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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
Bureau of Labor Statistics  
Washington 25, D. C.

LABOR STATISTICS IN COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Summary of Address by Ewan Clague, Commissioner of Labor Statistics  
U.S. Department of Labor  
Before the First Annual National Forum on Trucking Industrial Relations  
Hotel Statler, Washington, D. C.  
January 31, 1950

During your conference so far you have been discussing various aspects of collective bargaining. You have considered the problems that come up in the collective bargaining process, and have evaluated specific contract provisions which might be adopted in order to meet these problems. The remainder of this conference is devoted to an analysis of tools for bargaining. You are to consider the "how" of collective bargaining rather than the "what" of collective bargaining. My purpose here is to discuss the use of economic facts at the bargaining table.

In earlier days, the collective bargaining relationship consisted solely of the interplay of labor and management's economic force. Gradually economic reasoning has been added to the industrial relations picture. This is not to say that reasoning has been wholly substituted for force. The free exercise of economic strength by the various segments of our economy must continue to be a characteristic of our democratic way of life. But what we have added in the last few years has been the concept of facts behind economic strength. This has been especially true since the passage of the original National Labor Relations Act in 1935. Under that act employers were required to bargain in good faith with their employees. This meant that conclusions they reached--whether they were the same or different from those which might have been developed otherwise--had to be bolstered by some reasoning based on facts.

Economic discussion can be developed on the basis of facts supplied by either of the two parties to a dispute, or on the basis of facts developed by an outside agency. Government statistics are especially valuable in the field of collective bargaining because they are developed in a dispassionate atmosphere, emotionally separated from the immediate industrial relations situation. The Bureau of Labor Statistics of the United States Department of Labor prepares economic factual reports which are used by American businesses in three ways:

1. General economic information

This information is related to collective bargaining only in a relatively distant fashion. The Bureau of Labor Statistics makes every effort

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possible to meet the needs of the public for current economic statistics having a bearing on the labor field. Wholesale and retail prices of various commodities are published and are used as background for market research decisions, which, ultimately, may have some bearing on labor relations decisions. (See chart, "Wholesale Prices in Two World Wars.") Also, in the field of construction activity for instance, the Bureau publishes data on expenditures for new construction, including private residential building, public construction, and industrial facilities. You can see how trucking activities, in which you are vitally interested, can be affected indirectly but very seriously by the volume of construction activity. You may be interested to know that the year 1949 established a new record in homebuilding--over 1,000,000 new dwelling units were started during the year. The outlook is for another good year in 1950. (See chart, "Expenditures for New Construction.")

2. General information relative to collective bargaining

The Bureau also publishes a number of "indicator" statistics which have a closer bearing on collective bargaining. Although none of these data concern themselves with any specific industrial relations problem which faces you, they are valuable tools for telling you where you stand in relation to others who may face many of the same problems which confront you.

a. Employment and payrolls. One of the oldest, continuous series published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics is that on employment and payrolls. There can be no doubt that employment is one of the most vital economic factors of our time. Businessmen need to know what the level of employment is, where it is changing, either up or down, and how it varies from one part of the country to another. Employment is also an economic factor which will be taken into account in determining many public economic policies. (See chart, "Employees in Nonagricultural Establishments.")

On the basis of reports from employers, the Bureau publishes monthly estimates on employment, payrolls, weekly earnings, and hours of work, for about 200 different industries, for the country as a whole. In order to avoid duplication of reporting by employers to State agencies, which collect and publish similar information for the industries in their own States, the Bureau has developed cooperative arrangements with State government agencies by which the employers' reports are first sent to the States and then forwarded to the Bureau for the Nation-wide estimates. Of special interest to you would probably be the employment and payrolls data for construction, wholesale and retail trade and transportation.

b. Productivity. Productivity is a subject which has commanded increasing attention since the war. This does not mean only the contribution of labor to increased production. It means all the factors of technological development: management, machinery, supplies and worker effort, which together make up the whole picture of industrial productivity. General productivity trends are examined by the Bureau in an effort to develop a long-range view of labor unit costs. In addition, the Bureau makes studies of

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direct labor costs of a limited number of products. These are published in the form of man-hours required for production of standard items.

c. Industrial accidents. Safety programs are of vital concern to American industry. Both labor and management have been spending a great deal of time and money in programs designed to cut down work injuries and industrial accidents. The Bureau of Labor Statistics publishes work injuries and industrial accident statistics regularly.

