UE FIGHTS FOR WOMEN WORKERS

GE WOMEN DEMAND!
No Rate Lower
Than Common Labores Rate
Local UE 301

• End Rate Discrimination!
• End Job Segregation!
UE GENERAL OFFICERS

ALBERT J. FITZGERALD
General President

JULIUS EMSPAK
General Secretary Treasurer

JAMES J. MATLES
Director of Organization

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UNITED ELECTRICAL, RADIO AND MACHINE WORKERS
OF AMERICA (UE)

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Foreword

SINCE our organization in 1936, our Union, the UE, has carried on an unceasing fight against the long-standing discrimination of companies against women's rates of pay, their job security and their right to work at all jobs in the plant. Basic to this fight for the rights of our women members was the understanding that this discrimination against women was a weapon that employers daily used to undermine all rates and to reap billions of dollars of extra profits.

In this struggle to end discrimination, UE has won many victories and has been able to prove before government agencies how companies discriminate and the extent of the discrimination. These victories, precedents and experience can be of inestimable help in overcoming the substantial discrimination still practiced by companies against women workers in the industry.

The purpose of this pamphlet, therefore, is to expose the trickery used by companies to conceal and "explain" the double exploitation of women workers, and to set forth how UE locals have been able to win the elimination of rate discrimination against women. Armed with this knowledge, UE locals who put up a determined fight can force the companies in our industry to end discrimination against women.

There are other problems facing women workers — adequate care for their children, the need for a government program of day nurseries, problems of maternity leave, health protection — the need to train women for leadership in the union. UE members must pay increasing attention to these problems. But the key problem for the union at this time is the elimination of the basic economic exploitation of women workers, a problem the entire union can and must attack now in the interests of all our members.

ERNEST THOMPSON, Secretary
National UE Fair Practice Committee

How Industry Exploits Women Workers

IN ADVERTISEMENTS ACROSS THE LAND, industry glorifies the American woman — in her gleaming GE kitchen, at her Westinghouse laundromat, before her Sylvania television set. Nothing is too good for her — unless she works for GE, or Westinghouse, or Sylvania or thousands of other corporations throughout the U.S.A.

As an employee, regardless of her skill she is rated lower than common labor (male). She is assigned to jobs which, according to government studies, involve greater physical strain and skill than many jobs done by men — but she is paid less than the underpaid sweeper, the least skilled men in the plant. She is speeded up until she may faint at her machine, to barely earn her daily bread.

Wage discrimination against women workers exists in every industry where women are employed. It exists because it pays off in billions of dollars in extra profits for the companies. According to the 1950 census, the average wage of women in factories was $1,985 a year less than men. Multiply this by the 4,171,000 women in factories and you get the staggering total of 5.4 billion dollars. In just one year, U.S. corporations made five billion four hundred million dollars in extra profits from their exploitation of women.

Here are just a few examples of the double standard on wages in the electrical manufacturing industry:

- At a large GE plant, women who make up one-fourth of the workers are hired in at $1.22 an hour, while men are hired in at
$1.47, except for common labor, which is $1.43. Most of the women work on production jobs whose highest rate is $1.34 — nine cents less than the rate of an untrained sweeper. Women doing the same work as men on punch press, motor winding, stator bar insulating, wiring, electronic-tube assembly, are getting from 20 to 30 cents an hour less. GE pockets the difference — a profit on sex.

- At a large Westinghouse plant, the minimum hiring-in rate for women is $1.33. The hiring-in rate for men starts at $1.51. The highest rated job held by a woman pays $1.54½, only 3½ cents more than the male sweeper. Only a few women are in labor grades 5 and 6, equal to or slightly higher than the bottom sweeper’s rate on the male key sheet. Most of the women are in Grades 1 to 4, below the starting point of the male key sheet.

- At another Westinghouse plant where women do all the production work, and men are only used for maintenance, the common labor rate for the men is $1.42 — the highest rate a woman can get is $1.44. These situations exist throughout the GE, Westinghouse and Sylvania chains as well as in the smaller plants of the industry.

- In the lamp industry, all production work is done by women, who make up three-fourths of the total working force. These women production workers are hired in at from five to twenty cents less than men, and the highest rate they can make is several cents less than the male common labor rate. As a result, the companies make $2,619 per year on every employee in the lamp industry, compared to $1,540 per employee in motor and generator plants where only one-quarter of the workers are women. An extra profit, on sex!

**UE’s Battle to End Double Standard**

From the very beginning, the UE has challenged industry’s double wage standard. For 15 years this union has fought, more than any other union and against bitter company resistance, to eliminate lower rates for women. That’s not just boasting on the union’s part. A report issued in September, 1951, by the Women’s Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor flatly states that in the electrical manufacturing industry “equal pay resulted from the union’s activity.”

A historic precedent for all labor was set by the UE in a National War Labor Board case against GE and Westinghouse in 1945, advancing the principle of equal pay for equal work not only where women were doing the same jobs as men but on those jobs regarded by the company as exclusively “women’s jobs.”

