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# LABOR AND TEXTILES

BY ROBERT W. DUNN  
AND JACK HARDY

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## **LABOR AND TEXTILES**



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STRIKE MEETING AT GASTONIA, N. C.

# **LABOR AND TEXTILES**

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**A STUDY OF  
COTTON AND WOOL MANUFACTURING**

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by  
**ROBERT W. DUNN**  
and  
**JACK HARDY**



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**INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHERS  
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## PREFACE TO LABOR AND INDUSTRY SERIES

THIS is one volume in a series of industrial studies being prepared by the Labor Research Association, an organization devoted to the gathering and interpretation of economic material for the labor movement.

The aim of this series is to present a picture of the development of the important American industries in relation to the workers employed in them. Other books dealing with American industries have been written from the viewpoint of the employer, the personnel manager, and the technical expert. But they have all been interested in perpetuating the present system of exploitation and in piling up more profits for powerful corporations.

The present series studies American industries from the worker's viewpoint. What is the trend of production in a given industry? What are the wages, hours, and conditions of employment, and how do these compare with those in other industries? What is the extent of unemployment and what are the prospects of keeping their jobs for those workers still employed? What profits are the companies making, and how are they often concealing them? What mergers are being carried through as the employing class attempts to tighten its control? How are the corporations associated to protect their interests and oppose those of labor? To what extent are the workers already organized in company unions, in the American Federation of Labor, in the new Left Wing unions? What are the prospects for effective unionization? What is the real purpose of the "welfare" and "industrial relations" propaganda of the employers? What can the

workers in the industries of the United States look forward to under the present economic system? These are some of the questions this series seeks to answer.

These books describe not only the hardships and grievances of the workers in a given industry. They analyze the class conflicts arising between those who uphold the capitalist system of production and distribution and the workers who are organizing for revolutionary change. Those who seek to put an end to the rule of the employing class will find in these volumes not only graphic pictures of living and working conditions, but an interpretation of economic struggle and suggested programs of action to meet the offensives of the corporations.

To the militant workers who, in the face of overwhelming obstacles, are carrying on the fight against the strongly organized forces of the capitalist class these books are dedicated.

LABOR RESEARCH ASSOCIATION.

## FOREWORD

**TEXTILES** were depressed long before the international crisis of capitalism developed in 1929-30. For years these industries, especially the cotton and wool branches, have been regarded as "sick." They are among the oldest industries in America. They are "protected" by an especially high tariff. But the wages of the workers have always been notoriously low. Hours are long, and night work and tuberculosis a special menace to health. Unemployment is a permanent and growing plague. Shop conditions are worse than in almost any other American industry.

Textiles have seen many uprisings of the workers, calling forth severe repressions by the employers and the capitalist state. In recent years textile strikes were more spectacular than others. Passaic, New Bedford, Gastonia, Marion, Danville—all have shown that textile workers have had an unusually heavy burden to carry and that they readily resort to strike action to improve their conditions.

Attempts to organize textile workers have met with active sympathy from thousands of persons not directly connected with the labor movement. Scores of local and national craft unions have been formed. More recently the launching of the National Textile Workers' Union in 1928 and the struggles that followed it, as well as the half-hearted campaign of the American Federation of Labor unions in southern cotton mill states have attracted much attention.

Hundreds of articles have been written in recent years attempting to answer the question, "What is wrong with textiles?" The present volume not only tries to answer this

question but presents in a systematic manner the salient facts of the industry, its trends, profits, employers' associations and tactics, its workers and their conditions, and the various movements to organize them.

In 1929, Grace Hutchins of the Labor Research Association wrote *Labor and Silk*, one of the first books in this Labor and Industry Series. It dealt with silk and rayon manufacturing and contained general references to conditions in other textile branches. The present volume covers cotton and wool manufacturing, the two other basic textile industries that manufacture yarns and fabrics.

The data in this book are taken from a mass of documentary sources, some of which are given in the reference notes that follow the text. These sources were supplemented by the experiences of one of the writers, formerly organizer and research director for a textile union. Much of the material in the chapters on union organization is from an unpublished monograph, *Dual Unionism in the Textile Industries*, prepared by Mr. Dunn while engaged in this union work and while holding a fellowship at the New School for Social Research in New York City. In connection with these studies he had occasion to visit dozens of cotton and woolen mills in this country and to interview hundreds of textile workers. Later he gathered comparative material in the textile centers of England, Austria, Germany, Poland, and the Soviet Union.

For careful and critical help in the preparation of this volume the authors are deeply indebted to their colleagues in the Labor Research Association. They also owe a special obligation to scores of rank and file workers in cotton and woolen mills who have given facts, shared experiences, and interpreted developments in their particular plants. To help these militant workers in their efforts to organize and win the industry this book has been written.

## CHAPTER I

### A "SICK" GIANT

TEXTILE manufacturing is in a bad way. It is admitted by all to be one of the "sore spots" of American industry. One of the world's oldest crafts, it is suffering from all the maladies of advanced age, and is generally regarded as one of the "problem industries" of capitalist society. A Boston textile man cries out in desperation that it needs a "strong man" to lead it—"a Moses, a Mussolini or a Messiah." The industry is permanently depressed on a world-wide scale. Although our main concern here is with the American cotton and wool manufacturing industries and their workers, it is impossible to consider them apart from the international crisis in textiles.

#### OVEREXPANSION AND OVERPRODUCTION

All who have studied these industries in the United States agree that they suffer seriously from "chronic overexpansion of productive capacity." They are both afflicted with overproduction or underconsumption as it may be more accurately described.

Government figures show that an average of over 2,000,000 spindles in the cotton goods industry of the United States are not used at all during the course of the year. And in a depression month such as July, 1930, only 26,464,444 of the 34,030,706 spindles in the industry were used at any time during the month.

The "activity" on a single-shift basis varies from one region to another with the South in the lead. From 1924 to 1927, for example, the percentage of activity varied from

77 to 82 in New England states, from 65 to 72 in Middle Atlantic states, and from 91 to 102 in southern states, the last figures reflecting the two-shift or night operation in the South.

It is clear that the cotton industry has a productive capacity much greater than the effective demand of consumers for its goods. Current production of cotton goods—even with many mills closed and others operating at from only 35 per cent to 75 per cent of their capacity—is estimated as at least 25 per cent over the present effective demand for the product.

The situation in wool manufacturing is even worse. Wool spindle activity was at an index of 91 in 1919 (1923 = 100), while by 1928 it had dropped to 80, a more serious fall than in cotton. Wool loom activity fell from an index of 86 in 1919 to 74 in 1928, which indicates an even greater "over-built" condition in the weaving mills. In the summer of 1930 the industry as a whole was running about half time.

There is enough wool machinery in this country to produce during any given period nearly three times as many yards as can be sold. The consumption of wool fabrics in 1927 amounted to "approximately \$656,000,000 as compared with a maximum manufacturing capacity in the industry of \$1,750,000,000 at current prices."<sup>1</sup>

Both the wool and cotton industries clearly have much more machinery than is used. At the same time even the machines that are operated produce more goods than can be sold under the present system. Thus overexpansion and underconsumption are common to both these industries.

#### CAUSES

Fundamentally it is the capitalist system of production and distribution that is responsible for the chaos of overexpansion and underconsumption in textiles. The system involves a merciless drive for profits, cut-throat competition,

inability of workers to buy the goods produced, inevitable overproduction, and the cycles of unemployment which have been growing steadily worse in recent years. But in addition to this underlying cause of the present condition a number of special factors have contributed to make the situation in cotton and wool manufacturing what it is to-day.

War and post-war expansion laid the basis for increased overproduction in these industries. It is estimated that during the war 75 per cent of the work in all textile industries was for the government. The wool goods industry alone expanded its equipment some 30 to 35 per cent to handle orders for military goods. The companies piled up enormous profits which drew scores of new competitors into the field. New plants were built and new equipment purchased. Cotton mills sprang up like mushrooms, especially in the South, to meet the demand for cotton goods largely caused by the inability of British mills to maintain their usual exports. This war and post-war demand increased the number of American mills and spindles and greatly intensified the reaction to the boom in the deep depression of 1920-21.

But the post-war slump arrested only temporarily the building of more mills and enlargements of old ones. Despite all the idle looms and spindles, new plants and extensions have been added each year. Even in 1929, new plants were being constructed, especially in the South. The small units in the industry and the relatively small amount of capital required to enter at least certain branches of the trade, have stimulated the haphazard addition of new plants even at the time when the industry as a whole complained of overproduction.

Introduction of new equipment, furthermore, has been vigorously promoted by machinery manufacturers who have made handsome profits from their sales. And these new machines have, of course, carried with them greater capacity



per loom and per spindle than the machines they displaced, thus adding to the overexpansion of the industry.

"Labor extension" and stretch-out devices which we shall examine in detail in Chapter VI have had a similar effect. Speed-up has invariably brought greater output, and thus hastened the crisis of overproduction. By these modern methods of driving the workers and through the use of more efficient and modern machinery, individual companies have tried to lower their unit costs. The result has been growing accumulations of unsold goods.

Competition of such other industries as silk and rayon has also contributed to the slump in cotton and wool. There has been the deadliest kind of competition among all industries for what modern merchandisers call the "consumer's dollar." But the intra-industrial competition in textiles has been particularly severe. Cotton and wool have been beaten back by silk and rayon. The figures produced by Ralph Borsodi in *The Crisis in Textiles* show that between 1914 and 1927 the "approximate share of the consumer dollar" secured by the cotton industry declined 11 per cent while that of the woolen and worsted industry dropped 17.7 per cent. At the same time silk gained 13.2 per cent and knit goods—chiefly silk hosiery—20.4 per cent.

Rayon, in its phenomenal development, has also led the assaults on cottons and woolens. A recent estimate by a cotton manufacturer put rayon production in the United States as equivalent to the production of 2,500,000 cotton spindles or approximately 7.5 per cent of the cotton goods production. The rayon industry has been increasing the physical volume of its production about 20 per cent a year over a period of years while the annual increase in cotton goods production has been only about 1 per cent.

Wool has suffered from the encroachments of both silk and rayon and of cotton as well, and has lost heavily in the field of women's apparel. However, it still continues to be the

main source of material for men's clothing and leads, of course, in carpet and rug manufacture.

These shifts from one fabric to another suggest the rôle that style has played in the decline of cotton and wool. It takes no statistical analysis to follow this trend, particularly in the last few years. Gingham, cloth linings, bleached cotton, flannel underwear, cotton stockings and other former staples have rapidly declined in sales. Goods that have been more easily "styled," chiefly silk and rayon, have been driving the old lines off the counters. Women's petticoats have disappeared and the use of wool suits for women has declined as furs have cut into the woolen coat field. Until very recently the shortness of skirts has also had its effect upon all textiles, and especially wool fabrics.

These shifts in styles have had particularly serious effects on the wool goods industry, which depends almost exclusively on wearing apparel for an outlet. About 98 per cent of its product is used for clothes while only 40 per cent of cotton goods go into the garment trades.

Anarchy in distribution is another important factor in the textile crisis. An old industry, with selling methods imported from England a century ago, it has not worked out the relatively simple and direct methods of marketing its products which prevail, for example, in the automobile industry. Instead we find a maze of crossed lines running from mill to wholesaler, broker, commission house, converter, jobber, chain or department store and "independent" retailer. It is one of the most chaotic distributive systems in the whole capitalist world. Every agency is out to get a maximum profit regardless of what happens to the others. In the general confusion the mills are bound to turn out more goods than these various parasitical intermediaries can distribute even with their common methods of price-cutting, "shading prices," "inside discounts" and "distress selling."

Agents and commission men are, naturally, not interested

in restricting production if such a move reduces their profits. Selling agencies are thus under certain circumstances one of the chief factors in stimulating overproduction. In fact, some of them have been known to send the mills misleading market reports in order to stimulate production above market needs, thereby increasing their commissions.

Long hours and night work in cotton mills, particularly in the South, have also added to the piles of goods produced. An industrial engineer has estimated that if night work were stopped in the cotton industry it would have as much effect as if all imports of cotton goods were stopped while exports were tripled. But others contend that even were mills closed at night the increase in the price of cottons would only draw into operation on day shifts more of the looms and spindles now idle in both northern and southern mills. This illustrates still further the chaotic and uncontrolled character of the industry.

These are only a few of the most obvious factors making for overproduction in the cotton and wool industries. A few others may be listed: the influence of the tariff which has fostered industries which live partly by artificial means and government assistance; the fluctuating price of raw materials which has often meant the difference between profit and loss for the mill men; the prevalence of "hand-to-mouth" buying which has hit the mills, especially those turning out old standard goods in large quantities on longer "runs"; and the general mismanagement of the industry.

Bad management in textiles has been much harped upon by Herbert Hoover and the American Federation of Labor, who hope to save capitalism by "stabilizing" its methods of production and distribution. At this point we merely list some of the frequently voiced general criticisms of the industry for what they are worth as indices of the capitalist chaos in textiles. It is clear that there is tremendous waste in the mills; the Hoover Committee in 1921 found 49.2 per

cent waste in textiles. The buildings, especially in the North, are antiquated. Much of the machinery and equipment is out of date. Cost accounting systems are often obsolete. Family favoritism in the choice of executives is a familiar drag on "progress." A poor quality of goods is often produced. Antiquated methods of merchandising are used.

Many of these conditions are the inevitable evils of a capitalist-run industry, and cannot be permanently and effectively eliminated under the present system. Indeed they have brought the industry to such a pass that the mill owners are now trying desperately to find remedies to help them out of their difficulties.

#### "SOLUTIONS"

All kinds of remedies have been prescribed for "saving" this industry. Experts have been searching for years to find a way out, some formula for solving the contradictions inherent in the present structure, methods, and organization of textiles.

Some contend that the "survival of the fittest" will do the trick; that the weaker companies will be gradually frozen out, leaving the industry in "stronger hands." The idea is to get as many spindles as possible out of operation so that the remaining ones can make bigger profits. There are, of course, many instances of mills being bought up by the "stronger hands" who actually destroy all, or a part, of the machinery they have purchased, in order to prevent its being used in competition against them. On the other hand, it often happens that a mill, forced into bankruptcy by close competition, may be taken over by a new owner. With fresh funds and low capitalization it will turn out as much goods as before and thus create a still more "dangerous competitor," jeopardizing the profits of all the other mill owners. Such incidents illustrate the danger—to the

employing class—of leaving this type of competitive industry to the “survival of the fittest.” Still, such an influential manufacturer as B. M. Cone, of North Carolina, holds this is the only remedy. “The thing will have to work itself out like an epidemic of influenza,” is his conclusion.<sup>2</sup>

Others consider voluntary curtailment the only way to restrict production, maintain prices, and increase profits. Under this plan a number of mills agree to work on part time for a certain period. For example, in November, 1929, a group of 65 cotton mill executives at Spartanburg, S. C., decided to restrict production on print cloths and narrow sheetings by at least 27 per cent. About the same time curtailment in Fall River and New Bedford fine goods mills ranged from 40 per cent to 50 per cent. (It was still greater in 1930.) The slogan adopted was “operate on orders only,” for it was pointed out that “to continue production on a full basis, with storehouses full, is believed nothing short of suicide.” The manufacturers in those centers were reported to be unanimous in their belief that “curtailment must be carried on, even to extremes, if there is to be improvement.”

Methods and periods of restricting production vary with the mill, or mills, concerned and the condition of the market for a particular class of fabrics or yarns. Occasionally a mill, or group of mills, closes down for a month or more. Others will run, say, three or four days a week. But it has always been difficult for the many units in this highly competitive industry to achieve effective “organized short time” as it is called in England. On this point the *Textile World* observes somewhat bitterly: “We know from dire experience that large numbers, if not most textile manufacturers, will not make effective a gentlemen’s agreement to curtail production until forced by lack of orders, accumulated stocks of finished goods and unprofitable prices.”<sup>3</sup>

Even at its best this restriction for certain periods is looked upon as only a very temporary “remedy.” As soon as prices

rise a little each mill is likely to run wildly ahead according to its own plans, usually leaving the situation as bad as it was when curtailment began.

