., New York newspaper, January 15, 1941.

24

Fortune, "Servant Problem," March, 1938, 116.

In 1933, Marie White, agent for special groups, sought the cooperation of state supervisors of home economics in a study to ascertain if possible what content should be included in a training program for household employees. ²⁵ Of the 390 questionnaires sent out, 306 were returned; employers interviewed represented thirty-seven states, Puerto Rico and Hawaii.

Weekly wages ranged from \$.70 to \$18.00. Of the 258 employees included in that range, fifty were paid \$5.00 per week; thirty-three, \$6.00; thirty-three, \$3.00; seventeen, \$4.00; seventeen, \$3.50; sixteen, \$8.00; fifteen, \$7.00 and fourteen, \$10.00. Stated in another way, 103 or more than one-third of the employees received less than \$5.00 per week; fifty or almost twenty percent received \$5.00; eighty-one or a little less than one-third received from \$5.00 to \$9.00; fourteen received \$10.00 and ten received from \$10.50 to \$18.00. In other words, less than one-tenth received \$10.00 or more a week.

Where wages were reported in terms of monthly earnings, four received less than \$20.00 per month. The lowest monthly wage was \$6.00 while the highest was \$75.00.

Thus, although complete data are lacking, "there need be little hesitation in putting household employment at the bottom of the list of non-manufacturing employment on the basis of cash wages.²⁶ On the basis of pre-war wage data the domestic worker compared with other workers in similar occupations has occupied the lowest rung of the economic ladder. Although post-war wages in some instances have reached unprecedented heights for domestic workers, extremely low wages for many domestic workers still exist. It is an occupational characteristic of the household employee, therefore, to receive the lowest cash wages compared to any other field of endeavor.

In regard to the hours which domestic workers are called upon to work, a familiar complaint is, "Often on my day off, I've been too worn out to do anything but just sit."²⁷ Although the charge of long and tedious hours is by far the chief complaint against household work, data relating to hours worked is curiously hard to find. In the few studies that have been made, how-

26

United States Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, "The Woman Wage Earner," Bulletin 182. Washington, D.C. 1939, 38.

27

Edna Tolman, "So You Can't Keep A Maid," The Saturday Evening Post, October 9, 1943, 94.

ever, the general impression of long hours has been confirmed. George Stigler refers to detailed census data on hours worked during the week, March 24 to March 30, 1940. Although the median hours of domestic work is almost the same as the hours in hotels, lodging places, eating and drinking places, they are about one-fifth²⁸ longer in domestic service than in other industries.

TABLE III

HOURS WORKED BY WOMEN IN SELECTED INDUSTRIES
MARCH 24 -- 30, 1940

INDUSTRY	MEDIAN HOURS	PERCENTAGE WORKING	
		LESS 40	60 OR MORE
Domestic Service	48.3	25.2	24.8
Hotels and lodging places	48.2	14.7	13.1
Laundrying, cleaning, and dyeing	40.9	21.0	4.1
General merchandise and variety store	42.7	17.4	1.8
Eating and drinking places	48.1	20.4	10.9
All female workers	40.8	26.4	7.9
		29	
		28	

²⁸ Stigler, 19.

²⁹ Ibid.,

And while the median hours worked by all female workers was 40.8 per week, the median for domestic workers was 48.3 hours. In the chart shown above, it should be noticed that though the median hours worked by household employees was 48.3, 24.8 percent of those working in domestic service worked sixty or more hours each week. This percentage was almost twice as much as that of hotel workers, and almost three times as great as the percent-³⁰age for all female workers in general.

The FORTUNE magazine survey is another source of data on hours. The FORTUNE article mentions a St. Louis survey, conducted by the Community Council in 1935, in which forty percent of the domestic workers demanded³¹ more time off. Of the servants interviewed by FORTUNE, forty-seven percent named long hours as the chief objection and disadvantage of household work. Of thirteen private agencies which were questioned, eleven categorically stated that long hours without a doubt is the chief³² objection to household work.

About fifty percent of the employers questioned in the survey stated that they worked their servants more than eight hours, plus time on call. More than a third worked more than ten hours plus phone call duty. About seventeen percent worked at least eleven hours plus call

and twelve percent worked seventy-two hours a week plus
³³
 time on call.

Although the other fifty percent of the FORTUNE employers said their full-time workers worked eight hours or less, they did not count "time on call." "Being on call" means that the worker, although free for the time being from performing actual household tasks, must keep herself in readiness to answer the doorbell, the telephone, and to receive back-door deliveries. Thus she must remain on the job.

Thus FORTUNE summarizes its findings with these figures: five out of every six servants worked more than eight hours a day, while one out of every six worked
³⁴
 more than twelve hours a day. Workers, however, in laundries, hotels, dyeing and cleaning establishments averaged much lower in hours worked. For example, in late 1936, workers in laundries averaged 42.5 hours, in hotels

30

Ibid., 20.

31

Fortune, 116.

32

Ibid.

33

Ibid.

34

Ibid., 83.

48.5 hours, and in dyeing and cleaning establishments,
³⁵
 43.5 hours per week.

The LABOR INFORMATION BULLETIN of May, 1936, carried the results of a study made in Connecticut of three communities. The study showed that working hours for the typical domestic worker were longer than the legal maximum for women in other occupations averaging sixty
³⁶
 to seventy hours per week and ten hours per day.

