

CHAPTER VI

BUREAU OF LABOR

The national aid and supervision of the laboring interests of the country were first proposed in Congress about the year 1867, and a reference to page 13 will show the legislation then introduced.

A Bureau of Labor was organized in January, 1885, under act of Congress approved June 27, 1884 (23 Stat., 60), as a part of the Department of the Interior, and the Commissioner of Labor was made its chief officer. Three years later, by act of Congress approved June 13, 1888 (25 Stat., 182), the Bureau of Labor and its duties were transferred to the Department of Labor with independent functions, the title of its chief officer remaining unchanged.

The duties of the Bureau of Labor are to acquire and diffuse among the people of the United States useful information on subjects connected with labor, in the most general and comprehensive sense of the word.

Under the act of 1888 the Bureau of Labor publishes an annual report, and special reports from time to time, upon subjects connected with labor, or as required by the President or by either House of Congress.

By act of Congress of March 2, 1895 (28 Stat., 805), the Commissioner of Labor is authorized to publish a bulletin containing facts deemed of value to labor and the industrial interests of the country. This bulletin is issued bimonthly.

By the act of Congress of April 30, 1900 (31 Stat., 155), the Commissioner of Labor is required to collect and publish annually statistical details relating to all departments of labor in the Territory of Hawaii.

The Government is represented in the International Association for Labour Legislation through the agency of the Bureau of Labor, and the subvention therefor is provided in its appropriation.

By act of Congress of February 14, 1903, "An act to establish the Department of Commerce and Labor," the Department of Labor and all that pertains to the same was placed under the jurisdiction and made a part of the Department of Commerce and Labor from and after July 1, 1903, on which date the name Bureau of Labor was adopted by order of the Secretary.

Carroll D. Wright has been Commissioner of Labor since the organization of the work in 1885.

Organization of Department of Commerce and Labor



BUILDING OCCUPIED BY THE BUREAU OF LABOR

LAW PERTAINING TO THE BUREAU OF LABOR

[As modified by act of February 14, 1903.]

The Bureau of Labor * * * and all that pertains to the same, be, and the same hereby are placed under the jurisdiction and made a part of the Department of Commerce and Labor.

Feb. 14, 1903.
(52 Stat., 827.)
Sec. 4.

There shall be at the seat of Government a Bureau of Labor, the general design and duties of which shall be to acquire and diffuse among the people of the United States useful information on subjects connected with labor, in the most general and comprehensive sense of that word, and especially upon its relation to capital, the hours of labor, the earnings of laboring men and women, and the means of promoting their material, social, intellectual, and moral prosperity.

Establishment
and general
scope.
June 13, 1888.
(25 Stat., 182.)
Sec. 1.

The Bureau of Labor shall be under the charge of a Commissioner of Labor, who shall be appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate; he shall hold his office for four years, unless sooner removed, and shall receive a salary of five thousand dollars per annum.

Commissioner.
Sec. 2.

There shall be in the Bureau of Labor, to be appointed by the Commissioner of Labor: One chief clerk, at a salary of two thousand five hundred dollars per annum; disbursing clerk, two thousand dollars; four statistical experts, at two thousand dollars each; four clerks of class four; five clerks of class three; six clerks of class two; twelve clerks of class one; ten clerks, at one thousand dollars each; two copyists; one messenger; one assistant messenger; three watchmen; four laborers; three charwomen; two special agents, at one thousand eight hundred dollars each; six special agents, at one thousand six hundred dollars each; ten special agents, at one thousand four hundred dollars each; four special agents, at one thousand two hundred dollars each; and (there shall be) an allowance to special agents for traveling expenses not to exceed three dollars per day while actually employed in the field and outside of the District of Columbia, exclusive of actual transportation including sleeping-car fares; and such temporary experts, assistants, and other employees as Congress may from time to time provide, with compensation corresponding to that of similar officers and employees in other departments of the Government.

Personnel.
Sec. 3.
Amended Feb.
25, 1903.
(52 Stat., 904.)

During the necessary absence of the Commissioner, or when the office shall become vacant, the chief clerk shall perform the duties of Commissioner.

Acting Commissioner.
Sec. 4.

The Commissioner of Labor shall have charge in the building or premises occupied by or appropriated to the Bureau of Labor, of the library, furniture, fixtures, records, and other property pertaining to it, or hereafter acquired for use in its business, and he shall be allowed to

Commissioner
in charge of
property and
expenses.
Sec. 5.

expend for periodicals and the purposes of the library, and for the rental of appropriate quarters for the accommodation of the Bureau of Labor within the District of Columbia, and for all other incidental expenses, such sums as Congress may provide from time to time.

Duties of the Commissioner.
Sec. 7.

Cost of dutiable articles.

Customs and currency laws, effect of.

Trusts.

Reports.

Labor controversies.

Foreign information.

Reports.
Sec. 8.

The Commissioner of Labor, in accordance with the general design and duties referred to in section one of this act, is specially charged to ascertain, at as early a date as possible, and whenever industrial changes shall make it essential, the cost of producing articles at the time dutiable in the United States, in leading countries where such articles are produced, by fully-specified units of production, and under a classification showing the different elements of cost, or approximate cost, of such articles of production, including the wages paid in such industries per day, week, month, or year, or by the piece; and hours employed per day; and the profits of the manufacturers and producers of such articles; and the comparative cost of living, and the kind of living. It shall be the duty of the Commissioner also to ascertain and report as to the effect of the customs laws, and the effect thereon of the state of the currency, in the United States, on the agricultural industry, especially as to its effect on mortgage indebtedness of farmers; and what articles are controlled by trusts, or other combinations of capital, business operations, or labor and what effect said trusts, or other combinations of capital, business operations, or labor have on production and prices. He shall also establish a system of reports by which, at intervals of not less than two years, he can report the general condition, so far as production is concerned, of the leading industries of the country. The Commissioner of Labor is also specially charged to investigate the causes of, and facts relating to, all controversies and disputes between employers and employees as they may occur, and which may tend to interfere with the welfare of the people of the different States, and report thereon to Congress. The Commissioner of Labor shall also obtain such information upon the various subjects committed to him as he may deem desirable from different foreign nations, and what, if any, convict made goods are imported into this country, and if so from whence.