As against a policy of "survival of the fittest" and restriction to keep up prices, some textile men point to mergers as the only "way out." How far this has gone we shall see in Chapter III. "Integration" of either the cotton or the wool industry, with a view to a general, organized, and effective restriction of output, is still only a hope of the capitalists and bankers. The ability of a "strong group" to control the market and regulate production is still very limited, for with advances in prices the many small mills are always ready to jump into the market, put more looms or spindles into operation, and dump their goods at lower prices.

But the employers and bankers in their quest for more profits have not confined themselves to attempts to cut down equipment and production. They have used every method they could to extend their market and develop new outlets for the surplus goods which overproduction creates.

To widen their market and to increase consumption, the manufacturers and their selling agents have resorted to all sorts of drives and campaigns. One of these has concentrated on stimulating "new uses" for their products. Assisted by the U. S. Department of Commerce and the Department of Agriculture, the Cotton Textile Institute has conducted a vast amount of research and carried on an "intense exploitation of new fields" for cotton products. They have sought for these wider uses in the airplane industry, in road building and traffic marking, in bags and containers of every description, in awnings, in "one-wear collars," in draperies and interior decorations, in longer and wider bed sheets and in miniature golf courses! Both in industry and agriculture they have tried to discover new ways of using more millions of yards of cotton cloth.

A representative of the Cotton Textile Institute announced in 1929 that the "New Uses Committee," was "coöperating with the War Department in working out plans whereby the Cotton Textile Institute can be of assistance in case of another war emergency."<sup>4</sup> Textile men realize that the next war, like the latest one, will provide a rich market for their products. They also recognize that with all the promotion of new uses of cotton for personal consumption, cotton output actually depends to a large degree on industrial uses. The stimulation of these industrial uses has been one of the main jobs of the cotton mill men. But as soon as one industry, such as the rubber tire industry, sets up a demand for a large quantity of fabrics, dozens of manufacturers rush into this line and are soon producing much more than the tire makers can consume. So the mills reduce operations, workers are laid off, and the employers push on into other fields looking for still newer uses to absorb the mass of goods.

Although certain changes in apparel styles have caused a great decline in the use of cotton and wool fabrics, in comparison with silk and rayon, this same "style factor" is now used by the cotton and wool men to stage a "come-back." As a result we have seen an intense campaign to make cotton "smart." At the same time the wool cloth men have staged their elaborate Pageant of the Golden Fleece at the Ritz; while "style bulletins," "style conferences," and "style radio talks" are among the new methods used by both cotton and wool manufacturers to expand the domestic market. Style has been "emphasized" not only in clothing, but also in sheets, pillow cases, towels, shower curtains, wall coverings and a hundred other outlets for yardage.

These style drives have received vigorous prodding from the trade press. The advertising manager of the *Daily News Record* reports that "literally thousands of columns

of news comment and of news photographs on cotton as a style fabric have been published in the last three years." And the Rockefeller "public relations counsel," Ivy Lee, has been paid to pronounce cotton "emphatically fashionable," thus creating "a more favorable psychology" for it.

The latest fashions in women's dresses are expected to help this movement for greater consumption. One Philadelphia textile man declared that the longer skirts of the spring of 1930 would "give mills 300,000,000 yards of additional output annually," a part of which would, of course, be cotton and wool fabrics.<sup>5</sup>

Style changes are expected to help the mills, especially if their products are the kind that wear out quickly. The Textile Division of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers reported in 1928 that one of the major advances made during the year was recognition of the fact that "products must be developed that fill the buyer's desire, or need, with particular stress on color, decoration and finish, real wear being a minor factor." The merchandise manager of the Pacific Mills expresses the same thought when he says that "wearing qualities are no longer so important, for fashions are out of date before goods wear out."<sup>6</sup>

While this increase in style goods is supposed to help the mills, it does not always work out that way. The woolen men, for example, complain that the increase in fancy suitings and styled materials has led to more hand-to-mouth buying by the garment trades. Quick style changes mean that the manufacturer can no longer turn out a standard brand of cloth and put it on his shelves with the assurance that it will sell over a long period. Vagaries of style may leave him with a large stock of unsaleable goods on his hands. Thus the style "solution" has very definite limitations and contradictions.

Along with the search for new uses and the playing up of



styles to consume more yards of cloth go general selling and "superselling" campaigns calculated to "put cottons over" or to make the public more "wool conscious." As the *Wall Street Journal* says, one of the most important steps "is to convince it [the public] as to what it wants." So, in connection with its competition for the consumer's dollar, the cotton industry tries to make the public want cotton; the wool fabric men try to "sell" them on wool; the worsted agents insist their product is more desirable; and the other textiles do likewise.

This is normal business under the free competition of capitalism. Expensive sales drives and "educational campaigns" are launched by the various textile industries to promote their particular fabric. Slogans are devised. National advertising is purchased. High pressure sales organizations are mobilized. All the costly technique of modern mass distribution is employed by the capitalists in frantic efforts to banish the growing specter of overproduction.

#### THE DRIVE FOR FOREIGN MARKETS

With the United States now leading the world as an exporter of manufactured goods it is natural that the textile capitalists should look upon exports as one way out of their bad market.

Textile exports have been energetically promoted in recent years. The supersalesman Herbert Hoover has repeatedly urged the mill owners and their agents to push into foreign fields, while the U. S. Department of Commerce has given a stout helping hand, especially to the cotton mills fighting for their place in the export sun. The general manager of the Associated Industries of Massachusetts, writing in the *Worcester Telegram* for April 6, 1927, observed that trade commissioners of the Department of Commerce were being sent throughout the world to assist the export business of New England manufacturers "not with the idea of mak-

ing abstract studies and of submitting academic reports, but rather with the same point of view as if they were employed by the selling department of a mill."

Pepperell Mfg. Co. recently took one of these experts out of the Department of Commerce, where he had learned all about the business, and sent him off to the Far East to push up their exports. Sales technique for the foreign market is continually being improved. "Concentrated effort" in this direction has been advocated by the Cotton Textile Institute. Under the Webb-Pomerene law, combination for export is granted exemption from anti-trust laws, and textile selling firms have recently formed the Textile Export Association of the United States and are taking measures to press militantly into the foreign field.

Exports of manufactures and semi-manufactures of cotton have fallen in value since 1920 when they reached nearly \$400,000,000. In 1929, they amounted to only \$135,000,000. In quantity the export of cotton cloth fell from its highest point of 818,750,000 square yards in 1920, when foreign mills were partially paralyzed, to 564,469,000 in 1929, the latter being slightly above the pre-war figure.

Not more than 6 per cent of cotton manufactures is now exported. Noting that exports have not kept pace with the expansion of the industry, mill owners, faced with saturated markets at home, want to boost this to at least 15 per cent or 20 per cent.

While trying to expand their exports, American cotton mill owners have to face a flow of imports of cotton manufactures with a value about half that of total exports. Most imported cottons are of the finer qualities while coarser goods comprise the bulk of the exports.

Exports of wool manufactures have been much lower than those of cotton. The industry has leaned heavily on a high protective tariff. But a high tariff duty on its own raw material and the maturity and competitive ability of this

industry in other parts of the world, have prevented it from exporting any important part of its production.

Save in war years, when the foreign demand was unusually high, wool fabric exports have been negligible. Even in the abnormal year, 1919, their value was only 2.78 per cent of that of domestic production, while in 1927 it was but .17 per cent. At the same time imports have increased slightly since 1921. In 1927, the value of imported worsteds and woolens amounted to 4.26 per cent of the domestic production.

The insignificant wool fabric exports have been sent chiefly to Cuba, the West Indies, Canada and the Philippines. Cotton fabrics have been shipped to a wider field, but even here the Philippines (a colony of special value to the American textile capitalists), Cuba and Canada take over 40 per cent of the entire volume. South America is the chief foreign outlet for cotton yarns, with Canada the next best customer. We shall presently note the prospects for further development of exports in these fields.

#### A WORLD-DEPRESSED INDUSTRY

"Exports must be expanded," say the American textile manufacturers and their government. "Exports must be expanded," echo the mill owners and their governments in other countries.

Here lies the flaw in the export "solution." Exports from the United States can be increased only by overcoming the stiffest competition from other countries. Textile capitalists in those countries, notably Great Britain, are in much the same or in a worse condition. They, too, must maintain exports to keep their industry profitable. Herein lies the dilemma of world overequipment and world overproduction under capitalism.

What is the situation confronting American textile employers as they turn to foreign markets? A glance at the

following table, showing the number of spindles in the world's cotton industry, comparing pre-war and post-war years, will help us to visualize what has been happening:\*

NUMBER OF COTTON SPINDLES IN PRINCIPAL COUNTRIES\*  
(All Figures in Thousands. No Adjustment of Pre-War Figures to Post-War Boundaries Has Been Made)

Country	1900	1914	1927	1928
Total .....	105,681	146,397	164,956	165,352
United States .....	19,472	32,107	36,696	33,540
Per Cent .....	18.4	21.9	22.2	20.3
Canada .....	550	965	1,319	1,319
Mexico .....	**	**	838	840
United Kingdom .....	45,500	56,300	57,325	57,136
Per Cent .....	43.0	38.5	34.7	34.6
France .....	5,500	7,410	9,567	9,776
Germany .....	8,000	11,550	10,800	11,153
Russia .....	7,500	9,160	6,945	7,311
Italy .....	1,940	4,620	5,086	5,189
Czechoslovakia .....	‡	‡	3,629	3,663
Spain .....	2,615	2,210	1,873	1,897
Belgium .....	920	1,530	1,936	2,070
Switzerland .....	1,550	1,380	1,518	1,525
Austria-Hungary .....	3,300	4,970	1,025 §	1,014 §
Poland .....	‡‡	‡‡	1,372	1,544
Other Europe .....	1,095	1,895	3,757	3,795
India .....	4,945	6,500	8,714	8,703
Japan .....	1,274	2,750	5,952	6,272
China .....	550	1,000	3,568	3,528
Brazil .....	450	1,250	2,593	2,610
All other .....	520	800	443	473

This table also indicates the obvious changes in geographical distribution that have taken place. Great Britain and certain other European countries have lost, or just held their own. Their position would appear worse if the number of active spindles only was given for the years 1927 and 1928. The United States has made a slight advance; while India, Japan and China have seen a marked expansion.

\* Figures for 1900 and 1914 are for active spindles; for 1927 and 1928 for both active and idle. \*\* Not available. ‡ Included in Austria-Hungary. ‡‡ Included in Russia. § Austria only.

Comparative statistics on the world consumption of raw cotton also reflect the growing importance of Oriental countries. Whereas the United Kingdom accounted for 21.1 per cent of all the cotton used in the mills of the world in 1913, by 1928 it consumed only 12.4 per cent of the total. The percentage used by continental European countries fell from 34.2 in 1913 to 31.4 in 1928. On the other hand, India and Japan, which together consumed 14.9 per cent of the bales in 1913, increased their percentage to 16.8 in 1928.<sup>8</sup>

A brief review of developments in the leading countries where the changes in conditions have been most significant, especially in the cotton industry, will help us to estimate what competition the mill owners of the United States will meet as they seek to make headway in the export field.

#### BRITAIN'S STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE

Take first the English cotton industry, the keystone of Britain's commercial empire. About four-fifths of the total production of the British mills has been for the export trade. Before the war this industry supplied nearly three-fourths of all the cotton piece goods entering into international trade. Cotton products then accounted for 31 per cent of all the manufactured goods exported from the United Kingdom. British colonial trade was founded on cotton goods.

As the table shows, Britain has easily led all other countries in the number of cotton spindles. It has surpassed all others in the amount of cotton consumed and the amount of cotton goods exported.

What has happened to this mainstay of British capitalism in recent years? Pre-war (1910-1914) the industry imported for its mills an average of 4,143,000 bales of cotton a year. By 1928, this had dropped to 2,460,000 bales. In 1913, the United Kingdom exported 7,075,252,000 yards of

cotton piece goods. In 1929, it shipped only 3,671,686,000 yards, a decline of 48 per cent. And cotton yarn exports fell from 210,099,000 pounds in 1913 to 166,637,000 in 1929.<sup>9</sup>

Decrease in shipments of British cotton manufactures to India, China and Japan has been most marked, but losses have also been recorded in other markets, in Latin America, Europe and Africa. The falling off in shipments in the critical India trade has been particularly severe. In 1913, Britain shipped to India 37,422,000 pounds of cotton yarn and 3,057,350,000 yards of piece goods. By 1929, the respective figures had fallen to 21,437,000 pounds and 1,374,178,000 yards.<sup>10</sup> The Indian boycott in 1930 brought a still further drop in this trade.

The fact that Britain has lost so heavily, that her trade in cotton products is steadily declining, that one-fourth of British cotton workers are jobless, and that British mills suffer even more than American mills from a permanent crisis of overproduction and diminishing markets, does not imply that British capitalists are lying down before the attacks on their basic export trade. In fact, these attacks only strengthen their determination to fight every inch of the way in foreign markets. At present, under the leadership of the bankers, they aim not only to hold their own at all costs, but to "recapture" lost markets.

They hope to do this by forming huge combinations such as the Lancashire Cotton Corporation, backed by the Bank of England, and by organizing syndicates to market their products more skillfully. They will introduce more ring spindles and automatic looms, the workers being compelled to operate more and faster machines. They will rationalize their companies, closing down some mills while running others on double shifts, thus creating more mass unemployment and under-employment in Lancashire. They will continue to cut wages. They will do this not only, as they say, to "keep on a competitive basis" with the cotton manu-

facturers of the United States, but also to retain something of their trade in the Orient and in Latin America. By such methods they will become more vigorous competitors of the American mill owners in foreign markets, thus reducing the possibilities of great increases in American fabric exports.

#### ORIENTAL COMPETITION

But it is not only with the British cotton exporters, desperate as they are to hold their trade, that the American mill owners will have to fight most bitterly in their drive for world markets. In some of these markets such as Canada, Mexico, Cuba, the West Indies, Central and South America and the Philippines, the trade of the United States, especially in the coarser, standardized cotton products, has been increasing at the expense of the British. It is rather in the Orient, in the same countries that have contributed to the decline of the British export empire, that the American textile companies must meet their most effective foes in the export battles ahead.

#### *India*

British capitalists who have made millions out of the workers in Lancashire have exported some of these profits to India where, with British textile machinery, they have helped to set up a rival cotton industry that now employs about 380,000 workers in over 300 mills. We have seen how the British shipments of cotton goods to India have declined as the native cotton industry has developed. Spindles in Indian cotton mills increased from 4,945,000 in 1900 to 8,807,000 in 1929. The number of looms increased from 40,000 in 1900 to 175,000 in 1929.<sup>11</sup>

Indian cotton mills are not adequate to supply the home market with woven goods but Indian mill owners are already taking measures against increasing imports from the more

rationalized Japanese industry, as well as against the success of the Japanese in the Chinese market in competition with Indian goods.

They are attempting to meet Japanese competition in both the home and foreign markets by speeding up the workers. Extremely low wages averaging in 1926 about \$17.50 a month even for skilled weavers, also reflect the employers' tactics in safeguarding their interests at the expense of the Indian workers. The workers have struck repeatedly against low wages and speed-up while the employers have resorted to the usual lockouts to gain their ends.

### *Japan*

Japan's cotton industry has had a rapid and continuous growth and is now the leading manufacturing industry of that country. Taking into account the number of hours per day operated by its 6.3 million spindles and the amount of their production, their competitive power, experts point out, is equal to that of 24,000,000 spindles of the mule type operated in England.<sup>12</sup>

Although the export of yarns from Japan has fallen off somewhat in recent years, due to the growth of spinning mills in China, the export of finer cotton piece goods has developed steadily. In the first six months of 1930, Japan exported nearly twice as much cotton goods as is exported from the United States in an entire year. Japan built up a very large trade with China during the war days when other exporting countries were out of the picture in the Orient. In fact, Japan has practically driven British and American cotton goods out of the Chinese market. In 1928, some 46 per cent of the Japanese exports of cotton goods went to China. Japan is also increasing her shipments to America's colonial market in the Philippines, and has also been sending more and more goods to British India, East Indies, Egypt, Straits Settlements, and even



to Australia, increasing her exports in comparison with British goods in all these fields.