"Her day started between 7:00 and 8:00 in the morning and ended between 7:00 and 8:00 in the evening, with a rest period of about two hours in the afternoon." However, it is added that she had to remain in the home
³⁷
 on call during her rest period.

In a survey already mentioned the largest number of the employees studied were on duty eleven to twelve hours a day, with only sixteen percent of them having as much as one-half day a week free. The greatest number of employees included in the study reported for duty between 7:00 and 8:00 A.M., the next greatest number between 6:00 and 7:00 A.M.. Leaving time for the largest

³⁵ United States Department of Labor, Labor Information Bulletin, May, 1936, 16.

³⁶ Mary Anderson, "The Household Worker and Her Job," Labor Information Bulletin, May, 1936, 5.

³⁷ Ibid.

number was between 7:00 and 8:00 P.M..

Thus on the basis of available prewar data, the typical domestic worker worked the longest hours as compared with most other workers. These long hours, coupled with the low wages houseworkers usually receive, indicate the low economic status of these workers relative to other workers.

CHAPTER FOUR

The second and third chapters were concerned with the legislative and economic aspects of household employment. We have seen thus far that the household worker is typically different from other workers in wages received and hours worked and in the amount and kind of legislation offered for her protection. This chapter will be concerned with the social aspects of household employment and the sociological implications of the master-servant relationship.

The position of household servant in our society carries with it a very low social status. A strong social stigma is attached to domestic work which makes the domestic worker a member of an inferior social group and her work degrading. Women who might otherwise be attracted to household work avoid the job because of the social inferiority that goes with the title "maid."

Even in parts of the country where household work as a profession is common, girls and women who have never done anything else go into such employment reluctantly. To them it is going backward, losing ground in the economic and social battle. If they do come to it--and many prefer relief to such a solution of their difficulties--they insist that it is only temporary. They prefer not to have their old associates know.

1

1
Dorothy P. Wells and Carol Biba, editors, Fair and Clear in the Home, A Symposium on Household Employment, New York: The Woman's Press, National Board, Y.W.C.A., 1936, 48.

The "hired girl," because of her position in society is not and knows she is not the social equal of the doctor's daughter or even the girl who is a clerk in the town's smallest store. A good illustration of this is the following true life incident as told by

Ruth Sergel:

Jenny is in an awful fix. She was laid off from the factory a month ago, and I helped her get a job as maid with my employer's sister. She had to have a job where she could go home nights because she's going steady with a nice man and doesn't want him to know that she is a maid and does housework.

At first she got home early and didn't have to explain so much, but now she is not getting home before 9:30, and she has to make up reasons why she is working that late in the factory. But now she is in a fix and doesn't know what to do because my employer's sister is going away and wants Jenny to stay nights for a week, and she is afraid that her boy friend will find out that she is doing housework and won't want to go out with her anymore.

He is the nicest boy friend she has ever had. He has been to college a little, and Jenny doesn't want him to stop asking for dates, and she thinks he will if he finds out that she is doing housework. He has introduced her to lots of his friends and probably won't want them to know he is having dates with a maid.

2

2

Ruth Sergel, editor. The Women in the House. New York: The Women's Press, 1938, 108.

To understand the reasons for this social stigma, we must understand the social implications of the "master-servant" relationship. The master and the servant belong to different social classes. Although work~~ers~~ and employers of other occupational groups may belong to different classes, it is only the domestic worker who is constantly made aware of this fact day in and day out. The common use of the domestic worker's Christian name emphasizes the social gap between her and her employer. The servant refers to her master as "sir," while he calls her by her first name. Thus today the Christian name of "Bridget" refers to the typical I-⁴rish housekeeper, or "Hilda," the Swedish. In the author's readings, these are some of the many references made to domestic workers: the girl, hired girl, servant, domestic, Martha, Mildred, maid, Cinderella, Bridget, Nora, housekeeper, housemaid, and household worker. Never has he found the domestic worker referred to as "Miss" or "Mrs.".

4

It is socially significant that a first page story appearing in the Chicago Herald American, February 13, 1946, which reported the first labor contract signed by a domestic worker and her employer constantly referred to the worker by her first name, reserving "Mrs." for her employer.

Then too, the household worker is physically differentiated from her employer. The cap and apron have become the traditional garb of the servant⁵ and signify her status as servant of the household.

Such class distinctions as the use of the Christian name, the use of the cap and apron, and in some cases the special servant entrance, are constant reminders that the good servant is one who not only performs tasks efficiently, but also knows his "place." The extent of this servile idea still prevalent among employers of domestics can be estimated from a few quotations from letters and questionnaires received by Fortune magazine in its study of the servant problem. One employer complained: "Servants do not keep their place." Another wrote: "After they are at our place for awhile they seem to think they should work the hours we work and should do the same things we do, that is, they should be on the same level as we are." "There are no really faithful servants anymore," laments one lady. Another says that servants are "frequently

⁵ White, 25. (Out of 303 employees in the survey, 180 were required to wear a uniform or other special costume when on duty.)

insolent." Another says that there is too much of "Jack is as good as his master or mistress--mistaken American idea of democracy." "We treat them," says another, "as one of the family, always managing to have them know their own place." Says another, "My servants are always kindly treated...as my servant and not my equal."⁶

Traditionally the master-servant relationship implied dependency and limitations on the personal freedom of the servant. In the past there were instances where the master could punish his servants and had control over their marriage, etc. Although many of these elements of the occupation have disappeared, some still remain. The domestic worker, as we have already seen, compared to other workers generally, works the longest hours; this factor coupled with the fact that she often lives at her employer's residence, seriously curtails her freedom. Thus her time off duty is narrowly restricted and regulated.

