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AGRICULTURAL LABOUR IN ENGLAND AND WALES

PART II
FARM WORKERS' EARNINGS
1917-1951

by

E. MEJER, Mag.Sc., M.Sc.

University of Nottingham School of Agriculture
Department of Agricultural Economics
Sutton Bonington
Loughborough.

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FOREWORD.

In an earlier report Mr. Mejer reviewed the changes in conditions of agricultural labour in England and Wales during the period 1900 to 1920.[1] The fourth chapter of this report discussed the earnings of agricultural workers during the first 20 years of the century. In this study Mr. Mejer takes up again the story of wages with the Corn Production Act of 1917 and carries it forward to the present day. This period of 34 years has been one of tremendous importance to agricultural workers. Politically, economically and socially they have strengthened their position as a unit of the national economy until now they have achieved the recognition they have been striving for over a century.

With the development of mechanisation they have declined in number and their influence at the polling booths has become less. But the casting of votes is only one aspect of political influence. In other ways they have achieved more power in shaping the policy of the nation. Both in and out of the House of Commons, the agricultural worker has become a real force. He and his fellows have not become a political party but they have certainly ceased to be the pawns of political parties. Economic opportunities during the 20th century have served the farm worker well. The increased demand for the services of a diminishing supply or workers, the widespread advance in the standard of rural education and the development of transport which has brought the country dweller into close contact with many of the amenities of town life are noteworthy examples.

Two dates stand out particularly in the last 30 years. First, in 1924 the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act re-established the statutory control of wages and conditions of employment which had been abandoned in favour of the voluntary principle when the Corn Production Acts were repealed in 1921. Second, in 1939 World War II started. Almost overnight the farm worker became a key war-worker. Without him starvation stared the nation in the face. And exceedingly well he played his part. The needs of the nation could only be met by agricultural changes bordering on the revolutionary. Not only did the accumulated skills of centuries enable the farm worker to play his part in the field and the farm during these changes but he was now equipped educationally and socially to play an important part in the council chamber.

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1 E. MEJER, M.Sc., *Agricultural Labour in England and Wales, Part I*, 1900-1920. Department of Agricultural Economics, University of Nottingham School of Agriculture, Sutton Bonington, Loughborough. 4s. 0d.

With a few isolated exceptions World War II constitutes the first national emergency in which the farm worker *qua* farm worker has been recognised as one worthy of consultation in the national interests.

In this report Mr. Mejer has confined himself mainly to movements in wages and hours and much hitherto unco-ordinated data have been brought together to illustrate the main trends. Other aspects of the situation such as housing, education, composition and quality of labour are not discussed but the main lines of development are made clear and in this and the earlier report a concise indication is given of the wage position of the agricultural worker during the present century.

WM. E. HEATH,

Head of Department of Agricultural Economics.

INTRODUCTION.

Study of progress made by the agricultural industry within the last few decades shows an impressive array of technical developments. Discoveries made in the fields of engineering, chemistry, botany, biology and other sciences, and their application to agriculture followed each other so quickly and so effectively that the achievements made are often credited exclusively to the material improvements in the techniques and methods of agricultural production. It is less often realised that progress made in the technical field would not be possible if it had not been associated with fundamental changes in attitudes of mind, in receptiveness to novel ideas and in human relationships in the agricultural community generally. It would be difficult to establish how far present day achievements of agriculture are due to the technical progress which made operations and tasks involved in producing farm commodities easier and more efficient, and how far social and political changes have created demand for better and more efficient methods thus stimulating inventive thought and the large scale application of scientific discoveries to farming. There is no doubt, however, that in farming, perhaps to a greater degree than in any other industry, the rate and the nature of progress are determined by the qualities, failings and objectives of the human element, the prime mover of every productive activity.

The human factor in British farming is represented by three main groups of people: landlords, farmers and hired workers. History provides many examples of apparently conflicting interests and of uncompromising attitudes adopted by representatives of each section of the farming community. Such conflicts may have been justified at the time by the prevailing social and political standards. In most cases, however, they originated from the inability of one group to appreciate the problems and the needs of the other and from a shortsighted belief in the possibility of building a prosperous and efficient industry through the prosperity and economic security of only one class.

Conditions have changed and today there is a growing awareness of the need for close co-operation between all those engaged in the industry, irrespective of their social and political beliefs, as the only way to achieving efficiency, greater bargaining power and economic security for all. Co-operation means mutual trust and understanding and neither can be fully achieved without a full knowledge of the background of the co-operating parties.

Since the First World War there have been many changes in the conditions of agricultural employment. The object of this

report is to bring together and to describe these changes and so assist students of modern agricultural development in England and Wales to obtain a more complete picture of conditions under which farm workers lived and worked.

The report includes information on changes in earnings and on those conditions of employment which were closely related to earnings in the form of either statutory provisions or customary practices. It does not deal with such important aspects of the labour problem in agriculture as changes in the demand for and the supply of labour, workers' housing, social insurances, development of the trade union movement and many other problems associated with the utilisation of labour. Each of these aspects opens a wide field of study and deserves to be given full consideration. But in the hand to mouth existence which farm workers in England and Wales led until relatively recently the question of wages and working hours was uppermost in their minds. It is felt, therefore, that these problems should be examined in the first place.

For the purpose of considering changes in working conditions in farming the field of study is divided into three main periods. The first statutory control of wages which operated from 1917 to 1921, the period of Conciliation Commitees from 1921 to 1924, and the period of re-established statutory controls of wages and conditions of employment from 1924 onwards. It should be remembered, however, that during the last 30 years conditions of agricultural employment have been affected not only by the statutory controls or their absence, but by a great many serious economic, social and political changes.

The introduction of the statutory minimum wage in agriculture in 1917 was important not so much because of its effect upon the level of earnings and other conditions of employment as because of its recognition of the farm workers' right to participate collectively in wage negotiations with their employers. The statutory minimum wage introduced by the Corn Production Act, 1917 was related to the guaranteed prices for agricultural commodities and it lasted only as long as the post-war economic prosperity. The economic depression which followed resulted in a decline in prices and in the replacement of the statutory minimum wage by a wage negotiated voluntarily through the Conciliation Committees. In practice this meant the return to individual bargaining and a deterioration in the conditions of agricultural employment. The principle of collective bargaining through the representatives of workers and employers was, however, maintained and with the stabilisation of general economic conditions the statutory control of wages was re-established in 1924.

From the passing of the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1924 until the outbreak of the Second World War there was a series of improvements in the living and working conditions of agricultural workers in spite of many setbacks arising from the unfavourable economic conditions which affected agriculture, particularly during the depression in the 1930's. Improvement in wage rates was the chief object of organised farm labour during that period but repeated efforts were also made to improve general conditions of employment. The result was a reduction in working hours, inclusion of farm workers in unemployment insurance, introduction of holidays with pay and general stabilisation of the workers' entitlement to holidays. Owing to these improvements, by 1939 agricultural workers were in a much stronger economic and social position than they were on the eve of the First World War.

The six war years, 1939 to 1945, brought further changes in the economic position of agriculture. The need for producing more food at home became one of the chief problems of the war-time economy and this had a considerable effect on the problem of farm labour. The ploughing-up campaign and the expansion of the agricultural industry generally called for an increase in the supply of labour at the time when there was a heavy demand from every quarter on the national sources of man-power. The labour shortage was, to some extent, offset by an unprecedented development of mechanisation in agriculture. Extra supplies of labour were obtained in the form of the Women's Land Army and various voluntary organisations. The former took over regular duties in all branches of farming, and the latter were particularly appreciated in the periods of urgent seasonal operations. In the later years of the war employment of prisoners of war in farming reached considerable proportions and eased the shortage.

War conditions helped to level out the differences in the social status and outlook of various classes of the population and the dependence of the national economy in the post-war years on the successful prosecution of the export campaign increased enormously the prestige and the bargaining power of the working class.

In agriculture the transition from war to peace-time production was effected with only few adjustments. During the war our inability to maintain food imports at the desired level necessitated the expansion of agricultural production at home. After 1945 the importance of some factors restricting the importation of food from abroad during the war declined but their place was taken by a new set of conditions which made imperative the maintenance of the home grown food production at a high level.

It was realised that this objective would not be achieved by a series of day to day emergency measures however effective they had been under exceptional war-time conditions. An agricultural policy was required so designed as to secure for the industry conditions favourable to long term planning, improvement and expansion in every way.

Such a policy aiming at stability and efficiency in the agricultural industry was implemented in the Agriculture Act, 1947 which was preceded by a few months by the introduction of the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1947.[1] The two Acts without doubt constitute most important pieces of agricultural legislation. The former created conditions essential to economic development of farming as a whole, and the latter brought together and gave permanent basis to the economic improvements achieved by farm workers in the conditions of agricultural employment.

In addition to the problems arising from the economic effects of the last war, the country, since 1945, has entered upon an ambitious programme of social reforms. Some of these have been introduced only very recently and it is too early to assess their efficiency, practical value and their power of resistance under adverse economic conditions. At this stage it can only be stated that the introduction of the policy of full employment, the process of re-distribution of incomes now taking place, the provision of the National Health Service, etc. should be of immense value to the welfare of the labouring classes.

Workers in agriculture shared the general improvements in working conditions and in earnings, and although the level of wages in agriculture is still below the level of wages in other industries, the rapid rate of increase of agricultural wages in recent years has reduced the disparity which before the Second World War existed between the industrial and agricultural earnings.

Improvements in the living and working conditions of agricultural workers in England and Wales are often described as revolutionary. This is true so far as the nature of the improvements is concerned. It is not true, however, as regards methods by which these improvements were achieved. The evolution stimulated by modern economic, social and political ideas was rapid but nevertheless it was maintained within the bounds of restraint and consideration for other sections of the community. The policy of restraint and good statesmanship, advocated by the early leaders of the agricultural trade union movement, served agricultural workers well in the past, even though it may have been hard to bear at times, and its continuation will be one of the greatest assets in the future development of agricultural industry.

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1 *The Agriculture Act*, 1947, 10 and 11 Geo. 6, Ch. 48.
The Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1947, 10 and 11 Geo. 6, Ch. 15.

CHAPTER I.

ESTABLISHMENT OF STATUTORY CONTROL OF WAGES IN AGRICULTURE.

1. CORN PRODUCTION ACT, 1917.

The statutory minimum wage in agriculture was introduced by the Corn Production Act, 1917. It was an instrument of an agricultural policy aiming at the increase of food supplies threatened by blockade and by the effects of the prolonged war. Such a policy could not pass over the demands for the establishment of a statutory minimum wage in agriculture made repeatedly on behalf of workers. The Corn Production Act was intended to continue in force until the end of 1922 and the main provisions regulating wages were contained in Parts II and V, and in the First Schedule to the Act setting out the constitution of the Agricultural Wages Board and the procedure which the Board had to follow.[1] Part II of the Act dealt with the principle of a minimum wage in agriculture making the employment of able-bodied workers at a rate lower than 25s. 0d. a week (of "ordinary day's work") a punishable offence. Summary conviction for this offence under Section 4 (Part II) of the Act rendered an employer liable to a fine not exceeding £20 and to a fine not exceeding £1 for each day after the conviction if the offence was continued. Sections 5, 6 and 7 (Part II) of the Act directed the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries to establish, after consultation with the Minister of Labour, an Agricultural Wages Board. The Board was empowered to fix and to vary the minimum rates of wages for all farm workers or for some special classes of workers either in the whole of England and Wales or in some areas, as they found necessary. The Board was also empowered to exempt from the provisions of the Act men, who, for reasons of age or health, were incapable of normal physical efficiency and could not, therefore, be regarded as able-bodied men within the meaning of the Act. In the definition of an "able-bodied man" it was stated clearly that the provisions of the Act applied to male workers and the term "able-bodied" implied that the age of workers could not be below 18. Rates of wages of workmen or youths had, therefore, to be calculated on that basis. The Act gave workers the right to complain to the Agricultural Wages Board on any infringements of the fixed minimum wage by the employers, and the Board was authorised to direct the adjustment of wages to be made by the employer. The sum determined by the Board and due to the workers was regarded legally as a civil debt. In Part V of the Act, powers were given to the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries to make regulations requiring

[1] *Corn Production Act*, 1917. 7 and 8 Geo. 5, Ch. 46.

the Agricultural Wages Board to define the benefits ("allowances") which may be regarded as payments in kind instead of cash and the appropriate rates of their conversion. Such a definition would enable the Agricultural Wages Board to limit or, if necessary, to prohibit the conversion of cash wages into benefits paid in kind and would generally help the Board to intervene in disputes arising from the lack of a clear definition of the nature and value of benefits. Similarly, the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries was authorised to issue regulations requiring from the Agricultural Wages Board a definition of overtime employment on which the rates of pay for overtime work could be based.

The constitution of the Agricultural Wages Board was based on Sections 11, 12, 13 and 17 of the Trade Boards Act, 1909, suitably modified and incorporated in the First Schedule to the Corn Production Act, 1917. The Agricultural Wages Board was to consist of members representing both employers and workers in equal proportions, and of independent members appointed by the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, including the chairman and the secretary of the Agricultural Wages Board. These independent members were not to exceed one quarter of the total number of members of the Board. Women were eligible for membership of the Agricultural Wages Board as well as men. The First Schedule to the Act left the establishment of the District Wages Committees to the discretion of the Agricultural Wages Board and the Board was also authorised to delegate to those committees such powers and duties which, in the opinion of the Board, would be necessary. An authority which could not be delegated was that of fixing minimum rates of wages. In the matter of wage fixing District Committees were directed to report and to make necessary recommendations to the Agricultural Wages Board, but the authority to fix or to vary or to cancel minimum rates of wages was reserved exclusively for the Agricultural Wages Board.

The first meeting of the Agricultural Wages Board was held on the 6th December, 1917. The Board consisted of 39 members, seven of whom were independent members appointed by the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries and the rest representatives of farmers and workers in equal proportions. By May, 1918, 39 District Wages Committees were set up in England and Wales and the wage fixing work began.

2. OPERATION OF THE STATUTORY MINIMUM WAGE.

The first order fixing a minimum rate under the Act came into operation in Norfolk on the 20th May, 1918. It fixed the wage at a level of 30s. 0d. for an ordinary male worker for a 54 hour week

in summer, and a 48 hour week in winter. Overtime rates were fixed at 8½d. an hour on weekdays and 10d. an hour on Sundays. This order also granted Saturday half-holiday although this did not become operative until the 3rd March, 1919, when the "half-holiday" order of the Agricultural Wages Board came into force. The minimum rates of wages rose fast after the establishment of the Agricultural Wages Board. In Norfolk, for example, the rate of 30s. 0d. operative in May 1918, rose within one year to 36s. 8d. In April 1920 it was raised to 42s. 0d. and in August 1920 to 46s. 0d. By 1920 the minimum wages varied in other counties from 42s. 0d. to 48s. 0d. a week for an ordinary worker and higher still for special classes. The rates for overtime also rose to about an average of 1s. 1d. per hour on weekdays and 1s. 3d. on Sundays. Table 1 gives a summary of the movement of wages, cost of living index and prices of agricultural products from 1917 to 1921. The highest level of wages was reached in August 1921.

AGRICULTURAL WAGES, PRICES AND COST OF LIVING. [1]

TABLE 1.

Date	Average weekly minimum wages of agricultural workers.		Per cent increase compared with pre-war.		
			Agric. wages	Cost of living	Prices of agricultural produce
	s.	d.			
August 1917	25	0	39	80	97
July 1918—May 1919	30	6	69	114	141
May 1919—April 1920	37	10½	110	120	169
April 1920—August 1920	43	0½	139	144	186
Aug. 1920—August 1921	46	10½	160	140	160
October 1921	40	1	122	110	86

[1] Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. Report of the Proceedings under the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1924, for the year ending 30th September, 1925. Appendix VIII. H.M.S.O. 1926.

In May 1920 the Minister of Agriculture received a deputation of the agricultural members of the Workers' Union in the Home Counties. The deputation pressed the Minister for an increase of wage rates in agriculture on the grounds that the minimum wage of 42s. 6d. then in force was totally inadequate owing to the high cost of living. They submitted to the Minister a sample budget of a family of an agricultural worker consisting of a man, his wife and four children and claimed that weekly expenditure of such a family on bare necessities amounted to 47s. 6d. They also submitted that the cost of living in villages was, in fact, heavier than in towns and ended with a threat of a strike unless these unsatisfactory conditions were improved[2]. The Minister

[2] *The Journal of the Ministry of Agriculture.* Vol. XXVII. No. 3. June 1920.

assured workers that the proposal for an increase of the minimum wage to 50s. 0d. was before the Agricultural Wages Board who would consider it at their next meeting. The claim of the disparity between the cost of living and earnings of agricultural workers was somewhat belated at that time. It is true that when the minimum wage was first established the cost of living exceeded the minimum wage in relation to 1914 conditions by 41 points and that the level of wages continued to lag behind the subsequent rises in the cost of living. But in the spring of 1920 there were already signs of a recession in prices and in the autumn of that year the level of agricultural wages in relation to pre-war conditions was higher than the cost of living. It is important to remember that the agricultural wages reviewed in Table 1 represent average cash wages of an ordinary worker, and that they were higher for special classes of workers although there were also cases where farmers interpreted minimum wage as a standard wage. But there was no unemployment and better wages could often be secured as long as the economic boom lasted. In any case these cash wages did not represent the total earnings of an agricultural worker's family and for the purpose of comparing total earnings with the family's cost of living, earnings of other members of the family, overtime, special payments and benefits not reckoned against cash wages should also have been included.

Table 2 indicates that from the end of 1919 to the end of 1921 farm workers' wages compared favourably with the general index of wages and the cost of living, and that at the latter period the level of agricultural wages was well above the level of the cost of living index or the wages of the dockers, miners and the general wage index. It was estimated by Bowley[1] that during that period out of 12 principal trades only bricklayers, engineers' labourers and railwaymen secured rises of wages greater than agricultural workers.

The work of the Agricultural Wages Board was not confined to the regulation of cash wages, and not less important was its influence on the hours of work. In answer to the demand for an increase of wages by £1 a week made by workers in January 1919, a settlement was reached by the Agricultural Wages Board in March of that year[2]. In addition to the general increase of wages by 6s. 6d. for all male ordinary workers over 21 years of age and proportional increases for younger workers, the hours for which minimum rate was payable were

1 Quoted by J. A. VENN, Litt.D. *The foundations of Agricultural Economics together with an Economic History of British Agriculture during and after the Great War.* Cambridge University Press, 1933 (First Edition, 1923).

2 A. W. ASHBY. *The Work of the Agricultural Wages Board in* 1919. Reprint from the Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England. Vol. 80, 1919.

WAGE AND COST OF LIVING INDEX NUMBERS 1914 to 1921. [1]

TABLE 2.

Date	Wages and cost of living (1924 =100)				
	General wage index	Agric'l. wage index	Dock labour wage index	Coal miners' wage index	Cost of living index
December 1914	59½	59	50	73	55
January 1919	121	112½	106	162	122
December 1919	132	135	104	162	124
December 1920	159	165	132	200	149
December 1921	127	138	116	109½	110

[1] *Special Memorandum No.* 50, *5th May*, 1947. London and Cambridge Economic Service.

reduced to 54 hours in summer and 48 hours in winter. Since overtime rates of pay were at the same time increased and hours in excess of the 54/48 hours week treated as overtime, the settlement meant an important improvement in workers' earnings. Customary hours of work for special classes of workers, stockmen, horsemen and shepherds were allowed to continue in 14 districts, and hours ranging from 52 to 61 were retained in the following counties. In Oxfordshire 52 hours throughout the year, Denbigh and Flint 58 hours winter and 61 hours summer and Carnarvon 61 hours throughout the year. A further reduction of hours came in October 1919 bringing the average hours per week down from 52 to 49½ (50 hours in summer and 48 hours in winter). Exceptions were made in Cheshire where the hours were later established at the level of 54 per week throughout the year, and in six other districts where hours varied for different special classes of workers from 57 to 63 in summer and from 53 to 63 in winter. This position remained largely unchanged until the end of the operation of the Corn Production Act, 1917 in October 1921. A summary of the minimum weekly wages, overtime rates and hours of work for various classes of workers at the time of the highest level of agricultural earnings under the Corn Production Act, 1917, is given in Tables 3 and 4.

The hours of work to which minimum wage rates applied did not include meal times, but the time in which work could not be done due to bad weather and workers were kept in readiness on the farm, was included in the hours covered by the minimum wage. The hours of work recognised for the minimum weekly wage did not include "walking" time[2] although there were cases in which farmers allowed their workers to include in the working hours time taken by walking to and from work. As regards benefits or advantages which could be reckoned against cash payments to workers, the Agricultural Wages Board

[2] In the case of a worker claiming that under the Act he was entitled to payment from the time he left home to start work (about half an hour one way), it was ruled at the Melton County Court on 1st October, 1920, that there were no legal grounds for such a claim and the action was dismissed.

WAGES, HOURS OF WORK AND THE RATES OF PAYMENTS FOR OVERTIME OF "ORDINARY" WORKERS ACCORDING TO AGE[1].

TABLE 3.

Counties	Minimum weekly wage of all classes of ordinary ("other") workers according to age									Hours of work per week		Overtime rates per hour	
	Under 14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	21 & over	Summer	Winter	Weekdays	Sundays
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.				
Berkshire, Buckingham, Cornwall, Derby, Devon, Dorset, Hampshire, Hereford, Leicester, Rutland, Northampton, (including Soke of Peterborough), Nottingham, Oxford, Shropshire, Somerset, Warwick, Wiltshire, Worcester, Cambridge (including Isle of Ely), Huntingdon, Bedford, Gloucester, Norfolk, Suffolk, Anglesey, Carnarvon, Brecon, Radnor, Denbigh, Flint, Merioneth, Montgomery, Pembroke, Carmarthen, Cardigan.	10 0	15 0	19 6	24 0	30 6	38 6	40 6	43 0	46 0	50 (excluding Sunday)	48	Ranging from 3d. for age group under 14 to 1s. 2d. for age group 21 and over	Ranging from 3½d. for age group under 14 to 1s. 5d. for age group 21 and over

1 Wages Board Gazette. Vol. III, No. 61. 1st March, 1921.

TABLE 3(a).

WAGES, HOURS OF WORK AND THE RATES OF PAYMENTS FOR OVERTIME OF "ORDINARY" WORKERS ACCORDING TO AGE[1].

Counties	Minimum weekly wage af all classes of ordinary ("other") workers according to age									Hours of work per week		Overtime rates per hour	
	Under 14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	21 & over	Summer	Winter	Weekdays	Sundays
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.				
Stafford, Sussex, Essex, Hertford	10 0	15 0	19 6	24 0	30 6	38 6	40 6	43 0	46 6	50 (excluding Sunday)	48	as in Table 3	
Kent, Lancashire (excluding the Furness Dist.), Surrey	10 0	15 6	20 6	25 0	30 6	39 0	42 0	44 6	47 6	50 (excluding Sunday)	48	3d. to 1s. 2½d.	3½d. to 1s. 5½d.
Cumberland, and Westmorland (including the Furness District of Lancashire)	10 0	15 6	20 6	25 0	30 6	39 0	42 0	44 6	48 0	50 (excluding Sunday)	48	as above	
Middlesex, Lincoln	10 0	16 0	21 0	25 6	31 0	40 0	42 6	45 6	48 6	50 (excluding Sunday)	48	as above	
Yorkshire	10 0	16 0	21 0	25 6	31 0	40 0	42 6	45 6	49 0	50 (excluding Sunday)	48	3d. to 1s. 3d.	3½d. to 1s. 6d.
Glamorgan and Monmouth	10 0	16 6	21 6	26 6	32 0	41 0	43 6	46 6	50 0	50 (excluding Sunday)	48	as above	
Northumberland and Durham	10 0	16 6	21 6	26 6	32 0	41 0	43 6	46 6	50 6	50 (excluding Sunday)	48	3d. to 1s. 3½d.	3½d. to 1s. 6½d.
Cheshire	11 0	17 0	22 6	28 0	35 6	44 6	46 6	49 0	52 0	54 (excluding Sunday)	54	3d. to 1s. 2½d.	3½d. to 1s. 5½d.

[1] Wages Board Gazette. Vol. III. No. 61. 1st March, 1921.

WAGES, HOURS OF WORK AND RATES OF PAYMENTS FOR OVERTIME OF SPECIAL CLASSES OF WORKERS ACCORDING TO AGE[1].

TABLE 3(b).

Counties	Minimum weekly wage of special classes of workers according to age.									Hours of work per week		Overtime rates per hour	
	Under 14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	21 & over	Summer	Winter	Weekdays	Sundays
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.				
Cambridge (including Isle of Ely), **Huntingdon** and **Bedford :** horsemen, cowmen and shepherds	—	—	—	—	—	47 6	49 6	52 6	56 6	59 (including Sunday)	57	1s. 0d. to 1s. 2½d.	1s. 2½d. to 1s. 5½d.
Cheshire : head stockmen, teamsmen, or shepherds.	—	—	—	—	—	48 6	50 6	53 0	56 0	54 (excluding Sunday)	54	1s. 1½d. to 1s. 3½d.	1s. 4d. to 1s. 6½d.
Second stockmen, teamsmen or shepherds.	—	—	—	—	—	46 6	48 6	51 0	54 0	(as above)		1s. 1d. to 1s. 3d.	1s. 3½d. to 1s. 6d.
Cumberland and Westmorland (including the Furness district of Lancs.) : horsemen, cattlemen or shepherds	—	—	—	—	—	52 6	56 6	60 0	64 0	63 (including Sunday)	63	1s. 0½d. to 1s. 3d.	1s. 3d. to 1s. 6½d.
Essex : (employment wholly or mainly in market gardening)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	50 6	50 (excluding Sunday)	48	1s. 3½d.	1s. 6½d.
Gloucester : horsemen.	—	—	—	—	—	47 6	50 0	52 6	56 6	58 (including Sunday)	60	1s. 0d. to 1s. 2½d.	1s. 2½d. to 1s. 5½d.
Stockmen and shepherds	—	—	—	—	—	49 0	51 6	54 6	58 0	60 (including Sunday)	60	1s. 0d. to 1s. 2½d.	1s. 2½d. to 1s. 5½d.