The government at that time published an exhaustive document establishing the fact that “exploitation” of women workers was taking place in both companies and recommending that it “should be ended.” But it took the UE strike of 1946 and constant national, local and shop battles to make the bosses even start to narrow the rate differentials.

As a result of union activity over the years, the discriminatory lower rates for women have been raised and on some jobs equal pay has been won. But the majority of women workers in lamp, radio
and television production and in packing operations, so-called light assembly, so-called simple machine and finishing operations in all plants, are still being exploited at rates of pay below common labor. They are still segregated on jobs the companies set aside as exclusively “women’s jobs” so that they may continue to under-rate them as compared to jobs held by men.

Today, the UE is engaged in an intensified campaign to end the rate discrimination against women. For these rates below common labor threaten every rate in the plant. The companies, as part of their general rate-cutting offensive, are putting in new machines and processes to be run by women at rates below common labor, replacing higher-paid men. And because the women’s base rate is so low, they are at the mercy of the company’s speed-up drive—the women are being used as a wedge to speed up and cut rates of all workers.

That’s why in collective bargaining today, a major UE demand is to abolish all rates below common labor and end the rate discrimination against women. The full weight of the union is being thrown behind this battle.

UE demands that the common labor rate be the minimum rate in every plant for jobs done by women as it is for jobs done by men. UE demands that the jobs done by women be reclassified on the basis of actual job requirements, skill, degree of mental and physical application, accuracy, time it takes to learn the job, responsibility, conditions under which the job is performed.

![Report](image)

**Government Report Proves “Exploitation”**

Valuable ammunition for this battle is contained in the document issued by the National War Labor Board* in 1945 as a result of UE’s case exposing discrimination in women’s rates in GE and Westinghouse. The document was based on extensive material presented by both UE and the companies at government hearings and on an inspection of plants of both companies by members of the government board.

The “exploitation” of women workers which they found exists in the same way today. The information in this document is extremely important in exposing the lies the companies still are using to justify lower pay for women. The majority of women in our industry are still segregated by the companies on jobs to which the companies do not assign men at all. They may not actually be labelled “women’s jobs.” But the companies deliberately maintain an artificial separation of the work done by women from the work done by men in order to prevent comparison on the basis of the actual content of the jobs. This War Labor Board report of the historic UE case shows how to PROVE discrimination against women in the plants, not only in GE and Westinghouse, but in any company.

*Do not confuse President Roosevelt’s War Labor Board of World War II with the present Wage Stabilization Board which was set up under Charles E. Wilson, ex-president of GE, to freeze wages without any freeze on prices, and which must clear all decisions with the big businessmen running the mobilization setup.
Evidence from War Labor Board

In its analysis of the job content of so-called men’s and women’s jobs, the Board used approaches originated by UE which are extremely useful today in determining whether discrimination exists.

1. They found, first, that discrimination was embodied from the beginning in the job evaluation systems of the companies.

Both GE and Westinghouse determined the content of each job by assigning points based on the skill, effort, conditions of work, etc.

In Westinghouse, “the occupations or jobs filled by women are point rated on the same basis of point values for requirements of the job and responsibility, with the same allowances for job conditions as on the jobs commonly filled by men.” But then the company goes ahead and artificially assigns a lower rate to women’s jobs.

The company itself admitted that for women “the rate or range for Labor Grades do not coincide with the values on the men’s scale. Basically, then we have another wage curve or key sheet for women below and not parallel with the men’s curve . . .” The company conceded that women are paid less than men for jobs which, by point evaluation, fall within the same labor grades.

In General Electric, a similar system was used assigning points to the job on the basis of the requirements, both for men and women. But after these points are assigned, the GE Job Evaluation manual states the payment for the points is on the following basis: “for female operators the value shall be two-thirds of the value for adult male workers.”

Both companies have since claimed they do not use this type of job evaluation system any more. But once jobs held by women have been assigned discriminatory lower rates, all other such jobs which are subsequently set up are rated on the same basis as the original jobs. Therefore, the original pattern of discrimination has continued down to the present, regardless of the kind of rating system the companies claim they are using now.


The companies claimed that the large rate differential between the lower-rated “women’s jobs” (janitress, packer, waitress, scrubwoman) and male common labor was due to a difference in physical effort.

The government board cited UE’s evidence to prove this was false, by showing that the companies paid very little, if any difference, in rate where a much greater difference in physical effort was involved between two men’s jobs, such as male sweeper versus a laborer digging ditches.

They cited a case in GE where the rate differential between the janitor and the scrubwoman was four times the rate differential between the janitor and the male sweeper, for no greater difference in physical effort and job conditions.

The fact that at Schenectady GE “at one time, due to war conditions, over one-quarter of the common labor force consisted of women, would seem to indicate that the element of physical effort attached to the common labor work does not warrant the large differential between that work and the lowest paid women’s jobs,” the board concluded.