The United States has been exporting less cotton cloth to Japan since the war. Japan's cotton industry is concentrated in a few hands and in a few large factories. The possibilities of rationalization, speeding up of workers and economies in buying, selling, and production are greater in some respects than in the more competitive and less unified textile industry of America and Britain.

Japan is meeting with increased competition, especially from Chinese spinning mills with their even cheaper labor. This competition is driving the Japanese cotton capitalists into heightened mass production, more automatic looms, and greater efforts to lower production costs by cutting wages. Japanese mills now operate 17 hours a day on a two-shift system. Night work for women and children was declared illegal in July, 1929, but at the same time the number of machines for each worker was increased and the workers speeded up in order to maintain output as before.

The tendency in the woolen and worsted industry in Japan is likewise toward the importation of more quantities of raw materials and less quantities of yarns and cloths. American wool manufacturers can find no encouraging field for exports in this direction. As in the cotton industry, they can look forward to increasing competition from Japan in the Far Eastern markets.

### *China*

In their struggle to expand exports, American cotton capitalists come in sharp conflict with the increasing output of the Chinese mills owned by Chinese, Japanese and British capitalists. Of 120 cotton mills in China in 1929, 74 were designated as under Chinese ownership (disguising some British capital); Japanese capital owns 43, and British three outright.<sup>18</sup>

Cotton spindles in China have increased from 550,000 in 1901 to 3,664,120 in 1929, while the number of power looms has increased from 2,200 to 29,582 during the same period. Not only has the American export of cotton cloth to China dropped from 80,462,000 square yards in 1913 to a paltry 1,029,000 in 1929, due largely to Japanese competition, but China herself exported cotton cloth in 1927 equal in value to five times that exported in 1915, and 16 times as many pounds of cotton yarns. These goods compete in Eastern markets, especially in India, with those of England, Japan and the United States.

About 90 per cent of the exports of the United States to China formerly consisted of cotton goods; now they are down to only 5 per cent. The drop in imports of yarns from other countries into China also reflects the rapid growth of Chinese spinning mills. Imports of cotton yarns from Japan into China fell from 193,742,000 pounds in 1925 to 11,815,000 in 1928, while imports from British India fell from 157,250,400 pounds to 3,535,000 in the three years. Piece goods exported from England to China and Hong Kong declined from 716,533,000 yards in 1913 to 186,521,000 yards in 1928. We have already noted how Japan has greatly increased her exports of piece goods to China at the expense of England.

The Chinese cotton mills now employ about 241,000 workers with an annual output of about 880,000,000 pounds of yarn and 586,000,000 yards of cloth. Most of the mills operate 23.5 hours a day, the workers being on a 12 to 16 hour shift and 7-day week. From 50 per cent to 75 per cent are women. Conditions of the workers generally are worse than in any other textile mills in the Orient.

Both British and American machinery manufacturers have been sending large shipments of textile machinery to China, India and Japan. Consumption of raw cotton by these three

countries indicates their increasing importance in the world textile market. Exports of cotton goods to these countries from the imperialist countries of the West have been falling off, while during the last 15 years about 9,250,000 spindles have been added in the mills of China, Japan and India. Ethelbert Stewart of the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that within another ten years these three countries "will produce all the cotton yarns and coarse cotton cloths for the hundreds of millions of souls of China, India, Dutch East Indies, Japan and the surrounding Islands."

#### OTHER OUTLETS CLOSING

Nor are the prospects for increased exports from the United States improved when textile manufacturers look toward Latin America, in spite of the speeches of Department of Commerce officials and the "good will" trips of Mr. Hoover. In this quarter they will meet stiff competition from the textile agents of Great Britain, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Japan and Czechoslovakia, all of them in quest of wider markets. They will also find the Latin American capitalists beginning to buy machinery and build their own mills, and setting up tariff walls to "protect" them. A glance at the figures for imports of cotton cloths shows that such countries as Venezuela, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia and Chile imported less of these materials in 1927 than in 1913. The manufacturing class in these countries wants to become self-sufficient in textiles. Even Guatemala has built a cotton mill to supply some of its cotton cloth needs, while Brazil has increased its cotton spindleage from 1,200,000 in 1913 to 2,750,000 in 1929. Peru, Paraguay, and Argentina have also constructed new and modern cotton mills.<sup>14</sup>

Export of textile goods from the United States to continental Europe is also out of the question. In fact, textile conditions in those countries illustrate still further the depression and sharpening competition in the world market.

Incurable "ailments" of the textile industry under capitalism are doubly emphasized in the European countries, most of which depend to a much larger extent on exports than the American industry. All need larger foreign markets, yet their exports have been dropping in recent years. The same factors that have caused depression in Britain have operated to some extent in all of them, although a few countries have benefited temporarily by Britain's losses.

Austria, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, Germany, France, Holland, Italy, Switzerland, Poland—all strive to become "independent" of outside sources of yarns and cloths and at the same time want to export their product to other countries. They all complain of increasing competition.

Developments in all these countries within the last few years reflect their position in the general economic crisis of textiles. The Belgian woolen industry has seen short-time work, strikes, and lock-outs. In Czechoslovakia unemployment reached 27 per cent in 1929, not including many part-time workers. Export trade on which half of the cotton mills of the country depend was falling off, with factories closing down completely. Depression has also hit the Spanish industry, and a special government cotton "commission" has been appointed to achieve "rationalization of production." Trade reports from Switzerland in 1929 showed output reduced to 35 per cent in some cotton mills and others running only 50 per cent of capacity with corresponding unemployment. In Italy, which has been looming more important in the cotton export trade, workers have faced similar conditions in addition to the despotism of the Fascist dictatorship. In Poland, in the Lodz district alone, at least 20,000 workers have been out of work with thousands of others on a two- or three-day week. Along with unemployment go more speed-up, lower wages, and strikes. In Germany, while 50 per cent of the workers with jobs are working overtime, about 100,000 textile workers are

wholly without jobs. In May, 1930, only 55.4 per cent of the trade unionists in the cotton industry were fully occupied; 36.4 per cent were on short time, and 8.2 per cent wholly unemployed. The Austrian cotton industry depends on exports to take at least 50 per cent of its output. At least 25 per cent of all textile workers in the country were jobless at the beginning of 1930 in addition to thousands on short-time. Similar conditions were reported from other textile manufacturing countries on the continent.

#### TARIFF WEAPONS

The international race for textile markets is, of course, accompanied by the imposition of tariff duties. The European and Oriental countries just mentioned are covered with a network of tariffs set up to protect the "home industry." American textile manufacturers have succeeded in erecting a high tariff wall with rates calculated to keep out most foreign goods. This artificial protection has swollen the fortunes of the manufacturers who have been for decades among the most expert tariff grabbers in the world. Former Senator Joseph Grundy, of Pennsylvania, wealthy worsted manufacturer, is typical of this group of capitalists controlling the tariff-making bodies of the government. They secured a tariff on wool fabrics, for example, of about 73 per cent. The Smoot-Hawley tariff of 1930 raised the rates on scores of textile commodities.

These tariffs, now supported by all textile capitalists both in the North and South, have done no more for the workers than have tariffs in Europe and Asia. Low wages, long hours, increasing speed-up and uncertainty of employment—together with higher prices for the mass of workers who use the products of the industry—these we find after decades of tariffs written by the textile companies to "protect the American wage-earner." These high tariffs have only made foreign employers drive their workers at a still

faster pace in order to maintain their markets here for certain classes of goods.

While protesting against American tariffs most European countries resort to the same methods. In fact, many of them increased their cotton and woolen goods duties in 1929. Their textile capitalists cry out, as do those in the United States, for higher and higher duties on imports. From China and India to Austria and Germany tariffs are set up to "aid" the textile industries, while each imperialist country builds a tariff wall against goods imported from rival nations into its colonies and protectorates. The tariff is thus but another weapon of the employers in the growing struggle for imperialist supremacy. In spite of ever-rising tariff walls workers in the highly "protected" textile industry of all countries remain among the lowest paid and most intensely exploited of workers.

From this examination of the international situation in textiles and especially in cottons—conditions are no less serious in the wool industry—certain conclusions may be drawn.

Production of textile goods is increasing in every textile manufacturing country. Textile mills are overequipped. That is, they have more machinery than they need to fill the demand for their products. This is because the low wages of the working class under the existing economic system restricts the workers' power to purchase the cloth they need. Overproduction in textiles is actually underconsumption of the workers.

With the saturation of home markets and productive capacity on the increase, every country seeks new export outlets. But these are growing fewer and more competitive each year. Tariff barricades are everywhere thrown up, but these only serve to sharpen the conflicts.

Underdeveloped and colonial countries are being gradually

equipped with the most modern textile machinery. This is already leading to the further reduction of textile exports from the old imperialist countries with further depression of these industries.

The net result of this situation is curtailment of operations, rival cartels, syndicates and selling agencies, export wars, tariff struggles, mass unemployment and short-time work, more intense rationalization, speed-up and wage cuts for the 850,000 wool workers and the 3,700,000 cotton workers in the world.<sup>16</sup>

The cotton and wool industries of the United States are increasingly involved in this world struggle for markets. The workers here like those abroad are, as we shall show in later chapters, paying the price for the breakdown of capitalist economy.

## CHAPTER II

### THE INDUSTRY TO-DAY

TEXTILE manufacturing is in every sense of the word one of the key industries of the United States. About 4,500,000 growers, mill workers and others are dependent upon textiles.<sup>1</sup> Textile mills employ over one-eighth of all workers in the country engaged in manufacturing. The 1,100,000 workers employed to turn out textile mill products constitute a working force greater than that of any other manufacturing industry. Of these, 467,596 are cotton workers while 154,361 are woolen and worsted workers.

The value all textile workers "add by manufacture"\* exceeds that of such industries as iron and steel, lumber, leather products, -rubber products and machinery. The products manufactured by cotton workers alone sell for over \$1,500,000,000 a year; those of woolen and worsted workers average over \$800,000,000.

Textile workers produce a multitude of products. Cotton manufacturing includes the making of yarns, threads, sheetings, tire fabrics, print cloth, shirtings, gingham, cotton flannel, denims, lawns, towels, and hundreds of other types of cloths. Among the chief products of the woolen and worsted branch are yarns, suitings, dress goods, overcoatings, cloakings, blankets, and upholstery.

In addition to those engaged in the mills, the economic life of cotton farmers in the South and the wool growers, chiefly in the West and Southwest, are linked to the mills, upon which they depend for an outlet for their products.

\*"Value added by manufacture" is a term used in the census to represent the difference between the combined cost of the materials, supplies, fuel, power, etc. and the value of the finished products.



Although it is difficult to determine how large is the total investment represented by all the textile industries of the country, it has been estimated on good authority that the capital invested in the cotton textile industry in 1928 was about \$2,000,000,000.\* In 1919, the worsted industry was capitalized at \$557,721,000 and the woolen industry in the same year at \$273,973,670.

It is apparent from these figures that textile manufacturing is of strategic importance in the American economic scheme and that textile workers are one of the largest and most important groups of the American working class.

#### PRODUCTS OF MILLS

Just under 9,000,000,000 square yards of cloth are woven annually in the cotton branch and over 550,000,000 square yards in the woolen and worsted section of the industry. The exact quantity and value in recent years, according to the Census of Manufactures, has been as follows:\*

Year	Cotton		Woolen		Worsted	
	Value of Products (in thousands)	Production (in thousand Sq. Yds.)	Value of Products (in thousands)	Production (in thousand Sq. Yds.)	Value of Products (in thousands)	Production (in thousand Sq. Yds.)
1923.....	\$1,901,126	8,264,219	\$364,288	316,092	\$698,271	311,925
1925.....	1,714,368	7,741,568	361,524	304,683	596,266	275,105
1927.....	1,567,401	8,980,415	301,309	284,857	516,669	265,411

One of the most striking aspects of cotton goods production is the extent to which the American industry, since the middle nineties, has improved the production of its high grade fabrics. Until that time fine goods were mostly imported from England and continental Europe, while this country concentrated on coarse goods. At present, however, over 60 important establishments equipped with about 7,000,000 spindles, produce fine and fancy fabrics in the United States. The largest center for this type of work

\*In every case where "value of products" is cited in this book, the amount represents the selling value at the mills.

is New Bedford, Massachusetts, where yarns up to 150's are run.\* The South has also been building large and well-equipped fine yarn mills and fine goods plants producing a great variety of fine and fancy fabrics for wearing apparel and household uses.

The two main divisions of wool manufacture, the woolen and worsted industries, involve distinctly different methods of preparing the yarn. In woolen manufacturing, yarns are made with the wool fiber in the criss-cross fashion in which they come, containing the longest as well as the shortest fibers. Wool wastes and shoddy as well as cotton are often carded together with wool fiber into one yarn to be sold later as "pure wool."

In the worsted industry the fibers are combed. This takes out the short, tangled and weak fibers, called "noils," and arranges the long fibers or "tops" in a parallel position, as distinct from the criss-cross arrangement in woolen yarns. A worsted yarn is therefore stronger and more durable.

Typical woolen goods are cassimeres, cheviots, meltons, kerseys, homespuns, tweeds and flannels. Typical worsted fabrics are serges, fancy worsted suitings, gabardines, poplins and venetians.

The total value of the products of worsted mills first exceeded woollens in 1899 and has been higher ever since. With the exception of overcoatings and some types of cloakings, woollens have grown increasingly less popular. Cassimeres, flannels and a few woolen suitings are still used in some grades of men's clothes, but in general these, along with woolen dress goods, are being supplanted by worsteds. Flannels for underwear, once a substantial outlet for yarns, are now practically gone. Wool blanket production is giving

\* The degree of fineness of cotton yarn is indicated by the "number," or "count." This is determined by the number of 840-yard hanks which weigh one pound. Count 1 requires 840 yards to weigh one pound; count 10 requires 8,400 yards per pound, and is one-tenth as coarse as count 1, etc. Fine yarn consists of 40s or over.

way before the manufacture of serviceable all-cotton blankets, and the once profitable horse blanket business has collapsed before the advancing automobile.

While the exact quantity of each type of woolen and worsted fabric produced varies somewhat each year, domestic production may be roughly divided into about 40 per cent to 45 per cent of cheap goods; between 30 per cent and 40 per cent of medium grade fabrics, and 15 per cent to 25 per cent of high quality goods. When imports were reduced during the World War, the production of high quality fabrics was stimulated. Although some classes of British fabrics are still superior to the American, the industry here is fighting hard to overcome these difficulties. The tariff confines imports to higher grades of woollens and worsteds used in the more expensive kinds of men's clothes, and to novelty goods for women's wear.

#### PLANTS AND EQUIPMENT

There are many different types of manufacturing units in textiles. Some mills are highly specialized. The Pepperell Mfg. Co., for example, is known primarily for its trade-marked sheets and pillow cases. Amoskeag established a reputation for gingham. At one time 70 per cent of the production of the American Woolen Co. consisted of blue staple worsteds. Within its own class of fabrics each mill has, of course, considerable variety.

Many of the largest concerns whose output is diversified are divided into units known as Mill Number 1, Mill Number 2, and so on. Each of these mills usually confines itself to one sort of goods. This type of concern often maintains a single finishing plant where all its fabrics are put into final shape for the market.

While most cotton mills in this country both spin and weave, some do only spinning. The spinning plants supply yarn to knitting mills and to weaving plants unable to meet

their own needs for yarn. In 1927, there were 220 cotton mills doing only weaving; 387 spinning mills; and 665 mills doing both spinning and weaving. In addition, 75 miscellaneous types of establishments had neither spindles nor looms.

The greater part of the finishing or converting of cloth is done in separate establishments. This is due to the high degree of specialization and the great variety of finishes and designs now demanded. One such establishment is equipped with fifty printing machines. This is the largest finishing unit in the world.

There are hundreds of "converters" in the cotton industry. These concerns have no plants of their own. They buy gray cloth from the mills and send it out on a job basis to be bleached, dyed or printed. Then they offer it for sale. About a third of the output of the mills passes through the hands of converters.