1 Wages Board Gazette. Vol. III, No. 61. 1st March, 1921

WAGES, HOURS OF WORK AND RATES OF PAYMENTS FOR OVERTIME OF SPECIAL CLASSES OF WORKERS ACCORDING TO AGE[1].

TABLE 3(c).

Counties	Minimum weekly wage of special classes of workers according to age.									Hours of work per week		Overtime rates per hour	
	Under 14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	21 & over	Summer	Winter	Weekdays	Sundays
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.				
Gloucester : (*continued*)													
under-horsemen	—	—	—	—	—	44 0	46 0	49 0	52 6	54 (including Sunday)	57	1s. 0d. to 1s. 2½d.	1s. 2½d. to 1s. 5d.
under-stockmen or under-shepherds	—	—	—	—	—	46 0	48 6	51 6	55 0	57 (including Sunday)	57	1s. 0d. to 1s. 2½d.	1s. 2½d. to 1s. 5½d.
Norfolk : teamsmen, cowmen, or shepherds	—	—	—	—	—	38 6	40 6	43 0	46 0	50 (excluding Sunday)	48	11½d. to 1s. 2d.	1s. 2d .to 1s. 5d.
sheep-tenders or bullock-tenders	—	—	—	—	—	38 6	40 6	43 0	46 0	as above		as above	
Northumberland and Durham : shepherds or whole-time sheep-tenders	—	—	—	—	—	—	56 0	58 6	62 0	hours customary in the area		—	—
Suffolk : horsemen, stockmen or shepherds	—	—	—	—	—	38 6	40 6	43 0	46 0	50 (excluding Sunday)	48	11½d. to 1s. 2d.	1s. 2d. to 1s. 5d.
Anglesey and Carnarvon : horsemen, cowmen, shepherds, bailiffs	—	—	—	—	—	49 0	51 6	54 6	58 0	61 (including Sunday)	58	1s. 0d. to 1s. 2d½.	1s. 2½d. to 1s. 5½d.

[1] Wages Board Gazette. Vol. III, No. 61. 1st March, 1921.

WAGES, HOURS OF WORK AND RATES OF PAYMENTS FOR OVERTIME OF SPECIAL CLASSES OF WORKERS ACCORDING TO AGE. [1]

TABLE 3(d).

Counties	Minimum weekly wage of special classes of workers according to age.									Hours of work per week		Overtime rates per week	
	Under 14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	21 & over	Summer	Winter	Weekdays	Sundays
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.				
Denbigh and Flint : teamsmen, cattlemen, cowmen, shepherds, bailiffs	—	—	—	—	—	49 0	51 6	54 6	58 0	61 (including Sunday)	58	1s. 0d. to 1s. 2½d.	1s. 2½d. to 1s. 5½d.
Merioneth and Montgomery : stockmen, teamsters, carters, shepherds	—	—	—	—	—	44 0	46 6	49 0	52 6	56 (including Sunday)	53	1s. 0d. to 1s. 2½d.	1s. 2½d. to 1s. 5d.
Workers wholly or partially boarded and lodged by the employers and whose duties include attending horses and other stock.	11 6	17 6	22 6	28 0	35 0	—	—	—	—	as above		3d. to 9½d.	3½d. to 11½d.

1 Wages Board Gazette. Vol. III, No. 61. 1st March, 1921.

TABLE 4.

MINIMUM AND OVERTIME RATES OF PAY OF FEMALE AGRICULTURAL WORKERS IN ENGLAND AND WALES IN FORCE ON 1st MARCH, 1921[1].

In the areas of the District Wages Committees for :	Ages	Minimum rates per hour	Overtime rates per hour	
			on weekdays	on Sundays
		s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
Yorkshire	18 years and over	0 10	1 0½	1 3
	17 and under 18 years	0 7	0 9	0 10½
	16 ,, ,, 17 ,,	0 6	0 7½	0 9
	15 ,, ,, 16 ,,	0 5	0 6	0 7½
	14 ,, ,, 15 ,,	0 4	0 5	0 6
	under 14 years	0 3	0 4	0 4½
All other parts of England and Wales	18 years and over	0 8	0 10	1 0
	17 and under 18 years	0 6	0 7½	0 9
	16 ,, ,, 17 ,,	0 5½	0 7	0 8
	15 ,, ,, 16 ,,	0 5	0 6	0 7½
	14 ,, ,, 15 ,,	0 4	0 5	0 6
	under 14 years	0 3	0 4	0 4½

NOTE : The normal working hours to which minimum rates apply are :—

6½ hours on one weekday in each week throughout the year in whole of England and Wales.

8½ hours in summer and 8 hours in winter in Cambridge, Huntingdon, Bedford, Cumberland and Westmorland, Derby, Devon, Dorset, Hertford, Middlesex, Kent, Northampton, Nottingham, Wiltshire.

8½ hours all the year round in Cheshire, Lancashire, Shropshire, Glamorgan, Monmouth, Merioneth, Montgomery.

8 hours all the year round in the remaining parts of England and Wales.

[1] Wages Board Gazette. Vol. III, No. 61. 1st March, 1921.

endeavoured to bring some uniformity to their values. The three main forms of benefits were cottages, milk and potatoes. Cottages were reckoned at the rate of 3s. 0d. per week, new milk at 6½d. per quart or at the local wholesale price whichever was smaller, and skimmed or separated milk at 8d. per gallon. The value of potatoes was originally calculated according to variety and grade and in the order of the Agricultural Wages Board dated 6th September, 1918, specifying "benefits and advantages" as part payment of wages, prices of potatoes ranged from £5. 5s. 0d. to £7. 10s. 0d. per ton.[1] By the Agricultural Wages Board's order operating from 13th December, 1920 no distinction was made between grades or varieties of potatoes, and new prices for the reckoning against wages were specified varying from £6 per ton in Norfolk to £10 per ton in Oxfordshire, Worcestershire, Anglesey, Carnarvon, Brecon, Radnor, Denbigh, Flint, Glamorgan, Monmouth, Merioneth, Montgomery, Pembroke, Carmarthen and Cardigan.[2] It was estimated[3] that payments in kind amounted to about eight per cent of the workers' wages.

The Agriculture Act, 1920 passed in December of that year, provided for an indefinite continuation of the Corn Production Act, 1917 and four years' notice by both Houses of Parliament would have to elapse before it could be suspended. But only six months later the Minister of Agriculture declared in Parliament (on the 8th June, 1921)[4] that the Government's policy was to decontrol agriculture and that the guarantees of both minimum prices of corn and minimum wages for agricultural workers would have to be abandoned after the harvest of 1921. The Corn Production Acts (Repeal) Bill was introduced and while it was read a second time in the House of Commons on July 5th, the Agricultural Wages Board was discussing the motion of the employers' representatives to reduce the existing minimum rates for adult male workers throughout the country to 40s. 0d. a week, adult female workers to 7d. per hour, to make proportionate reductions in the rates for special classes of workers, boys and girls, and to establish working hours at the rate of 50 hours per week in summer and 48 hours in winter, the overtime being paid at a rate 25 per cent higher than the minimum on weekdays and 50 per cent higher on Sundays. The motion was opposed by the workers' representatives who argued that the determination of rates of wages which could not have been enforced if the Agricultural Wages Board ceased to exist would serve no useful

1 A. W. ASHBY. *The work of the Agricultural Wages Board in* 1919. The Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England. Vol. 80. 1919.

2 *Wages Board Gazette.* Vol. II, No. 57. December, 1920.

3 A. G. L. ROGERS. *The agricultural labourer at home and abroad.* Wages Board Gazette. Vol. III, No. 59 and Vol. III, No. 63. 1921.

4 *The Journal of the Ministry of Agriculture.* Vol. XXVIII. April 1921—March 1922.

purpose. No agreement was reached over this motion and it was sent by the Board to the District Wages Committees for their consideration and comments.[1] The discussion was resumed by the Board on the 21st July, 1921 and it was decided by a majority to reduce the minimum weekly wage of an ordinary male adult worker by 6s. 0d. per week provided that the minimum rate in any area should not be less than 42s. 0d. per week. The original proposal for a proportional reduction of wages of boys and girls, special classes and hours of work and overtime rates was approved. The reduction of adult female workers' rates to 7d. per hour was accepted with the exception of Yorkshire where it was to be 8d.,[2] and the appropriate statutory Notices of Proposal were issued, followed by the order varying the minimum rates of wages which came into operation on the 5th September, 1921.

On the 19th August, 1921 the Corn Production Acts (Repeal) Bill received the Royal Assent bringing to an end as from the 1st October, 1921 the guaranteed prices and wages and the existence of the Agricultural Wages Board.

3. THE EFFECTS OF THE CORN PRODUCTION ACTS, 1917 AND 1920.

The primary importance of the statutory wage in agriculture introduced in 1917 is due to the fact that for the first time workers were admitted to the wage regulating machinery and granted equal rights with the employers to argue their case and to influence the decisions of the Agricultural Wages Board. The full weight of that achievement can be realised only in the light of the pre-war impotence of workers in the matter of influencing the level of their wages and conditions of employment. The importance of achieving the recognition of workers' right to participate in the determination of their wages and working conditions was not lessened by the fact that it was motivated chiefly by the exigencies of the war-time conditions and that it was tied up with the policy of guaranteed prices for the farmers. In spite of the protestations byt he Government and other spokesmen, the principle of relating the level of remuneration of workers to the profitableness of the industry remained unchanged and as soon as price conditions deteriorated wages were also forced down. But the long term effect of the first statutory wage regulating persisted throughout the years following 1917 and even in the years of the depression of the 1920's the workers' right to participate in the determination of wages could not be denied. Similarly, the efforts of the Agricultural Wages Board to achieve uniformity in relating hours of

1 *Wages Board Gazette.* Vol. III, No. 69. 20th July, 1921.

2 *Wages Board Gazette.* Vol. III, No. 70. 8th August, 1921.

work to rates of wages and to define overtime and "benefit" payments were very important. They had an immediate direct effect on agricultural conditions of work and earnings, and what is more important they introduced into the relationship between employers and workers in farming a permanent principle of protection of workers against underpayment and other evils born from undefined conditions of employment.

The immediate effects of the Corn Production Acts are evident from the preceding review of earnings in agriculture. The level of farm wages in this period was higher than ever before and was not reached again until after the outbreak of the Second World War.

The statutory regulation of farm wages in the period between 1917 and 1921, generally speaking, worked smoothly, but it must be remembered that it coincided with the period of high prices for agricultural products, and that farmers were prepared to meet higher cost of labour as long as they could make yet higher profits. The criticism of the statutory wage regulation on the part of farmers was therefore, based not so much on objections to the level of the farm workers' wages as on the resentment against what they regarded as interference in the relationship between the farmer and his workers. The note of apology for that "interference" can be detected in various contemporary official pronouncements. Sir Arthur Griffith Boscawen M.P., the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in his Liskeard speech[1] declared, for example, that although he knew that the Agricultural Wages Board was not popular with farmers, he might claim that its existence prevented great strikes and disturbances in agriculture such as had afflicted other industries. He agreed with farmers that the introduction of rigid factory hours on the farm must be steadily resisted. Farmers' representatives complained that fixed hours in relation to statutory wages were too short. On the one hand they claimed that even the best workers could not earn their minimum wage due to the time lost through bad weather and included in the "unreasonably short number of statutory working hours".[2] This shows that in spite of two years of operation of the Agricultural Wages Board there still existed some misunderstanding as regards payment for hours of work lost owing to bad weather. On the other hand farmers laid great stress on the uncertainty of farming and the difficulty of making profits sufficient to meet the payment of statutory wages, as though they believed in wages being part of the final share-out of profits made at the end of a production period and not one of the essential costs of production without which no profits whatever could be made.

1 *Wages Board Gazette.* Vol. II, No. 52. 1st October, 1920.
2 *Wages Board Gazette.* Vol. II, No. 52. 1st October, 1920.

Statistics of infringements of the statutory minimum wage regulations and orders are not available. At a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Gloucestershire Farmers' Union in 1921[1] it was stated that thousands of farmers paid their workers less than the statutory minimum wage. No undue weight could be attached to that statement and it was not borne out by any authoritative declaration. The published accounts[2] of the legal proceedings taken in the course of enforcement of the Agricultural Wages Board's orders provide, however, sufficient evidence of the character of those infringements. In the majority of cases these were concerned with underpayment of workers generally and in some cases with paying non-able-bodied men less than a minimum wage without first obtaining the necessary permit of exemption from a District Wages Committee. It is difficult to draw a line between the deliberate attempts on the part of farmers to avoid the payment of the statutory wage and underpayments arising from the traditionally vague conditions of the industrial relationship between the farmer and the worker. Cases of underpayment were rarely brought to court unless the worker left his employment. It was then revealed that usually they were the outcome of some verbal agreement between the farmer and the worker which, though in essence contrary to the provisions of the Corn Production Act, was at the time regarded as satisfactory by both parties. Generally speaking, especially on farms employing not more than two workers, no record of hours was kept, and beyond establishing the fact that the statutory wage regulations were not observed, courts had considerable difficulty in arriving at the exact amount of underpaid wages due to the worker.

There is no evidence of the statutory regulation of wages interfering with the amicable relations between workers and farmers. During the period 1917 to 1921 there was a tremendous development of trade unionism in agriculture. The estimated membership of the National Union of Agricultural Workers, which in 1917 was about 15,000, rose to about 53,000 in 1918 and to almost 127,000, in 1919, which in the history of that Union represented the highest membership ever achieved until the end of the Second World War.[3] The growth of trade unionism among agricultural workers was partly due to the general social and material progress which had taken place since the war. The exchange of views and the facilities to organise and to act as an organised body became easier, and economic conditions under which unemployment was almost non-existent and trade and industry flou-

1 *Wages Board Gazette.* Vol. III, No. 67. 1st June, 1921.

2 *Wages Board Gazette.* 1919 to 1921.

3 REG. GROVES. *Sharpen the Sickle. The History of the Farm Workers' Union.* 1949. Porcupine Press Ltd., London.

rished, improved the workers' bargaining position. But to some extent at least, the growth of trade unionism acknowledged the belief growing among workers in the effectiveness of collective bargaining illustrated by the guarantee of the minimum wage obtained in the Corn Production Act, 1917.

In so far as the development of trade organisations in farming was concerned, the farmers' attitude to what they regarded as restrictive practices had not changed and the evidence of that attitude was often reflected in the criticism of the enforcement of the Corn Production Acts on various occasions. But apart from this traditional outlook, the general body of farmers realised the advantages of the statutory minimum wage in preventing labour unrest and disputes which would have been unavoidable had the question of wages remained unaffected by the 1917 guarantees. Some farmers, though few of them admitted it openly, welcomed the new set-up and all of them whether they liked it or not, became accustomed to having problems of wages and industrial relations in farming discussed with workers' representatives over the Wages Board's table. The effect of meeting and discussing various problems in the atmosphere of partnership must have been beneficial to amicable relations between farmers and workers even if an agreement could not always be reached.

The wage fixing machinery of the Agricultural Wages Board created opportunities for training both farmers and workers in collective bargaining. It stimulated the sense of responsibility in both parties concerned, enabled workers to assert themselves and raised their status in relation to employers.

CHAPTER II.

VOLUNTARY CONCILIATION COMMITTEES.

1. CORN PRODUCTION ACTS (REPEAL) ACT, 1921.

The Corn Production Acts (Repeal) Act, 1921[1] came into operation on the 1st October, 1921. It repealed the Corn Production Acts, 1917 and 1920 and accordingly the Agricultural Wages Board ceased to exist. Provision was made in Section 1(b) of the Act that proceedings arising from the application of the Corn Production Acts and still pending at the time of passing of this Act would not be cancelled by virtue of the repeal, but that the place of the Agricultural Wages Board or the District Wages Committee concerned would be taken by the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries. But the most important part of the Act as regards wage regulation in agriculture was contained in Section 4 of the Act under the heading "Establishment of voluntary joint councils of employers and workmen in agriculture". This Section provided for the formation of local Joint Conciliation Committees in various areas. The committees were intended to replace the Agricultural Wages Board and the District Wages Committees, and the Minister of Agriculture was given powers to use such steps as he thought necessary to ensure the voluntary formation and continuation of the Conciliation Committees. The Act provided that these committees would consist of representatives of employers and workers and that their purpose would be to deal with wages, working hours and conditions of employment. Further details of the organisation of the committees provided by the Act were as follows :— The representatives of employers and workers on the District Wages Committees (but not the appointed members) at the time of the passing of the Act, were to form Interim Conciliation Committees which would operate until the formation in the area of a Conciliation Committee proper, but not longer than two years from the date of the passing of the Act. Vacancies occurring among the members of these Interim Committees were to be filled by the appropriate organisations (employers or workers) who apointed representatives to the District Wages Committee. Conciliation Committees did not have to cover the same areas as previously held by the District Wages Committees. They could cover smaller areas and they could make separate wage agreements for any part of the area in which they operated. Committees were given freedom to appoint an independent chairman who, however, was not entitled to vote unless on some particular matter determined by the committee on which his vote was authorised. The representatives of both groups on the committee,

[1] Corn Production Acts (Repeal) Act, 1921. 11 and 12 Geo. 5, Ch. 48.

i.e., employers and workers, had to have only one collective vote on any question. This meant that every resolution had to be approved by the majority of members on each side before it could be carried. Committees were given powers under the Act to deal with and to agree upon rates of wages for any class of persons employed in agriculture in the committee's district or any part of it and they were also empowered to fix special rates for special classes of workers or to make exemptions from the agreed rates. It was left to the discretion and agreement of the Conciliation Committee to submit their decisions to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries for confirmation. The Minister was given powers to confirm the committee's agreements and to cause them to be advertised in the district concerned with details and dates of the operation of such agreements. The agreed, confirmed and advertised rates of wages or other conditions contained in the agreement constituted an implied term of every contract of employment in the area, during the advertised period and in respect of classes of workers detailed in the agreement. In cases of a breach of an agreement duly confirmed and advertised, the Act provided that workers could recover the arrears of pay in the law courts as long as the proceedings were commenced within three months after the worker left his employment and that the arrears recovered would not extend for more than three months, or if the court considered it just, for a longer period, not exceeding, however, one year.

2. EARNINGS IN AGRICULTURE UNDER THE CONCILIATION COMMITTEES.

The last enforceable rate of weekly cash wages of an ordinary agricultural worker in England and Wales fixed in September, 1921 was 42s. 0d. With the abolition of the Agricultural Wages Board and under the new conditions created by the Corn Production Acts (Repeal) Act, 1921 this was followed by a reduction of wages throughout the country. It was estimated[1] that in December 1921 the average cash wage of an ordinary worker stood at the level of 36s. 0d. to 37s 0d. per week and that by the end of January 1922 this was reduced in a number of counties to about 30s. 0d. per week. The national average cash wage in February and March 1922 adjusted for variations in the rates paid to different classes of workers was about 32s. 0d. to 33s. 0d. per week. The downward tendency in wages was maintained to the end of that year and in 1923, resulting in an average of about 28s. 0d. per week which lasted until the end of 1924. The movement of wages during that period was summarised by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries as follows:—

[1] MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES. *Agricultural Statistics* 1921. *Vol. LVI. Part III*; 1923. *Vol. LVIII. Part III*; *and* 1924, *Vol. LIX. Part III*,

Date	Average weekly cash wage		Percentage increase over the 1914 level of 18s. 0d. per week (or 16s. 9d. per week excluding "allowances").
	s.	d.	
October 1921 to September 1922	33	9	87
October 1922 to September 1923	28	0	56
October 1923 to December 1924	28	0	56
March 1925	31	0	72

This estimate of the average rates of wages was based either on the agreed rates fixed by the Conciliation Committees or, in the absence of such agreement, on what was believed to have been the prevailing rate actually paid. Figures thus obtained were adjusted for the number of workers in each county but they did not include skilled workers who were receiving higher wages.

Table 5 gives a comparison of the level of agricultural wages with the general wage index as well as the index of wages of dock labour and coal mining and the cost of living index based on 1924 as 100[1]. Although this comparison may suggest that agricultural workers were in an advantageous position in relation to other working classes, it should be remembered that the estimate of average wages did not take into account the hours of work which, it was suggested[2], moved distinctly in the direction of longer hours. It was estimated that generally working hours in the period of the Conciliation Committees were shorter than before the war, but longer than they were under the wage regulating system of the Agricultural Wages Board. The extension of the working week from 50 to 54 hours was attempted by farmers in all parts of Lincolnshire and abandoned only after some strikes and in the face of unyielding opposition of workers. In the East Riding of Yorkshire farmers demanded a 55½ hours week for

WAGES AND COST OF LIVING 1921 TO 1924 (1924 = 100).

TABLE 5.

Date	General wage index	Agricultural wage index	Dock labour wage index	Coal mining wage index	Cost of living index
December 1921	127	138	116	109½	110
December 1922	99	100	92	91	100
December 1923	98	100	93	97	98
December 1924	100	100	100	100	100

1 *Wages and Cost of Living.* London and Cambridge Economic Service. Special Memorandum No. 50, 5th May, 1947.

2 MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES. *Agricultural Statistics,* 1921. *Vol. LVI. Part III.*

30s. 0d. wages which, after unsuccessful negotiations culminating in the lock-out of over a thousand men, was eventually settled at 55½ hour week for a 33s. 0d. wage. There were also wide variations between the rates of wages and the length of a working week in different parts of the country. The generally accepted lowest average rate of wages in that period was 28s. 0d. per week. But lower rates held in the agriculturally important area of Norfolk and some other eastern counties and the lowest weekly cash wage paid in that area reached 25s. 0d. with the threat of further reductions. It was estimated[1] that in the light of changes in the prices of food and the general cost of living the 25s. 0d. wage was equal to about 14s. 7d. by the pre-war standards and that real wages of agricultural workers by the end of 1923 stood at the level of 1914 or even slightly below. The history of the Norfolk strike in 1923 provided an excellent example of conditions under which wage negotiations were carried out during that period, and of the weight of pressure which workers had to withstand in order to obtain a satisfactory settlement of their demands. In February 1923 the farmers' representatives at the Norfolk Conciliation Committee proposed to abolish the then existing rate of 25s. 0d. for 50 hour week in favour of 5d. per hour rate for 54 hours a week, paid on an hourly and not a weekly basis. This amounted to reducing the weekly wage to 22s. 0d. with an extra four hours brought in and, in fact, a still larger reduction since the hourly basis of payment would enable farmers to disclaim any liability for the time lost through bad weather and other reasons. This proposal having been rejected by the workers' representatives, the next offer was made on the 3rd March raising the rate per hour to 5½d. which, as regards weekly cash wage meant only a reduction of 3d. but still contained the provision of extra hours and other dangers included in the original proposal. Three days later, and without any further negotiations, notice was given by farmers to some 20,000 workers that these conditions would be imposed. After a fruitless meeting of the farmers' and workers' representatives with the Prime Minister on the 16th March, a series of negotiations took place with farmers offering 24s. 0d. for a 52 hour week, 26s. 0d. for a 54 hour week and 25s. 0d. for a 52 hour week. None of these offers was accepted by the workers, whose lowest offer was 25s. 0d. for a 50 hour week, and the negotiations broke down. The strike was called and the men on strike numbered at least some 6,000 throughout its duration and over 10,000 at its peak. The strike was intended to be general in the county but the men offered 30s. 0d. wages for a 50 hour week and later 26s. 0d. or more for a 50 hour week were allowed to return to work and therefore the strength of the striking force varied.

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1 REG. GROVES. *Sharpen the Sickle. The history of the Farm Workers' Union*, 1949. The Porcupine Press, London.

The final settlement was reached on the 18th April, 1923, when the rate of 25s. 0d. for a guaranteed 50 hour week was accepted by both employers and workers. Four hours in excess of 50 per week, treated as overtime, were to be paid at the rate of 6d. an hour and any further overtime at 7½d. an hour. There was also a significant clause attached to that agreement to the effect that the return of men to work must not be followed by victimisation.

3. SUMMARY OF CONDITIONS UNDER THE CONCILIATION COMMITTEES.

The blame for the fall in agricultural wages during the period 1921 to 1924 is often ascribed entirely to the ineffectual operation of the wage regulating system in the form of the Conciliation Committees. When the Corn Production Acts (Repeal) Act, 1921 was passed, 63 Conciliation Committees were set up. Some of them never functioned and by the end of 1923 only 14 committees still operated. From the end of 1921 to March 1923 only 16 agreements concluded by the Conciliation Committees were effective and this number had fallen to four by the end of 1923. The inefficiency of the Conciliation Committees system was due to its entirely voluntary character. The Act did not make any one in particular responsible for setting up a committee and members of a committee were under no obligation to conclude agreements on wages and other conditions of employment. Even if an agreement was made, the committee did not have to submit it for the Minister's approval and official notification to the parties concerned. Without such an approval and notification the terms of the agreement were not legally binding. As a result and under the depressed economic conditions generally, employers had the whip hand over the workers' interests and there was a general drift back from collective to individual bargaining. But it would be incorrect to assume that deterioration of agricultural earnings and working conditions resulted only from the inadequate protection of the workers' position by the existing legal system. The impact of the depression on farming was so hard and the feeling of disappointment and frustration among farmers so strong that the increasing pressure on the workers' standard of living was unavoidable. It was not only the extent in the fall of agricultural prices but also the suddeness of the fall which led to the critical conditions in farming. The price of wheat which in June 1921 stood at 89s. 3d. per quarter, fell to 45s. 8d. in December. The price of oats during the same period fell from 43s. 8d. to 28s. 3d. and fat cattle from 106s. 8d. per cwt. in the early part of the year to 62s. 5d. per cwt. at the end of the year.[1] The shock of the

[1] MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES. *Agricultural Statistics*, 1921. *Vol. LVI, Part III.*

rapid deterioration of prices turned farmers' attention to the labour item of the production costs. Their endeavours to lower the level of wages aimed on the one hand at cutting down costs, since economies on labour were traditionally recognised as the first means of maintaining the farmers' standards of living in times of depression. This trend of thought was followed individually by most farmers. But on the other hand, as a matter of collective policy, farmers felt that in exercising pressure on workers' earnings and in justifying this pressure by an apparent inability of the industry to afford better conditions, they had a powerful bargaining weapon which they could use in winning some measure of assistance to the industry from the state, already embarrassed by the spread of unemployment and industrial unrest in the country. It has been suggested that this policy was at the back of the most extreme demand for cutting down wages put forward by farmers in Norfolk in 1923[1] (22s. 6d. per 54 hour week, paid on an hourly basis). Farmers openly admitted that the proposed wage was insufficient for a man to live on, but that it was still more than the industry could afford and that the "economic wage" in agriculture at that time would be in the region of 18s. 0d. per week.

