California exempted 50 percent but authorized more, up to 100 percent, if needed to support the debtor's family and if the creditor's claim was not for necessaries.

Ohio exempted 80 percent of the first $300 per month and 60 percent of the balance (with a minimum of $150), and $100 for debtors who were not heads of families.

Colorado exempted 70 percent for heads of families and 35 percent for others.

Illinois had the highest exemption in this group—85 percent or $45 per week, whichever was more, with a maximum of $200 per week. But the Illinois experience is instructive further. Until a 1961 amendment to its law, its exemption was only $45 per week. Between 1961 and 1964 Mr. Brunn found that personal bankruptcies in Illinois declined 9 percent, while they were increasing 18 percent nationally. And I find that they have declined another 4 percent in Illinois from 1964 to 1966 while they have increased another 2 percent nationally.

Mr. Brunn also studied the experience of Iowa, which moved in the opposite direction in 1957 by abolishing its 100-percent wage exemption and substituting $35 per week plus $3 per dependent. Since 1957 personal bankruptcies have multiplied 3.6 times in Iowa while multiplying 2.8 times nationally.

It may be said that these figures alone do not prove that wage garnishment is a contributing cause of bankruptcy. It may merely be a series of remarkable coincidences. Or it may be that the financial difficulties which led to garnishment would have led to bankruptcy had there been no garnishment.

But we need not rely on the figures alone. Last week you heard the testimony of three able and experienced referees in bankruptcy from States where wage garnishment is heavily employed (Oregon, Tennessee, and California). They were unanimously of the view that wage garnishments caused bankruptcy filings by many debtors who would not otherwise have filed.

That view is supported also by studies of personal bankruptcies in which the bankrupts were interviewed. In one such study, involving 84 bankrupts in Michigan, 75 percent indicated that garnishment or the threat of garnishment was the reason for their filing in bankruptcy. (Dolphin, "An Analysis of Economic and Personal Factors Leading to Consumer Bankruptcy" (1965), page 18.) In another study in Illinois in which 73 bankrupts were interviewed, 35 said that threat of garnishment or fear of job loss was what caused them to go into bankruptcy. (Stabler, "The Experience of Bankruptcy" (1966), page 7.) Other simlar studies which did not include personal interviews with the bankrupts reveal:

Out of 300 cases in Seattle, 69 debtors had suffered one garnishment in the 4 months preceding bankruptcy, 14 more had experienced two garnishments in that period, and four had been garnished three or more times. (Brosky, "A Study of Personal Bankruptcy in the Seattle Metropolitan Area" (1965), page 39.)

Interviews with bankruptcy attorneys in Utah revealed their opinion that most personal bankrupts have either had their wages garnished or have been threatened with garnishment. (Misbach, "Personal Bankruptcy in the United States and Utah" (1964), page 33.)