The woolen and worsted industry, on the other hand, is more integrated. Most plants perform all processes of manufacture. They sort, scour, card, comb and spin the wool; weave, dye, finish and pack the cloth for shipment. Some mills however only do spinning, and sell their yarn to weaving mills. Others simply carry the process as far as weaving the cloth in the gray. Dyeing and finishing are then done in specialized plants.\*

It is clear from this description that dyeing and finishing have come to be an important part of the industry—occasionally carried on in conjunction with other branches and sometimes separately. Of the 9,125 textile mills listed in the 1929 *American Textile Directory* † 1,446 had their own dye houses. In 1927, there were 743 separate establishments, employing 73,851 workers, engaged in bleaching, dye-

\* For a description of the various processes and occupations in both industries see pp. 247-250.

† This list includes not only cotton and woolen but silk, rayon, knitting and other establishments.

ing, mercerizing and printing yarn or cloth. The majority of these plants are independently owned and work on a contract or commission basis. Others are owned by the larger textile corporations. The Lewiston Bleachery and Dye Works at Lewiston, Maine, for example, is owned and operated by the Pepperell Mfg. Co.

Some textile corporations locate in one center; others spread throughout the country. The 790,000 cotton and worsted spindles, 24,000 cotton looms and 1,700 worsted looms of the Amoskeag Mfg. Co., are all at Manchester, New Hampshire. The Manville Jenckes mills, on the other hand, are scattered in Georgiaville, Manville, Woonsocket, Central Falls and Pawtucket, Rhode Island, and in Gastonia and High Shoals, North Carolina. The American Woolen Company owns mills all over New England.

The tendency toward concentration, as we shall note in our discussion of mergers, is making itself felt in textiles. The Census of Manufactures shows the number of establishments declining since 1923:

NUMBER OF ESTABLISHMENTS

<i>Year</i>	<i>Cotton Goods</i>	<i>Woolen</i>	<i>Worsted</i>
1923 .....	1,375	513	338
1925 .....	1,366	503	329
1927 .....	1,347	471	288

The U. S. Department of Commerce, in its recent study, *Industrial Structure of New England* (Domestic Commerce Series, No. 28), found that the average cotton mill in New England employs about 700. Some 17 of the largest companies employed over 1,000 each. Of 126 woolen and worsted companies reporting, 76 employed from 100 to 500 workers, while 13 of the larger ones each employed over 1,000 persons.

While there are still many small establishments the large ones turn out most of the goods and employ the majority

of the workers. The following table shows this situation as it stood in the census of 1925:

Industry	No. of big plants	Per Cent of big plants to total no.	No. of workers in big plants	Per Cent of total in industry	Value of products of big plants (thousands)	Per Cent of total of industry
Cotton Goods..	498	36.4	347,684	78.9	\$1,352,971	78.9
Woolen Goods..	116	23.1	37,852	56.4	217,384	60.1
Worsted Goods..	142	43.2	86,150	87.9	530,800	89.0

In the cotton industry, 36 per cent of the plants produced nearly four-fifths of the goods; 23 per cent of the woolen plants turned out three-fifths of the product; 43 per cent of the worsted plants produced nearly nine-tenths of the worsteds.

Some of the largest concerns in the industry are Amoskeag (Manchester, New Hampshire), which operates about 790,000 spindles; American Woolen (Lawrence and other New England centers), with about 750,000; Pacific Mills (Lawrence and other towns in New England and the South), with 621,000; Manville Jenckes (Pawtucket and other centers in Rhode Island and North Carolina), with 590,000; Pepperell Mfg. Co. (Lowell, Massachusetts, and mills in Maine and Georgia), with 572,000; Riverside and Dan River Cotton Mills (Danville, Virginia), with 472,000.

The total spindleage of the industries is as follows:

Cotton (1929)		
Active spindles .....		32,417,036
Idle spindles .....		2,402,498
<b>TOTAL .....</b>		<b>34,819,534</b>
Woolen and Worsted (1928)		
Active woolen spindles .....		1,646,989
Idle woolen spindles .....		602,907
<b>TOTAL .....</b>		<b>2,249,896</b>

\* The term "big" is here used to denote plants whose products have an annual value of \$1,000,000 or more. Computations based on data in *Census of Manufactures, 1925*.

## LABOR AND TEXTILES

Active worsted spindles .....	1,558,039
Idle worsted spindles .....	986,154
TOTAL .....	<u>2,544,193</u>

## WHERE COTTONS ARE MADE

In the early days of American cotton manufacturing, the New England States enjoyed a virtual monopoly. Until after the Civil War the South, with its plantation system and slave labor, confined itself almost exclusively to agriculture. About 50 years ago, however, the southern states began to challenge New England's leadership. To-day southern supremacy is an accomplished fact, especially in coarse goods.

In 1880, there were only 561,360 active cotton spindles in the South. In the same year, the number in New England was over 8,632,000. From 1880 to the present the rate of growth in the South has been remarkable. Between 1900 and 1929, the number of active spindles in New England fell from 13,171,000 to about 12,537,000—a decrease of nearly 5 per cent. During the same period spindles in the cotton growing states increased from 4,367,000 to 18,540,000 or about 325 per cent. Since 1912, the average annual increase in southern spindleage has been around 468,000, the total number of spindles increasing to 19,378,370 by January 1, 1930.\*

As a result of the movement South, the cotton-growing states now make well over half of all cotton goods. They also employ over 60 per cent of the workers in the industry.

Some of the southern cotton industry is financed by northern capital. Southern chambers of commerce have placarded northern states with appeals to "Come South where labor is cheap." Many New England mill interests went South and built mills; others purchased already established concerns. Between 1923 and 1927 about \$100,000,000 of New England mill capital migrated southward.

A detailed view of the geographical distribution of the cotton industry and the amount of cotton consumed (as a rough index of production) is given in the following table\*:

State	Number of Workers Mills		No. of spindles (thousands) (1929)		Cotton used (thou- sands of bales) (1929)
	(1927)	(1927)	Total	Active	
North Carolina....	95,786	374	6,223	6,129	1,631
Massachusetts ....	90,871	163	8,586	7,256	779
South Carolina....	75,069	163	5,585	5,562	1,301
Georgia .....	56,607	139	3,125	3,079	1,269
Rhode Island.....	26,203	66	2,290	2,030	219
Alabama .....	24,825	68	1,804	1,178	617
New Hampshire...	14,722	17	1,309	1,162	206
Connecticut .....	12,639	35	1,105	1,064	110
Pennsylvania ....	12,160	107	97	84	18
Maine .....	10,195	17	1,059	905	122
Virginia .....	8,426	11	709	679	106
New York .....	7,572	35	688	645	127
Tennessee .....	7,211	21	616	610	176
New Jersey .....	5,718	25	381	372	32
Texas .....	5,564	26	282	255	121
Mississippi .....	2,761	14	177	174	41
Maryland .....	2,217	8	73	73	36
Illinois .....	1,192	11	59	59	11
Kentucky .....	1,100	4	85	84	22
Vermont .....	1,008	4	116	116	10
Indiana .....	697	3	85	84	16
Ohio .....	570	7	....	....	....
Michigan .....	315	9	....	....	....
Arkansas .....	310	3	....	....	....
Others .....	3,854	17	....	....	....

While northern interests in the South are large, they are less so than is commonly supposed. It was estimated in 1927 that 83 per cent of the spindles in southern states were controlled by southern capital, 15 per cent by northern capital (in some cases as southern branches of northern mills), and 2 per cent by western capital.<sup>4</sup>

\* *Census of Manufactures, 1927*, p. 266; U. S. Dept. of Commerce, *Bulletin 166*, pp. 31-32.



New England still leads the country in the production of fine, high grade cotton goods. About 80 per cent of New England's production is in this field, New Bedford alone having about 40 per cent of the fine goods looms in the country. Until comparatively recent years the South produced only the coarser grades of staple cotton cloths. Practically all kinds of cloth in which New England is still supreme are made of the finest yarns—at least 40s or over.

The southern mill owners, however, are now making the finer goods. This contributes still further to the decline in New England production. For a long period the natural dampness necessary for spinning fine cotton yarn gave the New England cities some degree of security. But recent developments in the field of artificial humidification have deprived them of this advantage. A cotton manufacturer who has mills in Massachusetts and Georgia testified, in 1928, "I can make anything at all in my Georgia mill that I can make here, make it just as well and make it cheaper."<sup>5</sup> Early in 1930 the firm of Boger and Crawford, of Philadelphia, announced an addition to their plant at Lincolnton, N. C., for the purpose of spinning counts ranging from 140s to 200s.<sup>6</sup>

Until twenty-five years ago the South was content to confine its production to cotton yarns, which were sent North to be woven. The extent to which this has changed is best reflected in the statistics of looms. Since 1922 the number of looms in New England has declined. The South continues to install them at a rapid rate. On July 1, 1929, there were 352,272 looms in southern cotton mills and 323,985 in New England.<sup>7</sup> About 10 per cent of the cotton looms in Massachusetts and Rhode Island are permanently idle. In the South the percentage of permanently idle looms is practically negligible.

## WHY THE COTTON INDUSTRY MOVES SOUTH

Why does the cotton industry move South? Five reasons are commonly advanced, not all of which are valid. These are:

1. *Savings of transportation charges on raw material by locating the mills where the cotton is grown.* The possibilities of saving money in this direction are grossly exaggerated by southern "boosters." Freight charges are of minor importance in the cost of raw material, averaging from one to one-and-a-half cents a pound from the growing centers to Fall River. Moreover, southern mills do not, for the most part, rely upon cotton grown in their immediate localities. Both North and South Carolina consume more cotton than they grow. Half of the cotton used in the country is grown west of the Mississippi. Freight rates on this cotton to the chief southern mill centers average from 60 per cent to 90 per cent of the rate to Massachusetts. Many southern mills are not located in the cotton-growing regions. Intra-state freight charges are high, often 50 per cent of the rate to New England. In addition much of the finished product is consumed in the North and freight charges must be met when the goods are shipped to market.

2. *Cheap power.* About 75 per cent of the southern spindles are electrically driven and use hydro-electric power. To a large extent Massachusetts mills use coal for fuel. Even where southern mills depend on coal they save money because they are near the mines. Most southern mills buy their power from power companies thus saving the investment of capital in non-dividend earning machinery. However, the power cost per pound of fabric is not a matter of great consequence in either New England or the South.

3. *Lower taxes in the South.* Many New England cities have taxed mill property comparatively heavily, both valuation figures and tax rates being high. The South has taken

advantage of this fact and in many cases has offered mills exemption from taxation for a period, usually five years, and has set low valuation figures and rates. In New Bedford, Massachusetts, for example, the city tax rate is \$2.78 per \$100 and in Lowell, Massachusetts, it is \$3.00 per \$100. In both cities the assessment basis is 100 per cent of the valuation. In Atlanta, Georgia, the rate is only \$1.50 per \$100. As an additional inducement, Atlanta levies taxes on only 70 per cent of the assessed valuation and Birmingham on 60 per cent. In other southern communities the assessment basis is even lower than these. In Nashville, Tennessee, and Dallas, Texas, it is only 45 per cent of comparatively low valuations.

This situation is now adjusting itself. In 1927 many New England cities began to lower valuation figures while others began to reduce their tax rates. The southern cities are growing and are going to need considerable money as improvements are made. Hence the mills, once established in the South, are not likely to be long overlooked as sources of revenue. It was reported to the 1930 convention of the National Association of Cotton Manufacturers that in some places in New England taxes are already as low, if not lower, than in the South. Georgia has levied a 5 per cent income tax in addition to regular taxes.

4. *Fewer labor laws in the South.* This is a real attraction to mill owners. Limitation of the working hours of women has virtually limited the work of all operatives in Massachusetts (though not in the rest of New England) to 48 hours a week. Massachusetts also prohibits night work for women. In the South 55 to 60 hours are the rule for women workers, with no legal restrictions on night work. Arkansas, Mississippi, and South Carolina have no workmen's compensation acts and accordingly no insurance premiums to pay for this slight protection of the workers' interests. Alabama places no legal limitation on working hours for women. There are about three times as many

labor laws in Massachusetts as in the average southern mill state.

5. "*Cheap and contented labor.*" This has been a basic reason for mill owners favoring the South. "It is to reach this supply of working people that other industries of other sections are seeking the South," the *Southern Blue Book* (1927) frankly admits. "Put your plant where labor helps instead of hindering," advertises the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce.

Chambers of Commerce, power companies and other interested parties have spent fortunes in appealing to northern manufacturers to locate in the South where native-born, Anglo-Saxon labor is cheap, "loyal" and plentiful. "The new investors show keenness in seeking out the centers from which this native help is drawn," wrote the editor of the *Charlotte Observer*. The "annual wage averaged by persons engaged in textile mills in South Carolina is \$631," boasted the New Industries Commission of Richland County. "Labor in Spartanburg is free, unchangeable and contented. Strikes are unknown. . . . It is faithful and efficient. It has the will to work," says the Chamber of Commerce of Spartanburg, South Carolina.

Recent labor developments in the Piedmont have shattered some of these illusions concerning the docility and submissiveness of the southern workers, but labor still remains cheap. After the expense of maintaining the mill villages, variously estimated at from \$1.50 to \$4.36 an operative per week, is added to labor costs, the southern mills still have a 20 per cent advantage. It is even as high as 30 per cent for some classes of products. In one computation of the cost of producing a pound of an identical standard print cloth in a Massachusetts and in a southern mill, the Massachusetts cost was 28.03 cents; that of the southern mill was 19.9 cents. Of the 8.13 cents difference between the two, 98 per cent represented savings in the cost of labor.<sup>a</sup>

## WHERE WOOL GOODS ARE MADE

In contrast to the cotton goods industry, the South does not compete with the rest of the country in the manufacture of woolen and worsted goods. About 59 per cent of this industry is in New England (January, 1930); 30 per cent in the Middle Atlantic States; 1 per cent in Pacific Coast states; and 10 per cent in other sections of the country.

In 1927 the woolen and worsted mills were scattered over the following states:

<i>State</i>	<i>No. of Mills</i>		<i>No. of Workers</i>	
	<i>Woolen</i>	<i>Worsted</i>	<i>Woolen</i>	<i>Worsted</i>
Massachusetts .....	99	75	15,923	35,141
Pennsylvania .....	79	67	6,718	10,546
Maine .....	50	9	6,140	4,244
New Hampshire .....	35	..	5,007	....
Connecticut .....	29	11	5,938	3,055
Rhode Island .....	24	71	3,275	21,114
New York .....	23	15	2,631	3,472
Wisconsin .....	16	..	1,042	....
Vermont .....	15	..	2,619	....
Minnesota .....	11	..	508	....
Tennessee .....	9	..	1,583	....
Ohio .....	9	..	754	....
New Jersey .....	8	16	1,176	8,777
Michigan .....	8	..	873	....
West Virginia .....	7	..	618	....
North Carolina .....	6	..	1,156	....
Oregon .....	6	..	1,076	....
Virginia .....	6	..	749	....
Indiana .....	6	..	711	....
Illinois .....	4	..	532	....
Georgia .....	3	..	766	....
Maryland .....	3	..	469	....
Other States .....	15	24	1,526	6,222
<b>TOTAL</b> .....	<b>471</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>61,790</b>	<b>92,571</b>

The worsted industry is considerably more localized than either woolens or cotton goods, while woolen manufacturing is the most widely scattered of the three, having mills in all

the textile states from coast to coast. However, the amount of business done by woolen mills outside of New England, New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, in proportion to the total value of production, is comparatively small. Lawrence, Providence, Passaic and Philadelphia are the leading wool manufacturing centers.

## RELATED INDUSTRIES

Several industries such as dyeing and finishing and the manufacture of textile machinery and parts, are closely related to the cotton and wool industries. Besides these, there are about ten others which are, in reality, subdivisions or parts of cotton and wool manufacturing.