With just Thursday and Sunday afternoons off, she has little opportunity to mingle socially with girls her own age, ...while in the factory she works side by side with girls who have similar interests, bowls with them, attends their dances, and takes part in the activities of their own union. 7

6

Fortune, 118.

7

Shelby Cullom Davis, "Household Servants are Gone Forever," Reader's Digest, April, 1945, 76.

Another reason for the social stigma attached to domestic work is the tendency to classify housework as "unskilled work." However, in this mechanized age, it is difficult to see how such work can be considered "unskilled." A household worker may be required to operate a washing machine, mangel, electric iron, waxer, vacuum cleaner, pressure cooker; to answer the telephone, receive guests, order groceries, check the bills and look after the baby.

It is estimated that on the average about seventy different household tasks are performed during a day, varying from simple tasks, which can become almost automatic, to difficult ones requiring a high degree of skill.

8

Often domestic work is highly personal in nature because it is work generally done directly for the person of the master or mistress, and as a result, much of the work itself is of a personal and often extremely unpleasant nature. Therefore, because of this personal nature of servant work, the servant is said to "serve" her employer; or is said to "wait on" her mistress. There is implied in this servant relationship the subordination of the "server" to the one being served.

8

N.Y. State Dept. of Labor, Domestic Service Employment in New York State, 7.

A good illustration of the subordination of the domestic is shown in this comment of a former domestic:

Personally, I get a lot of joy out of the rich smell of freshly baked rolls or a spicy apple pie. I like to stand back and survey a shinningly clean room, with its rugs glowing, its chintzes perky and colorful, its vases filled with flowers. ...at times like these, I don't feel like a servant. But I do feel like one when some perfectly healthy young woman steps out of her nightie and leaves it lying there on the floor for me to pick up, or when she sits at her desk and throws torn-up scraps of paper on the rug instead of dropping them into the waste basket, or when she takes her bath and leaves the tub for me to clean, or when she lies in state against her pillows while I bring her breakfast on a tray and tuck a cushion in behind her back and fetch a bed jacket.

There is something un-American about this and about the dozens of other personal services she demands as her right, simply because she happens to be able to pay for them. This isn't the type of equality and brotherhood our men abroad are fighting for. If an employer is old or infirm or ill, if she is a busy executive whose exacting duties or limited time makes extra attentions necessary, it is quite another story.

But for one complacent, able-bodied, indolent woman to demand so much of the weary flesh of another as if she were some kind of superior being, is not quite decent. Gradually it gets under your skin. And after a while you say to yourself: "This is a helluva life. I'm going out and get a job at the dime store." 9

Domestic work, then, implies the personal subordination of the worker to the employer. Although this status can be and has been perfectly acceptable in some societies, we live

in a society that places a premium on personal equality. Apparently, any occupation which strongly implies personal subordination will be looked down upon as servile and degrading. Workers themselves will regard it unfavorably and will enter it only as the last resort. It is significant that domestic work is entered by marginal workers generally, workers who find other fields of employment restricted. Thus instead of being a normal occupation, attracting those with the necessary skills and inclinations, domestic work has become society's "dumping ground" for its marginal workers.

The domestic worker stands out as an occupational type in other respects also. While other forms of labor, like the factory system have resulted in less personal relationships between employer and employee, domestic work has retained a very high personal relationship. Thus domestic work is performed in the personal atmosphere of the home; while most other work is carried on outside the home, like the factory. What makes the occupation of domestic employment so unique is that employer and employee frequently have to live together. Thus in household employment the factor of personality takes on tremendous importance. In an office a person may have a disagreeable personality, but as long as the work is

properly done, he or she is usually tolerated. However, because of the closeness of the family group, a personality may make the atmosphere pleasant or unpleasant as the case may be.

In the apparently minor issues which involve personal habits and privileges, the waking-hour association of employer and employee allows individual characteristics of arrogance, vulgarity, and selfishness, if possessed by either woman, seriously to discomfort the other. 10

When a factory employer considers a prospective employee for production employment, he is primarily interested in work efficiency. The disposition, personal habits of cleanliness of the employee are only secondary considerations. However, qualities of personality are considered essential in a domestic employee and are usually considered by employers when employing domestic workers. A survey conducted for the United States Department of the Interior, Office of Education, showed that employers of domestics considered the following qualities essential and that the majority of them considered them before hiring: personal cleanliness, health, personal neatness, honesty,

and good disposition.

While in other employments generally the rights and duties of employees alike are becoming contractualized, this trend has hardly touched the field of domestic employment. Whereas the factory has clearly defined duties, hours of work, detailed job description, etc., the domestic worker is a member of a completely unstandardized occupation.

Thus in household employment, there are no definite wage scales based on experience, skill or amount of work to be done during the course of the day. This accounts for the great wage differentials which prevail in this field of employment.

This lack of standardization is traceable to the almost complete lack of organization among domestics. Household employment is a relation between individual employees and individual employers. Problems of wages, hours, conditions of work, etc. are settled by individual employers and individual workers, neither of whom are organized.

There is no clear definition of jobs involved, or proper distinction between heavy and light work. Despite the wartime magazine cartoons (typical: the madam agreeing to the domestic worker's use of her sable coat every Thursday) there is no standard contract or understanding in the initial hiring of the vast majority of these employees.