The Commissioner of Labor shall annually make a report in writing to the President and Congress, of the information collected and collated by him, and containing such recommendations as he may deem calculated to promote the efficiency of the Bureau. He is also authorized to make special reports on particular subjects whenever required to do so by the President or either House of Congress, or when he shall think the subject in his charge requires it. He shall, on or before the fifteenth day of December in each year, make a report in detail to Congress of all moneys expended under his direction during the preceding fiscal year.

All laws and parts of laws relating to the Bureau of Labor created under the act of Congress approved June twenty-seventh, eighteen hundred and eighty-four, so far as the same are applicable and not in conflict with this act, and only so far, are continued in full force and effect, and the Commissioner of Labor appointed under said act, approved June twenty-seventh, eighteen hundred and eighty-four, and all clerks and employees in the Bureau of Labor authorized to be appointed by said act or subsequent acts, shall continue in office and employment as if appointed under the provisions of this act, and until a Commissioner of Labor, other officer, clerks, and employees are appointed and qualified as herein required and provided; and the Bureau of Labor, as now organized and existing, shall continue its work as the Department of Labor until the Department of Labor shall be organized in accordance with this act; and the library, records, and all property now in use by the said Bureau of Labor are hereby transferred to the custody of the Department of Labor hereby created, and on the organization of the Department of Labor on the basis of this act the functions of the Bureau of Labor shall cease.^a

Substitution of
Department for
Bureau.
Sec. 9.

In addition to the duties now imposed by law, it shall be the duty of consuls and commercial agents of the United States, annually, to procure and transmit to the Department of State [for the Department of Commerce and Labor], as far as practicable, information respecting the rate of wages paid for skilled and unskilled labor within their respective jurisdictions.

Foreign labor
reports.
Jan. 27, 1879.
(20 Stat., 273.)

It shall be the duty of the United States Commissioner of Labor to collect, assort, arrange, and present in annual reports statistical details relating to all departments of labor in the Territory of Hawaii, especially in relation to the commercial, industrial, social, educational, and sanitary condition of the laboring classes, and to all such other subjects as Congress may, by law, direct. The said commissioner is especially charged to ascertain, at as early a date as possible, and as often thereafter as such information may be required, the highest, lowest, and average number of employees engaged in the various industries in the Territory, to be classified as to nativity, sex, hours of labor, and conditions of employment, and to report the same to Congress.

Hawaiian re-
ports.
Apr. 30, 1900.
(31 Stat., 155.)
Sec. 76.

Whenever a controversy concerning wages, hours of labor, or conditions of employment shall arise between a carrier subject to this act and the employees of such carrier, seriously interrupting or threatening to interrupt the business of said carrier, the Chairman of the Interstate Commerce Commission and the Commissioner of Labor shall, upon the request of either party to the controversy,

Mediation
commission.
June 1, 1898.
(30 Stat., 125.)
Sec. 2.

^aThe name "Bureau of Labor" is now the proper title, as stated on page 60.

with all practicable expedition, put themselves in communication with the parties to such controversy, and shall use their best efforts, by mediation and conciliation, to amicably settle same; and if such efforts shall be unsuccessful, shall at once endeavor to bring about an arbitration of said controversy in accordance with the provisions of this act.

City statistics.
July 1, 1898.
(30 Stat., 643.)

^aThe Commissioner of Labor is authorized to compile and publish annually, as a part of the Bulletin of the Bureau of Labor, an abstract of the main features of the official statistics of the cities of the United States having over thirty thousand population.

Congressional Record.

A bound copy of the Congressional Record shall be furnished gratuitously to the Bureau of Labor. [This provision is made a part of the printing act of January 12, 1895, by act of January 30, 1903.]

Report, distribution.
Jan. 12, 1895.
(28 Stat., 614.)
Sec. 73.

[There shall be printed] of the report of the Commissioner of Labor, twenty-five thousand copies; five thousand for the Senate and ten thousand for the House, and ten thousand for distribution by the Commissioner of Labor.

Bulletin.
Mar. 2, 1895.
(23 Stat., 805.)

The Commissioner of Labor is hereby authorized to prepare and publish a bulletin of the Bureau of Labor, as to the condition of labor in this and other countries, condensations of state and foreign labor reports, facts as to conditions of employment, and such other facts as may be deemed of value to the industrial interests of the country, and there shall be printed one edition of not exceeding ten thousand copies of each issue of said bulletin for distribution by the Bureau of Labor. [Under this provision the bimonthly Bulletin of the Bureau of Labor is published. Purchase of reports and material for Bulletins is authorized in appropriation acts.]

Bulletin, extra edition.
June 6, 1900.
(31 Stat., 644.)

The Public Printer is authorized to print such number of extra copies of the bimonthly Bulletin of the Bureau of Labor, not to exceed 20,000 of any single issue, when in the opinion of the Commissioner of Labor the demand for the Bulletin makes an extra edition necessary.

Louisiana Purchase Exposition.
Mar. 3, 1901.
(31 Stat., 1442.)

[An exhibit by the Bureau of Labor at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, and a representative on the United States Government Board, is provided for by law.]

^a This duty was transferred to the Bureau of the Census by Department Circular No. 3. See page 83.