

EQUAL PAY MEANS RATE FOR THE JOB

In any occupation where men and women require the same entry qualifications and training, perform work of similar character and have similar responsibilities, they should receive the same rate of pay.

Comparable conditions of employment imply the right to promotion to the highest positions in the service irrespective of the sex of the employee.

Certain groups of women employees in the community already receive the same rate of pay as the men in their industry or profession. Some of these occupations are:—

RESIDENT MEDICAL OFFICERS
UNIVERSITY LECTURERS
PHARMACISTS
MUSICIANS
HOSPITAL TECHNICIANS
A.B.C. ANNOUNCERS

POLICE WOMEN
TRAM AND BUS CONDUCTRESSES
RAILWAY EMPLOYEES (where work
was proved identical)
MALLEY EMPLOYEES
ACTORS (some categories)

SOCIAL JUSTICE DEMANDS EQUAL PAY

Equality exists in the work performed by men and women teachers.

1. QUALIFICATIONS

BOTH MUST

- Complete 5 years' secondary studies
- Pass the Leaving Certificate Examination
- Complete, successfully, two or more years of tertiary study
- Pass a stringent medical test
- Possess excellent characters

2. WORK

BOTH HAVE

- Identical responsibility in comparable positions
- Similar class and period loads
- Similar preparation and correction
- Similar amenities on the job
- Same Public Service Regulations and Departmental instructions to which they must conform

"Our broad conclusion is that the work done by men and women in this sphere (education) is mutatis mutandis, and, on the whole, equal; parallel in the one sex school; equivalent in the mixed."

(Royal Commission on Equal Pay, Great Britain, 1944-46.)

A SIMILAR COMMISSION IN AUSTRALIA COULD
ONLY ARRIVE AT THE SAME CONCLUSION.

ECONOMIC POSITION OF WOMEN

The domestic responsibility of the unmarried man is no greater than that of the unmarried woman, yet she only receives a percentage of the male wage. The unmarried women group is by no means a negligible minority in the community, as is shown by an examination of the 1954 Commonwealth Census:

- a. 25.7% of the male work force was unmarried, widowed or divorced. 593,910 were unmarried and 81,628 were widowed or divorced, out of a total male work force of 2,615,002.
- b. 55.7% of the female work force was unmarried, widowed or divorced. 287,479 were unmarried and 73,452 were widowed or divorced, out of a total female work force of 647,929.

In the 1947 Census* it will be seen that:

- a. 69.4% of the male population over the age of 19 years was married.
- b. 36.5% of the male population over the age of 19 years had dependent children.
- c. 85.6% of the men with dependent children were between the age of 25 and 49 years.
- d. 2.6% of the female population over the age of 19 years had dependent children.

No figures were given for men and women with dependants other than children. Generally, the burden of such dependants falls more heavily on women than on men. Experience has shown that women teachers, particularly, assume the responsibility for aged parents, invalid relatives and the education of younger members of the family.

Further, if the husband is out of work he cannot claim unemployment benefit if his wife is working. She must support him and the family on a percentage of the male rate.

* 1954 figures in this group are not as yet available from the Statistician.

NOT TO BE REPRODUCED WITHOUT PERMISSION

FROM AN ORIGINAL IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE ARCHIVES

Trade Union Equal Pay
Committee c 1940-1965

THE BASIC WAGE AND THE NEEDS OF A FAMILY

Any contention that the Australian Basic Wage is a "needs" Basic Wage designed to provide for a family unit of a man, wife and three children is completely erroneous.

This was made perfectly clear in the judgment of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court in the Basic Wage and Standard Hours case in 1953. The Court reviewed the history of Basic Wage judgments back to the "Harvester" Award of 1907, which was later adopted as the first Basic Wage, and asserted that at no time had the Commonwealth Basic Wage been determined on the basis of "needs."

In 1907, without a searching enquiry, Mr. Justice Higgins determined that 7/- a day was a fair and reasonable minimum wage because this wage was already being paid by "reputable employers in sheltered industries" and by "public bodies which do not aim at profit but which are responsible to electors and others for economy." Hence the Court in 1953 stated "the claim that the 'Harvester' wage was in fact assessed as a living wage designed to provide a particular standard of living to a typical family group cannot be maintained."

The 1930-31 Basic Wage enquiry stated that the predominant principle in the Basic Wage assessment was to fix a wage that the economy could sustain. This principle of the "capacity of industry to pay" has been maintained in all subsequent judgments and in 1953 the Court said:—

"Nothing has been put before the Court in support of a departure from the now well-established principle that the Basic Wage should be the highest the capacity of the industry as a whole can sustain . . .

"If it (the Court) is, at any time, asked to fix a Basic Wage on a true needs basis, the question of whether such a measure is correct in principle and all questions as to the size of the family to be selected remain open."

In its judgment on the Commonwealth Basic Wage in 1958 the Court granted an increase of 5/- in the male Basic Wage and listed the various aspects of the economy which it examined before arriving at its decision; the points examined were:—

- Money and banking
- Employment
- Investment
- Rural industries
- Production other than rural
- Overseas trade and overseas balances
- Competitive position of secondary industries
- Retail trade.

The Court did not consider the cost of living of a man or of a man and his family.