At Westinghouse, the board stated that “the physical effort involved in the work of the male common laborers, whose work was observed, clearly did not justify the substantial difference between
their rates and the rates for the least skilled women’s jobs.” Janitors and janitresses were doing similar work vacuuming rugs, cleaning rugs, cleaning floors, washing, waxing and mopping laboratory floors, yet were being paid substantially different rates.


The government board stated flatly that at General Electric: “All but a small fraction of the women’s jobs are rated substantially below male common labor, despite the fact that many, if not most, of these jobs clearly involve more skill, mental aptitude and responsibility than the male common labor jobs.”

For example, the board found that assembly and insulating jobs held by women required up to twelve months of training and were given up to 120 points for skill, while a sweater job took no training time and was given zero points for skill. For physical application, the sweater was given 35 points, the janitor 15 points, and women on assembly jobs were given 25 to 35 points, women on insulating jobs, from 30 to 35 points. The sweater and janitor were given no points for working conditions, while some of the women’s assembly jobs and most of the women’s insulating jobs were given 5 points for working conditions.

“These jobs (assembly and insulating) — the two largest groups of women’s incentive jobs — carried total point values ranging from 475 to 610, as against 440 for sweepers. 475 for male janitors and 480 for male ‘inside shop labor,’” the board reported. “Yet, by virtue of the one-third markdown factor in the translation of these points into rates, all of these women’s jobs were rated below the male common labor jobs.”

Thus a comparison of production jobs held by women with male common labor on the company’s own job evaluation scale shows clearly that the “women’s jobs” had higher requirements. Yet the company, using the arbitrary standard that “for female operators the value shall be two-thirds of the value for male operators,” put rates on women’s production jobs below common labor.


Noting that many of the women’s jobs were on incentive, and therefore many of the women (by speed-up) earned up to and above common labor day rates, the board found by comparing these jobs with similar men’s incentive jobs that the differential in the base rates still could not be justified. To find out if discrimination exists on women’s incentive jobs, it’s still true today as the UE showed the War Labor Board in 1945 that you have to disregard incentive earnings and compare base rates.

Sometimes men, and even women, fall for the company’s trick and figure if a woman is able to increase her earnings on incentive, there is no discrimination. They fail to see that if the woman’s base rate was set in terms of actual job content instead of being based on discrimination, she would not be forced to speed up in order to earn enough to exist on.

For both GE and Westinghouse, the government board found that “in comparing women’s jobs with men’s jobs which correspond more closely to the operation performed by the women, and which are also on incentive, differences appear which cannot adequately be explained by reference only to differences in job content.”

At GE, for example, in winding jobs there are differences of 31 cents to 36 cents between men and women on similar jobs, working on the same size of wire, under identical conditions, except that men were working on larger frames. In coil insertions, there was a difference of 40 cents an hour between men and women. While the men’s work in coil insertion required double winding instead of single winding and the use of a heavier hammer, the women, in addition to the hammer, had to use a tool similar to a screw driver which called for considerable physical effort involving hands, wrists and forearms. According to the board, “it seemed particularly strange that jobs of this sort should be rated even below the job of male sweeper.”

Coil winding jobs in GE, where a difference of 50 mills (one-twentieth of an inch) in the size of the wire on the men’s and women’s jobs was the only basis for a 41 cent wage differential, were cited by the board to “illustrate rather dramatically a condition running all through the plants involving a differential between men’s and women’s rates, which in its full extent cannot fairly be explained as attributable solely to differences in job content.”

In Westinghouse also, the differences between men’s and women’s rates for similar jobs could not be explained on the basis of comparison of the jobs. The 19 cent difference in rates between male and female packers working side by side in Westinghouse and performing identical tasks except that the men pack larger cartons could not be justified “on any usual theory of job evaluation,” said
the Board. Male winders working with wires only slightly heavier than women winders received much higher rates. Enormous differences appeared in the rates for male and female punch press operators, drill press operators and testers of instruments and relays.

5. Board Conclusion as to Extent of Sex Differentials

The government document stated: "On the basis of the entire record, we conclude that the union has established the existence in the plants of both companies of substantial differentials between rates for women's jobs and men's jobs which cannot be justified on the basis of comparative job content . . . In our final discussions with the parties, the representatives of both companies virtually conceded that the differentials could not be justified on the basis of job content."

It must be emphasized that although the UE case before the War Labor Board was concerned with GE and Westinghouse, the findings are applicable to every plant in the industry where discrimination exists.

Is There Any Justification?

The companies claimed there were other grounds for paying women lower rates. Their arguments — still being used by industry generally to justify wage discrimination against women — were completely exposed by the UE before the War Labor Board as company propaganda. They can be met with statistics from other government sources that also prove them lies.

The companies say:

"Women are young, temporary workers. They quit after a few years to get married." "The greater turnover of women, the special services they require, make it necessary to pay them lower rates."

The facts are:

The U.S. Census Bureau reveals that one out of every two women workers in American industry is at least 35 years old, and most of these older workers have held onto their present jobs for at least five years.

