

The Office Employees Letter

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Office Workers Need Protection, Declares Gen. Philip B. Fleming

The need of minimum wage and maximum hour protection by salaried office workers is as acute as that of factory workers, said Gen. Philip B. Fleming, administrator of the Wage-Hour Division of the U. S. Department of Labor, in a talk to our union at our June meeting.

"The assumption so often advanced that all salaried white-collar workers enjoy satisfactory working conditions—with plenty of sick leave and long summer vacations each year—doesn't appear to be true," Gen. Fleming said.

"A survey made by the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor of nearly 5,000 women office employees in 39 States and the District of Columbia showed that 10 per cent of them were working more than 48 hours a week, and that 30 per cent were working from 44 to 48 hours a week. We had testimony to show that vacations with pay are far from universal, and that long hours at sedentary occupations are not conducive to health. The labor conditions of this group have frequently been 'detrimental to health, efficiency and well-being,' which are exactly the conditions which Congress sought to remedy in the wage and hour law. The same Women's Bureau survey showed more than a fourth of these girls and women were being paid less than \$20 a week."

Gen. Fleming pointed out how the act has increased efficiency and benefited employers.

"It is an interesting fact that employers, as well as employees, are benefiting from the application of the law to their office workers. A great many of them tell us that efficiency has improved and

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**NEXT
REGULAR MEETING
Tuesday, July 1, 1941**

8:00 P. M.

Chantilly Room

HAMILTON HOTEL

**Nomination and Election
of Three Delegates to
Washington Union Label League**

Wage Increase Reported

The Journal of Commerce reports that many industrial companies which have granted increases to hourly-wage workers after negotiations with unions are now raising the pay of their clerical personnel as well. This is being done despite the fact that the clerical workers are largely unorganized. For example a number of steel companies after negotiating a 12 per cent wage increase for their plant workers have also raised the pay of their clerical workers earning less than \$4,000 per year. This was found necessary "to maintain the morale of the office workers."

The clerical pay roll amounts to 20 per cent of the total pay roll in the steel industry, the Journal of Commerce reports. Also, personnel men believe that increases for clerical workers are likely to follow pretty generally where increases have been given to production workers.

Priest Says White Collar Workers are Exploited

White-collar workers and the share croppers are the two most exploited groups in the country, and their economic redemption is possible only by organizing them into strong labor unions where they will enjoy the right to bargain collectively.

So declared Rev. John P. Monaghan, chaplain of the Association of Catholic Trade Unions in New York, in a sermon at a pontifical mass in Gotham's St. Patrick's Cathedral last Sunday. The ceremony commemorated publication of two great encyclicals on labor by Pope Leo XIII and Pope Pius XI.

"What Leo XIII said of Europe in 1891 and what Pius XI repeated ten years ago," declared Father Monaghan, "is what the church says of America today.

"Strikes and strikebreaking, profits and poverty, slums and saturated wealth—these are moral problems, religious problems. The social question is the sum total of the problems produced in a society by men who disregard the rightful ends of human life.

"The right to private property and the right to a living wage, the right to form business associations or workmen's unions, are not political devices or economic measures. They are moral rights that flow from the very nature of man.

"All this the papal encyclicals on labor declare. But not a single democracy has yet realized them into the political and national order. No modern politician, no modern economist, no modern sociologist, has been radical enough to draw the blueprint of a social order designed to serve the eternal destiny of man to everlasting life."—Labor, May 27.

**REGULAR MEETINGS WILL BE HELD DURING JULY AND AUGUST — COME!
HOTEL AIR CONDITIONED**

THE OFFICE EMPLOYEES LETTER

Published Monthly by

OFFICE EMPLOYEES UNION No. 11773

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208 National Union Building
Washington, D. C.

PAUL R. HUTCHINGS	President
IRENE BOYCE	1st Vice President
W. R. PROBEY	2nd Vice President
KATHERINE ROGERS	3rd Vice President
HELEN H. ELLIS	Financial Secretary
RITA BENNETT	Recording Secretary
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MEMBERS, TAKE NOTE

At the March 4 meeting a Constitutional amendment was adopted requiring automatic suspension of any member who becomes three months in arrears for dues.

Section 3 of Article VII of our Constitution now reads as follows:

"Section 3. All dues, fines and assessments shall be paid to the Financial Secretary. Any member being three months in arrears for dues shall be automatically suspended from membership. In order to be reinstated members shall pay three months' back dues, and the current month's dues, together with a \$2 reinstatement fee. Suspended members shall not be privileged to admission into the meetings."

