

# REPORTS AND ENQUIRIES

## Conditions of Domestic Employment in the Scandinavian Countries

In recent years the Scandinavian countries have shown a special interest in the conditions of employment of domestic servants, whether paid or unpaid. Reports on this subject published in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, during 1938 and 1939 are summarised below.

### SWEDEN

#### *Report and Bill Concerning the Regulation of the Engagement and Employment of Domestic Servants*<sup>1</sup>

In accordance with suggestions made in the Riksdag in 1931 and 1932 with regard to the conditions of engagement and employment of domestic employees, the Swedish Minister of Social Affairs set up a committee of experts on 30 June 1933 to consider these conditions and submit proposals. At the request of the experts the Social Board was instructed, on 29 December 1933, to collaborate with them in an enquiry into the conditions of employment of domestic servants in towns and urban centres. The results were published in September 1936.<sup>2</sup> On the proposal of the experts, the Social Board was then instructed, on 5 November 1937, to collaborate in an enquiry into the conditions of employment and wages of domestic employees in agricultural households. The results of that enquiry were submitted in December 1938.<sup>3</sup> In April 1937 the experts submitted a report and proposals concerning vocational training for domestic employees.<sup>4</sup> The Government has

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<sup>1</sup> SOCIALDEPARTEMENTET : *Betänkande med förslag till lag om reglering av anställnings- och arbetsförhållandena inom det husliga arbetet*. Hembiträdesutredningens betänkande II. Statens offentliga utredningar 1939 : 15. Stockholm, 1939.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *International Labour Review*, Vol. XXXV, No. 1, Jan. 1937, p. 83.

<sup>3</sup> SOCIALSTYRELSEN : *Arbetsförhållandena inom det husliga arbetet å landsbygden*. Sveriges officiella statistik. Socialstatistik. Stockholm, 1939.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *International Labour Review*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 3, Sept. 1937, p. 394.

not so far taken any decision on this subject. On 9 June 1939 the experts presented their second report, with proposals for legislation governing the conditions of engagement and employment of domestic servants.

The experts point out in their report that the above-mentioned enquiries showed that the hours of work of domestic servants were unduly long, and that these workers are therefore obviously unable to enjoy the social and cultural advantages guaranteed to most other groups of workers by labour legislation. It is not only for social reasons, however, that the introduction of legislation is desirable ; it is necessary also in order to raise the standing of an occupation which seems at present to be generally looked down upon. As the conditions of employment of domestic servants are much worse than those of other groups of workers, more particularly as regards hours, spare time, vocational training, etc., there has for many years been a shortage of domestic servants, while in several branches of industry and other activities women have to a considerable extent taken the place of men because they accept lower wages, with the result that in periods of depression there has been more male unemployment than there would otherwise have been. Regulations governing domestic service should therefore aim at increasing the prestige of that occupation and thus exercising a favourable influence on the employment market.

The experts realise how difficult it would be to take the 8-hour day as a basis for regulating hours of work. In view of the special nature of domestic work and the large number of workplaces, they think it impossible to introduce legislation involving a system of inspection. They have therefore prepared two Bills : the principal one would apply to all domestic contracts of employment, while the alternative one, which they hope will be accepted if the first is rejected, would be binding only on those who signed a standard form of contract.

The two Bills contain the same provisions concerning working conditions. The principal Bill, however, excludes from its scope members of the employer's family, governesses or other persons holding a position of supervision in the household, certificated nurses, and valets and ladies' maids engaged mainly in personal attendance on the employer or his wife.

The experts propose that hours of work should be regulated indirectly by fixing the minimum amount of spare time to which domestic servants should be entitled in every case. According to the two Bills, the day's work would end, unless there was any agreement to the contrary, at 7 p.m. ; in agricultural households it might continue until 8 p.m. during the months from April to September. It was obviously impossible to prohibit overtime, but the Bills provide that overtime shall be worked only by agreement between the parties and that extra wages shall be paid. In this connection the experts make a distinction between housework in the strict sense and the task of looking after children or the sick ; for work of this latter type

no special remuneration for overtime is prescribed. Time off might be given in lieu of the extra pay for overtime.

According to the two Bills, domestic servants would have the following free time<sup>1</sup>: on one Sunday or public holiday out of three from the time work ceases on the day preceding the holiday until the time of beginning work on the day after the holiday; on one day a week from 2 p.m.; and on 1 May from 1 p.m. if it does not happen to be a Sunday. It would be possible for domestic servants, by arrangement, to be free every second Sunday from 1 p.m. until the time of beginning work the following day. In special circumstances equivalent free time might be given on other days, subject to agreement between the parties.

The prescribed period of notice would be 14 days in the case of contracts containing no other stipulation on the subject. The employer would be entitled to break the contract immediately if the servant was guilty of serious negligence, was sentenced for a criminal offence, or was found to be suffering from tuberculosis, venereal disease, or any other contagious disease. The servant would have the same right if the employer was two working days late in the payment of wages (which should be paid on the last day of the month), if she did not receive adequate food or accommodation, if the employer or his wife grossly neglected their duties towards the servant, if the employer or a member of his family suffered from one of the diseases mentioned above, or if the employer settled permanently in some other locality.