The National War Labor Board rejected these company arguments in World War II, laying down the principle that "intangible alleged cost factors incident to the employment of women could not legitimately be used to reduce the rates to which the women
would otherwise be entitled on the basis of job content.” In the GE and Westinghouse cases, the Board said “no evidence of such costs was introduced.”

THE COMPANIES SAY:

“Women don’t have families to support. They work for pin money.” “General sociological factors justify lower pay for women.”

THE FACTS ARE:

According to government figures, one out of every four women workers have children under 18 whom they must support. One out of every five is either widowed, divorced or separated from her husband. Many have to work because they are war widows, wives of disabled veterans, or of men now in the army. But most women work because their husband’s pay is inadequate to support the family needs. 93% of all women work because they have to support themselves or their families.

THE COMPANIES SAY:

“Women are simply worth less for purposes of factory employment than men.”

THE FACTS ARE:

This attitude on the part of GE management — that women are somehow inferior workers “worth less” to the company — was revealed by UE’s government case to be the greatest hoax of all to justify wage differentials. Stated the National War Labor Board, after its survey of GE and Westinghouse plants:

“If men were to be substituted for women on the so-called woman’s jobs there would probably be a very real loss in efficiency and productivity, since it is recognized that men are not as well adapted as women for light, repetitive work requiring finger dexterity. The productive worth of women on the jobs to which they are customarily assigned, if fairly weighed, might well offset any added production costs resulting from such factors as absenteeism, transient character of service, etc.”

Even the National Association of Manufacturers stated, in May, 1942: “There is little difference between men and women as regards their satisfactory performance in industry.”

THE COMPANIES SAY:

“Women aren’t as strong as men. They need extra help for heavy lifting etc.”

THE FACTS ARE:

The over-emphasis on physical effort is a trick often used by companies to justify sex differentials. Actually, physical effort alone has little to do with the value of a job on the company’s own scales, which place common labor digging ditches at the lower end and tool and die makers at the top. But, insofar as physical effort is one factor in a job’s value, the Women’s Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor, in a survey in 1951 of the electrical industry, pointed out that:

“The constant arm and finger movements involved in many women’s jobs were, in the course of a day, probably more wearing in many cases than the occasional lifting of a 30 or 40-pound box. The jobs done by women “often involve close attention to work and concentration that is fatiguing.”

It’s true that women can’t lift as heavy weights as men, even
though the companies used to demand it of them before they had the protection of a UE contract.

But the ability to lift heavy weights is actually only a very small part of the valuation placed on a job by the companies themselves. Out of 33 sample jobs rated by the National Electrical Manufacturers Association, only two were given as many as 40 points for “physical effort” out of a total possible evaluation of 500 points. Physical effort at the most constitutes less than 10% of the evaluation the company places on the job.

On more skilled women’s jobs where they may be doing the same work as men except for a difference in the size or weight of the material, the difference in physical effort required is hardly ever sufficient to justify as great a rate differential as the companies claim.

**THE COMPANIES SAY:**

“Our rates for women are in line with established community practice. Industry has always paid women less. We’re justified because every company does it.”

**THE FACTS ARE:**

This argument was rejected by the government board in the GE and Westinghouse case, as follows:

“If this contention were sound, it would follow that no exploitation of any group could be ended (save by voluntary action) if it constituted the common practice of the employers in the locality. The real question is whether any exploitation exists. If it does exist, as we believe that it does from the evidence in this case, it should be ended, and the fact that others practice it ought not to stand as a bar. “

“The claim of community and industry practice cannot be advanced as a sound reason for doing nothing to correct an injustice which patently exists,” the Board stressed. “Moreover, these companies as the whole or dominant employer in the community in many instances, may have themselves initiated or supported the practice.”

**The Real Reason for Discrimination**

Big business has found it profitable to maintain the old superstition that women are “inferior” to men. Not long ago women were considered men’s “chattels,” with no rights at all of their own. They had no vote, could hold no property separate from their husbands.

It is no accident that big business all over the world fought the movement for votes and equal rights for women. For in their factories, the public acceptance of women’s equality would mean the loss of a huge source of labor they could segregate and exploit for extra profits, and as a means to hold down the wages of all workers.

The following memorandum from the government’s Women’s Bureau was quoted by the Board as the explanation of why women were originally discriminated against when they came into industry and why they are discriminated against still.

“In any early period when women were first entering industry as a new part of the labor force, carrying over into the factory household skills that were not given a high money value in the public mind, women were paid at lower scales of wages than those usually paid men. In this they suffered from the same type of wage exploitation that ordinarily has occurred with the entrance of any new
group to industry, such as migrant workers or those of different nationalities or races...

"From this, two parallel wage structures grew up, one for men and one for women, the latter fixed on a lower scale, frequently without valid reasons that would hold up under objective tests. Frequently, and especially where women are involved, wage rates have been determined by tradition or custom or prejudice wholly unrelated to the requirements of the job or its exactions from the workers...