The last order made by the Agricultural Wages Board reducing the minimum wage to 42s. 0d. had already reflected the strength of the pressure on workers' earnings exercised by farmers. Even had it been politically possible during that period to retain the wage regulating organisation of the Agricultural Wages Board in spite of the abolition of price guarantees, it is doubtful whether the downward trend of agricultural wages would have been arrested.

Conciliation Committees were a failure as an effective wage negotiating machinery in farming. But with the general stress on return to free economy unrestrained by state controls, no other results could have been expected especially in the depressed economic conditions. The system of committees was severely criticised by both farmers and workers, and on balance perhaps more so by workers who were directly affected by the weaknesses of the system. Neither workers nor farmers were yet fully conscious of the changes taking place in the social sphere of industrial relationships. Wages were still regarded very much as a function of the rate of profitableness of the industry and not as a function of living standards based on principles of social justice and partnership of workers in the industry which gained strength in later years.

The real importance of the Corn Production Acts (Repeal) Act, 1921 was, therefore, due to the fact that in the face of a great

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2 REG. GROVES. *Ibid.*

economic pressure the right of workers to an active participation in the determination of their working conditions was maintained. Although this may have been achieved in principle rather than in practice the Act bridged the gap which otherwise would have arisen between the abolition of the Agricultural Wages Board and the re-establishment of statutory wage regulation in 1924, and which would have delayed the recognition of the modern social approach to labour problems in agriculture.

CHAPTER III.

AGRICULTURAL WAGES (REGULATION) ACT, 1924.

On the 14th April, 1924 in response to the repeated demands of the workers' organisations and under the favourable conditions of a Labour Government in office, a Bill was introduced in the House of Commons proposing the restoration of statutory wage regulation in agriculture. The proposals of the Bill did not differ in any essentials from the provisions of the Corn Production Act, 1917. It provided for the establishment of County Wages Committees, the recommendations of which would have to be ratified or amended and ratified by the Central Wages Board before they became operative. The Bill was read for the second time on 2nd June. At the Committee stage, on 10th July, the Bill was threatened by the combined opposition of the Conservative and Liberal members to the establishment of the Central Wages Board with powers to amend the rates of wages and hours of work recommended by the county committees, and an appropriate amendment to the Bill was carried. This was a blow at the whole structure of the proposed wage regulating system, sufficiently serious for the Labour Government to contemplate at one time a complete withdrawal of the Bill. The decision to do that was not taken, however, as it was thought that the Bill, even in its curtailed form, might be of better value to agricultural workers than Conciliation Committees. The Act came into operation on 7th August, 1924 under the title of the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1924,[1] and Section 4 of the Corn Production Acts (Repeal) Act, 1921 authorising the establishment of the Conciliation Committees was repealed.

The main provisions set out in the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1924 were as follows :—

The Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries was made responsible for the establishment of the Agricultural Wages Committees for each county in England and Wales or for groups of counties subject to resolutions calling for such combination passed by the representative members of the individual county committees. The Minister was also made responsible for the establishment of the Agricultural Wages Board for England and Wales. County Committees were given full powers to fix, cancel or vary the rates of pay for time-work, piece-work or overtime in relation to working hours and other conditions of employment and they were also given powers to grant permits of exemption from the fixed minimum rates in respect of non-able-bodied agricultural workers. The Agricultural Wages Committees were autonomous in their decisions and the Agricultural Wages Board under this Act had

1 Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1924. 14 and 15 Geo. 5, Ch. 37.

no powers to interfere in any way with decisions made by an Agricultural Wages Committee beyond registering those decisions and making arrangements for their notification in the area and to the parties concerned. The only exception where the Agricultural Wages Board could assume full powers of an Agricultural Wages Committee was provided by Section 5 of the Act. When the Agricultural Wages Committee concerned either failed within two months of its establishment to fix a minimum wage and to notify it to the Board, or failed to fix and notify a minimum wage rate replacing the rate which ceased to operate, or passed a resolution requesting the Agricultural Wages Board to fix, vary or cancel a minimum rate, the Agricultural Wages Board was empowered to step in and to exercise all the powers of the Committee. The powers of the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries were limited to directing a committee to reconsider their decision. The committee was obliged to do so and to notify the Minister of the results of their re-consideration of the matter raised. In addition the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries was empowered by the Act to make regulations requiring Wages Committees to define the benefits or advantages which may be charged against wages as a part payment in kind, or to define the employment which was to be regarded as overtime employment. Regulations could also be made prescribing the procedure for applications and complaints to the committee or sub-committees and also regulations designed to bring the attention of persons concerned to any matter arising from the operation of the Act. But all these regulations had in the first place to be laid before both Houses of Parliament and became operative only if neither House of Parliament had agreed to make an address for their annulment within 28 days of receiving the regulation for consideration.

The first schedule of the Act contained details of the constitution and proceedings of the Agricultural Wages Committees and the Agricultural Wages Board.

The committees consisted of members representing in equal proportions employers and workers in the area covered by the committee, of two impartial members appointed by the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries and of a chairman appointed annually by the committee, or failing such an appointment, by the Minister. The committees could excercise their discretion in appointing sub-committees and in delegating to them such part of their powers as they considered necessary provided that the appointed sub-committees consisted of equal numbers of representatives of employers and workers (not necessarily members of the committee) and of a chairman.

The Agricultural Wages Board, similarly to the committees, consisted of representatives of employers and workers in equal pro-

portions and of members appointed by the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries. The number of appointed members was not specified but it was provided that it must not exceed one quarter of the total number of members of the Board. The chairman of the Board was to be nominated by the Minister from among the appointed members. The provision was made also that at least one member of the Board must be a woman. The Board was authorised to appoint one or more committees if they thought this necessary and provided that equal proportion of employers' and workers' representatives on such a committee was preserved the committee could have powers delegated to them by the Board on any matters except the powers or duty to fix, cancel or vary minimum rates of wages.

The outstanding difference between this Act and the Corn Production Act, 1917 lies in the isolation of the wage problem from the price guarantees and controls of agricultural production which in 1917 were regarded as inseparable parts of the general agricultural policy expressed by the Corn Production Act. Another important difference was decentralisation of the wage regulating apparatus arising from the vesting in the Agricultural Wages Committees, full powers of decision in matters of wages and other conditions of employment under the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1924. The Corn Production Act, 1917 was intended to operate, unless it was extended, within a definite period of time, whereas the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1924 was passed for an indefinite period of operation.

The Agricultural Wages Board and the 47 County Agricultural Wages Committees were constituted on 18th October, 1924 and the first meeting of the Agricultural Wages Board took place on 25th November, 1924.

1. CHANGES IN EARNINGS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT.

(i) **Wages of adult male workers.** As a result of the re-establishment of the statutory wage regulating system in agriculture the minimum rates of wages were increased throughout the country. During the first year of the operation of the Act only about six per cent of the areas in England and Wales had minimum wage rates fixed below 30s. 0d. per week in summer (Norfolk 29s. 0d. for a 50 hour week and Berkshire and Suffolk 29s. 2d. for a 50 hour week). The lowest minimum weekly wages in winter, fixed in 1925, were in Suffolk and in Norfolk—28s. 0d. for a 48 hour week. The highest rates operated in Glamorgan—37s. 6d. for 53 hours in summer and 51 hours in winter. About 31 per cent of the areas had weekly rates of

TABLE 6.

MINIMUM WEEKLY WAGES OF THE ORDINARY MALE ADULT AGRICULTURAL WORKERS IN ENGLAND AND WALES.

Range of weekly wages	Number of Agricultural Wages Committees' Areas												
	1925	1926	1927	1928	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938
s. d. s. d.													
27 0 and under 28 0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—
28 0 ,, ,, 29 0	—	—	—	—	—	1	5	4	—	1	1	—	—
29 0 ,, ,, 30 0	3	—	—	—	—	—	1	4	2	1	—	—	—
30 0 ,, ,, 31 0	17	15	15	16	16	15	14	20	22	7	1	1	—
31 0 ,, ,, 32 0	7	11	12	11	10	11	11	9	12	17	20	3	1
32 0 ,, ,, 33 0	10	11	11	11	12	12	10	7	5	14	15	16	2
33 0 ,, ,, 34 0	2	3	2	2	1	2	4	1	5	5	6	9	13
34 0 ,, ,, 35 0	4	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	1	2	2	15	16
35 0 ,, ,, 36 0	1	3	3	3	3	3	1	1	1	—	2	1	10
36 0 ,, ,, 37 0	3	3	3	2	3	2	—	—	—	2	1	2	3
37 0 ,, ,, 38 0	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	1
38 0 ,, ,, 39 0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	3
Total number of areas	48	48	48	48	48	48	48	49	49	49	49	49	49

NOTE :- Variations in the total number of areas are due to the fact that until 1933 Leicester and Rutland had separate rates for each county although they were covered by one Committee. From 1933 Leicester and Rutland were treated as two areas having separate rates fixed. Also from 1933 Lancashire was divided into "Southern Area" and the "remainder of the Committee's area" with separate rates fixed.

30s. 0d. and the remainder of the areas had wages ranging from 30s. 0d. to 36s. 0d. per week. Changes in the distribution of various weekly wage rates of the ordinary male workers in the areas covered by the Agricultural Wages Committees are summarised in Table 6. Further rises in wages occurred in 1926, particularly in the lowest paid areas. In two of the highest paid areas there was a reduction in the minimum rates accompanied by a reduction of working hours. In the Holland Division of Lincolnshire the rate of 36s. 0d. for a 52 hour week in summer and 48 hours in winter was reduced to 35s. 0d. for 50 hours a week in summer and 48 hours in winter. In Glamorgan the rate was reduced to 36s. 0d. for 50 hour week in summer and 48 hours in winter. In Glamorgan this reduction resulted, in fact, in an increase of wage rates per hour amounting to 0.15d. in summer and 0.18d. in winter. In the Holland Division of Lincolnshire there was an increase of 0.34d. per hour in summer and a reduction of a farthing per hour in winter. Between 1926 and 1931 minor adjustments in wage rates and hours of work were made in various areas but the average weekly minimum wage remained unchanged at the level of about 31s. 8d. A downward movement of the minimum rate started in 1931. In 1931, out of the total of 47 Agricultural Wages Committees, 13 had made changes in the minimum rate and/or hours of work. The minimum rate was reduced in five areas by amounts ranging from 1s. 0d. to 2s. 0d. and in Suffolk a flat rate of 28s. 0d. for 50 hours in summer and 48 hours in winter was fixed. The hours of work were increased in eight areas and the increases ranged from 1½ to four hours per week. These changes resulted in the average minimum wage in England and Wales falling from 31s. 8d. to 31s. 6½d. Between September 1931 and March 1932 11 committees made further reductions in the minimum wage, ranging from 6d. to 3s. 6d. per week and seven committees effected increases in working hours by one to three hours per week. The national average minimum wage, by the end of February 1932, had fallen to 31s. 4d. per week. In terms of the average hourly rates for ordinary adult male workers, these changes were as follows :—

30th September, 1930—7.51d.
30th September, 1931—7.43d.
1st March, 1932 —7.33d.

With the exception of reductions in the weekly minimum wage made in November, 1933 in the West Riding of Yorkshire, there were no further reductions of wages after June, 1933. The lowest national average minimum rate of weekly wages was reached in 1933-30s. 6½d.- and the reduction of wage rates and increases of working hours in the period 1931 to 1933 affected 42 out of the total 47 committees. During the year ended 30th September, 1934 13 committees effected increases

in the minimum wage, six committees reduced working hours, and two increased both minimum wage and reduced hours. The average minimum wage in September 1934 had risen as a result of these changes to 30s. 11d. By 31st March, 1935 the average minimum wage of 31s. 8d. prevailing before the reduction of wages started in 1931 was exceeded and amounted at that time to 31s. 8½d. During the seven months following September 1935, the average minimum wage was brought up to 32s. 0d. (the highest rate since the passing of the 1924 Act), and in about half of the committees' areas the minimum rates became higher than before the 1931 to 1933 reductions were made. Still further increases of the minimum rates followed and the national average changed to 32s. 2d. in September 1936, 33s. 4d. in September 1937, 34s. 5½d. in September 1938 and about 43s. 0d. at the beginning of 1940. Owing to the new structure of the wage regulating machinery there was no uniformity in the level of wages fixed in various areas. There was also no common policy as regards the duration of orders made by the Agricultural Wages Committees. Table 7 illustrates the duration of orders made by the committees and it is evident that in the first year of the operation of the new system the majority of committees was in favour of making orders lasting under 12 months. Later it became a common practice to make orders for either a fixed period of one year or an unspecified period of time although there was an increase in the number of committees making short period orders between 1934 and 1937. On the eve of the Second World War about 66 per cent of the committees were making orders for 12 months, over 27 per cent for indefinite periods and the remainder for periods shorter than 12 months.

TABLE 7. DURATION OF ORDERS MADE BY THE AGRICULTURAL WAGES COMMITTEES IN ENGLAND AND WALES.

Year	Number of Committees making orders for:			
	Specified period of duration			Unspecified period
	Under one year	One year	Over one year	
1925	25	14	—	8
1926	5	30	—	12
1927	4	24	—	19
1928	—	28	—	19
1930	—	36	1	10
1931	5	32	1	9
1933	6	31	—	10
1934	15	20	2	10
1935	8	32	—	7
1936	7	32	—	8
1937	14	24	—	9
Jan. 1939	3	31	—	13

The number of orders made by the committees each year varied from 49 to 69. The greater proportion of these orders were concerned with the minimum and overtime rates for the male workers. Throughout the 1924 to 1939 period there was a tendency to level up the difference in weekly wages of ordinary workers in various areas. Workers in the areas in which wages paid were higher than the average wage in the country suffered the effects of the depression first by having their wages reduced, and workers in the lower paid areas enjoyed increases of wages relatively greater than in any other areas. From the workers' point of view areas in which no sizeable variations of wage rates took place compared favourably with both higher and lower paid areas which were more easily affected by the fluctuations of prices and profits in farming. At the beginning of the operation of the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1924 the highest wages were paid in England to ordinary workers in Cheshire, Lancashire, Northumberland and Durham, and Yorkshire, and the lowest in Norfolk and Suffolk. The average weekly wages of the ordinary workers in Wales stood at the level of 29s. 5d. in 1924, which compared favourably with the average for England and Wales,[1] and they remained higher than the average for England and Wales until 1927. From 1927 average wages in Wales were lower than in England. Under the economically adverse conditions in agriculture wages in Wales declined faster and with improvement of general conditions, rose more slowly than the average for England and Wales. The highest wages in Wales were earned by ordinary workers in Glamorgan and the lowest in Merioneth and Montgomery. The geographical variations in the level of wages were due to a variety of causes. Among these there was an important relationship between the type of farming and the level of wages. In the north, as in East Lancashire, where livestock production was a predominant feature of farming, wages were higher not only under the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1924, but also in the years preceding the First World War. Work with animals necessarily involved longer hours and in 1925 the weekly wage of an ordinary worker in the eastern area of Lancashire was fixed at 42s. 0d. for a 60 hour week both in winter and in summer, whereas in other counties wages fixed in that year ranged from 28s. 0d. to 37s. 6d. but for a week of 48 to 54 hours.

(ii) **Hours of Work.** It must be remembered that the Agricultural Wages Committees had no power to fix the actual hours of employment. But since they based their fixed minimum rates of wages on the length of the working week in excess of which overtime

1 A. W. ASHBY., M.A., AND J. H. SMITH, M.Sc. *Agricultural Labour in Wales under statutory regulations of wages,* 1924 *to* 1937. The Welsh Journal of Agriculture. Vol. XIV, 1938.

TABLE 8.

THE LENGTH OF THE WORKING WEEK OF AN ORDINARY AGRICULTURAL WORKER IN ENGLAND AND WALES.

Year	Number of areas with the appropriate length of the working week in force											
	Winter hours					Summer hours						
	48	50	51	52	54	48	50	51	52	53	54	55 to 58
1925	24	12	3	1	8	1	20	4	11	2	10	—
1926	28	11	1	—	8	1	23	—	9	—	11	—
1927	28	11	1	—	8	1	21	4	10	1	11	—
1928	27	12	1	1	7	1	20	3	11	1	12	—
1929	28	11	1	1	7	1	21	3	10	1	12	—
1930	27	12	1	1	7	1	21	3	9	1	13	—
1931	24	13	1	2	8	1	15	1	13	4	12	2
1932	23	15	1	1	8	1	13	3	13	5	11	2
1933	24	14	1	1	8	1	11	3	14	4	13	2
1934	26	12	1	1	8	1	18	2	10	3	14	—
1935	26	12	2	1	7	1	20	3	9	2	13	—
1936	27	11	2	2	6	1	20	4	10	1	12	—
1937	29	10	1	3	5	1	21	3	11	—	12	—
1938	29	11	—	3	5	1	22	2	11	—	12	—
1939 (Jan. 1940)	30	11	1	1	6	1	25	2	8	1	11	1

rates were payable, there followed a standardisation of the working time for the ordinary farm workers.

The length of the working week of the ordinary workers, which served as a basis for fixing the minimum wage, varied from one area to another and Table 8 gives the range of these variations for the period 1925 to 1939.

The general pattern of the length of the working week was built principally around the type of farming prevailing in the area. The longest hours were worked in the areas associated with livestock production, the shortest in arable districts. In some predominantly grassland areas uniform length of the working week was maintained all the year round. The length of the working week varied between winter and summer and whereas the highest proportion of areas had 48 hour weeks in winter, a 50 hour week was predominant in summer. There was an increase in the length of the working week in the 1930's which was compatible with the general worsening of conditions created by the economic depression. Some Agricultural Wages Committees decided upon an extension of the working week as an alternative to reductions in the minimum rates of wages and in some other areas working hours remained unchanged or even reduced but lower wage rates were also fixed. Extensions of the summer time working week were greater than those of winter. After 1933 the position as regards hours of work improved and by 1939 a higher proportion of areas had 48 hours a week in winter and 50 hours a week in summer than at the beginning of the operation of the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1924. The Agricultural Wages Committees experienced some difficulties in reconciling the interests of farmers and workers in the matter of working hours. The agreed length of the working week not only provided the basis for the minimum wage rates of the ordinary workers but also guaranteed workers' employment and pay within a specified period. Farmers in the areas mainly concerned with livestock production were in favour of maintaining or extending working hours even though it meant an increase in the minimum rates of wages. In arable areas the position was different. Farmers were often unable to employ their men fully throughout the guaranteed week, particularly during the periods of bad weather and yet workers were entitled to the full minimum pay if they duly presented themselves at the farm at the required times. In those areas, therefore, farmers pressed for both cuts in the minimum wage and reductions in the working hours. There were cases of farmers trying to avoid employment and payment of the full rates to their workers in slack periods and in adverse weather conditions by directing them to tasks which under the circumstances could not be done satisfactorily, were unpleasant, and meant obviously just to fill the time. Workers objected

to these practices and by abandoning work lost their entitlement to the guaranteed minimum pay.

Comparison of the minimum rates of wages in operation under the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1924 with the agreed hours of work and conversion of the minimum weekly wages into hourly rates gives a better picture of changes in conditions of earnings of the ordinary agricultural workers during the period under discussion.

There was a marked shift from the higher rates of wages per hour which were in force in the initial year of the operation of the Act to the lower rates enforced at the worst period of the depression of the 1930's. In the summer of 1925, 68 per cent of all areas had hourly rates of wages varying from 7d. to 7¾d. and the same range of rates was applicable in 60 per cent of areas in winter. In 1933, 68 per cent of areas had wages ranging from 6½d. to 7¼d. per hour in summer and 66 per cent of areas 7d. to 7¾d. per hour in winter.

HOURLY RATES OF THE MINIMUM WAGE OF ORDINARY AGRICULTURAL WORKERS IN ENGLAND AND WALES.

TABLE 9.

Minimum wage rates calculated on hourly basis. (pence)	The number of areas in which rates detailed in first column were in operation.					
	1925		1933		January 1940	
	Summer	Winter	Summer	Winter	Summer	Winter
Below 6¼	—	—	1	1	—	—
6¼ to 6½	—	—	1	—	—	—
6½ to 6¾	2	—	11	2	—	—
6¾ to 7	3	2	14	7	—	—
7 to 7¼	20	12	9	12	—	—
7¼ to 7½	5	3	5	7	1	1
7½ to 7¾	9	15	4	14	2	—
7¾ to 8	4	5	4	1	1	—
8 to 8¼	3	4	—	4	7	4
8¼ to 8½	4	5	1	1	8	2
8½ to 8¾	—	2	—	1	8	7
8¾ to 9	—	—	—	—	11	12
9 to 9¼	—	2	—	—	8	13
9¼ to 9½	—	—	—	—	1	8
9½ to 9¾	—	—	—	—	2	2(1)
Total number of areas (2)	50	50	50	50	49	49

1 Including one area (Holland Division of Lincolnshire) with the hourly rate of 10d.
2 Differences are due to variations in the minimum rates fixed for parts of some areas.

Hourly minimum rates improved again after the depression owing to both higher rates fixed and reduced hours, and by January,

1940 over 70 per cent of all areas had wages of ordinary workers amounting to from 8¼d. to 9¼d. in summer and over 67 per cent had hourly rates ranging from 8¾d. to 9½d. in winter. It is also interesting to note the changes in the level of the lowest and highest rates of the minimum wage per hour. The lowest rates in 1925 were in the region of 6½d. per hour in summer and the highest winter rates reached 9¼d. In 1933 the lowest rate both in summer and in winter was under 6¼d. per hour and the highest between 8½d. and 8¾d. per hour in winter. But by the beginning of 1940 the rates had risen. The lowest rate of 7¼d. per hour was in force only in one area, and two areas in summer and two in winter had hourly rates exceeding 9½d. per hour. In one case the actual winter rate amounted to 10d.

(iii) **Overtime.** Under the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1924, hours in excess of the normal working hours on which the minimum rates of wages were based had to be paid at the overtime rates. Overtime payments were important for the workers particularly at the time when the weekly minimum was low. The Agricultural Wages Committees had some difficulty in enforcing overtime rates principally in the initial stages of the system owing to differences in farm labour organisation and management in various parts of the country. In some cases, workers employed in the care of animals normally worked longer hours. Unless a provision was made by the local wages order fixing a weekly wage covering the regular extra hours workers were entitled to payment for these hours at the overtime rates. Many farmers did not realise that until cases were brought to court and the arrears of pay were claimed from them. This does not mean that the non-payment of overtime had always been intentional. Detailed time sheets for each worker were rarely kept and both farmers and workers often had to rely on memory in their reckoning of overtime. The position was even more complicated with the workers living in who would not have their working hours strictly determined but who would be expected as a matter of course to perform various extra tasks at odd times just as it would be expected from any other member of the farmer's family. Breaches of wage regulations as regards overtime, arising from these conditions would not normally be revealed until the termination of the contract of service and it was then not easy to establish the extent of arrears of pay. But in addition to the unintentional obstructions in the application of the principle of overtime, there were also cases of deliberate attempts on the part of farmers as well as workers to exploit the provision of overtime to their advantage.

Table 10 illustrates the range in the rates of overtime pay for the ordinary workers on weekdays and Sundays. There was no

uniformity in fixing the overtime rates. In some districts there was no differentiation between the overtime rates on weekdays and on Sundays or other holidays. But in the majority of districts different rates were fixed for weekly overtime and for Sunday overtime. From the farmers' point of view the level of the overtime rates on weekdays was far more important than payments for Sunday overtime. They strongly resisted workers' claims for higher rates on weekdays and these, until the beginning of the Second World War, did not change much and showed little difference from the hourly rates of the ordinary minimum wage. Higher rates were obtained for Sunday overtime, but this was of no great importance to either farmers or workers. The original rates for weekday overtime fixed in 1925 ranged from 7¼d. to 1s. 0d. and Sunday overtime from 7½d. to 1s. 1½d. In 1933, when agricultural wages during the period were at their lowest, over 50 per cent of the areas still maintained the rate of the weekday overtime at 9d. per hour, but the number of areas having lower rates, varying from 7d. to 8½d., increased and no rates higher than 10½d. were paid in any of the areas. In 1933 there was also a reduction

THE RANGE OF THE INCIDENCE OF THE HOURLY RATES OF THE OVERTIME PAY IN THE AGRICULTURAL WAGES AREAS OF ENGLAND AND WALES.

TABLE 10.

Hourly rate of pay for overtime (pence)	Number of areas where the indicated rate was in force.					
	1925		1933		January 1940	
	Weekday	Sunday	Weekday	Sunday	Weekday	Sunday
7	—	—	1	1	—	—
7½	—	—	—	—	—	—
8	3	3	11	6	—	—
8½	6	4	6	4	1	1
9	25	13	25	12	12	8
9½	5	1	3	1	4	1
10	6	4	2	9	15	9
10½	—	2	1	2	3	1
11	1	9	—	9	7	6
11½	—	5	—	2	5	4
12	3	6	—	2	2	5
12½	—	—	—	—	—	2
13	—	1	—	—	—	1
13½	—	1	—	1	—	4
14	—	—	—	—	—	4
14½	—	—	—	—	—	1
15	—	—	—	—	—	—
15½	—	—	—	—	—	2
Total No. of areas	49	49	49	49	49	49

in the number of areas in which higher rates for Sunday overtime were paid and an increase in the group of the lower rate areas. By the beginning of 1940 there was a general improvement in the rates for overtime. The weekday rates for overtime in over 60 per cent of the areas ranged from 9d. to 10d. and in over 34 per cent of the areas from 10½d. to 1s. 0d. and only in one area was the rate fixed at 8½d. For Sunday overtime there was a general improvement of rates and the scale of variations between various areas was very much extended. A high proportion of areas (18.3 per cent) had Sunday overtime rates fixed at 10d. an hour but the rates generally varied from 8½d. to 1s. 3½d. an hour with the greater proportion of areas having rates of over 1s. 0d. per hour than ever before.