12

However, because of their nature of their work-relationship, domestic workers seeking to organize face more serious obstacles than workers in almost any other industry or trade. Unlike most other workers, domestics work apart from one another. This fact, coupled with their long hours of work makes contact between them very difficult. As a rule they are easily replaceable workers and have not the protection of the Wagner Act.

Consequently, unions for domestics have had a high mortality rate. The Women's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor knew of eight domestic workers unions in 1938. In 1946, this same department reported on three active unions in the country.

12

Arthur A. Elder, "Let's Stop Exploiting Domestic Workers," Workers' Interdependence in Our Economy. May 15, 1947. Workers Education Bureau of America, 1440 Broadway, New York, New York.

Many grievances of domestic workers arise out of the fact that the work-relations take place in the home. A home cannot be run like an office, a factory, or even a hotel.

Even a labor legislator sees you can't install a time clock on a job where one evening the last dish isn't dried until ten and on the next night the family goes out to dinner and work is over at five. 13

Another problem unique to household employment also arises out of the very nature of the work relationship. An employer voiced the problem when she said, "I need a maid, not another member of the family." There is a problem that the household worker in becoming a "member of the family" will intrude unnecessarily into the intimate privacy of the family. On the other hand, there is the problem of the employer who in regarding the worker as a "member of the family," disregards the worker's rights as an employee in regard to wages, hours and working conditions. For that reason, Frieda S. Miller, writing

in the New York Times magazine section, said this about domestic workers:

They wish--not to be part of the family-- but to have less personal and more clearly defined employer-employee relationships. 14

Thus the problem of whether the domestic worker shall be an employee or a member of the family, and where the two should draw the line is peculiarly a household problem.

The domestic worker, then, is a member of an "inferior" social group in the eyes of the community. Her role as servant implies a class distinction of which she is constantly reminded. The master-servant relationship, traditionally a highly personal one, has not been affected by the trend toward contractualization of rights and duties in other fields of employment. Her work is looked upon as unskilled and befitting only the socially inferior.

14

Frieda S. Miller, "Can We Lure Martha Back to the Kitchen?" New York Times, Magazine Section, August 11, 1946, 40.

Thus it is not surprising to find that the title
"maid" has become a sign of social inferiority.

CHAPTER FIVE

The domestic worker, as we have seen, is a member of a totally disorganized and, from the point of view of the worker, a highly undesirable occupation. The domestic worker, on almost all levels, has failed to participate in the social and economic advances made in general by labor. The household worker suffers from a social stigma which degrades her person. She has been the poorest paid among the workers in general; and in spite of the economic and social handicaps of her position, she enjoys no social protection from the state in the form of protective social legislation. As a matter of fact, domestic workers are specifically excluded from most labor legislation. The very nature of the work has discouraged unionism or any other form of cooperative action on the part of the workers themselves for the elevation of their occupation.

For the domestic worker these handicaps have serious implications. We have seen that domestic workers are usually excluded from all federal and state social legislation. For example, there is no social security program for household workers. Yet in a study of unattached women on relief in Chicago during 1937, "The largest proportions

of the women reporting usual occupation and principal job since 1929 had been employed as domestic workers for private families..."¹ The need of these workers for unemployment compensation is quite obvious and the question can be asked, "Should not the fact that large proportions of women on relief have been domestic workers give impetus to a drive for intensive study of household employment with a view to its greater security?"²

The Women's Bureau made a survey during the depression of over 3500 unemployed women in Chicago, St. Paul, Philadelphia, Cleveland and Minneapolis. The largest proportions of these women seeking relief had had jobs in domestic and personal service, the majority in private homes.³ Thus it seems household employees are especially vulnerable in times of unemployment. However, they have none of the usual protection given most workers in the form of unemployment compensation.

The importance of household employment as a source of livelihood for the working aged was already noted.

¹ Byrne, Harriet A. and Cecile Hillyer, "Unattached Women on Relief in Chicago, 1937," Bulletine No. 158, United States Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, Washington, D.C., 1938.

² Ibid.

³ Byrne, Harriet A., "Women Unemployed Seeking Relief in 1933," Bulletin No. 139. United States Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, Washington, D.C., 1936.

However, the domestic worker is not protected in her old age by old age and survivors insurance. Nor can the older women in domestic work expect help through the insured status of their husbands; it was seen that in 1940, 33.6 percent of all household workers were widowed, divorced, or separated from their husbands. Nor can the married women expect help from the insured status of their husbands. In the Baltimore Survey only twenty-eight percent of the married women had husbands insured under the old age and survivors program.⁴ The survey itself concluded that in regard to husband's coverage, "the measure of protection was especially small for older women."⁵

This same study revealed "that to a large extent, the earnings of the women interviewed appeared to be used to support dependents either by supplementing the family income or by supporting the family entirely."⁶ About one-half of the household workers who were employed or seeking work had dependents. Thirty-seven percent of the single women had dependents. About fifty-five

⁴ Erma Magnus, "Negro Domestic Workers in Private Homes in Baltimore," 4.

⁵ Ibid, 5.

⁶ Ibid, 3.

percent of the women with dependents supported children under the age of eighteen. If this is any indication of the family responsibilities of the average domestic worker, the lack of social legislation and the normally inadequate wages of the domestic workers implies that a large segment of America's working force faces an uncertain old age.

