

Equal Pay For Women Is Upheld

Washington

The Supreme Court upheld yesterday for the first time the ten-year-old congressional mandate that employers pay women equal wages for equal work.

Dividing 5 to 3, the high court ruled that female workers are entitled to the same wage scales as men for the same sort of job, even if the men work different shifts or in different "privileges" or "benefits." The court said that the Equal Pay Act of 1964 requires equal pay for equal work.

Two areas of major impact are the sales industry and medical services, which women have traditionally occupied most of the lower paying positions and few of the higher.

In another decision, the high court declined to review a ruling that James Earl Ray, the convicted killer of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., is entitled to a hearing on his current contention that his guilty plea was not voluntary but the product of selfish pressure by his lawyers. The victim of a book contract under which he and his lawyers were to share in the proceeds of a book about the King assassination to be written by William Bradford Huie.

If he had gone to trial, Ray argued, all the facts he saved for Huie would have become public, so his lawyers, first Arthur Hanes and then Percy Foreman, pressed him to plead guilty to protect their financial interest in the writing project.

If a federal court finds that Ray was coerced into pleading guilty, it could order a trial on the charge that he murdered the civil rights leader in 1968.

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JAMES EARL RAY
A step toward new trial