(iv) **Wages of special classes of workers.** Wages of special classes of workers such as bailiffs, stockmen, shepherds and horsemen, varied throughout the country and there was no uniformity in the principles adopted by various committees in fixing their wages. Less than half of the 47 committees fixed the minimum wage and conditions of employment of special classes as shown in Table 11 and in the remaining areas special class workers were paid ordinary minimum wage plus overtime rates for extra hours necessitated by the special character of their employment.

The real value of the relatively high weekly wages of workers in special classes may be measured by reference to the length of the working week. It generally varied from 52 to 60 hours per week and in some areas it was shorter in summer than in winter but in some cases, particularly in the areas where the minimum weekly wages for special classes were the highest, they were based on customary hours often extending over 60 hours per week. Wages of workers in special classes, in view of those long hours, were, on an hourly basis, not much higher than the wages of ordinary workers. In some areas the differentiation between various classes of special workers was fairly extensive and the Agricultural Wages Committees endeavoured to follow this differentiation by fixing as many as six different minimum rates for special classes. This, however, did not signify that there was a graduation of pay according to skill and responsibilities. The difference in the level of wages was not large enough to offset the disadvantages of duties of a special class worker and as a result many workers felt better off as ordinary rather than as special class workers.

Table 11 shows that the reductions in the level of wages of the special class workers which occurred in the 1930's were relatively less extensive than those of ordinary workers and that these reductions affected mainly areas in which the original rates were higher than

WEEKLY MINIMUM WAGES OF SPECIAL CLASSES OF WORKERS IN ENGLAND AND WALES.

TABLE 11.

Areas with fixed minimum wages for special classes	1925	1933	January 1940
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
Cambridge	37 0	37 0	43 6
Cumberland & Westmorland	38 0	38 0	44 0
Hereford	36 0	35 0	41 6
Kent	33 0	30 0	40 0
Lancashire South	37 0	35 0	41 6
North	40 0	38 0	44 6
Suffolk	36 0	34 0	42 0
Surrey	38 8	37 0	44 0
Sussex	35 0	36 0	42 6
Glamorgan	40 0	36 0	40 0
Denbigh and Flint	37 0	34 0	37 6
Anglesey & Carnarvon	35 0	33 0	38 0
Merioneth and Montgomery	34 6	31 0	36 0
Durham: **(1) Horsemen**			
(a) Householders	39 0	38 0	44 6
(b) Not householders	35 6	33 6	40 6
(c) Rec. board and lodging	32 0	30 0	36 6
(2) Stockmen			
(a) Householders	43 0	42 0	48 6
(b) Not householders	37 10½	35 11	42 4½
(c) Rec. board and lodging	36 0	34 0	40 0
Gloucester:			
Head stockmen & shepherds	36 0	34 2½	42 0
Under ,, ,,	34 6	32 9½	40 0
Head carters	36 0	34 2½	40 0
Under ,,	34 6	32 9½	38 0
Lincoln (Holland):			
Cattlemen & shepherds	41 0	38 6	46 0
Horsemen	45 0	42 6	50 0
Lincoln (Kesteven & Lindsey):			
Waggoners	39 0	37 0	44 6
Stockmen	38 0	36 0	43 6
Shepherds	37 0	35 0	42 6
Middlesex:			
Stockmen	41 3	41 3	48 9
Carters	38 6	38 6	45 6
Norfolk:			
Teamsmen, cowmen, etc.	34 6	35 6	(1)
Sheep and cow tender	33 6	34 6	(1)
Northumberland:			
Householders	41 0	37 6	43 6(2)—47 0 (3)
Not householders	38 0	34 6	40 6(2)—44 0 (3)
Yorkshire, East Riding:			
Foremen	32 0	32 0	(4)
Beastmen & shepherds	29 0	29 0	(4)
Waggoners	28 0	28 0	(4)
Yorkshire (West Riding):			
Horsemen, beastmen, shepherds not living in	42 0	38 6	43 0
Horsemen, beastmen, shepherds living in (per year)	£83 4 0	£75 8 0	(4)
Foremen living in (per year)	£85 16 0	£77 15 8	(4)
Waggoners living in (per year)	£78 0 0	£70 8 4	(4)

1 The special rate of 43s. 0d. for 60 hour week was in force for cowmen only. Teamsmen and shepherds were receiving 42s. 0d. and bullock and sheep tenders 41s. 0d. per week of customary hours.

2 Horsemen and stockmen.

3 Shepherds.

4 The fixing of special rates has been discontinued. In the East Riding of Yorkshire men boarded and lodged by their employers were expected, if required, to provide 10 hours service a week more than the standard hours for 6d. an hour.

elsewhere. But from 1935 there was an overall rise in the wages of special classes in common with the ordinary wages and by the end of 1939 only in one case (Glamorgan) did the wages of special classes not exceed the rates originally fixed in 1925. The tradition of special payments in the form of bonuses was maintained by some areas. In Lincolnshire, for example, shepherds, in addition to their wages, received £2 in Holland and £3. 10s. 0d. in Kesteven and Lindsey for lambing the first 50 to 100 sheep. A further bonus of £1 was paid for every additional 100 sheep.

(v) **Harvest Rates.** The nature of the hay and corn harvest operations often made an extension of the normal working hours necessary and the work was harder than normal. Previously, harvest money in various forms had been paid to farm workers and when the wage regulating machinery under the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1924 started to operate the matter was tackled by the Agricultural Wages Committees in a variety of ways according to conditions and customs in their areas. Out of the total number of 47 areas, 11 to 13 committees annually made orders fixing special rates of pay for harvesting, and of these, five to seven areas had orders fixing different rates for hay and for corn harvest. Table 12 illustrates changes in the number of committees fixing harvest rates of pay between 1925 and 1939.

CHANGES IN THE NUMBER OF AGRICULTURAL WAGES COMMITTEES FIXING SPECIAL RATES OF PAY FOR HAY AND CORN HARVEST.

TABLE 12.

Year	Number of areas.	
	Corn harvest	Hay harvest
1924-1925	11	5
1926	12	5
1927	12	6
1928	11	5
1929	11	5
1930	11	5
1931	11	5
1932	11	5
1933	13	6
1934	12	6
1935	13	6
1936	13	6
1937	13	7
1938	12	6
1939	13	7

The system of paying special rates for the harvest varied. There were lump sums paid to workers for a defined period of days with a specified length of the working week and such payments were made in place of the ordinary minimum wage. In other areas smaller lump sums or bonuses were paid in addition to the ordinary minimum wage on completion of harvest. In yet another area special overtime rates were fixed for harvesting operations and in a few cases during the harvest special rates operated for the ordinary working day. In 1939 the payment of a lump sum in substitution for the ordinary working time operated only in Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely. The payment, applicable to the corn harvest only, amounted to £12. 7s. 6d. for a period of four weeks of 64 hours per week with the weekday and Sunday overtime paid at the rate of 11d. an hour for an adult man. In that year there was also one area only (Suffolk) in which a bonus of £5. 7s. 6d. was fixed for corn harvest on farms of not less than 60 acres of corn, payable in addition to the ordinary wage provided that during the harvest, workers if required, worked 11½ hours a day on any weekday. On farms with the corn acreage not exceeding 60 acres the rate of pay throughout the harvest was fixed at 10½d. an hour (for adult male workers) for all work on harvesting. Special harvest rates for ordinary working time were fixed in Essex. Adult male workers engaged in the corn harvest were paid a flat rate of 11d. an hour for ordinary as well as overtime hours. In two areas—Anglesey and Carnarvon, and Denbigh and Flint—different method of payment was fixed for regular and for casual workers. Regular workers in both areas received their minimum wage, and overtime rates during harvest were fixed at 1s. 0d. an hour. Casual workers 18 years old or over in Anglesey and Carnarvon had their harvest pay fixed either at 8s. 8d. per day and 5s. 0d. on Saturday or 44s. 6d. per week of 58 hours. In Denbigh and Flint casual workers were paid for hay and corn harvest at the rate of 1s. 0d. an hour for all the time worked. In the remaining areas in 1939 fixed harvest payments affected only overtime and the overtime harvest rates ranged from 9½d. an hour in Wiltshire to 1s. 3d. an hour in the East Riding of Yorkshire and in Lincolnshire. The same harvest overtime rates were paid in the majority of cases for both hay and corn harvest. But there were cases in which hay harvest was rated lower than corn harvest as, for example, in Hertfordshire where in 1939, 10d. an hour overtime was paid for hay and 1s. 0d. an hour overtime for corn harvest. Neither in the case of the hay harvest nor corn harvest were higher overtime rates fixed for Sunday work. There was no uniformity in the difference between the hourly rates for ordinary overtime and for the overtime during harvest. Harvest overtime rates were generally higher than the ordinary overtime. The difference ranged from only a fraction of a penny to about 6d.

(vi) Wages of Juvenile Workers. There was no uniformity in the level of wages for youths under 21 years of age in various areas. After the re-introduction of the statutory minimum wage in 1924, the minimum weekly wages of youths under 21 years were fixed according to age, but even within one age group the difference in wages according to the area ranged from 1s. 0d. to 8s. 6d. per week. Table 13 shows the variations of youths' wages in 1925 in 15 areas which had the same minimum wage of 30s. 0d. per week for the ordinary adult workers. It is noticeable that the range widens as the age becomes lower.

MINIMUM WEEKLY WAGES OF YOUTHS IN 15 AREAS IN 1925.

TABLE 13.

Age of workers	The highest rates		The lowest rates		Difference	
	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.
20 and under 21	28	0	27	0	1	0
19 and under 20	26	0	23	0	3	0
18 and under 19	25	0	20	0	5	0
17 and under 18	22	0	16	6	5	6
16 and under 17	20	0	14	0	6	0
15 and under 16	18	0	11	6	6	6
14 and under 15	17	6	9	0	8	6

Similar ranges of wages for youths operated in the remaining areas with the exception of the East and West Ridings of Yorkshire where no distinction was made for the age of the special classes of workers living-in. The difference between the lowest and the highest rates of wages in each age group of young workers increased in the later years and the range of wages in operation in 1938 is shown in Table 14. The wages of youths were based on age and on the length of the working week which varied from one area to another. These variations, however, were neither numerous nor sufficiently wide to account for the differences in the rates of wages of youths of the same

MINIMUM WEEKLY WAGES OF YOUTHS IN ENGLAND AND WALES IN 1938.

TABLE 14.

Age of workers	The highest rates		The lowest rates		Difference	
	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.
20 and under 21	36	5½	27	6	8	11½
19 and under 20	33	4	24	9	8	7
18 and under 19	32	6	22	0	10	6
17 and under 18	30	6	16	3	14	3
16 and under 17	23	0	14	0	9	0
15 and under 16	19	0	11	6	7	6
14 and under 15	18	0	8	5	9	7

age. The difference in the wage rates cannot be related to the effect of the predominant type of farming in the area upon the demand for juvenile workers because wages in the arable and particularly market gardening districts did not vary greatly from wages in other areas where the demand for juvenile workers was very much lower.

Changes in the level of wages of juvenile workers between the wars followed a course slightly different from the changes in wages of adult workers. During the depression of the 1930's reductions of wages for juvenile workers either remained steady or were less extensive than reductions of wages for adult workers, and in the years following the depression the rise in youths' wages was slower and not as great as others. By the end of that period wages of juvenile workers reached the original level established in 1925-26 whereas wages of adult workers were, at the same time, higher than in 1925-26.

THE HOURLY RATES OF THE WEEKLY WAGES OF JUVENILE WORKERS IN ENGLAND AND WALES IN 1937.

TABLE 15.

Hourly rates (Pence)	Number of areas						
	Age groups						
	20 and under 21	19 and under 20	18 and under 19	17 and under 18	16 and under 17	15 and under 16	14 and under 15
	Winter Period						
8¾ and under 9	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
8½ ,, ,, 8¾	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
8¼ ,, ,, 8½	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
8 ,, ,, 8¼	8	2	1	—	—	—	—
7¾ ,, ,, 8	7	—	—	—	—	—	—
7½ ,, ,, 7¾	13	7	—	—	—	—	—
7¼ ,, ,, 7½	5	5	—	—	—	—	—
7 ,, ,, 7¼	3	5	5	—	—	—	—
6¾ ,, ,, 7	2	10	4	—	—	—	—
6½ ,, ,, 6¾	8	6	3	—	—	—	—
6¼ ,, ,, 6½	1	7	5	1	—	—	—
6 ,, ,, 6¼	—	3	11	3	—	—	—
5¾ ,, ,, 6	—	3	8	4	1	—	—
5½ ,, ,, 5¾	—	1	7	5	—	—	—
5¼ ,, ,, 5½	—	—	1	11	2	—	—
5 ,, ,, 5¼	—	—	3	12	2	—	—
4¾ ,, ,, 5	—	—	1	3	2	1	—
4½ ,, ,, 4¾	—	—	—	5	12	3	—
4¼ ,, ,, 4½	—	—	—	3	12	1	—
4 ,, ,, 4¼	—	—	—	1	7	6	3
3¾ ,, ,, 4	—	—	—	—	5	8	3
3½ ,, ,, 3¾	—	—	—	1	5	12	1
3¼ ,, ,, 3½	—	—	—	—	1	6	2
3 ,, ,, 3¼	—	—	—	—	—	7	10
2¾ ,, ,, 3	—	—	—	—	—	4	12
2½ ,, ,, 2¾	—	—	—	—	—	1	7
2¼ ,, ,, 2½	—	—	—	—	—	—	8
2 ,, ,, 2¼	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Difference between highest & lowest rate (pence)	2.29	2.50	3.12	2.64	2.44	2.18	1.95

THE HOURLY RATES OF THE WEEKLY WAGES OF JUVENILE WORKERS IN ENGLAND AND WALES IN 1937.

TABLE 15(a).

Hourly rates (Pence)	Number of areas — Age Groups: 20 and under 21	19 and under 20	18 and under 19	17 and under 18	16 and under 17	15 and under 16	14 and under 15
	Summer Period						
8¾ and under 9	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
8½ ,, ,, 8¾	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
8¼ ,, ,, 8½	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
8 ,, ,, 8¼	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
7¾ ,, ,, 8	3	—	—	—	—	—	—
7½ ,, ,, 7¾	8	—	—	—	—	—	—
7¼ ,, ,, 7½	16	6	1	—	—	—	—
7 ,, ,, 7¼	4	4	1	—	—	—	—
6¾ ,, ,, 7	4	5	3	—	—	—	—
6½ ,, ,, 6¾	11	11	3	—	—	—	—
6¼ ,, ,, 6½	2	7	4	—	—	—	—
6 ,, ,, 6¼	—	9	6	1	—	—	—
5¾ ,, ,, 6	—	5	10	3	—	—	—
5½ ,, ,, 5¾	—	1	9	5	—	—	—
5¼ ,, ,, 5½	—	—	7	4	2	—	—
5 ,, ,, 5¼	—	—	4	11	2	—	—
4¾ ,, ,, 5	—	—	1	11	—	—	—
4½ ,, ,, 4¾	—	—	—	5	5	1	—
4¼ ,, ,, 4½	—	—	—	7	13	3	—
4 ,, ,, 4¼	—	—	—	1	12	4	2
3¾ ,, ,, 4	—	—	—	—	6	4	2
3½ ,, ,, 3¾	—	—	—	1	7	12	1
3¼ ,, ,, 3½	—	—	—	—	2	4	3
3 ,, ,, 3¼	—	—	—	—	—	15	7
2¾ ,, ,, 3	—	—	—	—	—	15	8
2½ ,, ,, 2¾	—	—	—	—	—	1	12
2¼ ,, ,, 2½	—	—	—	—	—	—	11
2 ,, ,, 2¼	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Difference between highest & lowest rate (pence)	2.45	2.50	2.56	2.49	1.95	1.93	1.96

Tables 15 and 15(a) show the range of the ordinary weekly wages of juvenile workers converted into hourly rates which operated at the end of 1937 and they also show the difference between the highest and the lowest hourly rates for each group of workers according to age.

(vii) Wages and hours of work of women workers. Minimum rates of wages for women workers were fixed by all Agricultural Wages Committees. In the first year of the operation of the Act wages in all but three areas were fixed on an hourly basis and out of those three areas one had wages fixed at day rates and two at weekly rates with a specified number of working hours. The hours of work varied. Only about 30 per cent of the areas had these hours fixed by their original orders and they specified either an eight hour day or a working

week ranging from 48 hours to 54 hours, shorter in winter than in summer. There was also lack of uniformity in the interpretation of the term "adult female worker". The wage rates fixed for the adult female workers were applicable, in the majority of areas, to women of 18 years and over. But in some areas girls of 15 and even 14, were receiving the same rates as the older women, and in the remaining areas the lowest age limit entitling to full adult rates varied from 15 years to 18 years of age. A comparison of the hourly rates of pay for female workers in the original orders, in 1933 and at the end of 1939 is given in Table 16. Relatively few changes occurred in the level of womens' wages until the middle 1930's. In 1933 as in 1925, the hourly rates in the majority of areas ranged from 5d. to 6d., but owing to increases in wages during the later years nearly 67 per cent of areas in 1939 had rates ranging from 6½d. to 7½d. per hour and about 47 per cent of all areas had hourly rates within the region of 6½d. and 7d. an hour. The comparison of hourly rates for women operating in 1939 with the rates in force in 1925 shows that in six areas (including four Welsh areas) no change of rates took place. In the remaining 41 areas rates increased in four areas by ½d., in 15 areas by 1d., in 14 areas by 1½d., in six areas by 2d. and in two areas by 2½d.

Overtime rates for women workers ranged in 1925 from 4d. to 9d. an hour but in the majority of areas the rates varied from 6d. to 7d. an hour and only about 50 per cent of the total number of areas fixed special overtime rates for women. The overtime rates improved by the end of 1939 in common with the ordinary hourly rates, and ranged from 7d. to as much as 11d. an hour in the case of

WAGES OF FEMALE WORKERS ON HOURLY BASIS.

TABLE 16.

Hourly rates of pay (pence)	Number of areas		
	1925	1933	1939
3	1	—	—
3¾	—	1	—
4½	2	1	1
4¾	—	1	—
5	24	22	4
5½	6	6	2
6	14	16	9
6¼	—	—	1
6½	—	—	10
6¾	—	—	—
7	—	—	12
7¼	—	—	1
7½	—	—	7
Total number of areas	47	47	47

the harvest overtime rates. Committees fixing the length of the ordinary working week made provisions for the weekly half-holiday amd by 1939 more than half of the committees had made such provisions.

(viii) **Benefits and Advantages.** There has been little change in the range and recognised value of goods and services provided by farmers for their workers as a non-cash part of wages. The Agricultural Wages Board operating under the provisions of the Corn Production Act, 1917, defined cottages, board and lodging, milk and potatoes as the main benefits. Under the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1924, the Agricultural Wages Committees were empowered to define benefits and advantages but they were also authorised to limit or even prohibit entirely the reckoning of certain or all benefits as non-cash payments of wages. In Monmouth, for example, wages had to be paid fully in cash and no reckoning of benefits or advantages instead of cash was allowed[1]. In all but two of the remaining committee areas the reckoning of non-cash benefits against cash wages was limited to certain specific benefits and benefits not specified by the committee could only be given to workers in addition to wages. The chief specified benefits remained the same as under the first Agricultural Wages Board, that is, cottages, board and lodging, milk and potatoes. But the value placed on each of these benefits by the Agricultural Wages Committees varied from one area to another. As shown in Table 17, the value of the main benefits remained fairly constant during the period 1924 to 1939 in spite of changes in the general cost of living which occurred during the same time.

CHARGES FOR CERTAIN SPECIFIED BENEFITS
IN ENGLAND AND WALES.

TABLE 17.

Year	Cottage (per week)		Board and lodging (per week)		New milk (per pint)	
	Range of charges	Predominant charge.	Range of charges	Predominant charge.	Range of charges	Predominant charge
	s. d. s. d.	s. d.	s. d. s. d.	s. d.	d.	d.
1925	2 6 — 4 0	3 0	10 6 — 17 0	15 0	1½—2½	2
1932	2 0 — 4 0	3 0	14 0 — 18 0	15 0	—	2
1939	2 0 — 4 0	3 0	15 0 — 22 0	—	—	2

Table 17 may be regarded only as a very general illustration of charges made for the main benefits. Charges for board and lodging, for example, were related to sex and age of workers and there was no consistency in that relationship in different areas. In 1925 the

1 MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES. *Report of Proceedings under the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act,* 1924 H.M.S.O. 1926.

value of board and lodging in Northumberland was reckoned at 15s. 0d. per week for both male and female workers 16 years old and over. But at the same time the board and lodging charge for male workers 19 years old and over only was reckoned in Leicestershire and Rutland at 17s. 0d. The value of benefits other than cottages and board and lodging, unless specifically determined by the Agricultural Wages Committee, was related to the current. wholesale prices. Specified charges for these benefits varied in method of calculation and in value according to local custom. In some areas potatoes or potato ground were specified as a benefit to the value of 2s. 0d. per week (Cambridge and Isle of Ely) or less. In other areas the charge for potatoes was related to the area of potato ground given as benefits, e.g. 6d. per score yards (Hereford), 1s. 0d. per week per 20 yards (Cornwall), 5s. 0d. per 100 yards drill (Carmarthenshire, Glamorgan, Pembroke and Cardigan), or to weight and quality of potatoes with higher charges for screened potatoes than for unscreeened (Northumberland 5s. 0d. per cwt screened and 3s. 0d. per cwt unscreened). Agricultural Wages Committees also specified some less common benefits which have been established in certain areas by custom. For example, coal was included in benefits in Durham and Northumberland at the rate of 3s. 0d. per week (15 cwts. per month) in Durham and 1s. 0d. per cwt in Northumberland. Carting of coal, firewood and other fuel, or carting generally, were specified among benefits in several areas. In Kesteven and Lindsey the supply of oil and fuel for shepherds during lambing seasons was recognised as a benefit valued at £1. 10s. 0d. In Merioneth and Montgomery 10d. per acre per week was charged for growing land. In Northumberland keeping of cows by workers was specified as benefit valued at 5s. 0d. per week. Manure for the garden, straw, corn and wood are other examples of the less common benefits.

The limitations imposed by the committees upon the reckoning of payments in kind or benefits against cash wages contributed to the improvements in conditions of employment in farming. The position as regards essential payments in kind, particularly cottages and board and lodging, became regularised. Farmers could still have and workers accept other benefits than those specified in the Agricultural Wages Committees' schedules, but such extra benefits would not have been recognised by the courts of law as part payment of wages. Legal proceedings taken by or on behalf of workers in connection with underpayment of their wages revealed that in some cases this was not fully appreciated. The method of reckoning cash value of benefits by the committees had been criticised for its lack of adaptability to changes in the economic conditions generally. That was particularly true as regards charges for board and lodging which,

even at the time of the depression of the 1930's remained unchanged in spite of the decline in the cost of living.

(ix) **Holidays.** An important contribution to the stabilisation of working conditions in farming was made by the effect of the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1924, on the question of holidays. Before the Act came into operation occasional days off or half-days were granted to workers in order to enable them to attend the market, or to do their gardening. The frequency with which such half-holidays were granted depended on the employers' generosity and in principle they were free to exercise their discretion in this matter. Similar conditions prevailed in the matter of annual holidays. In any case, generally speaking, workers had to be prepared for the loss of wages during the time taken off duty. With very limited financial resources to enjoy leisure time at their disposal and having to face the loss of wages for the non-working time, workers were reluctant to take more time off than was absolutely necessary.

Section 2 of the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1924 provided that "so far as it is practicable Agricultural Wages Committees shall secure a weekly half-holiday for agricultural workers". It is apparent from the phrasing of this provision that there was no guarantee of a regular weekly half holiday for each worker. In the first year of the scheme no action was taken under this section of the Act by the five Agricultural Wages Committees. All the remaining committees interpreted the provision of a weekly half-holiday under the Act to mean that on one day each week work in excess of a certain specified number of hours must be paid for at overtime rates. The specified minimum number of hours which had to be worked at ordinary rates on half-holidays varied from five hours (one committee) to 6½ hours (17 committees). Some Committees determined that all work after 12 noon or after 1 p.m. on half holidays must be treated as overtime, and in other areas minimum ordinary working hours on those days varied with the season, e.g. five hours in summer and 5½ hours in winter in Suffolk. The day of the week to which these half-holiday terms were to be applied was not fixed by the committees. In the majority of cases (35 committees) the orders on half-holidays pay suggested Saturday but ultimately left it to agreement between the workers and employers concerned. All these provisions may not have been entirely satisfactory from the workers' point of view because they did not in fact ensure a weekly half-holiday for each worker. Nevertheless they promoted and encouraged the principle of a weekly half-day free of work which led, in the following years, to the observance of a weekly short day in most areas.

The position was less satisfactory as regards women workers. Out of 47 Agricultural Wages Committees, 31 took no action for the provision of a weekly half-holiday or differential overtime rates of pay on those days for women. Of the remaining 16 committees six made orders for overtime rates to be paid for hours of work in excess of $6\frac{1}{2}$ hours on the weekly half-holidays. In four areas the minimum hours paid at ordinary rates were fixed at six, in three areas at $5\frac{1}{2}$ hours and in three areas until 12 noon. That was in 1925. In later years the position improved but in 1937 there were still 22 committees which had made no provisions for the weekly half-holiday for female workers.

There were also some cases where special classes of workers engaged in the care of livestock and receiving special minimum weekly wages were not entitled to overtime rates on weekly half-holidays. On the other hand, in some counties the loss of weekly half-holidays for special classes of workers was offset by the provision of a week or two weeks holiday on full pay annually.

The Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1924, made no provision for securing public holidays or other annual holidays with pay for the workers in agriculture. In the early years of the operation of the Act a few committees only incorporated the provision of public holidays with pay in their orders. But the practice of granting public holidays with pay has grown in later years and from the 1930's onwards a varying number of public holidays annually was secured in most of the areas. Table 18 shows changes in the number of public holidays per annum and in the number of areas in which these holidays were

CHANGES IN THE NUMBER OF PUBLIC HOLIDAYS WITH PAY SECURED BY ORDERS OF THE AGRICULTURAL WAGES COMMITTEES

TABLE 18.

Number of public holidays granted per annum	Number of areas		
	Year ending 30th September 1930	Year ending 30th September 1935	Year ending 30th September 1937
1	5	5	2
2	14	14	11
3	5	4	7
4	1	5	15
5	1	2	4
6	6	5	3
Total number of areas in which public holidays were granted	32	35	42

in force between 1929-30 and 1938, that is, until the passing of the Holidays with Pay Act, 1938[1].

Over the eight years there was a substantial improvement. Whereas in 1930 only 68 per cent of the total number of Agricultural Wages Committees made provisions for public holidays with pay, in 1937 this proportion had grown to over 89 per cent. There was also an increase in the number of days granted annually. In 1930 75 per cent of areas which made provisions for public holidays had these holidays not exceeding three days per annum and only 25 per cent had four, five or six days holiday. In 1937 holidays not exceeding three days annually accounted for only about 47.5 per cent, the remainder of the areas having holiday entitlements of four to six days a year. In 1937 34 committees specified that work on any of the agreed public holidays detailed in the committees' orders entitled workers to payment of overtime rates. In addition, the number of hours which a worker would normally be expected to work for the minimum wage was reduced for the weeks including public holidays specified by the committee. As a result, if the worker did not have to work on public holidays, he would still receive his full wage owing to the reduction of statutory hours in that week. If, on the other hand, the worker was required to work on public holidays, he was entitled to overtime rates of payment for all the time worked on such days. Overtime payment for the work performed on public holidays was applicable to all areas which made provisions for paid public holidays. But in eight out of the total of 42 such areas in 1937 there was no reduction of the statutory weekly hours and therefore workers in those areas, if they were not required to work on public holidays, had to make up the time necessary for the entitlement to the statutory minimum wage on other days, or to have a holiday with their normal wages reduced. It is noteworthy that these less favourable conditions from the workers' point of view existed in Wales and in the northern counties of England (Monmouth, Carmarthen, Merioneth and Montgomery, Pembroke and Cardigan, Radnor and Brecon, Durham, Lancashire and Northumberland).

The workers' entitlement to paid holidays was further extended by the provisions of the Holidays with Pay Act, 1938 which became law in August of that year. The Act empowered Agricultural Wages Committees to fix holidays with pay in addition to public holidays already recognised. This was often resisted by the employers and attempts were made to interpret the Act as inclusive of public

1 *The Holidays with Pay Act*, 1938. 1 *and* 2 *Geo.* 6, *Ch.* 70 and the *Holidays with Pay (Agricultural Workers — England and Wales) Proceedings and Notices Regulations*, 1938. Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. 24th October, 1938. H.M. Stationery Office, London.

holidays but owing to the vigilance of the workers' organisations, these attempts were largely unsuccessful and in 1939 every county had secured holidays with pay under the new Act.

The total period of holidays with pay in any one year according to the Act could not exceed seven days and not more than three consecutive days of holiday could be taken at once. Workers and their representatives recognised the significance and the immediate

ANNUAL ENTITLEMENT OF WORKERS TO HOLIDAYS WITH PAY UNDER THE HOLIDAYS WITH PAY ACT, 1938, AS FIXED BY THE AGRICULTURAL WAGES COMMITTEES IN 1939.

TABLE 19.

Area	No. of days of annual paid holiday		Area	No. of days of annual paid holiday	
	Ordinary workers	Special classes		Ordinary workers	Special classes
Bedford and Huntingdon	4	4	Northampton	4	4
Berkshire	3	3	Northumberland	4	4
Buckingham	4	4	Nottingham	3	3
Cambridge and Isle of Ely	3	3	Oxford	3	3
Cheshire	6	7	Shropshire	6	6
Cornwall and Scilly Isles	2	2	Somerset	3	3
Cumberland and Westmorland	6	7	Stafford	6	6
Derby	3	3	Suffolk	3	4
Devon	3	3	Surrey	6	7
Dorset	3	3	Sussex	5	6
Durham	4	4	Warwick	6	6
Essex	3	4	Wiltshire	3	3
Gloucester	4	4	Worcester	4	4
Hampshire	3	3	Yorkshire (East Riding)	2	2
Hereford	6	6	Yorkshire (North Riding)	4	4
Hertford	3	4	Yorkshire (West Riding)	4	4
Holland (Lincs.)	4	4	Anglesey and Carnarvon	6	7
Kent	3	3	Carmarthen	3 (2)	3 (2)
Kesteven and Lindsey (Lincs.)	4	4	Denbigh and Flint	6 (3)	7 (3)
Lancashire	6	7	Glamorgan	6 (4)	6 (4)
Leicester and Rutland	4	4	Merioneth and Montgomery	6 (5)	7 (5)
Middlesex	3	3	Pembroke and Cardigan	3 (6)	3 (6)
Monmouth	6 (1)	6 (1)	Radnor and Brecon	6	6
Norfolk	3	4			

Total number of areas 47

1 Six public holidays without reduction of hours in the guaranteed week.

2 Workers on yearly engagements with voluntary agreements for holidays recognised by Agricultural Wages Committees, 14 days holiday with pay including Sundays. Double pay for 14 days if no holidays taken.

3 As in 2, six days holiday each half-year. Double pay if worked.

4 As in 2 and 3 above, one week's holiday each half-year or double pay.

5 As in 2, 3 and 4, one week's holiday each half-year or double pay.

6 As in 2, 3, 4 and 5, one week's holiday each half-year or double pay.

value of the Act for the improvement of their working conditions, although their endeavours to amend the Act so as to provide an annual holiday of six consecutive days failed. In its final stage, the Act, though specifying the maximum entitlement of workers to paid holidays, did not fix any minimum number of days, and as a result there existed wide variations in the number of days granted in various areas as shown in Table 19. The Act also was not entirely satisfactory because of the necessity to split the annual holiday into three lots, if seven days holiday was fixed in the area, instead of taking it all at once.

However, as Table 20 shows, the annual paid holiday did not exceed four days in 68 per cent of the areas. Ordinary workers were not entitled to the maximum seven days holiday in any of the areas and only 15 per cent of the areas had seven days holiday fixed for the special classes of workers.

ANNUAL ENTITLEMENT OF WORKERS TO HOLIDAYS WITH PAY UNDER THE HOLIDAYS WITH PAY ACT, 1938, AS FIXED BY THE AGRICULTURAL WAGES COMMITTEES IN 1939.

TABLE 20.

Number of holidays with pay per annum	Ordinary workers		Special classes of workers	
	No. of areas	Percentage	No. of areas	Percentage
2 days	2	4	2	4
3 days	18	38	14	30
4 days	12	26	16	34
5 days	1	2	—	—
6 days	14	30	8	17
7 days	—	—	7	15
Total	47	100	47	100

In most of the Welsh areas the length of the annual entitlements to paid holidays depended on the system of hiring. Workers on yearly engagement by a voluntary agreement with the employers, which was recognised by the Agricultural Wages Committee, were, generally speaking, entitled to either 14 days paid holiday a year or double pay on 14 days a year if the holiday had not been taken.

In this field, as in the matter of wages, higher entitlements of the special classes of workers did not signify the recognition of higher skill or the reward for heavier responsibility attached to work performed. Higher pay resulted from longer hours of work and

longer holidays with pay were offset by the necessity to work on Sundays even though that work was treated as overtime.

(x) **Exemptions from the minimum wage.** The Agricultural Wages Committees were empowered by Section 2 (3) of the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1924, to grant to workers incapable of earning the minimum wage owing to a physical injury, mental deficiency or other causes, permits of exemption from the provisions of the Act which required wages to be paid at not less than the minimum rate. It was an important provision since it enabled old or otherwise infirm people to be employed in farming even though their lower working capacity prevented them from earning a fit man's wages. Certificates of exemption were granted by individual application and the extent of exemption varied according to fitness of the individual concerned. The existence of the certificates of exemption protected old or infirm people from underpayment which formerly often occurred, particularly as regards mentally deficient workers. At the same time the position from the legal point of view and from the point of view of the employer became quite clear, leaving the latter in no doubt that each of his hired workers must be paid either full wages or such reduced wages as prescribed by the Agricultural Wages Committee and supported by their certificate of exemption.

Table 21 illustrates changes in the number of certificates granted on various grounds between 1925 and 1937. The highest total number of certificates is recorded for 1928 and the issue of certificates previous to that year was steadily rising. The rise was due not only to the time lag in making use of the facility by the workers concerned, but also to the relatively stable economic conditions in farming encouraging the employment of partly unfit men and women. From 1929-30 there was a gradual decrease in the number of certificates. The greater proportion of the committees had been granting permits of exemption for indefinite periods of time for the old-age pensioners and permanently disabled men. Some of the certificates limited the validity of the permits to the period of operation of the current orders regulating minimum wages, and in a few cases all permits were reviewed, regardless of the period of their validity, whenever there was a change in the rates of the minumum wage. The high proportion of permits issued for an indefinite period of time had its effect upon the number of fresh applicants, and as the general economic conditions deteriorated after 1929, economies were made on labour and the demand for partly disabled men and women for farm work declined.

The analysis of permits of exemption by sex of the applicants indicates that only a very negligible number of partly disabled women were engaged in farming as hired workers.

TABLE 21.

CHANGES IN THE NUMBER OF PERMITS OF EXEMPTION GRANTED BY THE AGRICULTURAL WAGES COMMITTEES IN ENGLAND AND WALES.

Year	Total number of permits	REASONS FOR THE ISSUE OF PERMITS											
		Mental deficiency			Physical injury			Old age			Infirmity due to other causes		
		Men	Women	Percentage of total	Men	Women	Percentage of total	Men	Women	Percentage of total	Men	Women	Percentage of total
1925	8,946	1,247	7	14.0	1,943	3	21.8	3,350	21	37.7	2,353	22	26.5
1926	10,454	1,586	5	15.2	1,758	1	16.8	3,894	18	37.4	3,172	20	30.6
1927	10,932	1,680	7	15.4	1,677	1	15.4	4,304	17	39.5	3,223	23	29.7
1928	12,391	1,831	5	14.8	1,902	2	15.4	4,868	14	39.4	3,744	25	30.4
1929	10,547	1,621	6	15.4	1,403	1	13.3	3,989	6	37.9	3,501	20	33.4
1930	10,649	1,767	4	16.6	1,401	1	13.2	3,887	8	36.6	3,571	10	33.6
1931	10,546	1,750	5	16.6	1,380	—	13.1	3,761	9	35.8	3,629	12	34.5
1932	10,040	1,720	4	17.2	1,387	2	13.8	3,488	7	34.8	3,428	4	34.2
1933	9,419	1,621	2	17.2	1,403	—	14.9	3,109	4	33.1	3,275	5	34.8
1934	9,314	1,661	2	17.9	1,426	1	15.3	2,994	1	32.1	3,222	7	34.7
1935	9,188	1,726	3	18.8	1,380	2	15.1	2,858	2	31.1	3,213	4	35.0
1936	8,978	1,817	4	20.3	1,481	—	16.5	2,769	2	30.9	2,901	4	32.3
1937	8,664	1,862	5	21.5	1,433	—	16.5	2,587	4	30.0	2,770	3	32.0

The relatively largest proportion of permits was issued to workers suffering from infirmity due to old age or other miscellaneous causes. Next in order of importance were the mentally deficient and those suffering from physical injuries. Numbers in the latter category were relatively high in the first year of the operation of the Act owing to a number of injured ex-servicemen of the First World War employed in farming.

Some committees granting permits of exemption adopted the procedure of not specifying any special rates of pay to the exempted workers. This applied mainly to the old-age pensioners who in their state of semi-retirement were not entirely dependent on earnings, and on the strength of their previous services to the employer often were able to secure wages high in relation to work which they could now offer. Unspecified rates of pay were less satisfactory for the exempted workers in the prime of their life, who depended exclusively on their wages. Workers' representatives put pressure on Agricultural Wages Committees to reduce the issue of permits with the undefined rates of pay and the number of these permits tended to decrease. In 1925 permits with unspecified rates of pay accounted for 5.5 per cent of the total number issued. In 1937 the percentage was more than halved—2.6 per cent.[1]

The extent of the reductions of minimum wages following exemption varied considerably, and a comparison of these reductions in 1925 and in 1937 is provided in Table 22.

REDUCTIONS IN THE MINIMUM WEEKLY WAGE AUTHORISED BY PERMITS OF EXEMPTION.

TABLE 22.

1925			1937		
Amount by which weekly rates authorised by permits are lower than the minimum rate	No. of permits	Per cent of total	Amount by which weekly rates authorised by permits are lower than the minimum rate	No. of permits	Per cent of total
s. d.			s. d. s. d.		
1 0	194	2.6	less than 2 0	175	2.4
2 0	567	7.5	2 0 — 4 0	713	9.8
3 0	818	10.9	4 0 — 6 0	1,181	16.3
4 0	807	10.7	6 0 — 8 0	1,379	19.0
5 0 or more	5,132	68.3	8 0 — 10 0	1,316	18.2
—	—	—	10 0 or more	2,489	34.3
Total	7,518	100.0	Total	7,253	100.0

1 MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES. *Reports of Proceedings under the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act*, 1924. H.M. Stationery Office, London.

The rate of the reductions increased. In 1925 just over 68 per cent of all permits granted specified reductions amounting to 5s. 0d. or more from the minimum wage. In 12 years time the highest single group of reductions equal to 10s. 0d. or more per week represented over 34 per cent of all permits.

(xi) **Enforcement of the minimum wage.** The enforcement of the minimum wage was secured by Sections 7 and 9 of the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1924. Under Section 7 of the Act the employment of a worker in farming at a rate of pay lower than the minimum wage prescribed by the County Agricultural Wages Committee was a punishable offence. On a summary conviction the employer was liable to a fine of up to £20 for each offence and to a fine not exceeding £1 for each day following the conviction if he continued to commit the offence. In legal proceedings arising under this Section of the Act it was also the employer's responsibility to provide the evidence that rates of wages paid were, in fact, legitimate. Legal proceedings against employers were not necessarily followed by conviction and fine, and although in many cases there was no doubt that wages paid were below the statutory minimum, the intention to contravene the Act either did not exist or could not be proved. For the protection of workers' interests the Act provided, therefore, that in all such cases irrespective of conviction and fines imposed, the court had to order the payment to the worker of the sum representing the difference between the statutory wage and the wage actually paid during the six months preceding the complaint. In cases followed by conviction the evidence of underpayment during the 18 months preceding the six months was admitted and on proof the court was empowered to order the repayment of the difference between the statutory and actual wage for a period of two years.

Section 9 of the Act made necessary provisions for the establishment of enforcement officers responsible to the Minister for the investigation of complaints and inspecting the compliance of farmers with orders issued by the Agricultural Wages Committees. The inspectors were authorised to start and to conduct proceedings in respect of offences against the Act in a court of summary jurisdiction and the effectiveness of inspections on farms was ensured by the provisions contained in Section 9 (3) of the Act to the effect that refusal to supply an inspector with all the necessary information, giving false information or otherwise hindering him in his inspection were punishable offences liable to a fine not exceeding £20 or to imprisonment for not longer than three months, or to both.

Table 23 contains a summary of complaints, amounts of wages recovered and prosecutions instituted between 1926 and 1937. The

low number of complaints in the first year of the operation of the Act does not indicate that there were only relatively few contraventions of the Act. The new system of wage regulation coming into force and in many cases ignorance of the correct procedure on the part of both farmers and workers were bound to create far more breaches of the Act than the number of recorded complaints suggests. Also, during the first few months the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries were taking a lenient view of these offences. Farmers were given time and opportunity to get used to the new system of wages and legal proceedings were taken only against those employers in respect of whom there was evidence of deliberate offence strong enough to secure conviction in the court of law.

On 3rd August, 1925, the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries made the following statement in the House of Commons[1] :—

> "I say here quite deliberately and definitely that where I have reason to suppose that there is deliberate evasion of the Act, I shall not hesitate, as I am not hesitating, to prosecute and to secure for the labourer that to which the action of Parliament has rendered him entitled".

By that time only three convictions of employers had been obtained and normally the enforcement had been limited to the investigation of hours worked and wages paid, and to requesting the farmer concerned to repay his workers the arrears of pay revealed by inspection. A change of policy, however, followed the Minister's statement in the House. From the beginning of August to the end of September, 1925, 14 further convictions were obtained and apart from fines and costs imposed, over £100 worth of arrears of wages were ordered to be paid. In the following year there was a steep rise in the number of prosecutions for underpayment and the highest number of prosecutions was recorded in the years of the depression in 1930 and 1931.

The proportion of underpaid workers is difficult to ascertain and the number of complaints lodged is not conclusive in this respect because many of them on closer examination proved to be unfounded or amounts involved were so trifling as to suggest mistakes in recording rather than deliberate breaches of the Act. In such cases, of course, the complaints were either dismissed or the necessary adjustments in the wage bill were pointed out to the farmer who, as a rule, paid the difference without further difficulties. However, the extent

1 MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES. *Report of Proceedings under the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act*, 1924. *For the year ending 30th September*, 1925. H.M. Stationery Office, London. 1926.

TABLE 23.

ENFORCEMENT OF THE MINIMUM WAGE.

12 months ended 30th September	Number of complaints received	Arrears of wages recovered during the period		Prosecutions instituted under Section 7 (1) of the Act	No. of court cases	Fines imposed	Costs ordered	Arrears of wages ordered	No. of workers involved
		As a result of specific complaints	As a result of "test" inspections						
		£	£			£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	
1925	876	850	—	17	17	41 10 6	31 2 8	110 7 4	28
1926	1,626	5,850	298	82	82	302 8 0	116 7 4	1,456 17 1	192
1927	1,988	11,490	1,930	98	98	234 9 0	134 16 0	2,053 5 6	193
1928	2,195	10,373	1,539	90	90	341 16 2	140 17 2	2,052 17 5	169
1929	2,234	11,001	1,425	97	97	258 13 0	114 17 0	2,046 15 8	196
1930	2,822	14,589	3,950	176	176	229 12 6	122 10 2	2,934 14 2	257
1931	2,616	10,897	5,713	135	135	210 18 6	110 2 8	2,273 0 3	206
1932	2,900	9,933	2,091	63	63	160 13 6	46 19 6	1,115 2 8	102
1933	3,169	10,015	631	66	66	201 5 6	55 13 11	1,239 4 2	111
1934	3,340	11,596	904	63	63	169 5 0	52 10 0	1,187 2 9	94
1935	3,588	15,594	1,241	79	79	215 12 0	57 2 2	1,552 2 11	128
1936	3,705	14,020	1,707	93	93	251 4 0	71 1 2	2,232 15 4	151
1937	3,733	14,215	1,971	106	106	450 10 0	88 11 11	2,771 8 6	177
Total	34,792	140,423	23,400	1,165	1,165	3,067 17 8	1,142 11 8	23,025 13 9	2,004

to which underpayment of workers in farming existed is evidenced by the results of the "test" inspections carried out by the Ministry's inspectors. Test inspections had no connection with the inspection of farms in respect of which a definite complaint had been made and an investigation had to follow as a matter of course. They were made on odd farms in the course of the inspector's travels and the randomness of these visits strengthened the evidence which they produced. In 1926, 15 appointed inspectors visited 150 farms and found that 206 workers out of the total of 915 workers employed on these farms (22.5 per cent) were paid less than the statutory minimum wage. It had been stated[1] that in the following years until 1929 the average proportion of underpaid workers was about 18 per cent. In 1929 and 1931 six extra inspectors appointed by the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries visited 1,553 farms employing 3,553 workers and found that about 20 per cent of them were underpaid. During the same period the "regular" inspectors in the course of their "test" inspections, discovered about 17 per cent of workers being underpaid. Further inspections made in 1936 and 1937 revealed that the proportion of underpaid workers amounted to 22 and 19 per cent respectively. The proportion of workers receiving less than the legal minimum rates may, therefore be estimated at some 17-20 per cent of the total number of workers. This high proportion was due to various causes but was mainly connected with the specific conditions of work and methods of labour management in farming. Chief among these causes was unsatisfactory recording, particularly on small farms employing only one or two workers. On such farms, time sheets were rarely kept and records of paid wages in the absence of detailed book-keeping were vague and unreliable. Taking into account differential rates in respect of work in normal hours, piece-time, overtime on ordinary days, Sundays and public holidays, holidays with pay, harvests, etc., the need to keep detailed records and the difficulty in remembering the arrears unless they were settled at short intervals are apparent. With the passage of time, workers themselves were often not aware of the exact amount of arrears of pay due to them, and the lack of definite documentary evidence made the task of the Ministry's inspectors or the Courts extremely difficult. Workers were repeatedly urged by both the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and their own trade organisations to report cases of underpayment without delay whilst all the dates, circumstances of the case and amounts involved were still fresh in the minds of the people concerned. This, however, quite apart from the customary slowness of the rural population in taking action, was not always practicable.

[1] REG. GROVES. *Sharpen the Sickle. The History of the Farm Workers' Union.* The Porcupine Press. London, 1949.

The relationships between workers and farmers were personal rather than businesslike. The tradition of master and servant relationship still existed in many parts of the country, and workers, particularly in times of the depression and widespread unemployment felt too much dependent on the farmer for their livelihood to antagonise their employers for what appeared to be a slight underpayment of wages. Complaints were, therefore, made and cases of underpayment came to light mostly when either underpayments assumed serious proportions or when the worker had been dismissed or left of his own will.

But the enforcement of the minimum wage also has been criticised on the grounds of inadequacy of corrective measures. The workers' representatives regarded fines imposed on employers for the infringement of the minimum wage orders as too low, and inspection of farms as inadequate. There were even more serious suggestions of partiality of rural magistrates in favour of employers and of the inadequate representation of workers' interests on rural Benches of magistrates.[1]

2. ECONOMIC POSITION OF FARM WORKERS ON THE EVE OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR.

Tables 24 and 25 give comparisons of changes in real earnings of agricultural workers and of all manual workers in relation to conditions in 1914 and in 1924.

During the 16 years following the introduction of the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1924 there was an undeniable improvement in the earnings of agricultural workers. The improvement was partly due to rising wages and partly to the reduction in the cost of living. In terms of 1914 prices and wages, the cost of living in 1939 rose by about 50 per cent, whereas wages of farm workers nearly doubled. Taking 1924 as a basis there was an 18 per cent reduction in the cost of living and 24 per cent increase in farm wages. The increase in wages of all manual workers during the same period amounted to only six per cent and their real wages were relatively lower than those of farm workers. But it should be remembered that wage rates generally, and actual earnings of workers in other industries were higher and in some trades and industries, very much higher than earnings of farm workers. It was estimated that in 1924 when the average minimum weekly rate of wages for an ordinary agricultural worker was 28s. 0d. the corresponding full time wage in other industries

[1] The resolution on the inspection of farms moved by Ald. G. E. Hewit, J.P., and adopted by the 69th Annual Trades Union Congress at St. Andrew's Hall, Norwich. 6th—10th September, 1937.

INDEX CHANGES IN THE COST OF LIVING, WAGES AND REAL WAGES OF AGRICULTURAL WORKERS IN ENGLAND AND WALES.

TABLE 24. 1914 =100

Year	Cost of living index	Index of wages of agricultural workers	Index of real wages of agricultural workers
1924	175	155	88
1925	176	174	99
1926	172	176	102
1927	167	176	105
1928	166	176	106
1929	164	176	107
1930	158	176	111
1931	147	175	119
1932	144	173	120
1933	140	170	121
1934	141	172	122
1935	143	177	124
1936	147	179	122
1937	154	184	119
1938	156	189	121
1939	158	193	122

INDEX CHANGES IN THE COST OF LIVING, WAGES AND REAL WAGES OF AGRICULTURAL WORKERS AND ALL MANUAL WORKERS IN ENGLAND AND WALES.

TABLE 25. 1924 =100(1)

Year	Cost of living index	Index of wages		Index of real wages	
		Agricultural workers	All manual workers	Agricultural workers	All manual workers
1924	100	100	100	100	100
1925	97	100	100	103	103
1926	96	112	101	116	105
1927	92	112	101	122	110
1928	92	112	99	122	107
1929	91	112	99	123	108
1930	87	112	98	129	113
1931	80	113	97	141	121
1932	79	111	95	140	120
1933	78	109	94	140	120
1934	78	110	94	141	120
1935	80	114	96	142	120
1936	82	115	98	140	119
1937	87	119	102	136	117
1938	86	123	104	143	121
1939	88	124	106	141	120

1 LONDON AND CAMBRIDGE ECONOMIC SERVICE. *Special Memorandum No.* 50, *5th May,* 1947.

averaged over 57s. 0d. per week. In 1933, with the average minimum wage of agricultural workers estimated at 30s. 8½d., the lowest Trade Board minimum wage rate for adult male workers was 37s. 6d., medium rate 48s. 0d. and the highest 61s. 6d. per week. On the eve of the Second World War, in September, 1939, the agricultural minimum wage was on an average equal to 34s. 9d. The lowest Trade Board minimum rate was then 40s. 0d., medium 49s. 9d. and the highest 61s. 6d. In addition, the average length of the working week estimated in farming at 50 hours, had to be compared with the average of 40 hours in other industries. As indicated by the stability of wages in the highest grades of other industries, rises in wages affected primarily lower paid grades of workers, and farm workers' wages, which lagged behind the earnings in all other industries were subject to relatively rapid improvement during the years 1924 to 1939.

Additional information on the real value of farm workers' earnings is given by enquiries into the family budgets of workers. Such inquiries, which, owing to their nature are difficult to conduct, have often been criticised and their conclusions doubted. Nevertheless they constitute a valuable source of information on living standards of groups of the population, and they not only made possible comparisons between total earnings and total spending of a family but they also disclose details of expenditure indicative of the relative importance of various items of expenditure and the general well-being of the family. Undoubtedly there is a margin of error in all these investigations and the value of results obtained is dependent on the randomness of sample within the surveyed group of population. That is one of the reasons for obtaining different conclusions in the surveys of budgets of the same class of the population undertaken at the same time by different investigators.