Although industrial workers are exposed to many occupational injuries, they are ~~not~~ covered by workmen's compensation in all but one state. The majority of household workers, again, are at a decided disadvantage compared to other workers because they do not have the protection of workmen's compensation. Nor is the home any refuge against accidents. In perhaps the only detailed study of accidents to employees, limited to Ohio, in the personal service occupations in 1932-33, it was disclosed that the greatest percentage of accidents that caused over seven days disability to females occurred in household employment.⁷ Another indication of the hazards in the home was the report of the National Safety Council that home accidents in 1943 amounted to nearly 5,000,000.

⁷ Margaret T. Mettert, "Injuries to Women in Personal Service Occupations in Ohio," Bulletin No. 151. United States Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, Washington, D.C., 1937.

Thus, the average household worker, is not on a similar footing with labor in other occupations. Standards as to wages, hours and job definition have been inadequate. They suffer from a social stigma which stamps them as inferior. And finally, they receive no protection in the form of protective social legislation. For these reasons a major occupational group in America's working force hold jobs, which though necessary for the upkeep of many United States homes, "are among the most despised, least wanted, most dreaded of any to be found in a Jobs Wanted Column."⁸

8

Miller, "Can We Lure Martha Back to The Kitchen," 14.

CHAPTER SIX

The full-time household worker who lives with her employer and maintains a more or less permanent working relationship is no longer the predominant type of household employee. This is due to the growing casualization of household employment which is particularly prevalent among urban colored women. For example, in a survey conducted by the Bureau of Old Age and Survivor's Insurance in Baltimore during January, 1941, data obtained indicate the high degree of casualization of household employment. Only fifty-five percent of the workers interviewed were full-time employees. Of these, only eight percent "lived in." The remainder were apportioned as follows: part-time, eleven percent; regular-day, thirty percent; and temporary day work, four percent.¹

The large proportion of non-resident full-time workers in contrast to the small group of resident full-time workers, and the relatively large proportion of

¹

Social Security Board, A Program for the Development of Old Age and Survivors Insurance, Part II, 3.

regular day workers are typical of Negro household workers in general.

Another indication of this trend can be found in recent advertisements for domestic workers. For example, only about a third of 409 advertisements in 1944 newspapers for full-time household workers in the Washington, D.C., area, analyzed by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, asked for "live-in" workers, while twenty-seven percent² of the total advertisements called for part-time help. High food costs and the housing shortage have cut down on the demand for "live-in" domestic workers. An interviewer at an employment agency in New York said, "The housewife doesn't want an extra mouth to feed and the spare room is rented or being used by a relative."³

Although heightened by the cost of living and the housing shortage, plus the increasing reluctance of domestic workers to accept "live-in" jobs, the trend in casualization is a long term one, indicating that

²

Waggaman, 4.

³New York Times, New York City, New York; April 29, 1947.

household employment is in a state of transition. This transition is due at least partially to the transition that has been going on in the American home during recent decades. This is the result of a number of factors:

1. The steady mechanization of household tasks as exemplified by vacuum cleaners, electric washing machines, ironers, etc.

2. The increasing use of canned goods.

3. The gradual decline of the importance of the home as a unit of consumption; restaurants, hotels laundries, day nurseries, etc. are increasingly rendering the services that were at one time more or less exclusively performed in the home. For example, there was a decline (63.8 percent) in the number of laundresses in private homes between 1910 and 1940, while the persons attached to laundries, cleaning, dyeing and pressing shops have increased more than two-and-a-half times.

4. The decreasing size of urban households and living quarters and the simultaneous increase in apartment buildings.

4

These factors also account for the declining importance of household employment. This decline in the relative importance of domestic service in recent years has been very marked, particularly, when compared

4

Social Security Board, "A Program for the Development of Old-Age and Survivors Insurance", Part II, 2-3.

with the rise in women's employment in other occupations. Since the turn of the century, the proportion of women household workers has fallen from twenty-seven percent of the total number of employed women in 1910, to a low point of nine percent in the war year of 1944. Since then there has been a slight increase of domestic workers to ten percent of all employed women in April, 1946.⁵

Between 1940 and 1944, the proportion of women domestics to total female employment dropped from nineteen to ten percent. Most of this decline would seem to be due to the fact that in periods of economic upsurge and heightened industrial activity, there has always been an exodus of women from household employment into other occupations.⁶

With the full-time, live-in domestic worker becoming an exception rather than the rule, and with the high degree of casualization setting in, the highly personalized relationship between the domestic worker

⁵

N.Y.State Dept. of Labor, Domestic Employment in New York State, 4.

⁶

Ibid.

and her employer may tend to disappear. This is a very significant development for it will tend to remove the household worker from the inner circle of the family. Heretofore, the domestic worker has been considered as actually part of the family, often to the detriment of her rights as an employee.

Traditionally considered as member of the household, the domestic worker's relationship with her employer has been a familial, paternalistic one, rather than a business or contractual relationship. And as a member of the household she has had to submerge her individual interests like all the other members of the family, yet with hardly any of the compensations and satisfactions which belong to the real members of the family group. Employers of domestics seldom forget that the home is theirs, and not the household employees.

The domestic workers is now receiving a new status in the household. While her status as a family-member diminishes, she is emerging as a full-fledged employee, as a worker. Witness the gradual change in title. Her traditional title "servant," which among other things

implies her family-membership in the household, is gradually losing favor and is being displaced by other names.