The following is the value of the products and the number of workers and establishments engaged in these related industries in 1927:

<i>Industry</i>	<i>No. of Workers</i>	<i>No. of Estab- lishments</i>	<i>Value of Products*</i>
Dyeing and Finishing Textiles....	73,851	743	\$406,047,372
Carpets and Rugs (Wool).....	32,829	65	166,888,408
Textile Machinery and Parts.....	26,154	367	116,921,130
Cotton Small Wares.....	14,958	220	64,819,965
Cotton Lace Goods.....	6,482	43	27,398,159
Wool and Hair Felt Goods.....	5,452	50	41,894,844
Waste (cotton and other fibers)...	3,494	118	33,377,276
Wool Felt Hats.....	2,185	17	9,381,645
Wool Shoddy.....	1,679	55	12,596,726
Wool Scouring.....	1,386	25	6,661,994
Wool Pulling.....	524	18	

Many other industries such as garment manufacturing, knit goods and the like are related to textiles, being directly dependent on them for supplies of yarn and cloth. The connections with silk and rayon fabrics should also be noted. Over 20,000,000 pounds of cotton yarns and 1,300,000

\*Those industries doing work on a contract basis have only the amounts received for work done listed as "value of products."

pounds of woolen and worsted yarns are used each year in making silk and rayon mixtures.

It has been computed that about 2 per cent of the entire production of wool fabrics and more than one-third of the production of cotton fabrics are sold to other industries for industrial uses.<sup>9</sup> Tire fabrics, auto upholstery, wire insulations and brake linings keep many textile mills busy. Some 197,353,058 pounds of tire fabrics were manufactured in 1927. According to the Rubber Association of America, 700,000 bales of cotton, a tenth of the total domestic consumption, are now used annually in making tires. Millions of yards of mercerized cotton fabrics are also used annually for wing covers and fuselages of airplanes. In Chapter I we explained how the industrial uses of textiles have been steadily increasing and why the manufacturers are in desperate search for new markets in this direction. But these new industrial uses, as we have noted, will not relieve the crisis in textiles under the present industrial system.

## CHAPTER III

### PROFITS AND MERGERS

THE aim of all industry under capitalism is to make profits for the investors. The cotton and wool industries are not exceptions. All the employers' efforts to "cure" the ailments of this industry, described in the first chapter, have been directed either to making more profits, or to turning losses one year into profits the next.

As in most industries under capitalism, some companies, in a given year, show large super-profits, some show losses, while the majority are in the middle group of "moderately successful concerns." Although the textile industries, as a whole, have shown comparatively low profit rates in the last few years it must not be assumed that the mills have been operated, as some employers would have us believe, solely for the sake of keeping the workers in jobs! These thousands of textile plants have been run in the expectation of profit. And in a large number of cases this hope has been fully realized.

In an industry like textiles which has reached a critical stage, it is well to examine the course of profits, not only over the last two or three years but over a longer period. One can then see what investors made when "times were better" and how profits average up over a period of years.

#### CONCEALING PROFITS

It is not always easy to secure facts regarding the profits of textile concerns. The stock of many companies is held by a very few persons—often only two or three—and financial reports are not made public. Other companies may report dividends paid but do not give the amounts. Mill



owners often oppose efforts to secure more detailed financial data. When the listing of textile securities on the New York Cotton Exchange was discussed in 1929, Fall River cotton mills opposed it on the ground that it would compel them to file a complete periodical statement of their financial condition. "In some cases," a trade paper pointed out at the time, "financial statements are so carefully guarded that even stockholders of those corporations have difficulty in ascertaining the financial condition of their plant at the annual meeting."<sup>1</sup>

This tendency to hide profits has been frequently manifested. Agents of the Federal Trade Commission, investigating conditions in certain cotton spinning companies, found many of them refusing to reveal operating costs. The experts reported that these companies "were indisposed to open their books and records to agents of the Commission and in some cases denied the Commission's right to compile data directly from their books."<sup>2</sup> One of the mills in this group was the Quissett Mill of New Bedford of which ex-Senator William M. Butler is President. It paid a cash dividend of 50 per cent in 1922 in addition to a stock dividend of 60 per cent.

Again during the New England textile strike in 1922 the rich Rhode Island mill owners, among others, refused to show their books to an investigating commission. Even the *Providence News* editorialized, February 23, 1922, as follows:

Called to a showdown of their profits, the cotton manufacturers of Rhode Island insolently say through their counsel that it is nobody's business what money they earn. . . . They defiantly say they will not arbitrate if arbitration means they must disclose figures of cost and actual capital invested.

Such conditions illustrate the difficulties of securing adequate and accurate data on the extent of profits. As we shall note, the practice of concealing profits, even by those firms

that do make some kind of a financial report, is now quite common.

### THE BOOM YEARS

Profits in the cotton and woolen industries during pre-war years were generally considered to be quite "satisfactory." The average rate of dividends paid by 76 New England cotton mills during the years 1889-1908 was a little under 8 per cent, and this did not include profits that were "plowed back" into plant extensions and the accumulation of huge surplus accounts.<sup>3</sup>

But it took the World War to bring the mills, as a whole, to the highest peaks of prosperity. Profits were enormous during the war and the immediate post-war boom. Large regular cash and extra cash dividends were declared by practically all companies and many, as we shall see, paid amazing stock dividends and heaped up great surpluses. Fortunes were made over night by textile investors. Stock values were inflated in expectation of higher profits. In woolen and worsted mills, beginning with 1916, profits were "little short of fabulous. . . . As profits continued or expanded, big dividends were paid and prices of mill shares soared to unprecedented heights."<sup>4</sup>

Reports on war profiteering issued by the United States Treasury Department revealed enormous profits of cotton and wool companies in 1916 and 1917. Thirty cotton manufacturers examined, showed a percentage of net income to capital stock ranging from 24 to 212. Profits of 44 companies making unfinished print cloth ranged from 15 per cent to 165 per cent, and similar profits were shown in other cotton lines. Out of 45 woolen and worsted manufacturing, dyeing and finishing companies, 16 made over 100 per cent on their capital stock. Some of the high rates were 205 per cent, 213 per cent, 216 per cent, 265 per cent, 297 per cent, 338 per cent, 411 per cent, 451 per cent, and 490 per cent,

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while the peak profit was made by a company that recorded 1,770 per cent for 1917. American Woolen Company was shown to have made a net income of \$28,560,342 (48 per cent on its inflated capitalization) or nearly \$15,000,000 more than it exhibited in its annual report for that year. In other words it concealed more than half of its profits from the public.<sup>5</sup> New Jersey Worsted Spinning Company, one of the firms against which the Passaic strikers fought in 1926, averaged net profits of 53 per cent a year for 16 years. During the war years 1916-17, they rose to 105 per cent.

Net profits on stockholders' invested capital (including capital stock and undistributed surplus) in a group of combed cotton yarn spinning mills, North and South, increased from 3.2 per cent in 1914 to 43.4 per cent in 1919. For eight similar companies studied by the Federal Trade Commission the net profit rate averaged about 30 per cent a year during the same six-year period.

The total net profits of 625 textile firms in Philadelphia, chiefly engaged in some branch of cotton and wool manufacturing, amounted in 1918 to 117 per cent of their combined invested capital. In 1919 it was 95 per cent. The profits of these mills nearly quadrupled their normal amounts during the boom period, 1915-1919. In cotton goods (56 concerns) profits increased over sevenfold.<sup>6</sup>

Thirty representative cotton manufacturing concerns made 32.5 per cent net income after all interest charges had been paid in 1916, while in 1917 they made 42.5 per cent. From 1914 to 1918 inclusive, eight of the chief cotton companies averaged about 30 per cent on their already heavily inflated capital.

In 1919 some 21 cotton mills in Spartanburg County, South Carolina, having a total capital stock of \$8,908,900, paid stock dividends amounting to \$6,058,000 in addition to cash dividends amounting to \$2,099,950, or a total payment of nearly 100 per cent in cash or stock to their shareholders.

## STOCK DIVIDENDS

These stock dividend payments during the boom days require special attention, for this method of "rewarding" stockholders has been very common in textiles. During the war and up to 1923 scores of companies paid not only extra large cash dividends out of their swollen surpluses, but they also paid their stockholders in additional shares of stock. If a stockholder, for example, held 50 shares and was given 50 more as a present by the company, he was receiving a 100 per cent stock dividend. When cash dividends were distributed the next time, at the same rate as before, he actually received double the amount he had previously received. Thus, without any further investment or outlay of money he found himself the owner of double the amount of stock he had bought.

Textile companies declared these stock dividends because they were making such tremendous profits and it was a clever way to escape certain taxation on these profits. Because of laws which then taxed both "excess" corporation profits and private incomes, the high cash dividends of these richly paying corporations were subject to what the capitalists called "double taxation." To avoid this the corporations issued these stock dividends and the United States Supreme Court decided that the individuals receiving them need pay no income tax on them.

After a company had added to its capital stock account in this way, its subsequent dividend *rates* appeared much lower than they actually were on its former capitalization. A 100 per cent stock dividend meant that a later cash dividend, say at a nominal rate of 6 per cent, was actually a dividend of 12 per cent.

The new "capital" set up by a stock dividend often meant no new productive equipment or funds needed for operation of the plant. It was simply the product of a bookkeeping

trick devised to conceal the payment of huge profits to stockholders. This issuance of stock in excess of the actual value of the property of a company paved the way for wage cuts, speed-up, and other attacks on working conditions. In their attempts to pay "normal" dividends on this swollen stock in later years the companies have, as usual, taken them out of the wages and conditions of the workers.

This boom-time inflation of capitalization through stock dividends also accounted for some of the apparently low dividend rates, and even losses, in later years. To-day even a few of the mill owners realize the need for "readjustments of capital structure" to squeeze out some of the water, and as one capitalist put it, "to permit mills to show a profit on legitimate worth and earning power." He adds, "Many a red figure, or small profit now based on false valuation and capitalization, would look good to the mill stockholders if they were based on honest statistics." †

These peak period stock dividends reflect the unparalleled profits of the textile profiteers during that time. By issuing these dividends one mill in the South increased its capital from \$75,000 to \$400,000; another from \$250,000 to \$1,000,000. The Bibb Manufacturing Company built up the largest capitalization of any mill in the South, by issuing the following string of stock dividends: 1916, 66⅓ per cent; 1917, 20 per cent; 1918, 100 per cent; 1923, 33⅓ per cent; 1925, 50 per cent; 1927, 100 per cent. Other southern mills, such as the Amazon Cotton Mills, North Carolina, handed out a 300 per cent stock dividend in one payment. The stock dividends of a group of 21 mills in Spartanburg County, South Carolina, amounted to about 69 per cent in the year 1919.

This method of pouring wealth into the laps of stockholders was equally widespread in the North. Stock dividends of Fall River mills averaged nearly 14 per cent in 1920 and over 12 per cent as late as 1923. In fact, between

1920 and 1924 the following Fall River mills declared stock dividends, 1920 and 1922 being specially marked by these payments :

FALL RIVER STOCK DIVIDENDS—1920-1924

<i>Mill</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Rate</i>	<i>Mill</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Rate</i>
Arkwright ...	1920	122	Lincoln .....	1922	40 †
Barnard .....	1921	150	Narragansett .	1921	50
Border City..	1922	50 *	Parker .....	1920	50
Charlton .....	1922	50	Pilgrim .....	1924	71 ¾
Cornell .....	1922	50	Sagamore ....	1922	66 ¾ ††
Davis .....	1920	33 ½ **	Seaconnet ....	1920	100.
Flint .....	1922	50	Shove .....	1920	50 §
Hargraves ...	1920	100	Union .....	1922	50
King Philip ..	1920	50	Wampanoag ..	1922	33 ½

New Bedford fine spinning mills with their huge surplus and war profits were able from 1917 to 1923 (especially in 1922) to hand out to investors juicy stock dividends at rates ranging from 33 per cent to 200 per cent.

Long-established companies such as Amoskeag Manufacturing Company have been tremendously overcapitalized largely through stock dividends. This company has cut such melons repeatedly since its first one in 1846. The largest was 100 per cent in 1919. From 1907 to 1922 its capitalization was increased, out of profits, from \$4,000,000 to \$44,500,000. The cash dividends paid in 1922 were equal to about 75 per cent on the capitalization as it stood before 1907.

The history of the Manville Jenckes Company provides a perfect example of stock watering. The company was formed in 1923 with the merger of the Jenckes Spinning Company and the Manville Company. The Jenckes company held plenty of water in its stock to begin with. In 1917 when its common stock amounted to \$3,300,000 it handed its stockholders a stock dividend of \$300,000. Then it began

\* In addition to a 20% stock dividend in 1917. \*\* In addition to a 50% stock dividend in 1917. † In addition to a 30% stock dividend in 1917. †† In addition to a 50% stock dividend in 1917. § In addition to a 50% stock dividend in 1917.



to roll up amazing profits which amounted in 1921, after payment of preferred dividends, to 70 per cent on the common stock. So it cut another melon declaring a stock dividend of \$1,800,000. Finally, with the merger in 1923, came another huge present to the stockholders of \$6,600,000, the capitalization of the company being raised by that amount without the expenditure of a single penny by the stockholders.

At the same time the stock of the Manville Company, including both common and preferred, was raised from \$11,300,000 to \$19,594,000 without any further investment by the stockholders. Actually through these manipulations the merging of the two companies increased the amount of their stocks from \$20,294,000 to \$39,000,000.

This was one of the most daring stock watering operations in textile history. The company has since both lengthened hours and cut wages in order to keep the dividends flowing to the idle stockholders who "own" these millions of stock which cost them nothing.

Woolen and worsted mills were no less generous to their stockholders, especially when war contracts were swelling their profits. One manufacturer, M. T. Stevens Sons & Company, paid a 360 per cent stock dividend at the end of 1922. Farr Alpaca Company paid 200 per cent in 1914 and 75 per cent in 1921. Arlington Mills and Hamilton Woolen Company, both large companies, each declared 50 per cent stock dividends in 1920. Sanford Mills declared one of 90 per cent in 1917 and another of 200 per cent in 1922. Smaller amounts were voted by practically all the wool manufacturing companies.<sup>8</sup>

#### RECENT PROFITS

Since the fat years of great stock and cash dividends the profits of mills and the prices of mill stocks, for the industry as a whole, have been dropping. Hundreds of com-

panies have been unable to pay dividends on their inflated common stocks, although fairly steady returns on preferred stocks have been recorded, and interest on bonds and mortgages has, of course, been regularly paid, except in the case of mills forced into bankruptcy.

In spite of the decided slump in profits, we find that in 1927—the last year for which we have government income figures for corporations—672 companies in the cotton goods business reported a profit while the remainder, 308 companies, reported no taxable net income. In other words, nearly 70 per cent of cotton manufacturing companies made some net profit. And the 305 woolen and worsted companies that reported a taxable net profit in the same year aggregated 53 per cent of all the companies making returns to the government.<sup>9</sup>

The number of mills reporting profits in later years is not yet compiled, although subsequent profits for many individual mills and groups of mills have been announced. A compilation by the National City Bank, for example, shows that 39 cotton mills made a total net profit of \$37,556,000 during the three-year period of 1927-1929, which brings the average three-year profit for each mill to about \$1,000,000. For 1929 alone 48 cotton mills made a net profit of \$15,629,000 on net worth (all stock plus surplus) of \$393,284,000, or 4 per cent, as compared with 12.8 per cent for 1,520 corporations from all American industries including both the most prosperous and the most depressed.<sup>10</sup>

### *New Bedford*

Some of the most complete data on profits have been collected for New Bedford and Fall River mills. The figures cover both the boom and depression days. Thus we can see what the owners made over a series of years.

New Bedford fine goods mills, both the very profitable and the not-so-profitable, over the ten-year period, 1918-1928,

have paid an average of 11.63 per cent on their stocks. And even if we omit the two prosperous years, 1918 and 1919, and take the ten-year period beginning with 1920 and ending with the lean year, 1929, we find the average ten-year dividend rate of these mills to be 7.42 per cent per annum.