In 1924-25, A.W. Ashby reported[1] on 83 budgets of farm workers' families in the early part of 1924. The national average weekly wage of the ordinary workers was estimated at that time at 28s. 0d. There was a wide range of variations in the weekly expenditure of farm workers' families but as Table 26 shows, the average expenditure could not be met by the prevailing weekly wage of an adult male worker. Extra earnings were provided by special payments obtained by the worker, by his overtime employment and by casual employment of his wife and children. Some proportion of workers had houses rent free and certain items of food were provided by the employer as payments in kind in addition to cash wages. On the

[1] A. W. ASHBY. *Farm Workers' Budgets.* Agricultural Economics Department, University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, 1925. Reprint from the Journal of the Ministry of Agriculture, December, 1924, and January and February, 1925.

other hand, expenditure on clothing, purchases or replacement of linen, kitchen utensils, etc., is not included in Table 26 and the extent of expenditure on these articles was largely dependent on the size of a balance left after all the necessities had been paid for. An idea of the workers' living standards may be obtained from the fact that although the expenditure on food was low, varying from 3s. 0d. to 4s. 7d. per head, food accounted for 60 to 70 per cent of the total expenditure. At the same time the miscellaneous group of expenses which included fares, small repairs to household goods as well as entertainment, papers, books, tobacco, etc., amounted to only about two per cent of the total. The expenditure of farm workers' families on food can also be regarded as inadequate. According to the tables of minimum diets drawn up by the British Medical Association[1] the weekly cost of food absolutely necessary for the existence of a family consisting of a man, his wife and three children ranged in 1933 from 23s. 0d. to 25s. 0d. Allowing for changes in food prices during the intervening years, this would amount in 1924 to 29s. 9d. and about 32s. 0d. respectively, that is, at least 10s. 0d. more than the average expenditure on food by the group of farm workers' families studied by Ashby in his investigation.

WEEKLY EXPENDITURE OF FARM WORKERS' FAMILIES IN 1924.
TABLE 26.

Details of expenditure	Average expenditure based on 43 budgets of families with 3 children or less			Average expenditure based on 40 budgets of families with more than 3 children		
	s.	d.	Percentage	s.	d.	Percentage
Rent	2	5¼	8.1	1	10	5.7
Food	19	3	64.2	22	4¾	70.0
Cleaning materials	1	1¾	3.8	1	0½	3.2
Insurances	1	5½	4.8	1	3½	4.2
Fuel and light	5	0	16.6	4	8¾	14.7
Miscellaneous		9	2.5		8½	2.2
Total	30	0½	100.0	32	0	100.0

Sir John Boyd Orr conducted a series of surveys of the family budgets and expenditure in the 1930's[2]. By reference to family incomes and expenditure on food per head he divided the population into six groups and compared the average food consumption in each of these groups with the nutritional standards of quantity set up by

1 Quoted by CHARLES SMITH. *Britain's Food Supplies in Peace and War. A survey prepared for the Fabian Society, London.* George Routledge and Sons, Ltd. 1940.

2 SIR JOHN BOYD ORR. *Food, health and income.* Macmillan & Co., London, 1936. SIR JOHN BOYD ORR AND D. LUBBOCK. *Feeding the people in war-time.* 1940.

Stiebling. The lowest group included all those families in which weekly expenditure on food per head did not exceed 4s 0d. and the next group included families with expenditure of 4s. 0d. to 6s. 0d. per head. According to nutritional requirements the average diet of the first group was entirely inadequate for health and in the second group only total protein requirements were satisfied. By the time of these surveys the average farm wage had risen to about 32s. 0d. to 34s. 0d. per week and the expenditure on food per head of the farm workers' families could be fitted into the two lowest income groups of population. But the respective standards of weekly expenditure on food per head in 1924 would be in the region of 5s. 0d. and 7s. 0d. - 8s. 0d. Sir John Boyd Orr based his surveys mainly on budgets from the industrial areas in the North of England. Even assuming that the cost of food was lower in rural areas, farm workers' spending on food was, generally speaking, at an unsatisfactorily low level, and as Ashby[1] pointed out, families with larger numbers of children suffered further deterioration in their daily diet. In 1937 Seebohm Rowntree reported on a comparative study of the industrial and rural working class families' budgets.[2] The results of his enquiry as well as the results of a similar enquiry made in 1937 by the Ministry of Labour and National Service are set out in Table 27. According to both enquiries the weekly expenditure of an urban family consisting of a husband, wife and three children was higher than the expenditure of a rural family of the same size.

WEEKLY EXPENDITURE OF URBAN AND RURAL WORKING CLASS FAMILIES.

TABLE 27.

Details of expenditure	Seebohm Rowntree's Enquiry				Ministry of Labour and National Service Enquiry			
	Urban families		Rural families		Urban families		Rural families	
	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.
Food	20	0	18	6	34	1	27	9
Rent	9	6	5	6	10	10	4	9
Clothes	8	0	7	0	9	4	5	10
Fuel and light	4	4	3	2	6	5	4	11
Household and sundries	9	0	5	6	25	7	14	8
Total	50	10	39	8	86	3	57	11

Seebohm Rowntree stressed in his report that his figures represented only a bare minimum of requirements laid down by the

1 A. W. ASHBY. *Ibid.*

2 SEEBOHM ROWNTREE. *Human Needs of Labour.* 2nd Edition, 1937.

British Medical Association. The average rate of farm workers' wages was estimated at that time at about 33s. 0d. per week. This wage compared with the weekly expenditure of about 40s. 0d. indicated that in spite of improvement in wages and decline in costs since 1924, the standard of living of farm workers was low, and that one earner could not support his family out of his minimum wage only.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SECOND WORLD WAR.

1. THE EFFECT OF THE WAR ON CONDITIONS OF AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT.

The outbreak of the Second World War deeply affected conditions of work and earnings in agriculture. Changes were dominated by two important factors; the necessity to step up the volume of agricultural production at home and the shortage of labour available.

The output of the farming industry had to be increased considerably in order to offset the threat, and in the middle years of the war the very real danger, to the nation's overseas sources of food. More men were required on the land to cope with the increasing area of tillage and in spite of progress made in the field of farm mechanisation the heavy demand for farm labour persisted throughout the war and in the post-war period.

The importance of agriculture to the war-time national economy was fully realised and the industry was given every encouragement to expand. Its claims, however, on the national resources of man-power had to be weighed carefully against those made by the armed forces and by other industries essential to the task of winning the war.

Conditions under which farm workers lived and worked on the eve of the Second World War compared favourably with conditions prevailing some 25 years earlier. Many farm workers felt, however, that neither the rate nor the extent of improvement in wages and other conditions of agricultural employment were as satisfactory as they desired them to be. This was attributed partly to the weak bargaining power of agricultural workers and partly to the economically depressed state of agriculture, apparently unable to afford better conditions for its employees. But fundamentally it was due to the fact that until the Second World War there was never a real shortage of labour in farming and that only after 1939 did it have scarcity value.

The war changed these conditions. The bargaining power of farm workers increased enormously not only because of the greater demand for labour created by the expansion of home agriculture but also because of the competition from other industries on the labour market. These industries were prepared to offer wages and other conditions of employment more attractive than agriculture and, if not checked, such competition might seriously disrupt agricultural production and so injure the whole national economy.

During the first 12 months of the war it became evident that the establishment of a control of movement of workers from farm to more attractive occupations or to the armed forces would be unavoidable.

In the list of occupations exempted from military service, published early in 1939, farm workers 25 years old and over were free from call-up. During 1939 the age limit of 25 was reduced to 21. Further reduction however, to 18 years, for which the agricultural industry pressed was resisted by the government. The government instead made arrangements for the postponement of calling up men in agricultural occupations when in individual cases it could be shown that such postponement was essential in the interests of food production and where the replacement of the worker liable to be called up would be impossible. In 1940 the age of reservation in respect of some essential classes of farm workers was lowered to 18 years.

The reduction in the supply of labour caused by the call up was offset to some extent by quota releases from military service of men of low medical category with previous experience in agricultural work. Special leave from the forces was granted at harvest time to men formerly employed as agricultural workers, and soldier labour was supplied to farmers short of workers in the peak periods of demand for labour. Extra sources of labour for agriculture were also created in the form of the Women's Land Army, and by the organisation of holiday workers and school children for seasonal operations. In the later years of the war prisoners of war were employed in farming.

All these measures protected the agricultural industry from a too heavy drain on its supplies of labour for the military service. They were not successful, however, in preventing agricultural workers from leaving farm employment and moving to better paid jobs in other industries badly in need of extra supplies of labour.

On 5th June, 1940 the Undertakings (Restriction on Engagement) Order, 1940 came into operation. Under this order employers in other industries were prohibited from employing men normally working in agriculture unless this was authorised by the Ministry of Labour. This proved to be an effective step towards the stabilisation of the supply of labour in agriculture. It was realised, however, that farm workers would have to be compensated for the loss of better economic opportunities in other industries and that wages in agriculture would have to be brought as much as possible in line with wages in other occupations. Also in order to prevent undue migration of workers within the industry from counties with lower rates of wages

to those where wages were higher a national minimum wage would have to be established and provisions made for its administration and control.

Early in 1939 negotiations were proceeding between the National Farmers' Union and representatives of farm workers about the establishment of a central wages board empowered to fix a national minimum wage. The first proposals made by workers' representatives were opposed by farmers and "compromise" proposals made by workers' representatives were put forward and circulated by the National Farmers' Union to its county Branches for consideration. The "compromise" proposals suggested that the existing wage regulating machinery of the District Wages Committee should be maintained but the Central Agricultural Wages Board should be given power to fix, in consultation with the District Committees, a national minimum wage. The proposals further suggested that the Central Wages Board should be given powers to reduce the national minimum wage in respect of individual districts if the District Wages Committee concerned would satisfy the Board that there were sufficiently strong reasons for such reduction. The District Wages Committees, on the other hand, would be free to fix the district rates higher than the national minimum if the demand for the higher rates could be substantiated by workers' representatives on the committee concerned. It was also suggested that the fixing of the national minimum wage by the Central Wages Board should be confined to wages for the ordinary adult male workers or possibly one or two other classes of workers as e.g. women but that the District Committees should be fully autonomous in fixing all other wage rates and conditions of agricultural employment.

These proposals were favourably received by farmers chiefly because of an assurance by the workers' representatives that they would support the principle of maintaining prices of agricultural products sufficiently high to enable farmers to pay reasonable wages. Workers' representatives claimed that this policy would be supported also by the Trades Union Congress. Farmers attached great importance to having prices for agricultural commodities guaranteed as a condition of their support of the national minimum wage. When the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Amendment Bill was introduced in Parliament it was found that it did not contain any guarantees of prices. Farmers protested vigorously against this omission and withdrew their support of the Bill. At the beginning of April, 1940, before the Bill was read a second time the Minister of Agriculture and the Prime Minister assured representatives of the County War Agricultural Executive Committees that agricultural wages under the new machinery proposed in the Bill would be related to prices of agricultural commodities.

On 25th April, 1940 the Bill received the Royal Assent.[1]

The Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Amendment Act, 1940, consisted of three sections. The last section merely directed the Act to be construed as one with the principal Act, i.e. the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1924. Section 1 and 2 of the Act dealt with the duties of the Agricultural Wages Board and those of the Agricultural Wages Committees respectively.

The Act followed the main points of the "compromise" proposals put forward by workers' representatives and initially approved by farmers.

The first duty of the Agricultural Wages Board under the Act was to fix a national minimum wage. The minimum rates of wages fixed by the Agricultural Wages Committees in each county could not be lower than the national minimum fixed by the Board but, if owing to special conditions of the agricultural industry in the county the Agricultural Wages Committee made satisfactory recommendations to the Agricultural Wages Board the latter was empowered to fix the minimum wage for the area concerned lower than the national minimum. The Agricultural Wages Board also had the authority to reconsider and change the national minimum wage.

The duties of the Agricultural Wages Committees may be summarised as follows:

Mimimum weekly wages for able-bodied male agricultural workers or for any other classes of workers fixed by the Agricultural Wages Committees in their areas had to be related to the national minimum wage although the committees were free to set up wage rates higher than the national minimum for any classes of workers.

The Act provided that the rates of wages fixed under the provisions of the principal Act and operating in each county when the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Amendment Act, 1940 came into force would not have to be adjusted so as to conform with the national minimum wage until the expiration of the prescribed period. If, however, at the end of the prescribed period and after receiving from the Board a notification fixing or varying the national minimum wage a committee failed to make the appropriate adjustments in the minimum rates, the Board was empowered to step in and to fix wages for the area concerned.

The first meeting of the Agricultural Wages Board took place on 30th April, 1940 and at the next meeting held on 14th May

1 *The Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Amendment Act,* 1940. 3 *and* 4 *Geo.* 6, *Ch.* 17.

the Board decided to propose for the consideration of the Agricultural Wages Committees the first national minimum weekly wage of 42s. 0d. for an adult ordinary farm worker.

At about the same time the Undertakings (Restriction on Engagement) Order came into operation and in order to bring agricultural wages more into line with wages in other industries the original proposal of the 42s. 0d. national minimum was increased to 48s. 0d. Farmers' representatives were prepared to support the proposed rate provided that the government guaranteed adequate price levels for agricultural commodities. On the 30th May the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries gave farmers the assurance required and the Agricultural Wages Board at the meeting held on 7th June, 1940 adopted the resolution setting up the national minimum wage at 48s. 0d. per week.

The procedure for giving effect to the national minimum wage for agricultural workers was specified by an Order in Council made on 4th June, 1940.[1] Under this order Agricultural Wages committees were required to make representations to the Agricultural Wages Board for fixing rates lower than the national minimum wage within three days from the date on which they received the Board's notification that the national minimum wage had been fixed. The committees were required to notify the Board of any proposals for other variations in the rates of wages within seven days from the original notification of the national minimum and failure to do so empowered the Board to make proposals for varying minimum rates fixed for the county concerned. Provisions were also made under the order for publishing within three days after the expiration of the seven day period the national minimum wage fixed by the Board, and proposals for varying minimum rates of wages fixed by the Agricultural Wages Committees.

The autonomy of the Agricultural Wages Committees was further restricted by a Defence Regulation made on 24th November, 1942. As a war-time measure the machinery under the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Acts 1924 and 1940 and the Holidays with Pay Act, 1938 was modified. The Regulation provided that, so long as the system of nationally fixed prices and assured markets for agricultural commodities operated, certain powers under the Acts until then exercised by the Agricultural Wages Committees should be transferred to the Agricultural Wages Board. The powers transferred

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1 *Emergency Powers (Defence) Agriculture and Fisheries. Order in Council amending the Defence (Agriculture and Fisheries) Regulations,* 1939. *S.R. and O.* 1940, *No.* 882.

were: to fix, cancel or to vary minimum rates of wages, to define employment which is to be treated as overtime employment and to make directions as to holidays with pay. The Agricultural Wages Board was required, however, to consult the respective Agricultural Wages Committees before exercising the above powers in their areas. In effect Agricultural Wages Committees were concerned only with defining the nature and the value of benefits or advantages which could be reckoned as part payment of the minimum wage and with the issue of permits of exemption from the minimum wage in respect of workers who owing to a mental or physical deficiency could not be expected to earn the minimum rate of wages.

The orders made by the Agricultural Wages Committees before the transfer of their powers to the Agricultural Wages Board remained in operation pending variations introduced by the Board. In order to level out local differences in wages, hours and other conditions of work the Agricultural Wages Board decided to review all the orders. Employers' representatives suggested that this should be done by raising wages and reducing hours in some areas and by reducing wages and increasing hours in others. The Board, however, decided to leave higher wages and shorter hours unaltered and to improve conditions in the areas in which they were less advantageous to the workers. The revised orders came into operation on 20th June, 1943.

In 1944 the Agricultural (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1944 was passed.[1] Section 3 of the Act contained provisions for fixing minimum time rates of wages for agricultural workers employed on piece-work. The object of these provisions was to ensure that the minimum time rate for piece-work was not higher than the minimum rate payable if the work was done on the time work basis. Differential rates for piece-work were allowed only in conditions in which the work done on the time work basis would have to be treated as overtime. Under the Act exemptions could be made, on the grounds of physical or mental disability, from the minimum time rates for piece-work in the same way as they were made in respect of the ordinary minimum wage.

The Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1944 was the last piece of legislation passed during the 1939 to 1945 war which affected the statutory wage regulating machinery.

The war years brought about a number of improvements in earnings and in the general conditions of work in agriculture. The

[1] *Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act*, 1944. 7 *and* 8 *Geo.* 6. *Ch.* 28. 27th July, 1944.

outstanding features of agricultural employment in that period were restrictions on movement of workers to and from the industry, the establishment of the national minimum wage and the transfer of important powers such as those to fix and to vary rates of wages and other conditions of work from the local Agricultural Wages Committees to the central Agricultural Wages Board.

There were also important changes in the organisation and in the character of agricultural production generally and these changes affected the supply and methods of labour utilisation in farming. The increased demand for labour caused by the extension of arable acreage, progress of farm mechanisation and employment in farming of the labour supplied by the Women's Land Army, prisoners of war, school children and, at the end of the war, displaced persons from the European countries are only a few of the factors related to war-time agricultural labour problems.

The farm workers' trade organisations during the war pressed for higher wages and better conditions of agricultural employment. They wanted to reduce the gaps existing between the economic position of workers engaged in farming and those engaged in other industries and occupations. The centralisation in the Agricultural Wages Board of powers to fix wages and conditions of work was supported by workers' representatives because it ensured uniformity of the minimum wage throughout the country and because the bargaining potential of workers concentrated on a central negotiating platform was stronger than it would be had it been dispersed over a number of local Agricultural Wages Committees.

Farmers opposition to changes in the statutory regulation of wages during the war was due mainly to the fear of return, after the war, to a large scale importation of food from abroad. This might lead to another economic depression of home farming and it might be difficult to effect the required reductions in wages under conditions of a national statutory control. But no real objections were made to rises in agricultural wages so long as these were accompanied by appropriate rises in prices for agricultural commodities and by guaranteed disposal of farm products.

2. CHANGES IN EARNINGS AND CONDITIONS OF WORK.

The first national minimum weekly wage for adult male agricultural workers, fixed on 28th June, 1940, was 48s. 0d. The 48s. 0d. wage applied only to ordinary, general workers. Special classes, women, and workers under 21 years of age had differential rates fixed by the Agricultural Wages Committees. The committees had powers to fix rates higher than the national minimum but few

of them had, in fact, done so. Out of a total of 47 Agricultural Wages Committees only four had higher rates. Cumberland and Westmorland, Derby and the Holland Division of Lincolnshire fixed a 50s. 0d. minimum weekly wage, and in Middlesex a 50s. 0d. wage operated in summer and 48s. 0d. in winter. Middlesex was the only county in which there was a seasonal differentiation in the minimum wage. In all other counties the same minimum operated in summer and in winter although there were variations in the length of the working week. Table 28 compares minimum weekly wages and hours of work of ordinary adult male farm workers before and six months after the introduction of the national minimum in each County Agricultural Wages Committee area in England and Wales.

Before the introduction of the national minimum the lowest weekly wage of 32s. 0d. operated in two Welsh areas. The highest wage of 43s. 0d. was paid in North and East Lancashire, and in over 76 per cent of the areas the weekly wage varied from 35s. 0d. to 38s. 0d. In the majority of areas hours of work varied from 48 in winter to 52 in summer. In some areas the length of the working week was the same irrespective of season and generally the longest week consisted of 54 hours with the exception of North and East Lancashire where a 58 hour week was in force throughout the year. The introduction of the national minimum wage was not followed by an immediate appreciable reduction in the length of the working week in all areas. In Cumberland and Westmorland a 50 hours week throughout the year was introduced instead of 54 hours week in summer and 48 hours in winter which operated earlier in 1940. In Lancashire (where prior to the introduction of the national minimum, a 58 hour week was in force throughout the year in the north and in the east of the county, and a 50 hour week in the south) a uniform 51 hour week for the whole county was brought in. There was a reduction in the length of a summer working week in Monmouth and in the North Riding of Yorkshire, and in two Welsh areas (Denbigh and Flint, and Glamorgan) the summer week was lengthened by two hours and in Denbigh and Flint the winter week was also extended by two hours.

During 1941 the National Union of Agricultural Workers pressed for a further increase in the national minimum wage in order to offset the effect on farm workers of the rising cost of living and to ensure that wages earned in agriculture were comparable with those obtainable in other industries and occupations. Representations to this effect were made to both the Agricultural Wages Board and the County Agricultural Wages Committees. The Agricultural Wages Board deferred its decision until November when the results of the harvest would be known but in the meantime increases ranging from

MINIMUM WEEKLY WAGES AND HOURS OF WORK OF ORDINARY ADULT MALE FARM WORKERS.

TABLE 28.

Agricultural Wages Committee Area	1st January, 1940			1st January, 1941		
	Wages	Hours		Wages	Hours	
		Summer	Winter		Summer	Winter
	s. d.			s. d.		
Bedford and Hunts.	37 0	50	48	48 0	50	48
Berkshire	36 0	50	50	48 0	50	50
Buckingham	38 0	50	48	48 0	50	48
Cambridge and Isle of Ely	37 0	50	48	48 0	50	48
Cheshire	39 0	54	54	48 0	54	54
Cornwall	37 0	50	50	48 0	50	50
Cumberland and Westmorland	36 0 to 37 6	54	48	50 0	50	50
Derby	40 0	54	54	50 0	54	54
Devon	35 6	52	50	48 0	52	50
Dorset	36 0	51	48	48 0	51	48
Durham	35 6	50	50	48 0	50	50
Essex	36 6	50	48	48 0	50	48
Gloucester	35 0	50	48	48 0	50	48
Hants. and Isle of Wight	35 0	51	48	48 0	51	48
Hereford	37 0	54	48	48 0	54	48
Herts.	37 0	48	48	48 0	48	48
Kent	38 0	52	48	48 0	52	48
Lancashire : South, North and East	38 0 to 43 0	50 58 in N & E	50	48 0	51	51
Leicester and Rutland	36 6 to 38 0	54	48	48 0	54	48
Lincolnshire : Holland	40 0	50	48	50 0	50	48
Kesteven and Lindsey	37 6	50	48	48 0	50	48
Middlesex	37 0 to 38 6½	50	48	48 0 to 50 0	50	48
Monmouth	35 0	54	50	48 0	52	48
Norfolk	36 6	50	48	48 0	50	48
Northants. and Peterborough	37 6	50	48	48 0	50	48
Northumberland	36 6	52½	48	48 0	52½	48
Nottingham	38 0	50	50	48 0	50	50
Oxford	37 6	50	48	48 0	50	48
Shropshire	38 0	54	54	48 0	54	54
Somerset	36 0	52	50	48 0	52	50
Staffordshire	37 0	54	54	48 0	54	54
Suffolk	36 0	50	48	48 0	50	48
Surrey	37 0	50	50	48 0	50	50
Sussex	34 3	52	48	48 0	52	48
Warwickshire	36 0	50	48	48 0	50	48
Wiltshire	36 0	50	50	48 0	50	50
Worcester	36 0	52	48	48 0	52	48
Yorkshire : North Riding	38 0	52½	50	48 0	50	50
East Riding	38 0	50	48	48 0	50	48
West Riding	38 0	50	48	48 0	50	48
Anglesey and Carnarvon	34 0	50	48	48 0	50	48
Carmarthen	33 0	54	54	48 0	54	54
Denbigh and Flint	32 0	50	48	48 0	52	50
Glamorgan	36 0	52	48	48 0	54	48
Merioneth and Montgomery	32 0	52	52	48 0	52	50
Pembroke and Cardigan	35 0	54	52	48 0	54	52
Radnor and Brecon	34 0	54	48	48 0	54	48

2s. 0d. to 8s. 0d. per week were granted by the County Agricultural Wages Committees in most areas. The increase of the national minimum wage to 60s. 0d. per week was resisted by the employers' representatives on the Agricultural Wages Board. They claimed that prices for agricultural commodities had been fixed in relation to the 48s. 0d. national minimum wage. If it were decided to increase the national minimum to 60s. 0d. per week an immediate adjustment in prices would be necessary to enable farmers to meet the rising costs of production. In spite of the assurance given by the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries in October 1941 that suitable adjustments in prices would be made to allow for any substantial changes in the costs of production farmers' representatives on the Agricultural Wages Board declined to support the claim for a 60s. 0d. minimum wage. They agreed, however, to accept and to support the decisions made by the independent members of the Board. The national minimum wage of 56s. 0d. per week was suggested by the independent members. This was carried by the Board and sent to the County Agricultural Wages Committees for their observations. A majority of the Committees were in favour of the 60s. 0d. a week minimum wage and at the same time they recommended an adjustment in agricultural prices to meet the higher cost of labour. In December 1941 the Agricultural Wages Board fixed the national minimum at the rate of 60s. 0d. per week.

The 60s. 0d. national minimum stayed unchanged until the end of 1943, and the length of the working week fixed by the County Agricultural Wages Committees varied according to local conditions. Following the transfer of powers from the County Agricultural Wages Committees to the Agricultural Wages Board the latter reviewed all the orders in operation early in 1943 and the revised orders of the Agricultural Wages Board came into operation on 20th June, 1943. Hours were fixed at not more than 52 in summer and 50 per week in winter. Minimum rates were raised in those areas where they were less favourable to the workers and improvements were made in overtime rates, holiday entitlement and the pay for women workers.

However, even before these orders came into operation the workers' representatives on the Agricultural Wages Board gave notice of a motion to raise the national minimum wage for adult male workers from 60s. 0d. to 80s. 0d. per week. The employers' representatives again would not agree to this rise unless it were accompanied by an appropriate adjustment in prices for agricultural commodities. The subsequent proposal made by the independent members of the Agricultural Wages Board to increase the national minimum to 65s. 0d. per

week was accepted and carried by the Board with farmers' representatives abstaining from voting. After consultations with the Agricultural Wages Committees about the proposed rise of the national minimum and proportional changes in the pay of women, youths and overtime rates, the national minimum of 65s. 0d. per week came into operation in December, 1943.