"These low pay scales for women were continued long after women had demonstrated their efficiency in various skilled occupations, even though industry came to depend on their work to an increasing extent. There were several reasons why this was so, not the least being that there has been little public understanding of the serious effects of this situation on the American economy as a whole."

A GE company representative admitted to the investigator from the Women's Bureau of the Labor Department, in 1951, the real reason for lower rates for women: "because women's job opportunities had been relatively limited in industry in the past, it had been possible to get them to work for less than men, and employers took advantage of this fact to underpay women."

"I'd hate to have to be the one to have to sit across the bargaining table trying to justify differentials," the GE representative said.

Then why do the companies keep on trying to justify lower pay for women? — because it means extra profits. That's why they try to convince the men in the plant, and the women themselves, that women shouldn't get as much as men. That's why for fifteen years they have so bitterly opposed the UE's demands to end rate differentials against women.
The Situation Today

After UE exposed the exploitation of women in GE and Westinghouse before the War Labor Board in 1945, GE claimed it threw away the old job evaluation plan under which all women's jobs were automatically paid for at two-thirds of the rate paid to men. It also allegedly discarded its separate key sheet for women. GE merely re-designated the "women's jobs" as "light" or "simple" jobs in each category and the "men's jobs" as "heavy" or "complicated." The rate differential remained unchanged.

Then to further confuse the situation and make it more difficult to detect the discrimination against women, GE discarded even the "light" and "heavy" distinction and set up a single key sheet — in which the jobs held by women were simply added to the bottom of the men's scale, below the common labor rate. In many cases the code number of the job remained the same during each change, as did the rate differential. See below how an assembly job held by women at a large GE plant has remained unchanged in its relation to a male sweeper's job even though the company now uses a single key sheet. The special adjustments for women won as a result of
UE's fight in 1945 and 1946, and all the other wage increases won by UE for both men and women, still left the women's production job, with requirements well above the sweeper's job, at a rate below sweeper.

Actually, the above woman's assembly job with an AER of $1.34 should not be compared with the sweeper's job but with the lowest man's assembly job with an AER of $1.47. The lowest man's assembly job at this GE plant has a rate of $1.47, and these men's assembly jobs complement and are performed on the same assembly lines with the women's jobs rated at $1.34. Moreover, the discrimination against women is measured not only by the difference in AERs between men and women, but also by the fact that the lower AER means a lower take-out on incentive earnings.

The above job held by women was one of thousands the company upped in 1945 and 1946 as a result of UE pressure. But many other jobs held by women, including jobs at the lowest rates, and the hiring-in rates, did not get special increases to eliminate the discrimination. Consequently, the differential in cents per hour between the hiring-in rates of men and women is the same as it was in 1945 when the War Labor Board ruled that the company take steps to eliminate the differential — that is, about 15 cents per hour. If starting rates of women production jobs at GE are compared with starting rates of men's production jobs, the differential is about 25 cents an hour.

Through UE efforts in GE women's straight time earnings, which were only 70.3 percent of men's in April 1945, were raised to 78 percent of men's earnings in 1952, but the differential is still substantial throughout the chain.

A parallel situation exists in Westinghouse, although UE was able there to raise not only individual women's jobs, but entire women's labor grades. As a result, the differential in hiring-in rates as well as between men's and women's labor grade rates has been narrowed. For example at a major Westinghouse plant:

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At some Westinghouse plants such as Jersey City and S. Philadelphia, the differential between men's and women's rates has been entirely eliminated by UE.

In the Sylvania chain, UE's battle on wage discrimination against women also forced the company to discard its separate women's key sheet. Sylvania, like GE, set up a single key sheet, but simply took all the women's jobs and added them at the bottom of the men's sheet below common labor, as the first six labor grades. Since the new key sheet was supposed to be based on proper job evaluation, they had to create a new basis for rating the women's jobs lower than men's.

So they arbitrarily set up a base factor of 200 points for all jobs done by men, and a base factor of 100 points for all jobs done by women, before adding in the factors for actual job content. If the man's job and the woman's job received an equal valuation on every single factor, this arbitrary base factor would still make the man's job rate 100 points higher.

Now Sylvania has started to put men into those first six labor grades, which were created to maintain lower rates for women. As a result of this rate discrimination against women, Sylvania has been able to put men on production jobs at rates below common labor.

The situation in the electrical machinery industry as a whole reflects the situation in General Electric, Westinghouse and Sylvania. As of July, 1948, the latest date for which such information is available, the differential between men's and women's average hourly earnings in electrical manufacturing was 35 cents. Not only were women's average hourly earnings considerably below the average for men, but women's earnings were even 7½ cents an hour below the average for unskilled men. In other industries the differential is even greater.
Special Situation of Negro Women

The situation of Negro women workers today is even more shocking.

Even more than white women, Negro women have to work to live. For the discrimination that keeps Negro men at the bottom of the pay scale forces their wives to work to supplement the pitifully inadequate income of the family.