The Bills further provide that the accommodation supplied to the servant must comply with the provisions of the Public Health Act and that the servant shall have the free use of that accommodation, the employer and members of his family not being entitled to enter it. A servant living in the employer's household would be entitled, unless she is transferred to hospital, to accommodation, food, and personal attendance—even after the contract had expired—until she could leave the employer's house without risk to her life or health. The employer would then be entitled to claim a refund by the servant of the expenses arising out of the illness. If a servant were prevented by illness from performing her work for more than 14 days, the employer would be entitled, in the case of a contract for a specified period, to break the contract after these 14 days by giving a further 14 days' notice. If it were expected from the outset that the incapacity for work would last at least four weeks, and if the illness were not due to an occupational accident, the employer would be entitled immediately to give 14 days' notice. If, however, the servant had recovered before the end of that period, the notice would not take effect.

The Bills contain special provisions for domestic servants under the age of 16 years. Such persons could not be required to work more than 7 hours' overtime a week or to perform any work involving

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that the Act of 17 June 1938 concerning holidays with pay applies to domestic employees (cf. *Industrial and Labour Information*, Vol. LXVII, No. 5, 1 Aug. 1938, p. 127):

a risk of accident or strain or likely to have any unfavourable influence on the health, physical development, or morals, of the servant. The employer would be obliged to see that a young domestic servant had the necessary rest periods during her work.

It would be compulsory for the employer to give a servant a certificate containing information as to the nature of the work performed, her length of service, and her assiduity and ability.

The Bills also contain a clause providing that the employer or the servant shall be entitled to claim damages if the other party does not fulfil the obligations laid down in the contract of employment or in the legislation.

As the experts consider these Bills simply as a first step towards legislation concerning domestic service, they propose that the legislation should provisionally be enacted for three years. They intend to undertake separate enquiries into placing in domestic service and the problem of pensions.

#### *Views of the Social Board on the Bills<sup>1</sup>*

On 15 September 1939 the Department of Labour and Social Welfare published its views on the Bills analysed above. With regard to the shortage of female labour for domestic service, the Department points out that the state of war may bring about a change in the employment market. It is possible that women whose husbands are mobilised may look for domestic employment, while on the other hand the decline in income or difficulties connected with rationing may induce families to dispense with domestic help. Apart from these considerations, it is to be expected that women will still seek employment in other fields in preference to domestic service. The tendency to admit women more freely to other branches of employment will continue, and domestic work will therefore have to suffer severe competition from other forms of activity. In recent years there has been a shortage of female labour in industry, nursing, and restaurants. The present trend of the population shows that it is impossible to count on any great increase in the amount of female labour, a greater shortage being more probable. Consequently the competition between domestic service and other kinds of employment will become more acute, and domestic service must be made more attractive. The enquiries that have been carried out show the need for legislation, and the Board is therefore in favour of introducing it. It is agreed that in view of the great difficulties of legislating on hours of work in this particular field the legislation should regulate spare time. Domestic work, except in agricultural households, should end by 7 p.m., or possibly by 7.30 p.m. provided that proportionate time off is granted. The legislation should, as the experts propose, deal not only with spare time but also with various other conditions of employment. The Social Board, however, is not convinced that in the present circumstances it would be desirable to put forward a proposal of this nature now.

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<sup>1</sup> *Sociala Meddelanden*, 1939, No. 9, pp. 657-666.

*Conditions of Work of Domestic Employees in the Country*<sup>1</sup>

In order to obtain the necessary information, those responsible for the enquiry into conditions on farms sent out to employers and employees questionnaires similar to those used for the 1936 enquiry.<sup>2</sup> In addition, a special questionnaire was sent to institutions and persons likely to have special knowledge of conditions of work on farms. A study of the replies showed that there was a shortage of female labour, which appeared to have become more marked from 1928 to 1938. The increase in the demand for female labour for industry and the attraction exercised by the towns were contributory factors in this phenomenon. At the same time, men had replaced women for certain farm work, more particularly looking after cattle.

Practically half of the domestic servants covered by this enquiry were under the age of 20 years, and only one-tenth were 30 years of age or over. The reason is that girls normally find their first places near their own homes.

*Vocational Training.*

Three-fourths of the replies referred to domestic servants who had merely had some training in cooking, and one-third to servants who had had a course in a continuation school. Only a very small percentage had attended courses in an agricultural domestic school, a people's university, or some other vocational school. It was found that the younger domestic servants had more frequently obtained some training than the older ones; this is probably because in recent years domestic science courses have been introduced in an increasing number of schools. On the other hand, it was found that the older servants had more frequently been trained in an agricultural domestic school or a people's university, because training of this kind is given only after the pupils have spent a certain time in remunerative employment. Rather more than one-fourth of the total had been in domestic service for less than three years, about half for three to nine years, and only one-seventh for 10 years or over.

*Change of Place.*

Domestic servants do not seem to remain long in the same place. According to the replies received from mistresses and servants, about half of the servants had been with the same family for more than a year, and rather more than one-fourth for less than a year; three-fourths had been less than three years in the same place, and about one-tenth from three to five years. The replies indicate that changes from one place to another in the same occupation are not so frequent as changes to another occupation.

Four-fifths of the servants replied that there was no stipulation in their contract concerning notice of dismissal. When such a stipulation existed, the period was generally three weeks or one month.

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<sup>1</sup> SOCIALSTYRELSEN : *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *International Labour Review*, Vol. XXXV, No. 1, Jan. 1937, p. 83.

In 1 per cent. of the replies, the period of notice was said to be a fortnight or less. Two-thirds of the servants had obtained their posts by personal recommendation, and only one-third had made use of the public employment exchanges; one-tenth had made use of advertisements, and only a very small percentage had applied to private employment agencies. It appeared that two-fifths of the total were members of youth organisations, study circles, temperance associations, trade unions, or sports clubs.