The last war-time change in the national minimum weekly wage of ordinary adult male workers took place in March 1945 when a 70s. 0d. weekly wage was introduced. The 80s. 0d. minimum wage for which workers pressed as early as in the middle of 1943 was not obtained until a year after the conclusion of the war, when also a 48 hours uniform length of the working week irrespective of season was introduced throughout the country.

Changes in the national minimum wage and hours of work of the ordinary adult male farm workers were reflected in the improved conditions of employment of other classes of farm labour, overtime rates and paid holidays.

Wages of male workers under 21 years of age varied in different Agricultural Wages Committee areas. As an illustration, weekly rates of wages paid to ordinary male workers under 21 years old in the six East Midland counties between 1941 and 1945 are shown in Table 29.

In 1941 local differences in the weekly rates of youths' wages amounted to over 5s. 0d., and the greatest variations existed in the 19-20 and 20-21 age group. There was a tendency to greater uniformity of rates in the years following 1941 and from 1943 uniform rates of wages operated in all counties in respect of youths under 17. Uniform rates of wages for boys between 17 and 21 years of age have operated since 1944.

Higher wages were paid to special classes of farm workers such as stockmen, horsemen, tractor drivers etc., and the relationship between wages of these workers and the national minimum wage paid to ordinary general farm labourers is illustrated in Table 30. Table 30 shows changes in the minimum wage fixed for ordinary workers as well as for waggoners, shepherds and stockmen in the Kesteven and Lindsey Divisions of Lincolnshire between 1941 and July 1946. Of the three special classes of workers waggoners' wages were the highest. Early in 1941 and in July 1946 wages of waggoners exceeded those of general workers by 18 per cent and 24 per cent respectively. The hours of work for special classes of farm workers were, however, higher. In some areas no specific rates were fixed

WEEKLY WAGES[1] OF ORDINARY MALE FARM WORKERS UNDER 21 YEARS OLD.

TABLE 29.

Age group	Year	Agricultural Wages Committee Area							
		Derbyshire		Kesteven and Lindsey		Leicester and Rutland		Nottingham	
		s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.
20-21	1941	46	0	44	10	49	8	47	8
	1942	50	0	54	6	56	3	55	0
	1943	58	0	56	0	56	3	56	0
	1944	60	0	60	0	60	0	60	0
	1945	60	0	60	0	60	0	60	0
19-20	1941	40	6	40	4	45	10	43	4
	1942	45	0	49	0	52	0	50	0
	1943	54	0	52	0	52	0	52	0
	1944	56	0	56	0	56	0	56	0
	1945	56	0	56	0	56	0	56	0
18-19	1941	35	5	36	6	38	8	39	0
	1942	40	0	43	0	43	9	45	0
	1943	49	6	48	0	48	2	48	0
	1944	51	0	51	0	51	0	51	0
	1945	51	0	51	0	51	0	51	0
17-18	1941	28	8	31	6	32	7	33	7
	1942	35	0	38	0	37	0	39	0
	1943	43	6	42	0	42	0	42	0
	1944	45	0	45	0	45	0	45	0
	1945	45	0	45	0	45	0	45	0
16-17	1941	24	7	27	4	27	7	28	2
	1942	30	0	33	6	31	3	33	0
	1943	36	0	36	0	36	0	36	0
	1944	38	0	38	0	38	0	38	0
	1945	38	0	38	0	38	0	38	0
15-16	1941	20	8	24	1	21	6	23	10
	1942	25	0	29	0	24	3	27	6
	1943	30	0	30	0	30	0	30	0
	1944	32	0	32	0	32	0	32	0
	1945	32	0	32	0	32	0	32	0
14-15	1941	17	0	20	9	17	1	19	6
	1942	20	0	24	0	19	3	22	0
	1943	24	0	24	0	24	0	24	0
	1944	26	0	26	0	26	0	26	0
	1945	26	0	26	0	26	0	26	0

[1] Average of the rates fixed during the year.

for special classes of workers and in those areas they were paid minimum rates for the minimum number of hours applicable to general workers plus overtime rates for extra hours entailed by the special nature of their duties. But in some areas special rates of pay and hours of work were fixed for special classes or workers. Rates of pay and hours of work of special classes of workers in these areas at the time when the uniform rate of 80s. 0d. per week of 48 hours for general workers was introduced as a national minimum are shown in Table 31.

CHANGES IN THE WEEKLY MINIMUM WAGES OF ORDINARY AND SPECIAL CLASSES OF ADULT WORKERS IN LINCOLNSHIRE (KESTEVEN AND LINDSEY).

TABLE 30.

Date of the Agricultural Wages Order	Ordinary workers		Waggoners		Shepherds		Stockmen	
	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.
January 1941	48	0	56	9	54	3	55	6
May 1941	48	0	56	9	54	3	55	6
September 1941	51	0	59	9	57	3	58	6
November 1941	54	0	63	3	60	6	62	0
December 1941	60	0	70	0	67	0	68	0
July 1942	60	0	70	0	67	0	68	0
June 1943	60	0	70	0	68	0	70	0
December 1943	65	0	76	0	74	0	76	0
June 1944	65	0	76	0	74	0	76	0
March 1945	70	0	81	0	79	0	81	0
April 1946	70	0	81	0	79	0	81	0
May 1946	70	0	85	0	83	6	85	0
July 1946	80	0	99	6	95	0	97	0

Taking into consideration the length of the working week wages of special classes of workers in those areas where minimum rates were fixed did not compare very favourably with wages of ordinary workers. On an hourly basis the highest wages were paid to special classes in Cumberland and Westmorland and these amounted to 1s. 9½d. per hour as compared with 1s. 8d. per hour paid to ordinary workers.

The comparison of wages paid to ordinary general workers and to workers in charge of livestock or engaged on other special duties indicates that higher wages of special classes were due merely to longer working hours and not to a recognition of their particular skill or responsibility, even though some farmers might and did pay special extra wages above the fixed minimum to their stockmen, tractormen or shepherds.

The war years brought an improvement in the rates of overtime paid for hours in excess of the specified number of hours qualifying for the minimum wage. There was a distinction between the rates of overtime on weekdays and on Sundays. At the end of 1940 the lowest overtime rates paid to adult male workers existed in Wales. In Carmarthen the overtime rate per hour was 11d. irrespective of whether it was weekday or Sunday overtime. The highest rates operated at the same time in the Holland Division of Lincolnshire with the weekday overtime at 1s. 3¼d. per hour and Sunday overtime at 1s. 6½d. per hour. The average overtime rate per hour for adult male workers in the country as a whole was 1s. 1¼d. on weekdays

WAGES AND HOURS OF WORK OF SPECIAL CLASSES OF ADULT WORKERS IN ENGLAND AND WALES (JULY 1946).

TABLE 31.

Class of workers	County area	Minimum weekly wage		Length of the working week
		s.	d.	hours
Tractor drivers and workers employed wholly or mainly in attending to stock	Cumberland and Westmorland	107	6	60
Horsemen		103	0	57 (summer) 61 (winter)
Cattlemen, milkmen and shepherds	Lincolnshire (Holland)	94	0	54
Tractor drivers		80	0 (1)	48 (1)
Waggoners	Lincolnshire	99	6	54 (summer) 58 (winter)
Stockmen	(Kesteven	97	0	54 (summer) 58 (winter)
Shepherds	and Lindsey)	95	0	53 (summer) 56 (winter)
Horsemen, cowmen, stockmen and shepherds	Sussex	103	6	58
Teammen, cattlemen, cowmen, shepherds and bailiffs	Denbigh and Flint	106	6	60

1 Plus 1s. 0d. a day for any day in which employed mainly on tractor work.

and 1s. 2½d. on Sundays. By January 1942 when the national minimum wage of 60s. 0d. per week was introduced there was no appreciable change in the average overtime rate for Sunday work although the number of areas with the highest overtime rate for Sunday work at 1s. 10d. rose to four. The highest weekday overtime rates of 1s. 6½d. operated in two areas and the lowest overtime rates were paid again in Carmarthen at 1s. 2d. per hour for both weekday and Sunday work.[1]

The improved uniform rates for overtime work shown in Table 32 came into operation in July 1946.

One of the important improvements in the conditions of agricultural employment during the war was the introduction of the national minimum wage for women workers which became operative in June 1943. In the middle of 1939 only two out of the total of 47 Agricultural Wages Committees had fixed weekly wages for women.

[1] In some areas special higher overtime rates operated at harvest time. For example in Kesteven and Lindsey Divisions of Lincolnshire in 1942 male workers over 21 years old were paid at corn harvest time 2s. 0d. per hour which compared favourably with the ordinary overtime rates of 1s. 5d. and 1s. 8d. per hour on weekdays and Sundays respectively.

OVERTIME RATES (PER HOUR) FOR MALE AND FEMALE WORKERS OF ALL AGES IN JULY 1946.

TABLE 32.

Age	Male workers		Female workers	
	Weekday	Sunday	Weekday	Sunday
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
21 and over	2 1	2 6	1 7	1 11
20 — 21	1 10	2 2	1 6	1 9
19 — 20	1 8	2 0	1 6	1 9
18 — 19	1 6	1 10	1 6	1 9
17 — 18	1 4	1 7	1 3	1 6
16 — 17	1 1	1 4	1 1	1 3
15 — 16	1 0	1 2	10¼	1 0½
14 — 15	9	11	8d. to 9½d.	10d. to 1s. 0d.

Otherwise women workers were paid by the hour and the highest hourly rate of pay was 7½d. Hours of work ranged from 48 to 54 hours per week, and whereas in some areas the wage rates varied according to the age of women, in others all women aged 17 or over were paid the same rates. After 1943 women regularly employed on farms have worked a 48 hour week, reduced in 1949 to 47 hours. Table 33 shows changes in their national minimum weekly wage.

Women over 18 years old were regarded as adults for the purpose of wage fixing so that there was progressively less difference between the male and female rates moving down the scale of age groups. In some counties, as e.g. in Kesteven and Lindsey, girls under 18 years old were in fact earning more than boys of the same age.

CHANGES IN THE NATIONAL MINIMUM WEEKLY WAGE FOR WOMEN WORKERS.

TABLE 33.

Year \ Age	21 and over	20-21	19-20	18-19	17-18	16-17	15-16	14-15
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
June 1943	45 0	45 0	45 0	45 0	38 0	33 0	27 0	22 0
June 1944	48 0	48 0	48 0	48 0	41 0	35 0	29 0	24 0
June 1945	48 0	48 0	48 0	48 0	41 0	35 0	29 0	24 0
July 1946	60 0	56 0	56 0	56 0	47 0	40 0	33 0	27 0

Overtime rates paid to women in 1946 are shown in Table 32. There was a marked improvement in the rates paid then as compared with the pre-war conditions At the beginning of 1939 17 out of 47 Agricultural Wages Committees had no overtime rates fixed for women, 26 had these rates fixed for weekday and Sunday overtime and four for Sunday overtime only. The lowest weekday overtime rate for an adult woman was fixed in one area (Durham) at 4d. per hour and

the highest in the North and East Ridings of Yorkshire at 9d. per hour. The average fixed rate for weekday overtime was 7d. per hour. The lowest Sunday overtime rate, also in Durham, was 4d., and the highest 10d. per hour in Buckingham. The average Sunday overtime rate was about 7¾d.

During the war there were relatively few changes in the definition and in the value attached to the main benefits and advantages which could be reckoned as payment of wages in lieu of payment in cash. The main benefits or advantages were milk, potatoes, cottages and board and lodging, and oil and fuel for the use of shepherds in their huts during the lambing season. The value of milk which was generally charged at 2d. per pint (new milk) in 1939 during the war years increased to 3d. per pint or it was reckoned at the current wholesale price. Separated or skimmed milk charged at 1d. per pint rose to 2d. per pint only after the War. Potatoes throughout the War were generally charged at the current producers' wholesale price and the value of oil and fuel for shepherds was reckoned in the region of 30s. 0d. per annum.

The benefit value of farm cottages occupied by workers and their families before the War was generally reckoned at 3s. 0d. per cottage per week, unless a higher or lower charge was authorised by the County Agricultural Wages Committee. During the first part of the War this charge remained largely unchanged but towards the end of the War the number of areas charging 5s.0d and 6s. 0d. per week increased, and in the middle of 1947 the benefit value of the farm cottage was established in all areas at 6s. 0d. per week unless exceptional conditions justified down or upgrading of this rate.

Relatively the greatest changes took place in the benefit value of board and lodging. These changes for six East Midland counties are shown in Table 34.

Comparison of these charges with those prevailing before the War shows that in the areas in which before the War charges for board and lodging were the lowest there was, by the middle of 1947, approximately a 100 per cent increase. Even in the areas with a relatively high benefit value of the board and lodging in 1939 charges went up by about 50 per cent by 1947. The main causes of the rise in charges for board and lodging were shortage and rising cost of food and the difficulties of household management increased by a growing number of workers temporarily or seasonally employed on the farm. This is supported by the fact that the charge for lodging without board which in 1941 ranged according to age from 2s. 0d. to 3s. 6d. per week amounted to only 3s. 0d. to 5s. 0d. per week in 1947.

CHANGES IN THE BENEFIT VALUE OF FULL BOARD AND LODGING FOR A SEVEN DAY WEEK.

TABLE 34.

Year and area	Sex and age	Male							Female						
		21 & over	20-21	19-20	18-19	17-18	16-17	15-16	21 & over	20-21	19-20	18-19	17-18	16-17	15-16
		s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
Aug. 1941	Derby	20 0	20 0	20 0	19 0	17 0	15 6	13 0	20 0	20 0	20 0	19 0	17 0	15 6	13 0
	Kesteven and Lindsey	18 0	18 0	18 0	18 0	16 10	14 0	11 10	15 0	15 0	15 0	15 0	15 0	12 6	10 7
	Leicestershire and Rutland	20 0	20 0	20 0	18 9	17 0	15 3	13 0	18 0	18 0	18 0	18 0	16 0	14 0	12 0
	Nottinghamshire	20 0	20 0	20 0	18 6	17 0	15 6	13 0	18 0	18 0	18 0	16 6	15 0	13 6	11 0
June 1943	Derby	24 0	24 0	24 0	22 9	20 6	18 6	15 6	22 9	22 9	22 9	22 9	17 0	15 6	13 0
	Kesteven and Lindsey	22 6	22 6	22 6	22 6	21 0	18 0	15 0	20 0	20 0	20 0	20 0	20 0	16 6	14 0
	Leicestershire and Rutland	24 0	23 0	21 6	20 3	18 6	16 9	14 6	21 0	21 0	21 0	21 0	18 9	163	14 0
	Nottinghamshire	23 0	23 0	23 0	21 0	19 6	18 0	15 0	21 0	21 0	21 0	19 0	17 0	15 6	12 6
Aug. 1947	All counties in England and Wales	30 0	30 0	30 0	26 0	26 0	21 0	21 0	27 0	25 0	25 0	25 0	20 0	20 0	18 0

The entitlement of farm workers to paid holidays in 1939 was reviewed in Table 19 in the preceding chapter. Further improvements were obtained during the War. These consisted, not only of more generous holiday entitlement and greater uniformity in the statutory control of holidays throughout the country but also in improved rates of pay received by the workers whilst on holiday.

By the end of 1943 the highest holiday entitlement amounted to 12 days including six public holidays, but it operated in only one Agricultural Wages Committee area. In about 68 per cent of the total number of agricultural wages areas the entitlement to holidays did not exceed nine days per annum and in the largest single group of 19 areas workers were entitled to only eight days per annum, including four public holidays.

The Agricultural Wages Board endeavouring to bring about a greater uniformity in holiday entitlement requested the Agricultural Wages Committees to increase the minimum total number of holidays for workers regularly employed in farming to 10 days per annum of which at least six should be holidays with pay. In response to this request, by August 1944 45 out of 47 Agricultural Wages Committees had fixed 10 days holiday per annum consisting of four public holidays and six holidays with pay. In the two remaining areas the total entitlement to holidays was fixed at 11 days which included six and seven days holidays with pay entitlement respectively.

It is important to make clear distinction between the holidays with pay within the meaning of the Holidays with Pay Act, 1938[1] and other holiday entitlements of farm workers. Under the statutory regulations of wages and hours of work farm workers were entitled to one "short day" per week. In most areas this was Saturday, although workers and employers were free to agree on any other day of the week as a "short day". The length of the "short day" varied between five and six and a half hours, and in some areas work after 1 p.m. or in the afternoon of a "short day" qualified workers for overtime payments. The provision of a weekly short day or half-holiday meant that relatively long hours had to be worked on the remaining days of the week in order to complete the weekly number of hours required for the statutory minimum weekly wage. It should be remembered that time taken by workers in travelling between their homes and the farm and the breaks for meals were not included in the statutory hours. Even after the introduction of the uniform 48 hour working week throughout the country, with a "short day" consisting of six hours, $8\frac{1}{4}$ to $8\frac{1}{2}$ hours had to be worked in each of

1 *The Holidays with Pay Act*, 1938. 1 *and* 2 *Geo.* 6, *Ch.* 70.

the remaining weekdays and travelling or meal times had to be added to that. Sundays and specified public holidays were also free from work and in the weeks including public holidays statutory hours required for the minimum wage were shorter than in a normal week. The provision of the weekly "short days", Sundays and public holidays did not signify, however, that workers were entirely free from the responsibility to work on these days. All it meant was that on the specified days workers were entitled to overtime rates for the work which they might be required to do. Overtime rates fixed for those days were higher than overtime rates related to normal weekday overtime work. Under these conditions workers did not suffer any financial loss through having to work on Sunday or Saturday afternoon, but it is necessary to realise that the extent of leisure time which they could enjoy was very limited.

A different set of conditions operated as regards holidays with pay under the Holidays with Pay Act, 1938. The Agricultural Wages Committees fixed the number of days to which workers in their areas were entitled as "holidays with pay" and the daily rates of remuneration on these days were also fixed according to age, sex and the nature of work normally performed. Holidays with pay could be taken by workers at any time as agreed with their employer. Where no agreement was made holidays should be taken within the last four weeks of the period of employment[1]. Workers could not be compelled to work on the days fixed and agreed as holidays with pay but if they wanted to work rather than stay away during the holidays they were entitled to normal rates of pay in addition to the holiday remuneration due to them in consequence of their holiday entitlement. As an illustration of the rates of holiday pay a comparison of holiday remuneration in respect of holidays with pay for the ordinary male and female farm workers according to age in the East Midlands is made in Table 35.

During the war Agricultural Wages Committees continued to issue certificates of exemption from the minimum wage on the grounds of old age or physical or mental deficiency of workers. Special provisions were made also to meet war-time conditions under which farmers had to employ an increasing number of workers with no previous experience of farm work. In October 1940 the Agricultural Wages Board fixed special minimum rates of wages applicable to workers in agriculture lacking in experience. These rates varied in different areas and whereas in some areas the period of time to which these

[1] For the purposes of regulating holidays with pay the annual period under the Holidays with Pay Act, 1938, extended from 1st November to 31st October.

HOLIDAY REMUNERATION UNDER THE STATUTORY REGULATIONS AND THE HOLIDAYS WITH PAY ACT, 1938
(DAILY RATES).

TABLE 35.

		MEN																	
		21 and over		20-21		19-20		18-19		17-18		16-17		15-16		14-15	
		W(1)	S (1)	W	S	W	S	W	S	W	S	W	S	W	S	W	S
		s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
Aug. 1941	Derby	8 4	8 4	7 1	7 1	6 2	6 2	5 8	5 8	4 7	4 7	3 11	3 11	3 4	3 4	2 9	2 9
	Kesteven and Lindsey	8 0	8 0	7 4	7 4	6 7	6 7	5 10	5 10	5 0	5 0	4 4	4 4	3 10	3 10	3 4	3 4
	Leicester and Rutland	8 10	8 10	8 3	8 3	7 7	7 7	6 5	6 5	5 5	5 5	4 7	4 7	3 7	3 7	2 10	2 10
	Nottingham	8 8	8 8	7 11	7 11	7 3	7 3	6 6	6 6	5 7	5 7	4 8	4 8	4 0	4 0	3 3	3 3
June 1943	Derby	10 0	10 0	9 4	9 4	8 8	8 8	8 0	8 0	7 0	7 0	6 0	6 0	5 0	5 0	4 0	4 0
	Kesteven and Lindsey	10 0	10 0	9 4	9 4	8 8	8 8	8 0	8 0	7 0	7 0	6 0	6 0	5 4	5 4	4 0	4 0
	Leicester and Rutland	10 0	10 0	9 4	9 4	8 8	8 8	8 0	8 0	7 0	7 0	6 0	6 0	5 0	5 0	4 0	4 0
	Nottingham	As Leicester and Rutland above.															
March 1945	Derby																
	Kesteven and Lindsey	11 8	7 8	10 10	7 0	9 4	6 4	8 6	6 0	7 6	5 4	6 4	4 4	5 4	3 8	4 4	3 0
	Leicester and Rutland																
	Nottingham																
Aug. 1947	Derby																
	Kesteven and Lindsey	15 0	11 4	13 2	10 0	12 0	9 0	10 10	8 7	9 6	7 0	8 0	6 0	7 0	5 4	—	—
	Leicester and Rutland																
	Nottingham																

1 W—weekday. S—Sunday.

HOLIDAY REMUNERATION UNDER THE STATUTORY REGULATIONS AND THE HOLIDAYS WITH PAY ACT, 1938 (DAILY RATES).

TABLE 35(a).

		WOMEN																	
		21 and over		20-21		19-20		18-19		17-18		16-17		15-16		14-15	
		W(1)	S (1)	W	S	W	S	W	S	W	S	W	S	W	S	W	S
		s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
Aug. 1941	Derby	5 4	5 4	5 4	5 4	5 4	5 4	5 4	5 4	4 8	4 8	4 4	4 4	3 8	3 8	3 0	3 0
	Kesteven and Lindsey	6 0	6 0	6 0	6 0	6 0	6 0	6 0	6 0	6 0	6 0	5 4	5 4	4 8	4 8	4 8	4 8
	Leicester and Rutland	6 0	6 0	6 0	6 0	6 0	6 0	6 0	6 0	5 2	5 2	4 4	4 4	3 8	3 8	3 0	3 0
	Nottingham	6 6	6 6	6 6	6 6	6 6	6 6	6 6	6 6	5 2	5 2	4 3	4 3	3 6	3 6	3 0	3 0
June 1943	Derby	7 6	7 6	7 6	7 6	7 6	7 6	7 6	7 6	6 4	6 4	5 6	5 6	4 6	4 6	3 8	3 8
	Kesteven and Lindsey	7 8	7 8	7 8	7 8	7 8	7 8	7 8	7 8	7 4	7 4	6 8	6 8	5 0	5 0	4 8	4 8
	Leicester and Rutland	7 6	7 6	7 6	7 6	7 6	7 6	7 6	7 6	6 4	6 4	5 6	5 6	4 6	4 6	3 8	3 8
	Nottingham	as Leicester and Rutland above.															
March 1945	Derby	8 0	5 8	8 0	5 8	8 0	5 8	8 0	5 8	6 10	4 8	5 10	4 0	4 10	3 4	4 0	2 8
	Kesteven and Lindsey	8 0	5 8	8 0	5 8	8 0	5 8	8 0	5 8	7 4	5 4	6 8	4 9	5 0	4 2	4 8	4 0
	Leicester and Rutland	8 0	5 8	8 0	5 8	8 0	5 8	8 0	5 8	6 10	4 8	5 10	4 0	4 10	3 4	4 0	2 8
	Nottingham	as Leicester and Rutland above.															
Aug. 1947	Derby																
	Kesteven and Lindsey	11 4	8 8	10 6	8 0	10 6	8 0	10 6	8 0	8 10	6 8	7 6	5 8	6 2	4 8	—	—
	Leicester and Rutland																
	Nottingham																

1 W—weekday. S—Sunday.

rates applied was undefined in others it was limited to a specified period of employment. Uniform rates of pay and conditions of employment of inexperienced farm workers were introduced after the war. The minimum rates of wages for this class of worker were applicable only in the first two months of agricultural employment. After two months inexperienced workers were entitled to the minimum wage, appropriate to their age, sex and nature of employment, on the same basis as all other workers in agriculture. Table 36 shows the minimum rates of wages for inexperienced farm workers in England and Wales introduced in November 1947 compared with the corresponding rates for ordinary male and female workers.

MINIMUM RATES OF WAGES PER WEEK FOR INEXPERIENCED AND ORDINARY FARM WORKERS AT THE END OF 1947.

TABLE 36.

Years of age	Male				Female			
	Inexperienced		Ordinary		Inexperienced		Ordinary	
	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.
21 and over	75	0	90	0	56	0	68	0
20 and under 21	71	0	79	0	53	0	63	0
19 ,, ,, 20	66	0	72	0	53	0	63	0
18 ,, ,, 19	60	0	65	0	53	0	63	0
17 ,, ,, 18	53	0	57	0	46	0	53	0
16 ,, ,, 17	45	0	48	0	38	0	45	0
15 ,, ,, 16	39	0	42	0	33	0	37	0

Differential rates of pay for all overtime employment applied to inexperienced workers also, but in all other respects as e.g. hours of work, short days, benefits etc. they were subject to conditions fixed for ordinary or special classes of workers.

CHAPTER V.

THE POST WAR PERIOD.

1. FURTHER CHANGES IN EARNINGS AND WORKING CONDITIONS OF FARM WORKERS.

Improvements in working conditions in agriculture continued after the War. In the middle of 1945 the national minimum wage for ordinary adult male workers was 70s. 0d. per week varying from 48 hours to 52 hours according to season. By July 1946, a national minimum of 80s. 0d. per 48 hours week had been fixed and this was further increased in August 1947 to 90s. 0d. minimum for a 48 hours week. In March 1949 the minimum rate was increased again to 94s. 0d. and the hours of work reduced to 47 hours per week. The most recent changes in the national minimum wage were made in the autumn of 1950 (12th November, 1950) when the national minimum was raised to 100s. 0d. per week of 47 hours. It still remains at this level in August, 1951.