But Negro women are barred from almost all jobs except low-paying domestic service in private homes, or menial outside jobs as janitresses and scrubwomen. In the basic sections of the electrical, radio and machine industry, as in industry generally, Negro women are not employed. In lamp plants and others where Negro women have been hired as a source of cheap labor, they suffer the exploitation of all women working under discriminatory rates of pay because of their sex.

Census figures show the special economic problems of Negro women:

- 41.4% of Negro married women continue to work compared to 25.3 percent of white married women.
- As of March 1950, 20.7 percent of Negro women with children under six had to work as compared with 11.2 percent of white women.

- Altogether in 1950, 46 out of every hundred Negro women were in the labor force as compared to 32 out of every hundred white women.
- Out of 451 job classifications, 3/4 of all women workers were concentrated in the 23 lowest paid job categories. But almost 4/5 of Negro women workers were employed in 5 of the lowest paid of the 451 job classifications.
- In 1950, the average earnings of Negro women were $474 a year, compared to $1,062 for white women, $1,471 for Negro men, and $2,709 for white men. The compounding of two kinds of discrimination against Negro workers who are women is shown by the fact that the average earnings of Negro women are barely 1/6 the average earnings of white men.

UE’s fair practices committees in many local unions have been fighting the discrimination against hiring of Negro women in the electrical and machine industry, and the discriminatory practices that restrict Negro women to the most mental, lowest-paid jobs. But electrical apparatus plants and other basic sections of the industry still discriminate on a large scale against Negro women, and for the most part today Negro women are not employed in the industry. Negro women workers have a real stake in the UE’s fight to end rate exploitation of women in the industry, but their problems also require a special fight to lift the double bars against hiring of Negro women.
How to Tackle Rate Discrimination

The campaign that UE is waging today to wipe out rate discrimination against women is realistic. It recognizes that legislation has not succeeded in wiping out this discrimination—for in the 11 states which now have laws requiring "equal pay for equal work" most women in industry are still working at lower pay than men.

UE's program demands an investigation of the actual rate structure in every plant and reslotting of all jobs held by women on the basis of the actual job content, starting with common labor as a base as it is for jobs held by men.

The Labor Department's 1951 "Case Studies in Equal Pay for Women" revealed that "equal pay" state laws do not keep companies from underpaying women workers unless the union tackles the actual rate structure to wipe out lower rates on jobs done by women. Most of the women in the electrical manufacturing industry are employed on jobs which the companies segregate as exclusively "women's jobs" so that they cannot be so easily be compared to jobs done by men. The Labor Department revealed that GE actually set up "women's jobs" where they didn't already exist in order to get around equal pay laws and keep on paying the women lower rates.

Describing a GE plant in New York State, the Labor Department said:

"When the State equal-pay law was adopted in 1944, those women doing the same jobs as men were either raised to the same rate that men were getting, or their jobs were broken down or altered in some way so that they were no longer doing exactly the same work as the men." For instance, GE's regular packing department was divided into a light packing department staffed and supervised by women and a heavy packing department staffed and supervised by men, and the men were paid a higher rate than the women.

But this same study by the Women's Bureau of the Labor Department was able to cite examples in the electrical industry where specific contract guarantees won by the UE and the union action on the rate structure not only achieved equal pay for men and women on the same job, but prevented the company from paying lower rates on any jobs done by women.

The Labor Department described a radio plant in New York City where UE Local 430 has completely wiped out lower rates for women on an industry-wide basis:

In 1942, in the plant, women were being paid between 42 and 55 cents per hour and men's rates ranged from 52 cents to $1.26 per hour. Women doing the same jobs as men were paid from 5 to 24 cents less. Today women are paid the same as men not only where they are doing the same jobs but in all jobs in the plant. The dual wage structure has been eliminated.

The UE obtained a clause in its contract spelling out: "There shall be no discrimination against any employee either in hiring, promoting, advancement or assigning of jobs or with respect to any other terms or conditions of employment because of such employees' union membership or activity, sex, race, creed, color or religious affiliation."

The union also won company agreement for a job evaluation, on which the Labor Department document says: "The company wanted to continue the sex differentials in the rates to be set, on the ground that the women's work was lighter. The union opposed this. The case went to the War Labor Board, which ruled in favor of the single rate scale, and women's rates were adjusted to bring them into line with men's."

There are no lower paid "women's jobs" in this UE plant. States the Labor Department: "There is a job classification plan, with job descriptions and rates for key jobs... Rates are set with reference to these key jobs, and without regard to whether they are performed by men or women."

Here are a few other examples of successful UE battles against rate discrimination:

- At International Harvester, women's rates used to be 20 cents an hour lower than men's. The union fought for and
succeeded in establishing a single rate structure, slotting jobs for both men and women upward from the common labor rate. This not only raised rates for Harvester women, but for men too.