### *Hours of Work.*

In the last few years, and more particularly since the introduction of the legislation of 1936 and 1937 concerning the hours of work of agricultural workers, domestic servants on farms have been claiming shorter hours and demanding regulations concerning rest periods and spare time.

The information supplied by mistresses indicates that the average hours of work, including breaks for meals, were rather more than 13 in the day in summer and  $12\frac{1}{2}$  in winter. According to the servants, the corresponding figures were 14 and 13. A very few replies stated that hours of work, even in winter, were 15 or more in the day. The average hours of work in the course of the week, according to the employers, were  $84\frac{1}{2}$  in winter and  $88\frac{1}{2}$  in summer; according to the servants, they were  $88\frac{1}{2}$  and  $93\frac{1}{2}$  respectively. There are usually from three to six breaks for meals and refreshments during the day, generally three for meals and two for coffee.

### *Holidays.*

There do not appear to be any formal agreements concerning spare time, which is generally given according to the inclination of the employer. The mistresses reported that from one-fourth to one-third of the servants had no fixed spare time, while the servants stated that this was the case for one-third of the total.

There were great discrepancies in the information supplied concerning regular Sunday holidays. A weekday holiday would seem to be given regularly once a week. The most usual arrangement is one Sunday in three or four and one working day every week.

Rather more than half the servants, according to the mistresses, and about two-thirds according to the servants themselves, are entitled to holidays with pay. The discrepancy may probably be explained by the fact that the right to these holidays is recognised only after a certain period of service, which is generally one year. The replies of the two parties agreed in stating that holidays are given more frequently on large farms than on small ones. The length of the holiday is usually one week. Holidays of two to three weeks are granted to about one-third of the servants, according to the mistresses, and to a smaller proportion according to the servants themselves. A very small number of servants are entitled to a month's holiday. A subsistence allowance during holidays would seem rarely to be paid in the country districts.

*Wages and Housing.*

The cash wages are as follows : for domestic servants on small farms working only in the house, 30 kr. a month on the average ; on large farms 39 kr. ; for those who are also required to milk the cows, the figures are 34 and 38 kr. respectively ; for other domestic servants engaged in work outside the house, the wages are 31 and 37 kr. These figures vary, of course, according to the age, ability, and length of service, of the individual.

With regard to accommodation, the employers state that two-thirds of the servants have rooms of their own, but according to the servants themselves only half enjoy this privilege. One-fifth of the servants, according to the employers, and one-fourth according to the servants, sleep in the kitchen. Conditions of accommodation vary greatly according to the size of the farm, the size of the family, and the district concerned.

*Medical Treatment.*

Since the repeal of the old masters and servants legislation in 1926, employers are under no legal obligation to pay for the treatment of their employees in case of sickness. For certain groups of women employees in agriculture formerly covered by that legislation, the matter is now regulated by a special provision of collective agreements whereby the employer is responsible to some extent for paying the medical expenses of his workers and their families. No such provision exists in the case of domestic servants on farms. A special question was therefore included in the questionnaire so as to obtain information on this point. The replies show that in two-thirds of the cases of short illness the employers pay the expenses ; according to certain replies, medical expenses are paid only in certain cases, depending on the length of service of the employee, whether or not the disease was contracted in the course of her service, etc. Some employers pay only the cost of medical attendance, and others only the cost of drugs or hospital treatment.

According to the employers, 13 per cent. of the servants, and according to the servants 15 per cent., are members of sickness funds. One-fifth, according to the employers, and one-fourth according to the servants, have life insurance policies.

*Suggested Improvements.*

The main reasons why domestic servants on farms endeavour to change their occupation appear to be the long hours, the low wages, their repugnance for the work (particularly milking and looking after cattle), the lack of spare time, the fact that such work is looked down upon, etc. The mistresses as well as the servants seem to consider that conditions of employment in farm households leave much to be desired. Many of the replies refer to the need for improved vocational training, either by means of a compulsory course of domestic training organised by the State or by some form of supplementary education for all girls between the ages of 15 and 16 years, or else by means of one year of compulsory service.

Certain mistresses expressed themselves as being opposed to statutory regulation of working conditions; very many of the servants, on the other hand, showed a desire for legislation or collective agreements to regulate conditions. Many of the mistresses stated that domestic work in rural areas was badly organised and that it should be facilitated by the introduction of modern equipment; many of them hoped that the public authorities would give economic assistance to enable rationalisation to be carried out. In this connection, the managers of employment exchanges favoured installing practical kitchens, electric light, and running water, the construction of cellars for wood and food in the house itself, and sounder methods of house construction and planning. The majority of the mistresses' replies drew attention to the consequences of the labour shortage, and in particular to the fact that mothers of families were overworked.

The report concludes with a comparison between the conditions of employment of domestic servants in the country and in the towns.

*Measures to Facilitate the Work of Women in Small Agricultural Households*<sup>1</sup>

Another enquiry was instituted by the Minister of Agriculture in 1938 with a view to finding means of simplifying household work in small agricultural holdings by the use of technical equipment. In 1937 an enquiry had been carried out into conditions of work in small agricultural holdings and had shown the need for the collective use of machinery. The 1938 enquiry was intended to take account of hygienic and health conditions, but the main purpose was to consider the possibility of simplifying women's work in rural households.