Many of you are no doubt acquainted with the joint effort of labor and management in the trucking industry in California, which has resulted in a successful safety program. This group produced a remarkable film which has had interesting and successful uses in this field.

The Bureau has for a number of years compiled injury-frequency rates and injury-severity rates on an annual basis for local trucking and hauling and for warehousing and storage. However, regulatory jurisdiction over interstate trucking is vested in the Interstate Commerce Commission, which also requires accident reporting in that field. ICC's statistics on interstate trucking are not strictly comparable with those for local trucking published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The latest injury rates for local trucking and for warehousing and storage are for the year 1948. These are presented in the bureau's injury-rate release dated September 1, 1949. These rates indicate a relatively high incidence of disabling work injuries in these industries--30.7 per million employee-hours worked in local trucking and hauling and 26.6 in warehousing and storage. Injury severity in local trucking and hauling is close to the level prevailing in manufacturing, but runs considerably higher in warehousing and storage.

3. Specific collective bargaining data

In any collective bargaining operations which you carry on you need data which will fit more closely to your problem than the general information described above. In the bargaining process resulting in your collective agreement you may have used any or all of the following types of statistics which we publish:

a. Consumers' Price Index. During the war period there was intense interest in the cost of living, and the Consumers' Price Index of the Bureau of Labor Statistics was regularly used as a guide post in determining wage rates. When governmental wage controls ended after VJ-Day, it might have been expected that this interest would decline. This did not occur because the emphasis on the cost of living was shifted to the collective bargaining table. Both management and labor found themselves using living costs as one of the factors to be taken into account in agreeing upon wage rates. In May 1948 the General Motors Corporation and the United Automobile Workers Union incorporated

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in their two-year contract a very precise relationship between wages and the Consumers' Price Index. No other business concern or union has used such a precise measurement, but literally thousands of contracts have some kind of provision relating to consumers' prices. Also, business concerns making adjustments in the pay rates of unorganized workers often make use of this same index.

The monthly national index of changes in the cost of living for moderate-income families is based, primarily, on data collected by field agents in 34 large cities. The monthly survey covers a carefully selected list of items representing family expenditures, described in detail by type and quality, and priced each month at stores patronized by moderate-income families. The stores include both independents and chain stores, with appropriate weighting for each. (Some prices, such as public utility rates, can be obtained by mail.) The prices of foods are obtained in 56 cities, including the 34 in which the other items of the index are also obtained.

From these reports the Bureau publishes a national index on the changes of consumers' prices at retail. (See chart, "Consumers' Price Index.") The Bureau also publishes similar indexes for 10 large cities every month, for 24 cities once a quarter, and for an additional 22 cities, indexes for food costs only.

We have been authorized by Congress to bring this Consumers' Price Index up-to-date, in a three-year program of reevaluating each of the factors which goes into it. By 1952 we hope to have a Consumers' Price Index based on present expenditure patterns rather than those of the prewar period.

b. Wage and wage rate data. One of the most critical economic issues of the postwar period has been that of wages and wage rates. As soon as government controls were taken off at the end of the war, there was a drive on the part of labor generally for higher wage rates. This pressure was intensified because the reduction in hours of work and loss of overtime pay brought down the weekly pay envelopes of the workers in many industries and because of the increase in the cost of living. The controversies concerning the levels of wage rates led to the demand for more and more information from the Bureau of Labor Statistics on wage rates by occupation and industry.