- At General Cable, there were two separate rate structures and two separate seniority lists for men and women when UE organized the chain. The UE won a single rate structure and a single seniority list, with no discrimination between men and women. Not only were there no discriminatory lower rates for women, but no separate women's jobs in General Cable. Under the UE contract, women are upgraded to the highest skilled jobs in the plant, such as precision tool and diamond die-making. The segregation of women on separate jobs at the bottom of the rate scale has been completely eliminated by the UE in this chain.

- When UE organized the Harvell Manufacturing Corp., La Porte, Indiana, in the fall of 1950, there was a woman's rate of $1.00 an hour for all jobs on which women were employed, including assembly, light presses, and shears. The rate for men started at $1.10 for sweeper and janitor. The first UE contract, won after a 42-day strike, narrowed the differential between women's rates and male sweeper by three cents, winning 8c for women, 15c for other jobs. In 1951 the UE narrowed the differential by another 4 cents, winning 13 cents for women, 9 cents for other jobs. In 1952 negotiations the UE insisted that the lowest women's assembly job must be evaluated higher than janitor. Rates for janitor and sweeper were set at $1.42 and the lowest women's jobs, assembly, light shears, wrappers, at $1.46.

In summary, wiping out discriminatory lower rates for women requires setting up a single rate structure, from the common labor rate to the highest skilled job, with jobs held by women reclassified according to their actual job requirements to eliminate discrimination as compared to jobs held by men. When this is done, the women's rates that fall below common labor are abolished. For rated according to the employer's own job evaluation categories — education, experience, physical effort, responsibility, working conditions, mental and visual effort, hazards, etc. — the simplest production job held by women falls at least as high as common labor and in most cases higher.

Note that the simplest women's assembly or production job requires at least three months training. In lamp, electronics, radio tube and television plants, production jobs held by women require the most concentrated use of the eyes up to actual assembly under a microscope, to the extent that eye defects are common among women after several years at this work. The great majority of women workers in these plants work under very disagreeable working conditions of heat and ventilation, in temperatures up to 120 degrees, to the point that fainting on the job is not uncommon. They are liable to danger from flying glass, beryllium poisoning and exposure to other chemicals that cause dermatitis and other skin eruptions.

The employers' most frequent excuse for rating these women's jobs below the male sweeper is "less physical effort." Many women's jobs require a great deal more physical effort than sweeping floors. Since physical effort comprises less than 10% of the total value of the job on the employer's scale and since the difference in physical effort between the sweeper's job and the simplest woman's assembly job is more than outweighed by the greater skill and mental and visual concentration required of the woman assembler, all jobs held by women should be reclassified to bring them at least to the common labor rate. The more skilled women's jobs should be reslotted at the proper point above the common labor rate by comparison with similar production jobs held by men in the plant.
Men's Business Too

Companies make so much extra profit out of their exploitation of women that they bitterly resist attempts to make them stop it. That's why over the years they've filled men workers and even the women workers themselves with propaganda that women aren't worth as much as men in a factory — and that if women get more they'd be taking money or jobs away from the men. The last thing the companies want is for the women and men to get together to fight this profitable double standard on wages, as they are doing today in UE.

That's why the UE can't fight this battle merely over the bargaining table with the company but must conduct an educational campaign in the shop and the community to expose the bosses' propaganda and show how the exploitation of women hurts all the workers in the plant.

It's an actual fact that lower rates for women are being used by the companies today to cut rates for men. In Westinghouse, East Pittsburgh, the company took jobs paying $1.45 to $1.48 an hour when done by men and put women on them for $1.30 to $1.38 an hour. UE Local 601 members fought together with IUE rank and file workers to stop this, but IUE-CIO made a deal with the company which is now introducing the same system throughout the plant. In GE's Locke Insulator plant in Baltimore, UE Local 120 is
fighting an attempt by the company to lay-off the 13 most senior men in a large department by putting in new machines to be run by women at below the common labor rate.

It's obvious that as long as these discriminatory women's rates below common labor exist, all men's rates are endangered. It's an established principle that the lowest rates in a plant are the basis upon which all other rates are constructed. Thus low rates for women hold down the entire rate structure.

The Illinois Department of Labor pointed out in its October, 1951, bulletin: "Establishment of the principle of equal pay for women is essential to a healthy economy. It protects wage levels, not only of women workers but of all workers and thereby sustains consumer purchasing power.

"It is an axiom that when large numbers of workers can be hired at lower rates of pay than those prevailing at any given time, the competition of such persons for jobs results either in the displacement of the higher paid workers or in the acceptance by them of a lower rate. Over a period of time this tends to depress all wage levels, and unless this tendency can be halted, it results eventually in lower levels of earnings for all, with a resulting reduction in purchasing power, and in standard of living."

It's not higher rates for women that threaten men's earnings, but the present lower rates for women that now exist in some plants. For all companies are introducing these new processes and machines to be run by women at lower rates. The higher-paid men are to be laid off. Eventually the company may put men on the job at the low rate they established for the women — unless these discriminatory rates are abolished now.