*Defects in the Conditions of House Work.*

The report, submitted on 25 February 1939, shows that most of the women working on small agricultural holdings are overworked because they have to perform their household tasks and in addition assist with the agricultural work by attending to the cattle and at certain periods of the year working in the fields. Their houses and kitchens generally lack many practical requirements such as running water; their hours of work are long and their work fatiguing. These facts doubtless constitute one of the main reasons why so many young women leave the country to seek employment elsewhere. The committee of enquiry, wishing to have some idea of the extent to which women took part in agricultural work, carefully examined the data supplied by small farms the accounts of which are subject to supervision, and which must therefore regularly supply information to the agricultural authorities concerning agricultural work in the strict sense (the care of cattle, work in the fields, etc.) performed by members of the families of small farmers.

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<sup>1</sup> JORDBRUKSDEPARTEMENTET : *Underlåtandet av kvinnornas arbete i de mindre lanthemma. Statens offentliga utredningar 1939 : 6.* Stockholm, 1939.

In five districts the committee also enquired into the time required by housewives for different tasks. According to the figures published in the report, their average hours of work are 13 in the day, of which 4 are devoted to agricultural work (in the stables, gardens, or fields), about  $3\frac{3}{4}$  to the preparation of meals,  $1\frac{1}{4}$  to other household tasks, and  $1\frac{1}{4}$  to the care of children. The time spent in moving from one workplace to another within the house or from the house to other buildings is estimated at  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour, and another  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour must be reckoned for movements in the kitchen during the preparation of meals. That means that  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hours, or 11.5 per cent. of the total working time, are taken up in moving from one place to another. The time spent in carrying water, etc., is estimated at a quarter of an hour on the average.

These figures show that the hours of work are unduly long and that steps should be taken to simplify the work of housewives on small farms, but there is an obstacle to any improvement in the very limited economic resources of small farmers, so that some improvement in their financial situation must be considered as the most important factor in securing better working conditions.

#### *Causes of the Unsatisfactory Conditions.*

As a rule the small farmer does not earn enough for the satisfactory maintenance of his family, and therefore it is often necessary for his wife to do some of the agricultural work. If she does this for four hours a day, which is half a normal working day, it means that she is overworked with her other duties. The committee points out that this difficulty is closely bound up with the special structure and working conditions of small agricultural holdings and therefore cannot be eliminated entirely. Something might, however, be done to facilitate the performance of the work. The report mentions among the desirable improvements: (a) an improvement in the economic situation of small farmers; (b) the creation of larger agricultural units producing a better return by joining unduly small farms to larger ones; (c) increased mechanisation on small agricultural holdings, more particularly by the collective use of machinery. The committee is doubtful, however, whether the establishment of co-operative stables, which has been advocated recently, would facilitate the work on these farms. It should, however, be possible to have certain household tasks, such as washing, done on a collective basis. Very often those concerned have not the slightest idea of what might be done to organise household work more scientifically, and very little interest is often taken in the problem of improving household conditions because this work is considered to be unproductive. Not enough has so far been done in this field, probably because of lack of knowledge and of practical ideas. The efforts made to improve working conditions in rural households are extremely slight compared with what has been done in the towns.

The report draws attention to the faulty construction and inadequate equipment of rural houses, and particularly to the absence of modern technical installations such as running water, central heating, and in many cases even electricity.

The report sums up as follows the main causes of the bad working conditions in small agricultural holdings : (1) unsatisfactory economic conditions and the resulting difficulties ; (2) lack of understanding of the importance of household work ; (3) defective and badly planned buildings and the absence of labour-saving devices ; (4) inadequate utensils and lack of knowledge as to the organisation of work.

*Suggested Improvements.*

There has been a considerable increase in the interest taken in all matters concerning domestic work, and peasant families themselves have tried to introduce certain improvements. The rural women's organisations and other bodies have also dealt with the question. The possibilities of action by private organisations, however, are necessarily limited, and the State must intervene, either by giving direct assistance to the individual or by carrying out general enquiries and collecting information.

The collection of information in the various provinces by advisers on household matters will have to be supplemented by newspaper articles, wireless talks, the cinema, and the distribution of pamphlets.

With regard to the rationalisation of working methods and utensils, the committee proposes that a Government institute for the rationalisation of domestic work should be set up. This institute would have the following tasks : (1) to carry out enquiries into working methods and study new and more scientific systems ; (2) to test utensils and other appliances used in household work ; (3) to publish the results of its enquiries, these publications being sent free of charge to schools, experts in domestic science, teachers in agricultural-domestic schools, and organisations engaged in the collection and distribution of information. The institute would also be responsible for training housewives by means of propaganda leaflets, newspaper articles, courses, lectures, wireless talks, and films. The institute would organise domestic training in elementary and secondary schools, since the training at present given is not based on scientific methods.

With regard to housing, the committee proposes that the State should grant subsidies and loans for installing labour-saving equipment in the houses of peasant farmers. A more detailed plan on this point will be drawn up with the assistance of experts on housing questions. The committee also proposes that a number of model houses should be built.

The committee further considered as one of the means of improving the conditions of work of rural housewives the establishment of collective laundries. This problem has already been studied by various organisations of housewives. The washing is still one of the most arduous tasks in household work, and on many farms it has to be carried out under very primitive conditions, often outside even in winter, with serious results for the health of the women concerned. The committee has prepared a number of plans on this subject adapted to varying local conditions. It is proposed, for example, that travelling laundries should be organised in sparsely populated

areas. Experts have calculated that between 70 and 80 per cent. of the time at present required for laundry work could be saved if suitable machines were used. The committee considers that a number of laundries should be established as an experiment so as to obtain information as to the results ; it suggests a State subsidy for this purpose.