EQUAL PAY . . . THE EFFECT OF ITS APPLICATION IN ONE STATE ONLY

With the proximity of equal pay legislation the question arises, Can it be introduced in one State and not into the others and into the Commonwealth sphere? Will industry be attracted to the non-equal pay States? Will overseas investors shy clear of New South Wales? In brief, will it be disastrous to the economy of New South Wales?

In both U.S.A. and Canada equal pay was introduced by individual States and the reform has gradually spread to other States.

In U.S.A., Michigan and Montana legislated for equal pay in 1919 and no other State did so until the World War II period. Since 1943 there has been a steady increase in the number of States with equal pay Acts and to-day these total 17. Although this represents only one-third of the States, it includes all the leading industrial ones (Illinois, New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania) and over half the female work force is employed in these States. In addition, at least 24 States have equal pay in their Civil Service. The U.S. Federal Civil Service has had equal pay since 1923.

In the *Labour Law Journal* of January 1955, the Director of the Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labour stated that the Bureau Officers in 1951 visited eight firms which had been operating under an equal pay policy of wage determination for at least five years. These factories employed from 190 to 13,000 workers, and the proportion of women varied from 16% to 61%. Seven of the eight factories were in States with equal pay laws. Management representatives of all of these firms expressed approval of the equal pay policy.

In Canada, Ontario led the way with an equal pay law in 1951 and its example has been followed by five other States and the Federal Parliament. Quebec, Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick are now the only non-equal pay States.

U.S.A. and Canada are Federal systems and have demonstrated that equal pay legislation does not adversely affect the economy of the individual state. Equal pay in these countries has increased the efficiency and morale of all workers and is appreciated by the employers as contributing to the general prosperity.

Industrial undertakings, interested in investing capital in New South Wales will not be deterred by the proposed equal pay law.

EQUAL PAY AND THE ECONOMY

In the 19th Century the opponents of Wilberforce argued that the abolition of slavery would ruin England financially. Similar arguments were used by those who opposed the abolition of child labour during the Industrial Revolution; yet England continued to prosper.

In Australia, more recently, major industrial and social reforms have been introduced—40-Hour Week, Long Service Leave, Annual Leave—and, contrary to the contentions of the opponents of these reforms, the Australian economy has not suffered. In no judgment of the Commonwealth Court has any one of these reforms been cited as a factor contributing to the lowering of economic standards.

In Australia the female Basic Wage was increased from 54% to 75% in 1950. In 1953 the Commonwealth Arbitration Court, commenting on the decision, stated:

“Upon the evidence presented of the employment of women, the Court finds it impossible to say that the higher ratio of the women's basic wage to the men's, adopted by the 1950 decision has resulted to date in either a significant degree of unemployment amongst women, or, generally speaking, in a comparatively higher wage cost burden having to be carried, at the expense of reasonable profits, by enterprises carrying a relatively high proportion of women employees.”

Equal pay, in increasing the purchasing power of women, would stimulate all branches of the economy while providing a higher standard of living for the women concerned.

Despite the ravages of World War II, in 1951 the London County Council granted Equal Pay to its employees and in 1955 the Parliament of Great Britain legislated to give equal pay to the non-industrial Civil Service by seven equal annual increments so that complete equality would be reached by 1961; subsequently similar proposals have been agreed for women teachers and for the salaried staffs of such authorities as National Health, electricity and gas. Women's salaries outside the Civil Service are beginning to be similarly adjusted.

Experience in U.S.A. and Canada has shown that equal pay results in a more efficient and contented female work force. It is one of the “sound practices” of business advocated by the American Association of Manufacturers.

EQUAL PAY AND THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

While conducting its own campaigns, the Teachers' Federation has been closely associated with the Australian Council of Trade Unions, the Trades and Labour Council of N.S.W. and, more recently, the Combined Equal Pay Committee, formed by the N.S.W. Public Service Association, consisting of representatives of organisations interested in equal pay, and has participated fully in the activities of these bodies.

Following a special A.C.T.U. Equal Pay Conference in 1957, a nation-wide petition was circulated, requesting the Commonwealth Government to honour its obligations under Convention 100 and Recommendation 90 of the International Labour Office (I.L.O.), which calls on member nations of I.L.O. to grant “equal remuneration for work of equal value.” On September 2, 1957, a deputation from the A.C.T.U. waited on the Hon. H. Holt, M.H.R., Minister for Labour and National Service, and presented to him the signed petitions as well as various submissions on the subject. Mr. Holt promised to examine the material and place the matter before Cabinet.

On 21st and 22nd March the A.C.T.U. again convened a Conference to consider equal pay and the working conditions of women. Encouraged by Mr. Cahill's announcement, on March 20, of his proposed equal pay legislation, the delegates resolved to intensify the campaign in other States.

In April 1957 a deputation from the Combined Equal Pay Committee waited on Mr. A. Townley, M.H.R., deputising for the Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. R. G. Menzies. Having listened to the case put to him, Mr. Townley stated that he was most impressed by the “persuasive and telling” arguments and promised to convey the submissions to the Prime Minister.

The result of these actions on the Federal plane were seen in a letter sent by the Prime Minister to the Teachers' Federation on February 5, 1958:

“As you know, this matter (equal pay) is under consideration along with the general question of the employment status of women, and my colleague, the Minister for Labour and National Service, will be putting the question before Cabinet in the near future.”

It is now time, with the lead given by N.S.W., for the Commonwealth Government to face up to its responsibilities to the workers of Australia and, at least, investigate equal pay legislation.

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