It works the same way with speedup. Because women's base rates are so low, they are forced to speedup to make a living wage. The company is then able to force the men in the plant to speedup accordingly.

Along with the battle to end rate discrimination against women, UE is fighting to eliminate double seniority lists wherever they exist and to win for women equal opportunities for upgrading to jobs throughout the plant.

Double seniority lists are a part of the whole pattern of discrimination the companies use to keep women segregated as "inferior" workers and confined to certain under-rated jobs so that their low pay rates can be used to keep all wages down. They are a way of keeping the workers divided and weakening the strength of the union.

The companies don't want to put women on "men's jobs" — not because they don't have the skill, but because the segregation of women is the only way they can maintain the discriminatory rates of pay from which they reap those extra profits. They don't want to put men on "women's jobs" in time of layoff because they'd lose the sex excuse for lower rates and they know they'd have to raise the rates for the job.

UE men and women have fought together in a number of plants recently to end these discriminatory practices in seniority and job opportunities. At Westinghouse Airbrake in Pittsburgh, UE Local 610 eliminated the dual seniority list that had existed in the plant and established in their contract that layoffs be conducted strictly in accordance with length of service, guaranteeing to both men and
women the right to bump into any job in any department for which they had seniority, regardless of sex.

Recently 1500 workers were laid off. The company wanted to transfer women only into jobs that they considered "women's jobs" — which would have meant that long-service women would have been laid off. The union told the company that the only principle operating was seniority, not sex — and that women, and men, must be laid off and transferred according to seniority throughout the plant.

As a result, 150 women were transferred into jobs and departments where no women had ever worked before — into the machining department, assembling departments, into turret lathe, milling machine, drill press, and grinding jobs. In one department 29 long-service women went in as grinders where never before had there been women grinders. Women replaced sweepers — and men from the machine shop who might otherwise have been laid off replaced shorter service women in the rubber department on what had formerly been "women's jobs."

The women who transferred into these machine, drill press and grinding jobs, etc. were given a breaking in period, just as the men were. The fact that women are working alongside men on these skilled jobs in a heavy industry plant like Westinghouse Airbrake shows that it can be done in any plant in the industry.

In another basic section of the industry, the West Pullman plant of Int'l Harvester in Chicago, UE-FE Local 107 fought successfully to save 160 women from discriminatory layoff, and to give them the right to transfer to jobs formerly only held by men. The company had tried to hire men from the street rather than recall these women according to their seniority.

The Whole Union's Fight

One third of the UE membership are women. If all the women who work in UE plants belonged to the union, the percentage would be even higher. This single fact shows how important for the strength of the union is the fight to end discrimination against women in our plants.

The companies want to keep the women segregated, on separate lower paying jobs with separate seniority, so that they may use them as part of their plan to drive down wages and destroy union gains under their war program. In the layoffs that are resulting from the war economy and the big business runaway shop drive, they want to pit women against men, married women against single workers, older women against younger, etc.

Segregation of women is the handle of a dangerous union-smashing weapon in the hands of the company. The only way to fight it is to end the segregation, integrate the women's jobs in their proper place in the rate structure, make it possible for women to be upgraded to any job in the plant, and establish identical seniority rights.
based on length of service without regard to age, sex, marital status, race or color.

Women in UE are determined to win the rates and job rights to which they are entitled. They have been meeting in conferences all over the country to discuss urgent problems of meeting the high cost of living on paychecks even lower than other workers... of physical suffering caused by growing speedup in the plant, coupled with care of home and children after the full workday. They resolved to fight to end the double wage standard that enables the companies to make an extra profit on their sex while they have such a hard time getting along. And these UE women have real fighting power, as they have demonstrated on many a picket-line across the country.

But fighting the exploitation of women is men's business too, as more and more men workers faced with rate cuts and speedup in GE, Westinghouse and other plants now realize. In every local and shop, and in the national chains, the whole weight of the union is being thrown into the fight to end the double wage standard against women.

UE is fighting and winning this battle in many plants today, despite all company argument and prejudice. It can be won in your plant, too. For the strength of the union, it must be won.

**UE's Program for Women**

The UE 17th convention resolved to adopt and give its unqualified support to the following program in the fight for women's rights:

- The lowest rate in every plant shall be the common labor rate of men or a sweeper's rate. No women shall be paid any rate lower than the common labor rate.

- The rate structure should be re-examined, and all jobs, particularly those performed by women, should be reclassified above the common labor rate according to job content.

- Make the company provide adequate health and safety safeguards for all workers.

- Eliminate double seniority lists for men and women wherever they exist.

- Give special attention to problems of married women growing out of family responsibility, such as shifts and absenteeism.

- Eliminate discriminatory hiring practices against married women, Negro women, etc., where they exist.

- Campaign for government-financed child care centers for working mothers as were provided in World War II.

- Press fight against speedup which is causing accidents and ill health among women workers.

- Guarantee the life and militancy of the union by developing, training and electing women to all levels of leadership.

- See that Fair Practices Committees are functioning in every shop.