#### NORWAY

##### *Conditions of Employment of Domestic Servants in Towns*<sup>1</sup>

When the new Workers' Protection Act was being drafted in Norway in 1936 the Trade Union of Domestic Employees requested Parliament to extend the scope of the Act to domestic servants. The Social Questions Committee of Parliament, in submitting its proposals, favoured legislation to regulate the conditions of employment of domestic servants but considered that these regulations could not be included in a general Act for the protection of the workers because that would involve excessive interference with work in private households. It therefore asked the Government to set up a special committee to study the problem and prepare a Bill on the conditions of employment of domestic servants. In December 1936 the Department of Social Affairs appointed a committee, which, at its first meeting in January 1937, decided that a statistical enquiry was necessary in order to determine the existing conditions of employment of domestic servants and requested the Department to entrust the enquiry to the Central Statistical Office. The necessary credits were voted and the statistical report was published as a basis for future legislation relating to domestic service.

The Norwegian legislation concerning masters and servants has been in force for more than two hundred years, and there are many rules established by custom. Domestic servants are also covered by the legislation concerning compulsory sickness and old-age insurance.

As the proposed enquiry had to be based on information supplied by individuals and as the Statistical Office considered that it should be carried out on as wide a basis as possible, questionnaires were sent to all housewives and all domestic servants working solely in private houses in 26 towns and in the suburbs of three of them. A Royal Order of 1 October 1937 made it compulsory to reply to the questionnaire.

According to the 1930 census, about 120,000 women (including 26,969 in towns) are engaged in domestic work in Norway, constituting about one-third of the total number of women engaged in economic activities. Between the 1920 and 1930 censuses the number of domestic servants increased very considerably. Domestic work is numerically the most important occupation for women after agricultural employment. There are only 60,000 women employed in industry. The number of questionnaires sent to housewives and servants in the towns covered by the enquiry was 57,221, and the number of replies that could be used was 38,505, or 67.3 per cent.

<sup>1</sup> STATISTISKE CENTRALBYRÅ : *Arbeidsvilkårene for hushjelp i norske byer*. Norges Offisielle Statistikk. IX. 146. Oslo, 1938.

*Results of the Enquiry.*

As the Norwegian enquiry was intended primarily to reveal the conditions of employment of domestic servants, detailed consideration was not given to the question of the supply and demand of domestic labour.

After a detailed allocation of domestic servants to various categories, the largest being that of general servants, the enquiry went on to consider various matters such as accommodation, the ages of domestic servants in different towns, their places of birth (in towns or in the country), etc.

*Vocational Training.*

As a general rule the information supplied by mistresses as to vocational training is vague and inadequate. It would appear that 19 per cent. of the servants received vocational training, lasting as a rule for five or six months. Those who received such training were generally cooks or children's nurses. The report states that there is no organised vocational training for domestic servants in Norway. In 1938 the Department of Agriculture set up a committee to report on the reorganisation of domestic training, and in the same year the city of Oslo also appointed a committee to make proposals for a vocational school for domestic servants.

According to the report, 13 per cent. of domestic employees had formerly been in some other occupation. The majority of these were over the age of 30 years and quite a number of them had been employed in hotels and restaurants, which may be considered as a kind of training for household work. Many of the young domestic servants had previously worked in factories; the older ones had been employed in handicrafts or sewing. As the information concerning vocational training is scanty, and as most domestic servants obtain their training, through practice, it was felt necessary to consider the length of the period during which servants remained in the same occupation. According to the information supplied by themselves, the period is longest in the case of cooks, followed by ladies' maids, and is shortest for nursemaids. Half of the cooks covered by the enquiry had followed that occupation for more than ten years. A large number of domestic servants under the age of 20 years had already been in that occupation for two to five years. The report remarks on the fact that domestic servants do not usually remain long in the same place.

*Period of Notice.*

The period of notice would seem to be fourteen days as a general rule, but in some cases it is as long as a month or even three months.

*Wages.*

Wages vary widely, being influenced by numerous factors such as local conditions, the age, ability, and experience, of the servant, the special requirements of the employer, the conditions of accommo-

dation, the employer's economic situation, supply and demand, etc. The wages of very young servants, who may be considered as apprentices and who live with their parents, are sometimes as low as 10 kr. a month, while the wages of an experienced cook often exceed 100 kr. The data concerning average wages show that there are considerable differences from one category to another. The highest wages are those of cooks and ladies' maids and the lowest are those of general servants and children's nurses. The last-mentioned group consists of a variety of types: some are very young girls with no experience, earning very low wages, and some are trained nurses with good wages. The report indicates that 45 per cent. of all domestic servants earn between 30 and 50 kr. a month, 15 per cent. from 20 to 30 kr., 18 per cent. from 50 to 60 kr., 2 per cent. less than 20 kr., and 8 per cent. more than 70 kr. There is a considerable difference between the wages paid in large and small towns; wages are higher in the larger towns, and this can be attributed to the different age distribution of servants in large and small towns and the higher standard required of servants in towns.