Local committee groups and agencies interested in reorganizing the occupation are experimenting with titles like "home aide," "household employee," "home-maker's assistant," "domestic worker," and even "household specialist," where the employee is unusually skilled.⁷ All these new titles emphasize her new role --her role as an employee.

That domestic work is an occupation in transition gradually approaching the employer-employee status was forcefully brought out by a sensational front-page headline in the Chicago Herald-American newspaper, February 13, 1946: "A Maid Signs a Contract, Time-and-a-half, etc." The significance of this statement was explained in the article that followed:

That housemaid who opens the door for you at the home of ... isn't merely a housemaid, she's a contract-employee. She is ..., first household worker in the Chicago area to enter into a written contract with an employer. Not for ... is the unending drudgery of the domestic of other years. Her duties, hours, rights and privileges are

exactly specified in her contract, which was negotiated by the Household Employee's League of the YWCA.

8

Other Chicago newspapers hailed the formal agreement as the first step in the effort to raise domestic workers to professional standing. What the other employers of domestic workers thought about the event is not known. However, one employer realizing the revolutionary significance of the event, frowned on the idea with "I wouldn't want to risk disturbing a very pleasant personal relationship."⁹

Another indication, though minor, of the transition through which the occupation is going is the presence of a few trade unions in the field. Domestic workers are difficult to organize. Working alone or in very small scattered groups, they do not lend themselves easily to organization. Trade unions in the household are looked upon as an invasion of the sanctity of the home. The mortality rate of domestic workers unions is very high. Nevertheless, there are at least three

8

Chicago Herald American Newspaper, Chicago, Illinois. Article appearing February 13, 1946.

9

Chicago Daily News, Chicago, Illinois. Article by Pence James on April 2, 1946.

currently active domestic worker unions in the
 10
 country.

The presence of trade-unions in the domestic employment field is also indicative of the slow, but gradual centralization, that is, control over the labor market, and organization taking place in the industry.

10

United States Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, Household Employment, A Digest of Current Information, September, 1946, 36.

In New York City, Domestic Workers Union 225 is planning a program for presentation to both workers and employers. It boasts of a training center at union headquarters where nutrition, cooking and the use of labor saving devices will be taught. An employment service is contemplated for the future. Negotiations with employers will be undertaken on the basis of supplying trained, qualified workers at wage standards varving with the skill requirements of the job.

N.Y. State Dept. of Labor, Domestic Service Employment in New York State, 35.

Another union actively engaged in domestic work services is Domestic Workers Union, Local 1348, CIO, Washington, D.C. It has set up standards for the employment of members covering wages, hours, vacations, and holidays. Each union member placed by the placement office of the union is responsible for returning a written agreement signed by her and her employer. The written agreement procedure outlined for workers living-in and for regular weekly workers applies also to day and part-time workers. There is an agreement for every job, even though it is of one day's duration.

U.S. Dept. of Labor, Household Employment, A Digest of Current Information, 36.

One can well imagine what would happen to the job standards and the training program of the building industry if suddenly the building trades unions were disbanded. High standards of working conditions and craftsmanship have been maintained in the building industry precisely because it is so highly organized and centralized. To solve the problems of domestic service, however, any one of several organizations' patterns might be followed.

For example, the growing trend toward centralization in household employment is noticeable in another direction. Agencies such as Scientific Housekeeping Inc., Proxy Parents Inc., Anne Herbert's Inc., have existed in New York for several years. In Erie, Pennsylvania, the Homes Service Institute has been operating for over a year. Its primary objective is placing trained and specialized domestic service upon a sound business basis with every attendant benefit.¹¹

The Richmond News Leader, a newspaper in Richmond, Virginia, reports on March 4, 1946, that the Quality Service Association in Richmond is offering a subscription plan in which housewives would pay a monthly premium to guarantee regular cleaning service.¹²

¹¹

Ibid., 58.

¹²

Richmond News Leader, Richmond, Virginia. Article appearing on March 4, 1946.

At the present time in New York City there are innumerable household services which have been commercialized. Some of the services available are: laundry, household linen service, pillow sterilization, maid service, child care, cooked meals, window cleaning, floor waxing, venetian blind cleaning, rug shampooing, telephone answering, silver cleaning and diaper service. Some shops exclusively prepare meals for homes. They prepare a daily menu, take phone orders and sometimes deliver.¹³ The accelerated rate of the appearance of these commercialized projects in the past few years may well indicate a trend of the future.

Another indication of the transitory stage of domestic work is the unprecedented interest in the problem. Magazines, and newspapers are constantly carrying articles on "How to Solve the Maid Problem."¹⁴ More important, especially for the future of household

13

United States Employment Service, Household Offices, Information on Commercial Household Services, September 20, 1946. (Mimeographed)

14

Much of this interest is obviously due to the current labor shortage of household employees.

workers, is the growing number of associations throughout the country who are giving attention to this problem, working through committees of various kinds. If the plans of these groups materialize, household workers of the future will enjoy most of the employment standards of the workers. The Women's Bureau conducted a study of these household employment programs in eighteen cities of the Midwest, South, and East. Although the results of the findings have not yet been released, preliminary findings, judging from various suggested programs of these groups, indicate a reform movement is well in progress.¹⁵

For example, these household employment committees are suggesting liberal standards in regard to holidays and vacations for household workers. Four holidays per year have been proposed in several cities. In Chicago, the Household Employer's League mention eight holidays with the worker given a choice of four out of the eight.¹⁶

