

WOMEN TRY TO LIVE ON LOW WAGES INSTEAD OF ASKING MORE, SAYS ORGANIZER

By Jane Whitaker

Is the reason women are paid wages so much lower than men in all grades of industry because they are willing to economize and slave to live within those wages, willing to work ten hours in a factory or store and then go home and sew and do laundry work and cook a meager meal on a one-jet stove instead of insisting on a sufficient wage to enable them to have those night tasks done by others, as men do?

Rose Schneiderman, who is here from New York to organize girls in the waist, dress and white goods industries, believes that is the reason, and Rose Schneiderman ought to know because she helped organize 25,000 waist makers and 8,000 white goods workers in New York city and helped them lift their industries above the starvation basis to one of fair comfort.

Like so many of the women who are doing big work in helping emancipate their sisters from economic slavery, Rose Schneiderman is a very tiny woman. She doesn't come up to my shoulder. She is so very small she seems like a child, but how much of a fighter she is you may judge for yourselves.

"We are going to organize the workers in these industries in Chicago," she said to me. "Conditions here are worse than they were in New York in some respects. The factories are located in alleys, you might say. The wages are terrible.

"A strong Polish girl told me—and she had such a tired look in her eyes—that no matter how hard she worked she had never been able to make more than \$9 a week, and she has been three years in the same factory.

"That \$9 is a maximum wage. You can imagine what the minimum is, and these workers have only about

thirty-five weeks' work out of the entire year."

"How do they live the rest of the time?" I asked. "The maximum you have named would not more than pay a girl's expenses during the time she was working."

Miss Schneiderman shrugged her shoulders. "They have to live," she said, tersely. "Some of them live off their parents, some of them go in debt, some of them save a little by the economies women are forever practicing."

Her voice grew a little strained. "You never hear of men working in a factory ten hours and then going home and making their clothes and doing their laundry and cooking themselves a cup of tea to drink with a couple of rolls, but that is what women do.

"Men demand enough money to hire these things done and that is why men get enough money to have them done. Instead of demanding more money the woman practices more economies.

"Yet if she would demand she could get. When we had the big strike in New York in 1910 the girls stayed out thirteen weeks until they had to return to work because so many were actually starving, and the strike was called a lost one.

"But it wasn't lost. In 1913, when we were in a position to stay out until we won, the employers did not dare take a chance on a strike. It had cost them too many millions before, it had shown them the endurance of 'weak, delicate women,' and the public itself, the public that sits in its luxurious drawingrooms, had had its eyes opened to what other women were enduring and the lesson was not forgotten, so the employers signed a contract with us, giving shorter hours, a 50-hour week, a half holiday the year around, legal holidays, time and a half for overtime,