Some of the leading dividend payers over this period may be listed, always keeping in mind the fact that cash payments, especially in the years after 1920-1922, were made on the huge blocks of stock issued as stock dividends during earlier years:

#### NEW BEDFORD COTTON MILLS

AVERAGE ANNUAL DIVIDEND RATE ON COMMON STOCK, INCLUDING STOCK DIVIDEND PAYMENTS, 1920-1929

<i>Mill</i>	<i>Per Cent</i>	<i>Mill</i>	<i>Per Cent</i>
Beacon .....	25.4	Nield .....	21.95
Bristol .....	8.45	Nonquitt .....	15.4
City Mfg. ....	9.45	Pierce .....	34.40
Dartmouth .....	23.7	Potomska .....	13.40
Hathaway .....	9.95	Quisset .....	20.75
Holmes .....	11.55	Soule .....	18
Kilburn .....	12.85	Taber .....	10.51
Manomet .....	9.86	Wamsutta .....	11.30
Nashawena .....	10.25	Whitman .....	13.85

After surveying the recent financial reports of the New Bedford mills, the leading textile stock brokers of that city concluded, on January 1, 1930, that "from their latest statements it appears they are, as a whole, in a very strong financial condition." This is apparent from the latest financial statements of the 25 active mills which show they have a combined excess of quick assets, over current liabilities, amounting to more than \$25,500,000 or more than 50 per cent of their total outstanding capitalization. Their combined surplus, depreciation and reserve accounts totaled \$41,633,000. Their combined balance sheets have presented

for years what the capitalist financial experts call a "conservative" and "strong" showing, in spite of their payments of much lower cash dividends in more recent years. In 1928, the year of the six-month strike, some fifteen of the mills paid dividends on common stock; while in 1927 every one of the New Bedford mills showed a profit, 21 out of 26 paying dividends. In 1929, however, a markedly depressed year, the results of the strike were reflected in the fact that only eight paid dividends on common stock.

#### *Fall River*

Fall River mills, as we have seen, were most lavish with stock dividends chiefly in 1922. Their juicy cash dividends during that period also push up their average payments for a ten-year period, 1919-1928. Their cash payments to stockholders averaged over 9 per cent a year, not counting stock dividends for the same years, which averaged nearly 3 per cent a year. The combined average of stock and cash dividends therefore amounted to over 12 per cent a year during this period. Average payments were highest in 1920 when they were over 46 per cent and lowest in 1928 when they were a little under 3 per cent. In 1929 the average rose to nearly 4 per cent.

The plain goods mills of Fall River have, of course, felt most acutely the competition of southern mills. In the last ten years the city has lost 31 mills owned by 15 corporations which have liquidated or moved their machinery to the South. Dividends in more recent years have naturally been "disappointing" to the stockholders who had looked forward to long years of steady payments on the free stock handed them in the form of stock dividends. The five fine goods mills have, on the whole, done better than the manufacturers of coarse goods.

Ten of the 21 Fall River mills whose dividends are made public (some are closed corporations making no public

statements) reported dividend payments in 1929, as against 15 that paid dividends in 1925. Some of the ten were able to "reward" their stockholders quite handsomely, as they have done steadily for a long period of years. Several of those unable to pay in 1929 were taking steps to be absorbed in mergers that are expected to put them back into profitable circles again in future years.

Profits in other northern mills vary tremendously, some nil, some small, and some more than "satisfactory." Many mills that had been turning a gloomy face to the capitalists showed what the *Textile World* called a "surprising comeback from loss in 1928 to profit in 1929." And an examination of many mill statements in the early months of 1930 showed "increased earnings and 1928 losses converted into 1929 profits."<sup>11</sup>

#### *Other New England Mills*

Scattered throughout the New England states outside of the two major Massachusetts cotton cities are textile companies whose profits have continued to be quite cheering to stockholders right through the period of depression. Space permits us to give only a few examples. These figures if known to the workers in these mills will help them to counteract the cries of "bankruptcy" from their employers.

Bates Mfg. Co., Me., paid regular dividends at the rate of 12% from 1913 to 1920; 11% in 1921; 12% from 1922 to 1926; and 8% from 1927 to 1929, in addition to many extra dividends (34% extra, for example, in 1929) and stock dividends (two of 50% each) during the boom years.

Pepperell Mfg. Co., Mass., has an unusually "strong" dividend record which has run unbroken since 1852. Dividends reported in 1929 were the usual 8% which it has "earned by an increasing margin" in each of the last four years. In previous years its dividends ran steadily at 12%, in addition to many extra cash payments. The capitalists who put about \$2,500,000 into this company have taken out of it at least ten times that amount in 25 years.

Boott Mills of Lowell, Mass., is also in a very secure financial position, current assets in 1929 being nearly six times current liabilities. It paid regular dividends of 7% for eight years up to 1928 when it began paying at the rate of 12% in addition to a small "extra."

American Thread Co., Conn., owned by the English Sewing Cotton Co., a British firm, has reaped enormous profits behind the American tariff wall. Even in years when its mills were running part time and when it was cutting wages and forcing the workers to strike, as in 1925, it paid 10% dividends. The very prosperous British parent company makes large profits and declares a regular dividend of 15%.

Even some northern mills continue to pay stock dividends at the height of a depression period. The Esmond Mills of Rhode Island (fancy cotton blankets), for example, paid a 100% stock dividend in Sept., 1928; a year later they paid another one of 50%!

Finally, as a prosperous northern company with plants also in Alabama, take the Merrimack Mfg. Co., Mass. One of the most profitable textile corporations in the country, its net profits were equal to nearly \$45.00 a share in 1928. It has increased its rate of dividends three times in the last two years and in 1929 paid at the rate of 12%.

A list of other prosperous companies whose profits in recent years have been studied by the Labor Research Association includes the Cabot Manufacturing Company, Lorraine Manufacturing Company, Pacific Mills, Manville Jenckes (see page 59), Pequot Mills, Lawton Mills Corporation, Utica Steam and Mohawk Valley Carpet Mills, Newmarket Manufacturing Company and Continental Mills.

#### *Southern Dividends*

Profits of southern mills are even more difficult to obtain than those of northern companies. The stocks of most of these mills are not listed on any stock exchanges, and facts on profits are closely guarded. During the war, as we have seen, the returns to the capitalists were enormous. Since then, it is estimated that about 20 per cent of the southern

mills have not missed a single regular dividend to stockholders; about 10 per cent have not paid any dividends to speak of since the boom days; while the remaining 70 per cent have paid in some years but not in others.<sup>12</sup>

Information on mill profits "obtained from an unquestioned authority" and representing "some of the best and some of the worst mills" was given by the editor of the *Raleigh News and Observer* in the spring of 1929. He reported that one mill made an average net profit of more than 16 per cent a year over a four-year period, 1923-1927. Another paid 10 per cent regularly each year while increasing its surplus threefold between 1924 and 1929. Another averaged over 7 per cent a year during the period 1924-1928. Still another, due to losses in one year, averaged only 2 per cent a year over a five-year stretch. Two others reported losses during the same period.

Southern brokers have from time to time issued statements on average profits of representative groups of mills. One reported that the cotton mills of Spartanburg County, S. C., the leading textile county of the South, paid annual dividends during the period, 1921-1926, of nearly 8 per cent.

According to a study made by George Norwood of the South Carolina National Bank, Greenville, the profits of 55 representative southern cotton mills in the year 1927 amounted to 10.35 per cent on net worth. If the inflated stock valuations were taken into account the profit rate would have been even higher.

For the next year, 1928, we have the reports of A. M. Law & Company, Charlotte brokers, giving a list of stocks of 78 "representative mills of the South" paying dividends at rates running from 4 per cent to 60 per cent for that year. The majority of them paid 7 per cent and 8 per cent, but about 15 paid at the rate of 10 per cent in a year which was relatively bad for southern mills.<sup>13</sup>

Of the year 1929 the *New York Journal of Commerce*, on

February 29, 1930, reported: "Several of the most important fine goods mills in the South showed excellent earnings in spite of the generally difficult market conditions." A leading southern brokerage house reported that a good number of companies had such a large surplus accumulated over a period of years, "with regular and substantial cash dividends paid since date of organization," that they sold at prices "that offer the investor large returns in dividends." In fact, the quick assets of some mills were practically equal to the price at which their stocks were quoted and sold. Investments in "well selected" southern mill stocks were still regarded as distinctly profitable.

Of course the mill owners, both North and South, with "agitators" organizing the workers and strikes imminent, do not care to admit publicly that they are making large profits, especially if they have no stocks to float on the open markets. So they "play down" their prosperity. We thus find many mills that complain they are losing money, actually garnering a high profit. Blanshard tells of one case of a mill manager who complained that his mill was running at a heavy loss. But at the stockholders' meeting, a few days later, an 18 per cent dividend was declared out of the year's profits! This was, of course, "small" compared with the 75 per cent dividend declared the previous year, but it could scarcely be described as "running at a loss."

"Right through the years of depression," as Blanshard points out, "a continuous flow of capital has gone into the southern mills. . . . Investors do not flock with much enthusiasm to an industry unless it is showing a substantial return. Moreover, the large and exclusively southern companies which do not publish their financial statements have revealed some large and steady dividends, even in years of depression."<sup>14</sup>

The names of a few southern dividend-payers are known through their public reports:



Avondale Mills, a chain of eight mills in Alabama, has shown a remarkable output of dividends on its stock of \$600,000. For nearly twenty-five years it has paid at rates ranging from 8% to 60%, never having fallen below 20% since 1919. Dividend rates since then have run as follows: 1919, 20%; 1920, 30%; 1921, 40%; 1922, 40%; 1923, 50%; and for the seven years, 1924 to 1930 inclusive, it has paid 60% annually.

Riverside and Dan River Cotton Mills, while cutting wages another 10% early in 1930 could report regular payments of 6% on its \$7,500,000 of preferred and 10% on its \$12,000,000 of common stock owned by a handful of stockholders.

Dunson Mills, Ga., paid dividends averaging 26% a year from 1920 to 1927. On top of this they declared a stock dividend of 100% in 1930, thereby raising capital stock from \$500,000 to \$1,000,000.

Another company paying a stock dividend of 100% in recent years (1927) was Newnan Cotton Mills of Georgia. Its 20% dividend in 1928 was thus equal to 40% on the original capital.

Marion Manufacturing Co., Marion, N. C., the company that broke a strike with bloodshed and killings in 1929, was another highly prosperous concern. Trade reports in 1929 revealed that its assets, including a large cash item, were 23 times its current liabilities. A large sum had been set aside for depreciation probably concealing hidden assets. Its net profit for 1928 amounted to about 17% per share. Dividends of 6% were less than it could easily have paid had it not put about half the year's profits into its surplus account for future dividends.

Clinchfield Mfg. Co., Marion, controlled by the same interests, was in an equally strong position, its current assets at the end of 1928 amounting to 18 times its current liabilities. Its very large depreciation account appeared to conceal hidden assets, and its profits available for dividends for the year amounted to \$12 a share, or a rate of 12%.<sup>18</sup>

The mills under the control of the Callaway interests of La Grange, Georgia, deserve special mention. In 1927 they were reported to have made more money even than during the war years. Among these mills are the following:

Unity Cotton Mills which paid cash dividends (regular plus "extras") of 39% in 1919, 1920 and 1923. In 1921, 1922 and

1924 they amounted to 24% each; in 1925, 30%; 1926, 35½%; 1927, 45%, and in 1928, 40%.

Manchester Mills, whose extra and cash dividends together came out as follows: 1919, 22%; 1920, 22%; 1921 and 1922, 12%; 1923, 27%; 1924, 20%; 1925, 17%; 1926, 23%; 1927, 31%.

Hillside Cotton Mills which paid 12% regular and 4% extra in 1928 and similar amounts in previous years.

A list of a few other southern mills with substantial profits in recent years (from 1927 to 1929) has been compiled by Labor Research Association. Some of these mills have had what the brokers call "long, unbroken dividend records." The majority paid dividends on common stock averaging from 8 per cent to 10 per cent in recent years, while a few have paid 12 per cent or more. In the list are the following 64 companies, their first names only being given for identification:

American Spinning, American Yarn and Processing, Arcadia, Atavista, Balfour, Beaumont, Belton, Bibb, Brandon, Calhoun, Cannon, Chesne, Chiquola, Clifton, Clinton, Columbus, Dacotah, Dallas, Dunean, Elm City, Enterprise, Entwhistle, Exposition, Florence, Gainesville, Georgia-Kinkaid, Gibson, Glenwood, Gossett, Graniteville, Green River, Grendel, Hamrick, Hannah Pickett, Hartsville, Highland Park, Jackson, Judson, Lancaster, Lane, Laurens, Limestone, Manetta, Martel, Martha, Monarch, Monroe, Newberry, Orr, Pacolet, Pickens, Piedmont, Poe, Ranlo, Spartan, Saxon, Thomaston, Union-Buffalo, Victor Monaghan, Wallace, Ware Shoals, West Point, Wiscassett, Woodside.

#### *Wool Manufacturing Profits*

Figures of the Wool Institute refute the impression that wool manufacturers have been all on the debit side in recent years. This notion is created by reports that the larger companies have recently made much less than the smaller ones, and that some have run at a loss. Ability of smaller companies to adjust themselves to style demands partly accounts for their greater prosperity.

These smaller companies have, in fact, made quite sizable profits. In 1928, for example, although six of the large cloth producers reported losses, some 22 moderate-sized mills made aggregate profits that more than offset the losses of the larger companies. At the same time the remaining mills in the industry were reported to have "broken even." So the industry as a whole made a profit in 1928 in contrast with reported deficits for 1926 and 1927.<sup>18</sup>

Although most wool manufacturing companies seem to be closed corporations, making no public reports, we may conclude from those that do issue reports that many of them have not been doing badly by their stockholders in recent years. A few examples:

Limerick Mills, Me., manufacturers of worsted yarns, declared a stock dividend in 1926 raising their capitalization from \$100,000 to \$300,000. So the 5% they paid in 1927 was actually at the rate of 15% on previous capitalization.

Charlottesville Woolen Mills, Va., is a very profitable mill specializing on uniform cloth. Its dividends on its \$50 par stock from 1921 on have run as follows in successive years—24%, 28%, 24%, 32%, 40%, 50%, 36%, and 24%; and equally heavy payments have been made on preferred stock which shares equally with common after 7% is paid on the latter in any year.

After two earlier stock dividends Sanford Mills, in 1926, presented each holder of \$100 par stock with four shares of new no-par stock. Subsequent dividends were equivalent to 12% in 1927, 16% in 1928 and 16% in 1929 on the original stock. Goodall Worsted Co., controlled by the same interests, was recently "reorganized." It has paid generous dividends on common stock continuously since 1898.

Julius Forstmann is head of the Forstmann and Huffman Co., of Passaic, against which the textile workers struggled in 1926-27. His palatial private yacht, the "Orion," is called the largest Diesel-engined pleasure yacht in the world, "practically a private ocean liner," which cost at least \$1,000,000. Stock of the company is closely held, so it is difficult to say how many such yachts Mr. Forstmann could purchase out of one year's profits from exploiting the Passaic workers.

Other wool manufacturing concerns that have paid dividends quite "satisfactory" for the stockholders are Wacantuck, Stillwater, Farr Alpaca, Hamilton, and Rock River.

*Botany's "Reorganization"*

The manipulations of Botany Consolidated Mills of Passaic, New Jersey, illustrate the tendency, especially among some of the larger units in the industry, to conceal huge profits by "reorganizations" and the changing of stock to a basis where dividend rates cannot be compared to a definite par value.

For the seven years ending January 1, 1924, the net profits of Botany Worsted Mills averaged about \$3,160,000 a year or about \$93 a share on each of the 34,000 common shares. To cover up these enormous profits and to pave the way for still bigger ones, a complicated "reorganization" and merger was effected. A holding company, the Botany Consolidated Mills, was organized in 1924 and immediately issued \$9,227,300 worth of 6½ per cent bonds, 100,000 shares of "Class A" 8 per cent participating preferred stock with a par value of \$50 a share, and finally, 479,000 shares of new common stock without par value.

With these stocks and bonds the directors of the new holding company were able not only to keep Botany Worsted Mills in their hands but to buy the adjacent Garfield Worsted Mills and also to lend money to two large foreign corporations thereby securing control of them and their 30 subsidiary companies with mills scattered throughout central European countries. In addition, the directors distributed practically all the 479,000 common shares to themselves!

Thus a large melon in cash and stock was cut, new properties and sources of profit both here and abroad were acquired, and the profits of later years could be neatly hidden behind the tremendously inflated no par stock. . . . It was

a wage cut by this company that started the Passaic strike of 1926-1927!

#### OTHER CAPITALIST GAINS

Profits are not the only channels through which the capitalist class takes its toll from the labor of the workers. So far we have dealt chiefly with the surplus set up and the actual amounts and rates of dividends paid on the common and preferred stocks of the companies.