In regard to vacations with pay, committees in Cincinnati, Chicago, St. Louis, St. Paul, and Minneapolis have proposed a week's vacation with pay for a worker

¹⁵

United States Department of Labor, Labor Information Bulletin, "A Solution to the Maid Problem," February, 1947, 5.

after a year's service, and a two week vacation after two years of service. Committees in Oakland, California, and Syracuse, New York propose two weeks with pay after a year's service. In Cincinnati, a proposal was made to grant sick leaves with pay, one week per year. Other cities have also taken up the problem of sick leaves.¹⁷

Although domestic workers in these projected programs would not attain the forty hour week, recommendations were made to reduce considerably their work day. Thus in Syracuse one finds a recommendation for a forty-eight hour week for non-resident workers and fifty hours for "live-in" workers. In Minneapolis and St. Paul, fifty-four hours were recommended. Many committees also distinguish between hours of work and hours on call, with compensation for the latter. Provisions for over-time payment are also dealt with by these committees.¹⁸

16

United States Department of Labor, Labor Information Bulletin, "Holidays and Vacations for Household Workers," April, 1947.

17

Ibid.

18

U.S. Dept. of Labor, Labor Information Bulletin, "Solution to the Maid Problem," 5.

Thus it can be seen that if these reform movements among some of the country's largest communities materialize, the domestic worker will have left her "servant" status behind and will begin to enjoy the rights taken for granted by other workers.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS AND JOURNALS

- DONOVAN, FRANCES R. The Saleslady. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1929.
- DONOVAN, FRANCES R. The Schoolma'am. New York: Stokes and Company, 1938.
- DONOVAN, FRANCES R. The Woman Who Waits. Boston: Badger, 1920.
- DRAKE, ST. CLARE AND HORACE CAYTON. Black Metropolis. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1945.
- MILLIS, HARRY A. And ROYAL E. MONTGOMERY. Labor's Risks and Social Insurance. Vol. II. New York: McGraw, Hill Book Company, 1938.
- SALMON, LUCY MAYNARD. Domestic Service. New York: Macmillan Company, 1911.
- SOROKIN, PITIRIM. Contemporary Sociological Theories. New York: Harper Brothers, 1928.
- STRONG, SAMUEL M. "Social Type," American Journal of Sociology. March, 1943, 48:563.
- YOUNG, KIMBALL. Sociology, A Study of Society and Culture. New York: American Book Company, 1942.

GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS: FEDERAL AND STATE

- ALTMAYER, A. J. "Social Security for Domestic Employees," Reprint, Social Security Bulletin. January, 1945, VIII.

ANDERSON, MARY. "An Occupational Analysis of Household Employment," Seventh International Management Congress. United States Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 1938. (Mimeographed)

ANDERSON, MARY. "The Household Worker and Her Job," Reprint, Labor Information Bulletin. United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, May, 1936.

BYRNE, HARRIET A. "Women Unemployed Seeking Relief in 1933," Bulletin No. 139. United States Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 1936.

BYRNE, HARRIET A. and CECILE HILLYER. "Unattached Women on Relief in Chicago, 1937," Bulletin No. 158. United States Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 1938.

CALIFORNIA, STATE OF, Department of Industrial Relations, Industrial Welfare Commission Order No. 1, effective 6-29-42.

CALIFORNIA, STATE OF, Department of Industrial Relations, Industrial Welfare Commission Order No. 2, effective 11-23-42.

CALIFORNIA, STATE OF, Department of Industrial Relations, Industrial Welfare Commission Order No. 5, effective 6-28-42.

CALIFORNIA, STATE OF, Department of Industrial Relations, Industrial Welfare Commission Order No. 6, effective 6-21-46.

ILLINOIS, STATE OF, National Youth Administration. Occupational Information-Research Report on Domestic Occupations. 1936.

MAGNUS, ERMA. "Negro Domestic Workers in Private Homes in Baltimore," Reprint, Social Security Bulletin, October, 1941. IV, No. 10.

METTERT, MARGARET T. "Injuries to Women In Personal Service Occupations in Ohio," Bulletin No. 151. United States Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 1937.

MILLER, FRIEDA S. Statement Before the House Ways and Means Committee, in support of certain Amendments to Title II of the Social Security Act, April 9, 1944. United States Department of Labor, Women's Bureau. (Mimeographed)

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, Division of Industrial Relations, Domestic Service Employment in New York State. September, 1946.

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, Division of Industrial Relations, Why Women Work. March, 1946.

PIDGEON, MARY ELIZABETH. "Changes in Women's Employment During the War," Special Bulletin No. 20. United States Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 1944.

ROBINSON, MARY V. A New Program for Household Workers. United States Department of Labor, Women's Bureau. (Mimeographed)

SOCIAL SECURITY BOARD, Bureau of Old-Age and Survivors Insurance, Analysis Division. A Program for the Development of Old-Age and Survivors Insurance. Report I, Coverage of Agricultural and Household Employees. Revised, April, 1945.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Monthly Labor Review. March, 1941.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, Labor Information Bulletin, May, 1936.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, Labor Information Bulletin. May, 1936.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, Labor Information Bulletin. "Better Work Standards for Domestic." November, 1946.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, Labor Information Bulletin. "Holidays and Vacations For Household Workers." April, 1947.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, Labor Information Bulletin. "Solution to the Maid Problem." February, 1947.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, Division of Labor Standards. "State Workmen's Compensation Laws," Bulletin No. 78. June 1, 1946.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, Women's Bureau, Coverage of Domestic Workers by State and Federal Legislation. May 15, 1946. (Mimeographed)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, Women's Bureau. Household Employment, A Digest of Current Information. September, 1946. (Mimeographed)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, Women's Bureau. Old-Age Insurance for Household Workers. November, 1945.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, Women's Bureau. "Reading List of References on Household Employment," Bulletin No. 154. 1938.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, Women's Bureau. "Reading List of References on Household Employment," Supplement to Women's Bureau Bulletin No. 154. November, 1940. (Mimeographed)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, Women's Bureau. Woman Worker. July, 1939. XIX.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, Women's Bureau. "The Woman Wage Earner," Bulletin No. 182. 1939.