Wage data are obtained directly by field agents from employers' payroll sheets in a cooperative program of many years' standing that is designed to provide factual data on the wage structure of different industries throughout the country. The published results show the wage rates for each industry by the different occupations in the industry. Furthermore, the wage rates are classified for each occupation in the form of distributions by size, so that there is presented not only the general average, the high and the low rates, but also the nature of the range between the high and the low.

You will be especially interested in the fact that studies of union scales of wages and hours for motortruck drivers and helpers engaged in local

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truckings have been conducted annually by the Bureau of Labor Statistics since 1936. These studies show the scales agreed upon in selected localities through collective bargaining for the various types and sizes of trucks, and are based upon information furnished by union officials. Scales for "over-the-road" drivers and for local city drivers on a mileage or commission basis are not included. Our most recent study provides information on the hourly scales in effect on July 1, 1949 and covered 235,500 drivers and 38,000 helpers in 77 cities having populations ranging from 40,000 to over a million. (See chart, "Indexes of Union Hourly Wage Rates and Weekly Hours for Motor Truck Drivers.")

In addition to the survey of union scales, the Bureau also collects information on the earnings of truck drivers in some of its industry studies. These surveys, unlike union rate surveys, are based on information obtained from employer payroll records and represent actual earnings. They include drivers without regard to union affiliations.

c. Collective bargaining agreements. The Industrial Relations Division of the Bureau of Labor Statistics keeps on file many thousands of collective bargaining agreements which are in force in a wide variety of enterprises. It publishes typical agreement provisions covering pension plans, union security, vacations, holidays, incentive wages, time studies, apprentices, promotion policy, layoff policy, leave of absence, wage adjustments, union-management cooperation, plant efficiency, seniority, strikes and lockouts, and safety, health and sanitation. A public file of collective bargaining agreements is also available for examination by anyone who wishes to study a specific phase of collective bargaining which has not yet been the subject of a published report.

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Now that I have told you all of the data which the Bureau of Labor Statistics gathers and which you might find useful in collective bargaining, I imagine you may be interested in knowing how this information reaches you. There are four such methods: First, we issue regularly releases which cover weekly, monthly, quarterly, or annual data which we prepare. Retail and wholesale prices are published weekly, for instance. The Consumers' Price Index, employment and payrolls data, and construction activity data come out monthly. Work injury statistics are published quarterly, and a large number of special reports are issued annually. These releases are sent to the press and to mailing lists of those who have indicated a desire to receive them.

Second, the Bureau publishes bulletins on special subjects in a wide variety of fields. Most interesting of these for your purposes, probably, would be the bulletins containing the collective bargaining provisions which I have discussed before, and those on union wage rates in the trucking industry.

Third, the Monthly Labor Review is our formal publication which has the widest general circulation. It publishes monthly series of current labor

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statistics, some of which have been published elsewhere, and serves as a compendium of data covering employment and payrolls, labor turnover, earnings and hours, prices and cost of living, work stoppages, and building and construction. In addition, the Review contains special articles on specific current problems, technical notes as to the bureau's statistical procedures, and summaries of longer studies and reports which the Bureau has issued or will issue.

Fourth, the Bureau prepares, at special request, summaries of data in its files which have not yet been published. If a significant amount of work is necessary to get together such information, the Bureau may require payment for special services performed. Also, at request, the Bureau may conduct special surveys for other government bodies or for private groups which pay for such work.

All work of the Bureau is conducted on a voluntary basis. Employers, who report statistics or who participate in a special study, do so voluntarily. The Bureau owes a debt of gratitude to the many thousands of employers, including perhaps many of those present at this meeting, for the wholehearted cooperation which has been given us in the past. It hopes that this same cooperation will continue in the future. To the extent that it gives facts impartially to people on both sides of the bargaining table, the Bureau is performing a service to the general public and to the parties themselves by making easier the accomplishment of true collective bargaining which is a basis for the effective operation of our American economy.