Other ways by which the owning class benefits from the operations of the industry are through the purchase of bonds paying a fixed rate of interest. This is one of the first "fixed charges" taken out of the gross income from operations. High salaries of executives and directors are a further source of income for the managing and directing class. There are also the amounts paid to bankers for short term, commercial loans as well as commissions to brokers for the sale of securities, "reorganizations" and other financial "services." Finally, there are the distributing agencies which often suck out their commissions even when no dividends are going to stockholders.

#### *Salaries*

The salaries of managers and executives are frequently exorbitant, even when the mill may be cutting wages or passing dividends. During the war days and when the excess profits tax was in force, it was the custom of many mills to put majority stockholders, or others close to management, on the payroll at large salaries. This kept down the size of dividends, but did not deflect the flow of money into the pockets of the few rich stockholders. It was another clever way of dodging taxes.

This method is still in vogue, the real profits of many mills, in the South, for example, being hidden in huge salaries. During the Gastonia strike of 1929 an editor of

the *Raleigh News and Observer* stated that the salaries of executives of some of the mills ran to \$50,000 and \$60,000 a year. At the same time, Paul Blanshard learned on good authority that "one mill official receives a salary of \$75,000, one \$60,000, one \$40,000 and several \$25,000." And A. W. Smith, President of the Brandon Corp. of Greenville, South Carolina, testified before a Senate Committee in 1929 that his salary was \$37,500 while the general manager received \$15,000. It would take the average Brandon worker about 56 years to earn in wages what Mr. Smith draws in one year. Executives of the Riverside and Dan River Cotton Mills also drew salaries of \$60,000 and \$75,000 a year in 1930 while the low wages of the workers were being cut 10 per cent.

The same high salary standards prevail in northern mills. The head of a New Bedford mill recently complained of the soft jobs given to "sons or friends of those who had a pull . . . without regard to qualification in any respect." He stated that many of these agents, treasurers and superintendents were drawing \$25,000 a year, some of them for sitting in the "Boston office" of the mill and doing practically nothing.<sup>17</sup>

Wool manufacturing has shown the same tendency. It was publicly stated that the salary of William M. Wood, late President of the American Woolen Co., was about \$1,000,000 a year while additional amounts were drawn out of the company's treasury to pay his personal income tax, and other large amounts paid directly or indirectly to his henchmen, especially in the selling end of the business. And the Botany Mills of Passaic deducted \$1,570,000 from its gross income in 1917 to pay a handful of directors a "bonus" in addition to their regular salaries of \$9,000 each. Similar practices, although not now on such an exaggerated scale, have been common in the industry.

*The Selling Agency Rake-off*

Profits of middlemen, jobbers, commission men and other distributors draw a very substantial toll out of textiles. As we have noted they are often taken at the expense of profits at the production end. When under the same management as that of the mills they may show a very high profit while the mill itself is running at a loss. It is difficult to discover what percentage of profits go to these agencies but it is an admitted fact that they may be receiving a rich return even when net profits of the mills are negligible. As Senator Wheeler recently put it, "In this way the producing companies may plead poverty when wages are being discussed or tariff schedules are being considered."<sup>18</sup> This policy of a prosperous selling agency controlling a mill which operates with no apparent profit seems to be particularly characteristic of southern cotton mills, although it is also a procedure followed by some of the well known and long-established mills of the North.

*Banker Control*

As in every other industry under capitalism the bankers have played their part both by lending commercial capital and by taking their commissions from the sale of stocks and bonds. They have also, through their ownership of stocks, dominated the policies and placed their representatives on the boards of many companies. They have likewise financed the distributing agencies, and squeezed a profit out of every possible transaction connected with the making and marketing of textiles. They have done much to encourage overproduction and "forced selling" by the mills. "The banking interests are now practically in complete control of the textile situation; not only in the East but in the South . . . as a general condition, all vital decisions affecting textiles

are completed in the directorates of banks," M. D. C. Crawford, a leading textile authority, writes in 1930.<sup>19</sup>

Such institutions as the First National Bank of Boston have long been associated with and shared richly in the profits of cotton and wool manufacturing companies. The directors of First National are on the boards of leading New England mill companies such as American Woolen, Amoskeag, Pacific, Pepperell, Berkshire, Farr Alpaca, B. B. & R. Knight, Merrimack, Hamilton Woolen, Nashua, Otis, and a score of other concerns including several in the South. This bank is also, as we shall see, behind the most important merger movement in the cotton industry.

Banking houses closely connected with textiles are Lee, Higginson & Co., Kidder, Peabody & Co., Hornblower & Weeks, Hayden, Stone & Co., and Bancamerica-Blair Corp. The latter has a strong hold in the Botany Consolidated Mills and was reported in 1930 as backing certain merger projects in the New England cotton industry.

Many mills are held in trust by the bankers who control them. In Fall River, for example, the bankers control the majority of the stock of the mills, thus dominating their policies. The leading local banks of Fall River are now in the hands of the banking house of Kidder, Peabody & Co., which backs other mills in New England. The tendency for mills to fall into the hands of the bankers is similar to that in England where the declining cotton industry is completely in the grasp of finance capital which is busily "re-organizing" it for the production of more profits.

#### MERGER MOVEMENTS

The bankers have also been behind the merging and consolidating that has been going on in the industry. Whenever an opportunity for profits opens, the bankers are certain to be there. They have seen prospects of increased profits through textile mergers.



At the outset the fact must be reiterated that both the cotton and wool industries are "strikingly individualistic in their spirit" as W. D. Hines, former President of the Cotton Textile Institute, puts it. In spite of consolidations already effected there remains, especially in the cotton industry, "an exceptionally large number of separate individual organizations." This is due largely to the comparatively small capital investment necessary to build and equip a plant. The number of separate establishments has already been noted as well as the tendency for the big plants—those with a product valued at over \$1,000,000 a year—to manufacture the bulk of the products and to employ the great majority of the workers.

In spite of the intense "individualism" of the industry, certain forces are driving the mills toward the formation of larger managerial units. The urgent need to control the market, which would be possible only with a few large units, is recognized by the capitalists. With large units, and the industry concentrated in a few hands, they contend, curtailment of production might be more nearly effected. Bulk buying of raw materials, production economies, the elimination of obsolete machinery, the wiping out of various wastes, might be achieved through larger organizations which are indispensable to a thoroughgoing capitalist rationalization of the industry. Besides, the companies, if larger and stronger, would be in a better position to resist the powerful buying groups that now play them against one another and force them into price-cutting battles. Amalgamations of wholesalers and retailers, chain stores, department stores, and mail order houses, have put the small mills at a disadvantage in selling their product. Large mill organizations could devise more profitable methods of distribution, and better advertising and research could be carried on. Finally, the mill owners believe, exports could be advanced more vigorously through a large organization

competent to fight foreign cartels and amalgamations.

Although they are not agreed on what kind it should be, most of the textile capitalists recognize the advantages in some kind of consolidation. Typical expressions are those of Wm. R. Bassett, engineer, that "the textile business simply needs the organization of large-scale business," and J. O. Ames of the Lonsdale Co., who says, "The only permanent relief that can be expected for the cotton industry will come from consolidations and mergers."

In his address at the last annual convention of the National Association of Cotton Manufacturers, Floyd W. Jefferson, head of the Textile Export Association, predicted an alignment of mills that would bring into existence "counterparts of the United States Steel Corporation and of the Bethlehem Steel Company." He foresaw a "rich harvest" for the "large capitalistic combination" which brings about the "right kind of merger."

Various types of integration have been suggested. Some propose a gigantic holding corporation owned by the present mills and selling agencies to be initiated by some "large capitalistic group." Horizontal mergers of mills making the same type of product have been pushed by others, the Berkshire group being typical of this kind. Others propose vertical mergers absorbing mills that spin the yarn as well as other units right up through the finishing and retail selling organizations. Then, there are the so-called circular mergers, a variation of the horizontal form, composed of non-competing manufacturers making different but related products that can be marketed by a single sales force. Others combine features from all three types.

Vertical mergers exist in cases where clothing companies have taken over or grown out of wool manufacturing concerns. For example, in the Oregon City Woolen Mills we find a mill producing cloth for three clothing plants which in turn feed eight retail stores. The slogan of this com-

bination is "from wool to the public." It does everything but grow the sheep. So also we find the Curlee Clothing Co. of St. Louis controlling the Mayfield Woolen Mills of Kentucky, the combination producing clothing "from the sheep's back to the finished garment." Then there is the big Standard Textile Products Corp., making oil cloth, leather cloth and the like which operates its own very profitable cotton mills in four southern states; Marshall Field & Co., and some of the chain stores which have their own cotton mills in the South; Manhattan Shirt Co., which runs its own cotton mills; and, finally, almost all the big tire and rubber companies, such as Firestone, Dunlop, Goodyear, Goodrich, United States and Fisk, which have their own tire fabric plants. Goodyear goes even further and owns a cotton-growing company in Arizona.

Another type of combination shows a grouping of mills around a power company. The Insull interests, for example, have already, through a subsidiary, the Central Maine Power Co., taken over four good-sized cotton mills in Maine with a total of 355,000 spindles and 9,300 looms. The Duke Power Co. owns several mills in North Carolina, controls certain others and has money invested in others such as the Erwin chain of mills in North Carolina. It also controls certain railway lines which have great influence over many southern mills. The Alabama Power Co., an operating unit of Southeastern Power and Light Co., organized the Alabama Mills Co., which recently constructed a chain of ten mills in that state, all of them, of course, buying their "juice" from Alabama Power Co. Other power company merging of cotton mills involving several million spindles was discussed in textile circles in 1930.

### *Mergers in Cotton*

Some of the larger units in the cotton industry up to date are simply the result of gradual horizontal merging. For

example, the Associated Textile Companies, controlled by William M. Butler of Massachusetts, is composed of the Butler Mill, Quisset Mill and New Bedford Cotton Mills Corp. of New Bedford, and the Hoosac Cotton Mills of North Adams, comprising altogether over 300,000 spindles and 7,000 looms.

Other typical large units, formed in much the same way are the following:

**Consolidated Textile Corp.** Its nucleus, when formed in 1919, was composed of four mills which grew shortly to about 27 plants including some 733,000 spindles, about 500,000 of them in the New England states. It is at least 100% overcapitalized.

**The Kendall Company.** A consolidation of five companies with nine mills, six of them in the South. It also combined recently with the chief distributor of its product, Bauer and Black, of Chicago.

**Lonsdale Co., R. I.** Also the result of absorption of mills in Rhode Island, Massachusetts and South Carolina embracing about 390,000 spindles.

**Martel Mills, Inc.** A merger of seven mills in North and South Carolina, Georgia and Delaware. Is controlled in turn by Milwood Corp., which controls about 320,000 cotton spindles as well as several woolen mills.

**The Otis Co., Mass.,** with five mills, is the result of a merger with another Massachusetts company and one in New Hampshire.

After absorbing Massachusetts Cotton Mills of Lowell, Granite Mills of Fall River, and mills in Georgia, Pepperell Mfg. Co. now constitutes one of the largest cotton companies in the country with 410,000 spindles.

**William Whitman Co.** A selling agency that has a controlling or substantial interest in four mills in Lawrence, three in New Bedford and three mills in the South. Together they make a complementary line of staple cotton and wool goods. This is a typical example of a group of mills managed by a selling house.

Mill merging in the South has taken much the same forms. Cannon Mills with 433,000 spindles, Brandon Corp., and the Gossett interests recently unified their control over mills which formerly were loosely grouped. Certain other capi-

talists have extended their control by adding a few individual mills to their holdings. Chains of mills in the South have been gradually merged by such family groups as Callaway, Erwin, Cone, Springs, Comer, and Hightower, while Deering, Milliken and Co., and other large New York selling houses control chains of mills. Rumors of large consolidations of combed yarn mills to include the Armstrong-Winget group of eleven mills were circulated in 1929, but nothing definite has yet resulted.

Fine goods interests have chiefly been involved in the most recent consolidations in the North. One of the first of these to get under way was directed by Homer Loring, former head and reorganizer of the Boston and Maine Railroad. Backed by Kidder, Peabody & Co., brokers, he was looked upon by some Fall River mill owners as the "savior" of their failing mills. At first it was thought he would buy up mill properties for good prices; but actually he achieved his purpose by first bringing about a merger of the three local banks. He was then in a position to dictate terms to the mills which he bought up cheap when they were on the verge of liquidation. In this way he took over, for example, the Arkwright Mills and the Chase Mills, and tied them up with three successful converting houses in New York, forming a consolidation known as the United Merchants and Manufacturers, Inc., which has also taken in several mills in South Carolina and one in Connecticut. The group thus already represents three converting houses, two finishing units, three rayon weaving plants and eight cotton mills equipped with some 300,000 spindles.

Next we have the Berkshire Fine Spinning Associates, formed in 1929 out of the Berkshire Mfg. Co. of Adams, Massachusetts, previously the largest fine goods organization in the country, the Greylock Mills of North Adams, the Coventry Co. of Anthony, Rhode Island, Valley Falls Co., of Albion, Rhode Island, and the Fort Dummer Mills of

Brattleboro, Vermont. This made a horizontal combination said to produce about one-fifth of the combed lawn cotton goods in the country. In 1930, the prosperous King Philip Mill of Fall River was added, thus making a total of 636,000 spindles and 14,500 looms in the company. Plans for taking over other mills that would raise the number of spindles to over a million were then under way.

A much larger merger project was in process of development in the fall of 1930. Both the Loring and Berkshire interests as well as those of Butler and leading New Bedford mills were reported to be behind the new General Cotton Corp., incorporated in September, 1930. It was described as a sort of cartel or holding company backed by the First National Bank of Boston.

This corporation plans to "stabilize" the market for fine goods by buying up so-called weak mills, holding their spindles out of use so they will not get into "outside hands" and thereby, as one writer puts it, initiate "another siege of terrible competition." It hopes to set the price in fine goods and to penalize any of the smaller fry who might attempt to undercut it.

General Cotton Corp. first took over the Davis Mills and Lincoln Mfg. Co. of Fall River, and workers of the latter were told on September 28th that "their services would be disposed of the following week."<sup>20</sup> Some 500 were laid off—a typical example of the immediate effects on the workers of capitalist rationalization.

The number of spindles to be eventually included in the new holding combine were placed as high as 4,000,000 with at least 1,000,000 to be junked as a part of the program of "salvation" for the fine goods industry of New England. Possibly 85 per cent of the New Bedford spindles are to be included in the corporation.

Such a sweeping attempt at control of the fine goods

branch of cottons shows the unmistakable trend toward consolidation in this branch of the industry.

### *Trends in Woolen and Worsted*

As there are still over 800 companies in the woolen and worsted industry scrambling for orders and cutting prices there has naturally been much discussion of ways of getting them together into mergers. We have already mentioned certain vertical combinations connected with a few clothing firms. But by far the largest company in the whole industry is the American Woolen Company.

Formed in 1899, during the period of trust building, it bought up mills in various parts of the country from Maine to Kentucky until it had nearly 60 mills in operation.

With its 750,000 spindles representing 30 per cent of those in the whole wool manufacturing industry, this company has held a dominant place in its field. It has operated as high as 70 per cent of the machinery of the country engaged in making men's worsted wear. It has had less of a hold on woolens although it has operated as much as 50 per cent of the machinery working on woolens for men's wear. Worsteds have been more staple and standardized and the big company with its mass production methods could make more out of them. Woolens, on the other hand, are more affected by styles so that smaller companies with greater flexibility have been able to compete more easily in making this class of goods.

American Woolen Co. has, of course, had its own selling agency and research department. Although not paying dividends to stockholders in the most recent years and although "milked" by its late President, William Wood, its accomplishments are the envy of some of the smaller fry in the industry. One of them, pleading for a similar big unit in the carded woolen field, refers to American Woolen's "marvelous results," and adds: "This great consolidation

has been built up from a few comparatively minor mills into the greatest enterprise of its kind in the world and its operation has resulted in vast profits to itself and great advancement for the entire industry." <sup>21</sup>

Rumors of mergers of smaller wool mills have been current in recent years, but as yet none of any great importance has been effected. The American Woolen Co. itself has been engaged in rationalizing its plant, closing down its least efficient mills and turning workers out on the streets. At the same time some of the small independent mills, engaged in style lines and specialty goods, have been making substantial profits, and thus have not been interested in joining in any larger concern.