UNITED STATES EMPLOYMENT SERVICE. "The Domestic Service Dilemma," The Labor Market. March, 1947. Publication of the United States Employment Service.

UNITED STATES EMPLOYMENT SERVICE, Household Offices, Information on Commercial Household Services. September, 1946. (Mimeographed)

UNITED STATES EMPLOYMENT SERVICE. "Placing Domestic Workers--A Challenge to the United States Employment Service," Employment Service Review. November, 1946.

WAGGAMAN, MARY T. "Wartime Job Opportunities for Women Household Workers in Washington, D.C." Reprint, Monthly Labor Review. United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. March, 1945.

WATSON, AMEY E. "Household Employment in Philadelphia," Bulletin No. 93. United States Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 1932.

WHITE, MARIE. "Duties and Reponsibilities of the General Household Employee," Vocational Education Bulletin No. 194. United States Department of the Interior, Office of Education. 1938.

WISCONSIN, STATE OF. Industrial Commission, Wage Regulations for Adult Women and Minors in Domestic Service, Form c-5a. (Mimeographed)

PERIODICALS AND MISCELLANEOUS PUBLICATIONS

BROWN, JEAN COLLIER. Brief on Household Employment in Relation to Trade-Union Organization. New York: National Board, Young Women's Christian Association, 1938. (Mimeographed)

BROWN, JEAN COLLIER. "Domestic Workers and Unions," American Federationist. Washington, D.C. May, 1938. XXXV: 447-483.

BROWN, JEAN COLLIER. Household Workers. Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1940.

BUSINESS WEEK, "Domestics Vanish," July 20, 1946.

DAVIS, SHELBY CULLOM. "Household Servants Are Gone Forever," Readers' Digest. April, 1945.

ELDER, ARTHUR A. "Let's Stop Exploiting Domestic Workers," Workers' Interdependence in Our Economy. Workers Education Bureau of America, 1440 Broadway, New York, May 15, 1947.

FLEISCHMAN, DORIS E. "You Can't Get Help," McCall's Magazine. September, 1946.

FORTUNE, "Servant Problem." March, 1938. 17: 81-5#.

LANE, JANET. "Listen, Mrs. Legree," Collier's. December 9, 1939.

MAGNUS, ERMA, Domestic Workers in Philadelphia, 1940. (Mimeographed)

PHILADELPHIA INSTITUTE ON HOUSEHOLD OCCUPATION, Progress Report of the First Year, February, 1937--February, 1938. Published by the Institute, 2005 Pine Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1938.

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Board of Christian Education, Department of Social Education. Martha in the Modern Age. Witherspoon Building, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

QUEEN'S WORK, "Horizontal Housework." St. Louis, Mo. October, 1942.

SERGER, RUTH, EDITOR. The Women in the House. New York: The Women's Press, National Board, Young Women's Christian Association., 1938.

STIGLER, GEORGE J. "Domestic Servants in the United States 1900-1940," Occasional Paper 24. New York: National Bureau of Economic Research, April, 1946.

TOLMAN, EDNA. "So You Can't Keep a Maid!" The Saturday Evening Post. October 9, 1943.

WELLS, DOROTHY P. and CAROL BIBA. Editors. Fair and Clear in the Home, A Symposium on Household Employment. New York: The Womens Press, National Board, Young Women's Christian Association, 1936.

NEWSPAPERS

BIRMINGHAM NEWS, Birmingham, Alabama. News article appearing March 26, 1946.

CHICAGO BOOSTER, Chicago, Illinois. "200,000 Prisoners, The Problem of Domestic Employment in Chicago." Weekly series of articles appearing from December 13, 1939 to January 10, 1940.

CHICAGO DAILY NEWS, Chicago, Illinois. News article appearing April 2, 1946.

CHICAGO HERALD AMERICAN, Chicago, Illinois. "Putting the Maid under Contract," News article appearing June 9, 1946.

CHICAGO HERALD AMERICAN, Chicago, Illinois. News article appearing February 13, 1946.

CHICAGO SUNDAY TRIBUNE, Chicago, Illinois. "So You Can't Find a Maid," by Helen Sigler. Feature article appearing November 30, 1947.

LOUISVILLE COURIER*JOURNAL, Louisville, Kentucky. News article appearing April 21, 1946.

NEW YORK TIMES, New York, New York. "Can We Lure Martha Back to the Kitchen," by Frieda S. Miller. Magazine Section. August 11, 1946.

NEW YORK TIMES, New York, New York. News article appearing April 29, 1947.

P.M., New York, New York. News article appearing January 15, 1941.

RICHMOND NEWS LEADER, Richmond, Virginia. News article appearing March 4, 1946.

NOTE: All United States government publications are printed by the United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.