The wages of domestic servants living with their employers are generally higher than those of servants who are not provided with accommodation. Those who live with their parents generally receive much lower wages than the others. These are often apprentices who work shorter hours or servants with no personal responsibility. The wages of servants who rent rooms of their own are also lower than those of servants of the same category living in the employers' house. Hours of work play a part in determining wage rates. In a few rare cases it would seem that a supplement is paid for accommodation. As a rule the rents paid for rooms by domestic servants are low (from 10 to 25 kr. a month in the large towns, generally below 15 kr. in smaller towns, and below 10 kr. in 43 per cent. of the cases). Sometimes the rent is paid partly in cash and partly by work, such as washing down the stairs. The work of domestic servants of this group is generally different from that of servants who live in the employers' house. Many of them come at a fixed time to do some definite work, often the heaviest work, although others do the general house work in the same way as resident servants.

The report contains statistics showing the differences between the wages of different categories of servants according to the length of time spent in the occupation, length of service in the same household, and the number of rooms in the employers' dwelling. The highest wages are paid in households of six persons or over. The wages are higher in childless households than in those with children, although the maid has naturally more work in the latter. The reason probably is that households with children are not able to pay high wages and are content to employ young and inexperienced servants. One interesting fact is that in households in which the mother engages in some occupation the servant's wages are lower than in households where the mistress has no outside occupation, although it might be supposed that in the former case the servant would have greater responsibilities.

*Accommodation.*

Of the domestic servants living in their employers' houses, 84 per cent. have rooms of their own (77 per cent. in the smaller towns), 8 per cent. share a room with another servant, and 7.6 per cent. sleep in the kitchen, hall, children's room, or some other room. Servants with rooms of their own were asked to give the length and breadth of the room. The replies show that there are very few of these rooms less than four square metres in size. Most of them are from six to eight or from eight to ten square metres and quite a number exceed twelve square metres. According to the legislation on the subject six square metres is the minimum area which is permitted.

*Hours of Work.*

As domestic service cannot be organised and restricted as precisely as other forms of employment the Statistical Office found that it was difficult to make exact calculations of hours of work and therefore decided to determine if possible the gross hours. These are calculated from the time of beginning to the time of ending work, without deducting breaks for meals or rests. According to the mistresses the average hours of work of servants living in are 11.8 in the day, while according to the servants they are 12.1. The hours of work vary according to the size of the house, the number of rooms, the size of the family, the number of children, the type of heating, etc.

*Breaks and Holidays.*

There are considerable discrepancies between the information supplied by mistresses and that supplied by servants as regards breaks. According to the former, 82.3 per cent. of servants have regular breaks during their working time; of that number, 1.4 per cent. have breaks of less than an hour, 11.6 per cent. from 1 to 2 hours, 18.2 per cent. from 2 to 3 hours, and 8.4 per cent. 3 hours or over; for 60.4 per cent. no information as to the length of the breaks was supplied. According to the servants the corresponding figures are 59.3 per cent. and 3.6, 21.9, 21.4, and 6.8, per cent., no details being given in 46.3 per cent. of the cases. As there were so many cases in which the duration of the breaks was not indicated it is impossible to arrive at a definite conclusion on this subject. There are also great divergences in the information supplied with regard to overtime for entertaining or other purposes. According to the mistresses, 88.2 per cent. of the servants are entirely free in the evenings, 5.2 per cent. are sometimes free, and 3.2 per cent. must work in the evenings. According to the servants the corresponding figures are 74.7, 2.6, and 18.9, per cent.

With regard to the weekly rest the mistresses state that 92 per cent. of the servants have one day's holiday a week, 2.8 per cent. are free twice a week, and only 0.7 per cent. less than once a week; 16.4 per cent. are free every Sunday, 51.6 per cent. every second Sunday, and 26.6 per cent. every third Sunday. The corresponding percentages supplied by the servants are 93.1, 1.9, 0.7, 15, 51.5, and 27.2.

According to the mistresses, holidays with pay are granted to 93 per cent. of the servants, but only to 86 per cent. according to the servants themselves. The holiday is generally a fortnight, but often longer, according to the period of service. The mistresses state that half the servants who are entitled to holidays receive a subsistence allowance (and sometimes also travelling expenses) ; according to the servants this is the case for 44 per cent.

### *Insurance.*

Servants were asked to state whether they had a life insurance or annuity policy. Their replies show that in general 21.4 per cent. had such a policy, the highest percentage (31.7) being among those between the ages of 31 and 55 years. A very few mistresses would appear to pay their servants' life insurance premiums. As was mentioned above, domestic servants are covered by compulsory sickness insurance in Norway, and the replies show that their contributions are generally paid by the mistresses.

### *Persons Working by the Hour.*

The report also contains a chapter on those who are not in full-time employment but do household work for a certain number of hours. Special questionnaires were sent out to housewives and servants to obtain information concerning this group. The material obtained may not be complete but it gives some idea of the conditions of work of this type of servant in a few of the larger towns. The labour problem for these servants is quite different from that of domestic servants in the accepted sense. For the latter the gross working hours may be longer, although it is impossible to indicate the exact figure, but the former work for a fixed number of hours and are fully employed during the whole of that period except during breaks for meals. The figures published show that most of these servants work three days a week, generally for eight hours a day, or else for three to six hours a day on six days a week. They often work in several households. The hours of work usually vary from 30 to 60 in the week, the average being 42 in the week, or seven in the day. They do not usually work on Sundays, but for them the free Sunday has the disadvantage that they receive no wages and have to provide their own meals. Most servants of this type are paid partly in cash and partly in meals, and some of them are also housed by the employer. It is difficult to compare the wages of those in permanent service with the wages of those working on an hourly basis. The average wage of the former in Oslo is 52.94 kr. a month, or 53.02 kr. if accommodation is provided. The wages of servants working on an hourly basis from 45 to 70 hours a week are, on the average, 49.81 kr. monthly if accommodation and all meals are supplied and 64.84 kr. a month with all meals but no accommodation. These servants have much shorter hours but also lower wages ; generally, however, they have some other employment or source of income.