All members are therefore urged to bring themselves in good standing, and all shop stewards are advised not to accept delinquent dues but to collect the reinstatement fee from any member who is three months or more in arrears.

OUR JUNE MEETING

At our June meeting 25 candidates were initiated, and 15 additional applications approved, and the officers were authorized to have a telephone installed in our new office at 918 F Street.

A vote of thanks was extended to Brother A. N. Dennis for persuading Gen. Philip B. Fleming, administrator of the wage-hour law, to address our meeting.

Our union was very fortunate in having such an outstanding public official to address us.

A motion to suspend the July and August meetings was defeated, and the customary summer vacation is a thing of the past.

Our membership now entitles us to two more delegates to the Union Label League, and there is one vacancy. Nominations and election will be held at the July meeting.

Ask for the union label on everything you purchase.

GEN. FLEMING

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output increased.. It has even made a better man of the boss.

"What happened in the old days in too many instances was that the boss got down to work at 9 o'clock and opened and read his mail. Then he spent a couple of hours 'in conference' and, after taking two hours out for lunch, he lost himself in various details of the business. Along about 5 o'clock he suddenly remembered the morning mail. Then he frantically sent for Miss Jones and started to dictate. After that he could go home, but Miss Jones couldn't. With all those letters to type she was lucky if she could get away by 7 o'clock. That Miss Jones got stuck for overtime day after day was of little concern to the boss. It didn't cost him anything extra.

"But now it does cost him something extra. If Miss Jones doesn't get away from there when the quitting whistle blows, the boss has to pay her time and a half for the overtime. As a consequence, he is mending his ways. He is disposing of his mail on straight time and not on expensive overtime.

"As one employer put it, 'The wage and hour law is a good thing for our office force, but it is harder on management.' Which is another way of saying that management has had to become at least as efficient as the help.

"You find that same principle running all through industry. So long as the cost of inefficiency can be taken out of the pay of the help, the employer has little incentive to improve his equipment or his methods. When the price of inefficiency comes out of his own pocket, however, he is disposed to be careful.

"That is one of many reasons why I am convinced that the wage and hour law, even in such a period of national crisis as the present, has been just as good for the country as it is for industry and labor."

He cited the exemptions provided by the law for various classes of workers, with special emphasis on the exemption for bona fide executive, administrative and professional employees. Gen. Fleming told how definitions of these classes of workers were formulated on the basis of hearings attended by both employers and labor representatives and how they have been found to be generally satisfactory.

"When the definitions were issued they were criticized by some leaders of

NEWS FROM OTHER LOCALS

Milwaukee, Wis., Local 16456 reports the signing of a new agreement with the Milwaukee Sentinel (daily newspaper) covering the employees of the advertising, display and classified, inside circulation, and accounting and financial departments. The new agreement provides for wage increases of from \$1.00 to \$2.50 per week. These increases effect about 40 employees. Severance pay was increased from 26 weeks pay after 13 years employment to 28 weeks pay after 12½ years employment. The agreement also provides a military service clause protecting employees service rights during periods of military service.

Agreements were signed between local unions of the American Federation of Office Employes and the Mississippi Power Company at Meridian and Gulfport, Miss. The agreements call for pay increases of \$5 per month each six-months' period until the maximum pay on each classification is reached.

Holidays with pay, two weeks' sick leave with pay, and two weeks vacation with pay, seniority, arbitration of all disputes with no strikes or lockouts, and establishment of a grievance procedure of highest type, are other features of the agreements.

Chicago Local 20732 advises that on February 15 it settled its strike against the J. C. Stoll Co. and the Publishers News Co. of that city. A satisfactory union agreement covering all the firms' office employes was signed.

The agreement provides for a union shop, salary increases, a 40-hour week with time and one-half for overtime work, vacations with pay, seniority rights and other conditions to improve the relationship between the employer and the office employes.

organized labor on the ground that they removed from the protection of the law a great many people who had been enjoying the overtime benefits. Of course, that is true. But, on the other hand, they brought back under the law's protection a great many workers who were exempt under the former definitions. As to the exact volume of net change, one way or the other, I have no figures. But the fact that this criticism is not now being voiced leads me to think that six months of experience with them has demonstrated to the former critics that the definitions are fair and reasonable, after all."