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The Ladies' Garment Worker

Official Journal of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union

Published Monthly in English, Italian and Yiddish

Vol. 1 No. 1 New York, April 1, 1910

When You Go Out Shopping Remember the Shirt-Waist Girl

Do you ever stop to think where, how and by whom the thousands of shirt waists you see on sale all over the city are made? Do you know that 45,000 women and girls in New York alone are employed in making these waists? Do you realize that the conditions under which these girls work, the wages they receive, the hours they spend at their machines depend directly on YOU?

UNDER PAY AND OVER WORK

Most of us probably would never have thought at all about such things except for the great strike last winter of about 20,000 waist makers in New York and Philadelphia, when the true conditions under which the mass of workers in the trade were forced to make a living were revealed. It was found that the wages, already too low for health and decency, were declining or remaining stationary though food and rent were rapidly rising. Overtime three and four nights a week during the busy season in addition to the usual working hours, and Sunday and Holiday work was not unusual. Fines and petty tyrannies practiced by foremen and superintendents made hard conditions doubly hard. The girls' thin and poorly nourished bodies and insufficient clothing testified at what cost to themselves and future generations they were working.

THE "FAIR" EMPLOYER, HELPLESS

Even the good employers who would like to treat their workers well were being forced by competition to adopt bit by bit the methods of the more unscrupulous. For this reason many of the best paid girls went on strike feeling that trade conditions were too uncertain for them to continue to depend on the good will of any individual employer, so they joined together with the poorer paid workers in their demand for a union shop.

WHAT THE UNION HAS DONE

The strike is now over and a few hundred factories have settled with the union. In such settled shops, the girls are now working 52 hours a week. Their wages are fairer, and they receive half again as much pay for overtime. Sunday is now a real day of rest; fines are abolished, and the individual girl does not have to deal with her powerful employer, the representative of the union takes up all the grievances with the firm. In the past, the infrequent visits of a factory inspector, for whose coming the management was well prepared, where the girl's only protection, now THE UNION IS ON THE JOB EVERY HOUR OF EVERY WORKING DAY TO SEE THAT THE HEALTH AND WELFARE OF ITS MEMBERS ARE PROPERLY LOOKED AFTER. These results have been gained by a dint of a very bitter struggle, and through this the girls are obtaining not only material advantages, but marked development in individual character; this discipline is only a part of the training that comes with trade unionism.

THE CONSUMERS RESPONSIBILITY

Now comes your part and responsibility. As the consumer for whom all things are made you can encourage through your buying either the unfair employers who make their profit through overworking and underpaying their workers and refusing them the right to join the union, or you can support these employers who deal fairly with their working people; whose employees have hope, strength, and discipline that comes through organization. Which girls do you prefer to support, the girls who remained at work during the strike, refusing to join the union and afraid to sacrifice their own interests for those less fortunate; or the girls who have faced brutality, starvation, and homelessness rather than stand aloof from their sisters?

THE UNION LABEL

There is no doubt which girls and which employers you will want to support. But how can you make sure you are doing so? There is just one way. You may not be able to remember the trade marks or names of all those fair manufacturers, but you can easily recognize the union label which is uniform for the trade. Several of these union factories are now placing the union label on their product. This is a picture of it.

You will find this label attached to the back collar of the garment. It is the only means whereby you can be perfectly certain that the waists were made under fair conditions by one of these self-respecting union girls in whom the whole country has been interested.

REMEMBER THAT THE LABEL IS THE WORKER'S ONLY GUARANTEE AND YOUR SAFEGUARD.

WHAT TO DO.

Ask at the stores you deal with for waists with the union label. If the saleswoman is indifferent, ask to see the buyer. Do not weakly succumb by buying a waist without the label. If you cannot find the label waist, write to the General Office of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union, 11 Waverley Place, New York City.