Holidays with pay are granted to 47.8 per cent. of servants of this type ; for 42.1 per cent. there is no stipulation in the contract of

employment, and certain others have holidays without pay. In all, 64.3 per cent. receive a holiday ; for 2.4 per cent. of these the holiday is one week ; for 75.6 per cent. it is a fortnight, and for 19.3 per cent. longer. The arrangements for the payment of subsistence allowance during the holiday also vary ; for 44.3 per cent. no allowance is paid, 27.3 per cent. receive an allowance, and for 28.4 per cent. no information was supplied. The period of notice of dismissal would seem to be 14 days as a general rule, but in a quarter of the cases there is no stipulation on the subject. For this group also the sickness insurance contribution would seem usually to be paid by the employer, sometimes by several employers. Many members of the group apparently prefer this type of work to permanent domestic service in spite of the disadvantages.

#### *Criticisms and Suggested Improvements.*

The report concludes with a chapter devoted to criticisms of the present organisation of domestic work and proposals for improvements. The question " Do you wish to change your occupation and if so for what reasons ? " was answered in the affirmative by 40 per cent. of the servants, mostly those under the age of 30 years ; more than half of those who had received vocational training as domestic servants expressed this wish.

The reason most frequently given for desiring a change is the length of the working day and the inadequate free time. Low wages are never given by themselves as a motive for changing, but they were often indicated jointly with overwork.

Many servants said that they were content with their work but wished their occupation to be more highly organised and respected.

Several mistresses saw no reason to change the present system of domestic service, but a large number indicated a desire for reforms. The reform most frequently mentioned was proper vocational training for domestic servants, followed by the fixing of wages according to qualifications. Many mistresses and servants urged the adoption of regulations concerning hours of work, holidays, and free time. Many of the replies drew attention to the need for a more scientific organisation of domestic work.

Very many mistresses and servants seemed to consider it possible to adopt statutory provisions concerning conditions of work in domestic service.

#### *The Committee's Proposals*

On 13 October 1939 the committee submitted its report and a Bill to the Department of Social Affairs.<sup>1</sup> The Bill would cover domestic servants in towns and those in rural households other than farms.

The most important provisions of the Bill are as follows. Hours of work would be from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. or, in the case of those working by the day, from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. For both groups the maximum

<sup>1</sup> SOSIALDEPARTEMENTET : *Innstilling om Vernelov for Hushjelp.* Oslo, 1939.

length of the working day would be 10 hours, and for those working half-days five hours. Provision is made for looking after the house or working overtime three times a week, but in the case of those under the age of 17 years this service must not extend beyond 9 p.m. Remuneration for such work would be granted in the form of additional time off or in cash at the rate of 1 per cent. per hour of the monthly wage for looking after the house and 2 per cent. for overtime work.

Servants would be free from 3 p.m. one afternoon a week. In addition, they would be entitled to one Sunday or public holiday out of two; on alternate free days the free time would extend from the end of the previous day's work to the morning of the following day; on the other free days the employee would be free from 11 a.m. until the following morning.

After six months' service in the same household servants would be entitled to eight days' holiday with pay and subsistence allowance, to be granted between 1 June and 1 September. For each additional month of service the holiday would be increased by one day up to a total of 14 days for 12 months, including Sundays. The period of notice of dismissal would be 14 days. No servant could be dismissed while sick and receiving benefits under the sickness insurance legislation and in no case during the first four weeks of sickness. The accommodation provided would have to be in accordance with the legislation concerning building, suitably furnished, and provided with a lock and key. The employer would supply the servant with an employment book which would act as a reference and would contain information as to the nature and conditions of work, membership of the sickness fund, etc. It is also proposed that a committee on domestic employment should be set up in each locality and that fines should be imposed on employers failing to comply with the provisions of the legislation.

## DENMARK

### *Report of a Committee on Domestic Training*<sup>1</sup>

As various appeals had been made to the Danish Government from different quarters to deal with the training of women for domestic employment, the Prime Minister decided at the end of April 1938 to appoint a committee representing the various Government departments and the more important institutions and organisations concerned to consider this problem.

The report submitted to the authorities by the committee on 13 January 1939 contains a survey of the present organisation of domestic training, the committee's proposals, and a Bill, which has already come before Parliament.

The report shows that the subsidies granted for domestic training in various schools and the courses at present organised are spread over the budgets of various Government departments, and that there is little co-ordination of the scheme.

<sup>1</sup> *Betænkning afgivet af den af Statsministeriet nedsatte Husholdningskommission af 1938. Copenhagen, 1939.*

*The Committee's Proposals.*

The Committee points out that, according to statistics, 71 per cent. of the women between 15 and 70 years of age in Denmark are engaged in household work, 56 per cent. as mistresses and about 15 per cent. as housekeepers, domestic servants, etc. From 40 to 50 per cent. of the total national income is in the hands of housewives, who spend from 1,600 to 1,900 million kr. annually in the purchase of household necessities. It is therefore extremely important, both for the individual household and for society as a whole, that the women engaged in domestic work should be as well trained as possible for carrying out their numerous tasks. It is also extremely important for reasons of health, and more particularly of nutrition, that training in domestic science should be organised in such a way as to be available for the great majority of the population. Various organisations and schools and certain individuals have tried to develop domestic training and to bring home to the public the value of such training for the individual and for the community. As a result, the number of pupils in domestic science schools and evening classes increased considerably in the last few years. At present, however, there is no uniform curriculum for domestic science training, and the training does not meet the needs of the population as a whole.