Improvements obtained in the national minimum wage for male and female workers of all ages between the end of the War and 1950 are illustrated by Table 37 which shows rates in operation in 1946 and again after the introduction of the 100s. 0d. per week national minimum.

The rate of increase in the national minimum wage after the War was not as high as during the War. Between 1940, when the first national minimum wage was fixed, and 1946 the minimum wage increased by about 67 per cent. From 1946 to 1950 the increase in the national minimum weekly wage and in the rates for overtime employment represented only about 25 per cent of the 1946 level. It must be remembered, however, that wages in agriculture improved much more rapidly than wages in other industries and occupations. Taking farm wages and wages in all industries including farming in 1938 as a 100, the index number of full time wages in farming in 1950 was 274 and in all industries and occupations 185.[1]

Recent orders have continued to exclude from the statutory hours of work required for the minimum wage meal times and time taken to travel to and from work. Time in which the worker was present on the farm and ready to work but in which the employer was unable to provide the worker with work under reasonable conditions is included in the statutory hours on which the minimum wage was based.

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1 See Table 40.

TABLE 37.

CHANGES IN THE NATIONAL MINIMUM WEEKLY WAGE FOR ORDINARY WORKERS AND CHANGES IN THE RATES OF PAY FOR OVERTIME EMPLOYMENT.

Date	Sex	National minimum wage (weekly rates). Age: 21 and over	20-21	19-20	18-19	17-18	16-17	15-16
		s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
July 1946	Male workers	80 0	70 0	64 0	58 0	51 0	43 0	37 0
November 1950		100 0	88 0	80 0	72 0	64 0	53 0	47 0
July 1946	Female workers	60 0	56 0	56 0	56 0	47 0	40 0	33 0
November 1950		76 0	70 0	70 0	70 0	59 0	50 0	41 0

Date	Sex	Overtime (hourly rates). 21 and over: W(1)	S (1)	20-21: W	S	19-20: W	S	18-19: W	S	17-18: W	S	16-17: W	S	15-16: W	S
		s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
July 1946	Male workers	2 1	2 6	1 10	2 2	1 8	2 0	1 6	1 10	1 4	1 7	1 1	1 4	1 0	1 2
November 1950		2 8	3 2	2 4	2 10	2 2	2 7	1 11	2 4	1 8	2 1	1 5	1 8	1 3	1 6
July 1946	Female workers	1 7	1 11	1 6	1 9	1 6	1 9	1 6	1 9	1 3	1 6	1 1	1 3	10¼	1 0½
November 1950		2 0	2 5	1 10	2 3	1 10	2 3	1 10	2 3	1 7	1 11	1 4	1 7	1 1	1 4

1 W denotes weekday and S Sunday overtime.

Statutory hours of work which at the end of the War varied according to season from 48 hours in winter to 52 hours in summer had been reduced by 1950 to a uniform 47 hour week in all seasons. Exceptions were made for weeks which included public holidays so that the minimum wage in those weeks was payable for shorter hours. In the weeks including Whit Monday, August Bank Holiday, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Christmas Day and Boxing Day statutory hours were reduced to 38½ provided that these holidays occurred in separate weeks. If two public holidays were due in the same week workers were required to work only 30 hours to earn the minimum wage. Weekly half-holiday was defined as the time after 12 noon on Saturdays or on some other day agreed between the worker and his employer and all work required after 12 noon on the weekly short day or public holidays had to be paid at overtime rates.

Statutory regulations controlling holidays with pay in the post-war period remained largely unchanged but the maximum entitlement to holidays was fixed at seven days for all the workers, and at nine days for those workers who were required to work seven days a week in at least 30 weeks during the year, and who completed 12 consecutive months of regular employment with the same employer. The time of the year when holidays with pay were to be taken was left to the agreement between the worker and the employer but in the absence of an agreement holidays had to be taken within the last four weeks of the year. Workers were also allowed to take all their holiday entitlement on consecutive days.

Holiday remuneration was improved and the rates of holiday pay to which workers were entitled in November 1950 are shown in Table 38.

HOLIDAY REMUNERATION FOR HOLIDAYS WITH PAY IN FORCE FROM 12th NOVEMBER, 1950.

TABLE 38.

Years of age	Male workers		Female workers	
	Weekdays	Sundays	Weekdays	Sundays
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
21 and over	16 8	12 8	12 8	9 8
20 and under 21	14 8	11 4	11 8	9 0
19 ,, ,, 20	13 4	10 4	11 8	9 0
18 ,, ,, 19	12 0	9 4	11 8	9 0
17 ,, ,, 18	10 8	8 4	9 10	7 8
16 ,, ,, 17	8 10	6 8	8 4	6 4
15 ,, ,, 16	7 10	6 0	6 10	5 4

From 1946 no special rates were fixed for workers engaged in looking after stock or in other special duties. They were subject

FIXED CHARGES FOR THE BOARD AND LODGING OF AGRICULTURAL WORKERS IN ENGLAND AND WALES.

TABLE 39.

Age of workers	MALES						FEMALES					
	Seven day week			Six day week			Seven day week			Six day week		
	Board and lodging	Board only	Lodging only	Board and lodging	Board only	Lodging only	Board and lodging	Board only	Lodging only	Board and lodging	Board only	Lodging only
21 and over	35 0	30 0	5 0	30 0	25 6	4 6	31 6	27 0	4 6	27 0	23 0	4 0
20-21	35 0	30 0	5 0	30 0	25 2	4 6	29 0	25 0	4 0	25 0	21 6	3 6
19-20	30 6	26 0	4 6	26 0	22 6	3 6	29 0	25 0	4 0	25 0	21 6	3 6
18-19	30 6	26 0	4 6	26 0	22 6	3 6	29 0	25 0	4 0	25 0	21 6	3 6
17-18	30 6	26 0	4 6	26 0	22 6	3 6	23 6	20 0	3 6	20 0	17 0	3 0
16-17	24 6	21 0	3 6	21 0	18 0	3 0	23 6	20 0	3 6	20 0	17 0	3 0
15-16	24 6	21 0	3 6	21 0	18 0	3 0	21 0	18 0	3 0	18 0	15 6	2 6

to the general minimum rates and hours of work but because of extra responsibilities involved they could obtain higher wages agreed between them and the employers. In any case longer working hours entailed by their duties had to be paid for at overtime rates.

Few changes took place in the post-war years in the value attached to benefits or advantages reckoned against wages in lieu of cash. There were local variations in the fixed value of benefits but the average charges were 6s. 0d. per week for a cottage unless its value was certified by the County Agricultural Wages Committee to be higher or lower, whole milk 3d. per pint and skimmed milk 2d. per pint. Potatoes were generally charged at current producers' wholesale price prevailing in the area. From 1947 until 1951 charges for board and lodging remained unchanged. In view of the rising cost of living employers pressed for a revision of these charges and on 6th June, 1951 the Agricultural Wages Board introduced new and higher rates for the value of board and lodging.[1] The new values became operative from 10th June, 1951 and they are summarised in Table 39.

Charges for lodging compared with those which operated at the end of the War remained unaffected except that uniform charges operate now in all Agricultural Wages Committee areas. Charges for board increased by about 17 per cent. The Agricultural Wages Board (Board and Lodging) Order, 1951 specified that charges for board and lodging for periods shorter than six days should be calculated in proportion to the scale for the six day period. Special rates were also fixed for individual meals to provide for cases not covered by weekly charges for board. The range of these charges was from 7d. for each meal, except dinner, for girls of 15 to 16 years of age to 1s. 0d. for adult men, and from 10d. for dinner for 15 to 16 year old girls to 1s. 4d. for men over 20. Special charges for individual meals were fixed in respect of six Agricultural Wages Committee areas. In Berkshire and in Warwickshire all meals were charged at the same rate for each age group of workers. Specified charges for each meal were made in Cheshire, Staffordshire and Worcestershire, and in Lancashire charges for individual meals were calculated on a seven day weekly basis.

The extension of arable acreage during the war created an increasing demand for manual labour. In spite of progress made in farm mechanisation some operations still had to be performed by hand and a general shortage of labour encouraged the use of piece-work. Piece-work has always been important in the specialised areas growing large acreages of root and other labour absorbing crops

[1] *The Agricultural Wages Board (Board and Lodging) Order,* 1951. *No.* 1829. Agricultural Wages Board, London.

but during the war the practice of growing these crops extended to other areas and it was followed by a spread of the piece-work system of labour utilisation throughout the country.

Under Section 4 of the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1924 farm workers in any county of England and Wales employed on piece-work for which no minimum rates of pay had been fixed, had to be paid not less than they would have obtained if they were employed on a time basis for which the statutory minimum wage was in operation at the minimum and overtime rates. Those farm workers engaged on piece-work who worked hours shorter than the standard number of hours required for the minimum wage were paid at the rates not lower than if they were engaged on an hourly basis as part-time or casual workers. Sometimes regular workers were taken off their normal time-work employment and put on piece-work. In such cases their minimum time-rate wage was reduced in proportion to the number of hours during which they were working on piece-work and the time spent on piece-work had to be paid for at not less than the minimum piece-work rate. Piece workers were also entitled to holidays and holiday remuneration on the scale to which they would have been entitled if they were employed on a time basis.

The interests of farm workers employed on piece-work were protected in a general way by these statutory regulations. In some counties, however, piece-work rates were fixed for a variety of operations. The fixing of piece-work rates was done by negotiation between the representatives of the National Farmers' Union and the National Union of Agricultural Workers in close co-operation with the County Agricultural Executive Committee concerned. The rates varied according to the quality or grade of land and different methods of performing the task. In addition to the fixed rates an up and down variation provided a range of rates within which they could be fixed by agreement between the employer and the worker. It was agreed between the representatives of the employers and workers that all disputes arising in connection with the rates fixed by negotiation should be reported to and dealt with by a Panel of the representatives of the National Farmers' Union and the National Union of Agricultural Workers and that no stoppage of work must occur pending settlement of a dispute by the Panel.

The provision of arbitration and negotiated settlement applied only to piece-work rates higher than the minimum defined by the statutory regulations of wages. The contravention of the minimum rate was outside the control of the negotiating bodies and was dealt with by the courts of law in the same way as the underpayment of the statutory minimum wage generally.

2. AGRICULTURAL WAGES (REGULATION) ACT, 1947 AND THE AGRICULTURAL WAGES ACT, 1948.[1]

On 11th March, 1947 the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1947 received the Royal Assent. The purpose of this Act was to bring together a number of enactments and regulations which affected the conditions of agricultural employment since the establishment of the statutory control of wages in farming. But the most important effect of the Act was to make permanent many changes in the statutory regulation of wages and working conditions which were introduced temporarily during the War. The Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1947 was one of the instruments of the post-war agricultural policy aiming at the expansion of agricultural production stimulated by guaranteed prices, assured markets and economic security for those engaged in the industry.

So far as England and Wales was concerned the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1947 repealed only parts of the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1924, the Agricultural (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1944 and the Holidays with Pay Act, 1938. The Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Amendment Act, 1940 was totally repealed. The Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1924 remained as the principal Act and the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1947 was to be construed as one with the principal Act. The two Acts were cited together as the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Acts, 1924 to 1947.

The first six sections of the Agricultural Wages (Regulations) Act, 1947 dealt with the transfer of functions of Agricultural Wages Committees to the Agricultural Wages Board and with definition of those functions.

Under the principal Act the power to fix, cancel or vary minimum rates of wages for farm workers was exercised in each county by the Agricultural Wages Committee although this power was temporarily transferred to the Agricultural Wages Board under the provisions of the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Amendment Act, 1940 and Regulation 23 of the Defence (Agriculture and Fisheries) Regulations, 1939. With the repeal of the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Amendment Act, 1940 and revocation of the Regulation 23 of the Defence Regulations the Agricultural Wages Board under the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1947 assumed full powers formerly exercised by the Agricultural Wages Committees.

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1 *Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act*, 1947, 10 *and* 11 *Geo.* 6, *Ch.* 15. *Agricultural Wages Act*, 1948. 11 *and* 12 *Geo.* 6, *Ch.* 47.

In addition to fixing, cancelling and varying the minimum wage the Agricultural Wages Board was given power to define the benefits and advantages and the value of benefits and advantages which may be reckoned as part-payment of wages in kind in lieu of cash. Conversely the Agricultural Wages Board could prohibit or limit the reckoning of benefits or advantages against cash payments of wages. The Agricultural Wages Board was also made responsible for defining overtime employment.

The Agricultural Wages Committees according to the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1947 were made responsible for authorising any deviations from the rates of pay and other conditions fixed by the Agricultural Wages Board. The Agricultural Wages Committees continued to be responsible for the valuation of the benefit value of cottages in those cases in which an above average or below average standard of accommodation would justify deviation from the value fixed by the Agricultural Wages Board. The Act included provisions for special rates of pay to learners in agriculture but these could apply only after the Agricultural Wages Committee concerned was satisfied as to the terms of the learner's employment and had issued an appropriate certificate. One of the conditions of employment of learners in agriculture specified by the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1947 was the payment of an apprentice or learner's premium to an employer. The acceptance of such payments was illegal under the Act unless it resulted from an agreement approved by the Agricultural Wages Committee. The Agricultural Wages Board could also impose other conditions on which the Agricultural Wages Committee would have to be satisfied before a certificate authorising learner's pay or the payment of a premium would be issued.

The Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1947 made provisions for the minimum time rates of wages for agricultural workers employed on piece-work. The piece-work remuneration was related to the minimum rate of remuneration for work done on a time-work basis and the former could not exceed the latter. Agricultural Wages Committees were empowered, however, to authorise piece-work wages lower than the time work rates in individual cases of workers physically or mentally deficient. The power of the Agricultural Wages Committees to exempt workers from the statutory minimum wage on the ground of incapacity to earn the full minimum was not confined to workers engaged on piece-work and extended to all classes of workers in farming.

The Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1947 contained a general provision concerning the powers and activities of the Agricultural Wages Committees. Subject to special provisions of the

principal Act and of the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1947 they had to operate in accordance with directions given by the Agricultural Wages Board and the authority of the latter was limited only to the consideration which they had to give to any recommendations made to them by the Agricultural Wages Committee on behalf of the county in question.

Section 7 of the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1947 contained an important provision concerning holidays with pay in farming. Under Section 1 of the Holidays with Pay Act, 1938 annual holiday with pay to which a farm worker was entitled could not exceed one week, and not more than three holidays with pay could be taken on consecutive days. These restrictions were abolished. The Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1947 in Section 8 extended the definition of "agriculture" to which all references in the wage regulations were made to include the production of any consumable produce which was grown for sale or for consumption or any other use for the purposes of a trade or business irrespective of whether this was carried on for profit or not. This brought some classes of horticultural workers which were not formerly included under the scope of the statutory wage regulation but the strictly private ordinary gardeners remained unaffected by this provision.

The Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1947 had a favourable reception. To farm workers it represented the realisation of conditions of employment for which they and their representatives had pressed for many years. To farmers it meant stability and uniformity of the statutory wage regulating machinery throughout the country and a reassuring sign of a determination on the part of the government in power to carry out the policy of expansion of agricultural production.

The principal Act on which the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1947 was based was passed in 1924. During the intervening 28 years a number of enactments and regulations were made concerned with conditions of pay and employment in agriculture. The Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1947 by repealing or amending these enactments simplified the interpretation of the statutory controls of agricultural employment. But because, of the necessity to relate the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1947 to the principal Act and to parts of the Holidays with Pay Act, 1938 and the Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1944, farmers and farm workers still had some difficulty in following the apparently confusing legislation and the need was felt for bringing up to date and consolidating all the legislative measures affecting agricultural employment.

On 13th July, 1948 the Agricultural Wages Act, 1948 came into force. The Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1924, the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1947 and sections of the Holidays with Pay Act, 1938 relating to workers employed in agriculture were repealed and the division of powers and responsibilities of the Agricultural Wages Board and the Agricultural Wages Committees as well as the operation of the statutory regulations of wages and conditions of farm employment were re-stated. Whereas the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1947 applied to Scotland as well as to England and Wales the operation of the Agricultural Wages Act, 1948 was limited to England and Wales.

The powers to fix, cancel or vary minimum rates of wages including overtime and piece-work, directions as to the workers' entitlement to holidays and the definition of the nature and value of benefits allowed to be reckoned as part payment of cash wages were vested in the Agricultural Wages Board for England and Wales. The Agricultural Wages Committees remained responsible for authorising individual exemptions from the fixed minimum wages on the ground of physical deficiency of workers, varying the benefit value of farm workers' cottages in special cases, awarding in special cases additional wages for piece-work and approving the terms of employment of inexperienced workers (learners) in agriculture. The Agricultural Wages Committees were also expected to make representations to the Agricultural Wages Board on any aspects of agricultural employment in their areas and the Agricultural Wages Board in arriving at their decisions had to consider these representations which, however, were not binding on the Agricultural Wages Board in any way.

Supplementary sections and five schedules of the Act contained details of the constitution of the Agricultural Wages Board and of the Agricultural Wages Committees, of procedure to be followed and other explanatory directions which made the Agricultural Wages Act, 1948 a comprehensive piece of legislation on which the industrial relationships between employers and workers in farming could be based.

CHAPTER VI.

CONCLUSIONS.

The relative scale of improvements in wages paid to agricultural workers since before the Second World War may be measured by comparing index changes in the weighted average minimum wage paid to ordinary adult male farm workers and the average wages excluding overtime and other payments obtained by workers in all industries including farming[1].

The rise in agricultural wages appears most spectacular when it is expressed in terms of wages which operated before the First World War. From 1919 until 1940 the index of wages in all industries including farming was generally higher than that of farm wages only. In 1921 all wages exceeded the pre-war level by 143 per cent and

CHANGES IN THE INDEX NUMBER OF FULL TIME WEEKLY WAGES IN ENGLAND AND WALES.

TABLE 40.

Year	1911 to 1913 = 100		1938 = 100	
	Farm wages	All wages	Farm wages	All wages
1919	203	219	106	113
1938	192	194	100	100
1939	194	196	101	101
1940	239	217	124	112
1941	274	236	143	122
1942	333	253	173	130
1943	336	264	175	136
1944	361	277	188	143
1945	384	290	200	149
1946	412	314	215	162
1947	463	326	241	168
1948	500	342	260	176
1949	518	352	270	181
1950	527	358	274	185

wages in farming also rose by 143 per cent, but whereas in farming it represented the peak of an upward trend, in general wages the peak was passed in 1920 and a decline had already set in. This decline continued after 1921. Between 1921 and 1922 the general wage index rapidly declined by 48 points but the decline in farm wages was even more serious. On the 1911-13 basis the index fell from 243 to 174. By 1924 some degree of stability in all wages was achieved but from 1925 until 1933 the general wage index showed a continuous though slow decline whereas the index of agricultural

1 *The Farm Economist.* Vols. V, No. 6, VI, No. 5 and 6.
London and Cambridge Economic Service Bulletin 1, Vol. XXXVII. 1949.

wages was rising by slow degrees and with occasional recessions until 1931. In 1932 both indices represented 174 per cent of the pre-war level of wages. From 1932 to 1940 there was a rise in wages both general and agricultural as compared with 1911 to 1913 level but the index of wages in all industries was higher than the agricultural wage index by one to two points. In 1940 the first definite gain in the index of agricultural wages over all wages was achieved and the excess of the former over the latter in relation to 1911 to 1913 conditions represented 22 points. This trend remained unbroken in the years following 1940 but the rate of improvement in agricultural wages as compared with wages in all industries became faster. In 1942 the index of agricultural wages was higher than the index of all wages by 80 points and the difference increased to 98 points in 1946, 137 points in 1947, 166 points in 1949 and 169 points in 1950. In 1950 there was more than a fivefold increase in farm wages over the 1911 to 1913 level and compared with 1938 conditions agricultural wages had nearly trebled. It should be remembered also that since 1938 there had been a decline in the length of the working week to which the minimum wage in agriculture was related. Taking the average working hours of an ordinary farm worker in England and Wales in 1938 as a 100 the index number of hours worked in 1946 was 96 and it declined to 94 in 1949.

It should be stressed, however, that in spite of the unquestionable relative improvements in wages of farm workers, the absolute rates of wages and working hours in farming did not always compare favourably with conditions of employment in other industries and occupations. In 1948, for example, the minimum rate for an ordinary adult male farm worker was 90s. 0d. for a 48 hours week. At the same time rural permanent way labourers on the railways were paid a minimum of 92s. 6d. for a 44 hours week, land drainage workers in rural areas had the same minimum as farm workers but they worked only 45 hours a week and general labourers employed in non-trading services of the local authority had a 98s. 6d. minimum for a 47 hours week.

The average weekly earnings of manual workers in other industries were higher still. In the same year, 1948, adult male workers in coal mining had average weekly earnings twice as high as the minumum wage in agriculture, dock labourers were earning over 155s. 0d. per week, iron, stone and other mining and quarrying workers 131s. 0d. per week, and the average weekly earnings in all industries taken together were estimated at 134s. 0d[1].

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[1] *Annual Abstract of Statistics.* No. 84, 1935 to 1946. H.M. Stationery Office, London.
The Ministry of Labour Gazette. H.M. Stationery Office, London.

Statistics of total earnings in agriculture are not available and therefore it is difficult to compare the above weekly earnings in other industries with those obtaining in agriculture. Under the statutory regulations agricultural workers were free to enter into an agreement with their employers whereby wages received were higher than the fixed minimum. The agreed wages including the value of benefits or advantages, defined by statutory regulations, constituted a contract wage. In the case of ordinary general workers contract wage differed little from the minimum wage but the difference was greater when special classes of workers such as tractor drivers, stockmen, horsemen, bailiffs, etc., were concerned. Workers in these classes were more likely to obtain cottages and other benefits and perquisites than ordinary workers, and owing to a greater responsibility attached to their work and often longer working hours their additional earnings in the form of overtime and various special bonuses and premiums were also higher.

An investigation of labour costs carried out on some 30 farms in the East Midlands shows that during the year ended 1st October, 1948 total weekly earnings of the ordinary general workers were higher than the statutory minimum then in force by only eight per cent. This is confirmed by the analysis of wages on identical farms covered by the National Farmers' Union Accounts Scheme[1]. Total earnings of special classes of workers such as tractor drivers exceeded the minimum wage by 15 per cent and those of carters and other stockmen by 26 per cent and 24 per cent respectively. Cowmen were earning 31 per cent more than the minimum and foremen and bailiffs over 40 per cent more. The average recorded total earnings of foremen and bailiffs were then 126s. 0d. per week. Compared with the average total earnings of all classes of workers in all industries at the level of 134s. 0d. the earnings of these, the highest paid class of agricultural workers, were low and indicated that in spite of the achievements in bringing farm wages and earnings into line with earnings in other occupations there is still room for further improvements. It should also be remembered that there are relatively few men in agriculture employed as bailiffs or foremen. As their earnings represented about one third more than earnings of the ordinary workers the financial position of the latter, compared with conditions in other occupations was even less favourable.

Another important factor which should be considered in connection with the study of earnings and conditions of employment is the purchasing power of the currency. Early in 1950 in a Par-

1 *Farm Accounts Scheme.* The National Farmers' Union Information Service. Vol. V. No. 12. December, 1950. London.

liamentary written answer[1] it was stated that measured over the whole field of consumers' goods and savings the internal purchasing power of the pound sterling taken as a 100 in 1938 declined to 97 in 1939, 83 in 1940, 75 in 1941, 70 in 1942, 68 in 1943, 67 in 1944, 65 in 1945, 63 in 1946, 59 in 1947, 55 in 1948, 54 in 1949 and 52 in February, 1950. More recently[2] the Chancellor of the Exchequer stated that the present day purchasing power of the pound sterling is about 10s. 0d. as compared with 20s. 0d. in 1938.

Changes in the purchasing power of the currency affect all trades and industries in the same way so that consideration of such changes is immaterial to the relative real value of earnings in agriculture as compared with those in other occupations. These changes, however, reduce considerably the magnitude of improvements achieved in the field of industrial earnings in recent years and they explain, to some extent at any rate, reasons for the repeated claims for higher wages on behalf of farm workers. The farm workers' minimum wage of 100s. 0d. per week corrected for the decline in the purchasing power of the pound since 1938 is only about 43 per cent higher than the minimum wage prevailing in 1938. But improvements in the conditions of agricultural employment cannot be measured only by reference to changes in earnings.

During the decades which followed the First World War there were important improvements in the economic, social and political life of workers engaged in agriculture. The most important economically was the establishment of the statutory minimum wage. Under the old system of individual bargaining the rates of wages in an area had been usually determined by the lowest pay offered by a few farmers and the wage was regarded as a function of profitableness of farming. Statutory regulation of wages protected the workers' standard of living and with the introduction of the national minimum wage it also ironed out local differences in the minimum rates of pay, hours of work and other conditions and strengthened the workers' collective bargaining power in their negotiations with the employers.

Not less important achievements were made in the social sphere. The unemployment insurance to which farm workers were admitted only after 1936 removed one of the greatest fears of a working man, that of loss of work. Improvements in the legislation on workmen's compensation protected farm workers against financial consequences of loss of work due to injuries sustained in work, and

1 *Weekly Hansard* No. 151. *Parliamentary Debates.* 18th April, 1950. H.M. Stationery Office, London.

2 *Weekly Hansard, No.* 187. *Parliamentary Debates.* 24th April, 1951. H.M. Stationery Office, London.

their inclusion in other schemes of social insurance, to which all workers are now entitled, has done a great deal towards raising the social standing and the confidence of agricultural workers.

Under the improved economic and social conditions farm workers have begun to take greater active interest in the political life of the country. It is often said that as a class farm workers owe their political development to the activities of the trade unions and of the labour movement generally. It is true that farm workers benefitted from the greater political experience of their organised fellow workers and that in their struggle over the improvement of living and working conditions in agriculture they were supported by the trade union movement. But the benefits were mutual. Farm workers, in return, brought into the political life of the country most valuable and often rare qualities of patience, modesty and restraint.

Developments during the last 30 years have done much to make available for the benefit of the agricultural industry and of the nation the reservoirs of wisdom and stability which are to be found in the ranks of the farm workers. Literally they have always enjoyed a place in the sun, now they are in a fair way to enjoy it metaphorically.

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