The committee had been asked, if it thought it necessary, to submit proposals for the organisation of a single system for the training of housewives and domestic servants, for the organisation of satisfactory school courses (in vocational schools, domestic science schools, etc.), and for the training of domestic science teachers. It felt, however, that it was concerned solely with the problem of the preparation of women for domestic work. It draws attention to the necessity for making it compulsory for boys as well as girls to have a certain period of domestic training, as is the case, for example, in Norway.

There are two possible types of preparation for domestic work: the first is practical work in a household under the direction of an experienced housewife; the second is theoretical and practical training in school.

The committee considered that what was chiefly required was to develop domestic training in schools so that such training would be available throughout the whole country. If subsequently it was found necessary to consider the problem of vocational training in approved households, this should, in the committee's opinion, be done mainly under the apprenticeship legislation.

*The Bill Submitted by the Committee.*

In the Bill which it drew up, the Committee proposes that all domestic training for girls should be under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. In dealing with preparation for domestic work, the Ministry should have the assistance of an advisory committee of experts on various forms of domestic training, both in towns and in rural districts. The State Council on Domestic Work should be represented on this committee.

All girls should receive domestic training during the last two years of the period of compulsory school attendance. The Ministry would draw up the curriculum, which would be the same for the whole country, and which would be given in all public schools and in all approved private schools in receipt of a State grant.

The Bill further provides that every girl between the ages of 14 and 20 should have the possibility of attending a three-year course in domestic science following the training given in the elementary school. The curriculum for this course would be drawn up by the Minister of Education and there would be three consecutive classes of 100 to 150 hours each. The curriculum would include the following subjects: cleaning, cooking, including the theory of nutrition, qualities of goods, housekeeping, the preparation of accounts and family budgets, the theory of hygiene and child welfare, needle-work, the maintenance of utensils, and laundry work.

The courses would be free, but the Minister might arrange for a small fee to be charged, possibly on condition that the fee would be refunded to those who regularly attended the courses.

In each county there would be a committee on domestic training, consisting of six members under the chairmanship of the governor. This committee would be responsible for supervising the training provided for girls between the ages of 14 and 20 years. The committee would decide in what place the training should be organised, take decisions as regards the curriculum, appoint the teachers, etc.

In each centre in which domestic training was organised, a local committee would be set up, consisting of three to five members, to supervise the training and take decisions on all points not falling within the competence of other authorities. The training would be given by certificated teachers of domestic science or by women specially trained for the purpose.

It would be desirable to co-ordinate the two schemes of training, because the three-year courses for girls between the ages of 14 and 20 would not provide full-time employment for a teacher, and the elementary schools in country districts often have several women teachers whose time is not fully occupied. It would be in the interests of the teachers and of the community to utilise the available time of these teachers as far as possible, in which case they could be given permanent contracts with the right to a pension. The local committees mentioned above would be responsible for ensuring this co-ordination.

The Bill provides for a State grant to domestic science schools giving not less than five months' advanced vocational training, both theoretical and practical, to young women on the basis of the knowledge gained during the three-year courses for those between the ages of 14 and 20 years. If pupils attending these schools were in difficult financial circumstances, the schools might receive a subsidy of 40 kr. per pupil in respect of two-thirds of the total number of pupils, and this subsidy might be extended at a later stage.

The Bill also provides for State grants to institutions for training domestic science teachers. Admission to such institutions would be

granted to those who had followed the three-year course for girls between the ages of 14 and 20 or some equivalent course and the five-month course in a domestic science school. Here again grants would be paid in respect of pupils whose financial situation made it necessary.

The committee thought that the course of training for domestic science teachers should be three years, but it was considered desirable to leave the decision to the Ministry of Education in consultation with the committees on domestic training. The curriculum for the training of teachers of domestic science in elementary schools would also be drawn up by the Minister of Education, who should take into account the fact that these teachers should also fulfil the conditions required for the training of girls between the ages of 14 and 20 years.

From time to time teachers of both types should, in accordance with rules to be drawn up by the Ministry of Education, attend refresher courses organised by the State. Attendance at these courses would be free of charge and the teachers concerned would receive a travelling allowance, a subsistence allowance, and if necessary a grant towards the cost of a substitute during their absence. By decision of the Minister, other teachers of domestic science and advisers on domestic questions might be permitted to attend these courses, and the State might also grant subsidies in respect of these persons.

The Bill also mentions grants to pupils attending other domestic science courses, such as those for adults who have not been able to attend the supplementary domestic science courses or those who wish to specialise in some particular branch.

Domestic science teaching in elementary schools and in courses for girls between the ages of 14 and 20, as well as the training for domestic science teachers, should be under the supervision of a woman inspector, who would be a civil servant and would assist the county committees mentioned above. If necessary the Minister of Education would appoint one or two assistants to help this inspector. The State would also exercise supervision over domestic science training in all other institutes, schools, and courses, in receipt of Government grants.

It is pointed out that in recent years there has often been a certain confusion between domestic science schools approved by the State and those subsidised by private undertakings as a means of advertising their products. The Bill therefore proposes that schools of the latter type should be required to make it perfectly plain in their publications that they are managed or subsidised by the undertakings concerned. The same provision would apply to the activities of domestic economy organisations.