In general, it seems clear that there is an increasingly distinct trend toward consolidations in certain branches of the cotton industry, notably among fine goods manufacturers. Some of the larger units have increased profits by merging and adding to the number of mills under their control. On the other hand, some of the smaller mills in both cotton specialties and woolen manufacturing are making big profits without merging. In wool some of the larger ones, at least in recent years, have been unable to pay dividends on their heavily watered stock.

But in the long run, the drift in both industries toward larger management units—regardless of the size of the plants—seems inevitable. The struggle for the survival of the fittest, the lure of larger profits, the pressure of the banks, the desire for control of production and for high prices, will force more and more mills into consolidations, thus increasing the control of finance capital over the industry.

What this means for the workers in unemployment, wage cuts, and speed-up, we shall see in later chapters.



## CHAPTER IV

### WORKERS IN COTTON AND WOOL

COTTON, woolen and worsted mills, exclusive of other textile branches, give employment to approximately 622,000 people. Industries directly allied with them employ an additional 162,000. Who are these workers? How many of them are women and children? What rôle does Negro labor play in the mills? What nationalities are found there? What kind of workers have filled the needs of the rapidly industrialized South?

#### SKILL

Less than half a century ago large groups of textile operatives were highly skilled workers. This was especially true of mule spinners and weavers. Fathers taught their jobs to their sons and prided themselves on their skill and craftsmanship. In many of the fine goods centers, such as New Bedford, one still sees the remnants of this vanishing race of skilled operatives. They are men with years of experience in the trade, usually old men out of jobs. They look on dejectedly as new machines render their special "skills" obsolete, while comparatively untrained fingers keep production moving. In the newer centers, as in the South, spinners and weavers of this older type scarcely exist, except in a few fine goods mills.

In their sharp competition for profits, textile capitalists have done everything they could think of to reduce labor costs. They have introduced much automatic machinery, requiring a minimum of attention from the workers. They have displaced as much labor as possible with these machines

and used as cheap labor as they could find to run them. The machines require little or no skill to operate. Their introduction has transformed the mass of American textile workers into semiskilled and unskilled laborers.

The ideal machine for the employers is one which operates itself and requires no attention. This manufacturers' ideal is, of course, not yet completely achieved. To a large extent, however, machinery has replaced the skill, intelligence, initiative and experience of past generations of textile workers. Speed standards are now set by the machine. The worker must keep up with it or get out.

There are, to be sure, many exceptions to this general rule. Loom fixers, for example, are still skilled mechanics (though less so than formerly) in both cotton and wool mills. Wool sorting still requires much experience. The few remaining cotton and woolen mule spinners still require long periods of apprenticeship. The tedious and monotonous "drawing in" of woolen threads cannot be picked up quickly by new operatives. Wool weaving requires much more dexterity and is more exacting than the weaving of cotton. Some other processes of wool manufacturing are also much less automatic than those used in cotton plants.

But all these skilled groups constitute only a small fraction of the working force. Since the perfection of the revolving-flat cards, carders require very little skill. And there are only a few of the relatively skilled card-grinders.

Spinning on ring-frame spindles can be learned within a short period, the work of a spinner now being largely confined to joining the ends of yarns when they break. Spooling once represented a relatively high labor cost until a mechanical knot-tying device, worn on the hand of the spooler, reduced this operation to merely putting the ends of the broken thread into this small machine and applying a little thumb pressure. Warping and beaming are relatively simple processes, and "slashing" while a heavy type

of work, and carried on in high temperatures, can easily be learned in a few weeks.

"Drawing in" is now done largely by machine, particularly on plain goods. Automatic looms now perform many operations formerly performed by the weaver. As one company manufacturing textile machinery recently advertised, "The weaver's job is a snap if her sliding bar stop motion has the new device that opens the warp where the broken end is down. Nothing to do but pick up the end, tie it in and pull on the shipper." In general, cotton and wool workers are now essentially machine tenders, piecing the ends of yarn when it breaks, keeping their machines supplied with material and "running full." In many of the largest mills in the North, cotton weavers, for example, are put on a full quota of looms after only two weeks of training, while full production is required in many other occupations after a "breaking in" period varying from two days to a week. In the South, where the mills have installed the most modern equipment, they take workers directly from the farms into the mills. There, without training, they soon carry on full production as spinners, weavers, doffers, or what not.

The outlook of the workers is being rapidly modified by these changes. In those sections of the industry where machines have displaced former skills, craft consciousness is giving way to a growing spirit of solidarity among all workers in the plants.

#### WOMEN WORKERS

One needs but to stand in front of any textile mill when the workers are "knocking off" for the day to be vividly impressed by the great numbers of weary women streaming out through the gates. The men may linger a bit along the way "for a puff," but the women must rush from the

speed-up of their spindles and looms to their domestic duties and worries.

The textile industry is a life industry. "Once a mill worker always a mill worker" is a common expression in textile centers. Among no group of textile workers is this better illustrated than among the women. They may marry and have children and in some cases may stay out of the mills for a few years. But invariably they drift back for the remainder of their working lives after a vain economic struggle to meet the needs of a growing family on their husbands' meager pay.

Historically, the textile industry has always been the greatest industrial employer of female labor. In 1850, women workers constituted 64 per cent of the total working force employed in American cotton mills. Spinning and weaving were especially the work of women, their smaller hands enabling them to handle the yarn with greater dexterity than men. Besides, women and children have always been capitalism's great reservoir of cheap labor.

As technological developments proceeded, machinery, as we have seen, tended to give less and less prominence to skill. Differences between worker and worker, between men and women, began to disappear. Whoever could keep pace with the speed of the machine and show low labor cost per unit of production was given the job.

Women undertook these new jobs and have managed to hold their own on an approximately equal basis with men workers, doing even the heaviest kind of work. When, for example, it was suggested at a conference of employers' representatives that men were doing heavier types of work in the mills than the women, Mr. Ignatius McNulty, head of the labor department of the American Woolen Co., replied, "That isn't always so. In the modern worsted weaving room the woman is working under exactly the same conditions [as the men]. There are the same number of looms

and under modern production methods she will be working the same number of hours producing the same grade and quantity of work."<sup>1</sup>

In 1926, the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics computed that 44 per cent of the cotton mill workers and 45 per cent of the workers in woolen and worsted mills were women.\* Based upon the total number of workers in these industries enumerated in the 1927 Census of Manufactures it would, therefore, appear that there are approximately 205,700 women working in cotton mills and 79,500 in woolen and worsted mills. In cotton mills women constitute 10 per cent of the beamer tenders, 93 per cent of the creelers, or tiers-in, 12 per cent of the doffers, 96 per cent of the drawers-in, 45 per cent of the drawing frame tenders, 54 per cent of the speeder tenders, 95 per cent of the frame spinners and 47 per cent of the weavers. In woolen and worsted mills the comber tenders are 49 per cent women, doffers 93 per cent, gill box tenders 59 per cent, frame spinners 98 per cent and weavers 33 per cent. Women are employed in almost every department of the mills. They are fewest in some of the preparatory and carding departments and most numerous in the spinning rooms.

Julia Hanlon, a 71-year-old woman weaver in the Wamsutta Mill in New Bedford, typifies the women workers who are forced to spend their entire life in the mills. She began to work at seven years of age, her mother having to swear that she was nine in order to get her the job. She has spent 64 years in the same mill. The wealthy Wamsutta Mill makes no move to pension her, but last year the New Bedford Chamber of Commerce gave her a gold pin, in token of her long service.

In an investigation of nine typical northern and nine southern mills, The Women's Bureau of the U. S. Depart-

\* There are more women than men in a worsted mill, while men predominate in the manufacture of woolens.

ment of Labor found women of every age in each. Some 4.2 per cent were under 16; 23.3 per cent were between 16 and 20; 31.8 per cent were from 30 to 50; 4.4 per cent were between 50 and 60; and 1.5 per cent were 60 years of age and over. The same study showed that 36 per cent of these women worked in mills fewer than five years; 40 per cent worked between five and 20 years; 24 per cent were in mills more than 20 years.<sup>2</sup>

These figures show that women are not mere transients in textiles, waiting for a chance to marry and escape the work in the mills. They spend their whole lives, from young girlhood to old age, in the mills. Forty per cent of them are married. Another 13 per cent are widowed, divorced or separated. It has been computed that about 94 per cent of the women in both wool and cotton mills live at home or with relatives. They are tied to their machines for life.

In southern mill villages women are virtually required by mill owners to work, for, in order to secure a dwelling, each family must contribute its quota of workers to the mill. The textile industry is one in which the workers are dependent upon the "family wage." This means that the wages of all members of the family are required to hold it off from starvation.

The economic strain is so great that it is the common practice in textile communities for pregnant women to work until two or three weeks before childbirth. Five to six weeks after the child is born they are back at their old jobs in the mill.

Under these circumstances, "home life" becomes a mockery and children grow up neglected, aimless and shiftless. The women are usually up at 4 or 5 A.M. getting breakfast and making other preparations for the little children who must remain home alone during the day. During the lunch period of 30 to 45 minutes many rush home, prepare a hasty meal, look after the younger members of the family, and

are back at their posts in the mill for the afternoon shift. Then, after the day's work of 10, 11 or 12 hours come the cooking of the evening meal and the countless other tasks of domestic life—marketing, cooking, sweeping, scrubbing, sewing, washing and ironing.

It is small wonder that women are sometimes seen to fall asleep over their machines. "All time work, night, day—no wonder me skeeny," was the way one foreign woman worker of Passaic put it. Nor is it surprising that the women have played an outstanding militant rôle in many textile strikes, leading the picket lines, resisting police brutality and organizing their fellow workers.

#### CHILD LABOR

It requires a great deal of diplomacy on the part of the spinning room overseer to bring all his help up to the same standards of efficiency due to the fact that most of them are children. . . . They have to be constantly watched or they will go from bad to worse in order to make more time for play or rest. The overseer should never give up until he gets them to where they will give him a good day's work with a minimum of trouble.

This is the advice given to mill bosses by a cotton mill manager writing in the *Textile World*, an employers' magazine.

Workers complain bitterly of child labor in the mills and bear witness that the above advice is rigidly followed. "I was always in the mill by half past five in the morning, at the very latest. Sometimes at five o'clock," testified a little girl at the Loray Mill, during the Gastonia strike. "Most always when six o'clock came at night, I was too tired to drag myself home. . . . Then the boss men were always around. . . . If a girl just sits down for a few minutes when the frames are clean, he comes around and cusses and makes you go over and help some one else."

Adult workers bear out these complaints in every detail.

"Children work in the mills. I have seen boys not over ten but they said they were 14. They work a 12-hour shift," wrote an experienced woman worker in a North Carolina mill.<sup>3</sup> "While the law states that children can't work in the mills under the age of 14, many at the age of 12 enter the mills and give their age as 14. I began work in the mill when I was 13. My sister entered the mill at the age of 12," a young delegate to a convention of the National Textile Workers' Union told the writers. "I was only 13 when I started to work in the Brookside Mill," said another.

Older women workers, in both northern and southern mills, told government investigators that "they were so little when they first went to work that they had to stand on boxes to reach the bobbins." A total of 2,003 female workers were investigated at that time. Over 4.5 per cent were found to be under 16 years of age. Of the total number of children and adults 64.4 per cent reported to the investigators that they had begun work in the mills before reaching 16 years of age.<sup>4</sup> Thus a large part of the entire mill population has had its life blighted by child labor.

The proportion of mill workers who are under 16 years of age has declined in recent years partly because of labor's agitation against the evil and partly because the highly mechanized processes of to-day require greater physical endurance and concentration than the children possess. Boys work as doffers in spinning rooms while girls are more likely to be found doing the spinning proper. Girls are found in great numbers tending spoolers in the spooling departments while boys bring up the full bobbins and cart away empty ones. Young girls are also used as battery fillers for the looms. Children work in other departments, but not in such large numbers.

In 1889, 8.9 per cent of all workers in worsted mills and 6 per cent in the woolen branch were under 16 years of



age. In 1890, 10.7 per cent of all cotton mill operatives were in this age group. The last published official enumeration taken was in the 1920 census when it was found that more boys and girls between 10 and 16 years of age were employed in textiles than in any other manufacturing industry. At that time cotton textiles employed 21,875 children, who constituted 5.8 per cent of all workers in the industry. Woolen and worsteds employed 7,077 children, 4.8 per cent of the working force. Since then the proportions, according to close observers, have remained approximately the same.

The laws of the various textile states are often not enforced. But even if they were they would offer little comfort to the child workers they are supposed to protect. These laws are as follows:

LEGAL WORKING AGE AND HOURS FOR CHILDREN UNDER 16

<i>State</i>	<i>Age Permitted by Law to Begin Work</i>	<i>Hours Allowed per Day</i>	<i>Hours Allowed per Week</i>
Alabama .....	14	8	48
Arkansas .....	14	8	48
Connecticut .....	14	8	48
Georgia .....	14 or 12*	10	60
Maine .....	14	8	54**
Maryland .....	14	8	48
Massachusetts .....	14	8	48
Mississippi .....	12 (in textiles)	8	44
New Hampshire ....	14	10¼	54
New Jersey .....	14	8	48
North Carolina ....	14 (some exceptions 12-14)	11	60 §
Pennsylvania .....	14	9	51
Rhode Island .....	15	9	48
South Carolina .....	14	10	55
Tennessee .....	14	8	48
Texas .....	15	8	48
Vermont .....	14	8	48
Virginia .....	14	8	44

\* If orphaned, child of widow, or during school vacation. \*\* Applies to girls only. § If completed 4th grade of school.

The children are forced into mill labor through economic necessity. The Women's Bureau of the U. S. Department of Labor picked at random 100 women textile workers who had gone into the mills at an early age. It asked them to state their reasons for leaving school to go to work. "I had to go to work"; "My father died"; and "I had to help at home," were typical answers. "I haven't had no more than four or five years of schooling" is the typical answer of a mill worker to questions concerning his education. In textile communities an "educated" worker is considered to be one who can read and perhaps also write.

The laws, it can be seen, permit intense exploitation of children. In Georgia and North Carolina children of 14 may work a 60-hour week; in South Carolina 55 hours a week; in Maine and New Hampshire 54 hours. Only two states set the limit as low as 44 hours.

Inadequate as they are, these laws, as well as others regulating working conditions of children and adults, are flouted by the mill owners, and are practically a dead letter in some states. Testimony before a subcommittee of the U. S. Senate, in May, 1929, brought out that a South Carolina law that requires attendance at school until 14 years of age is "totally disregarded"; that if any one brought an action against a mill in Tennessee for working a child under the age of 14 "their families would be blacklisted by every other mill in the country"; that the father of a North Carolina child had been likewise "ostracized all around" even though the action had been brought by others than himself; and that law or no law, "children at the age of ten years are working" in Tennessee.<sup>5</sup> Parents of illegally employed children, as well as the child laborers themselves, are encouraged and forced to falsify their ages. The laws are being winked at by the employers and not enforced by state or local authorities.

Southern mills are not the only ones to disregard child

labor laws. A textile worker employed on the outskirts of Boston told the writer that in his mill the state investigators check up the hours of minors only by examining their time cards. "So they have the kids punch out at 5 o'clock and then go back to work," he added. In Fall River the secretary of a weavers' union received reports that "youths under the legal age for night employment have been told in some instances to hide when information is received that the factory inspector is on his way to the plant." "Laws on a statute book and laws adequately and humanely enforced may be two different things," hinted a publication of the Massachusetts Child Labor Committee late in 1928.<sup>8</sup> The Pennsylvania Public Education and Child Labor Association has pointed out that the law of that state, passed in 1915 and practically unrevised since, lacks teeth to punish violators. The Pennsylvania legislature has failed also to make adequate appropriations for the enforcement of the law.

The recent report of a special committee of the House of Representatives of South Carolina embodies an official condemnation of gross violations of the labor laws. This committee was appointed March 13, 1929, to investigate the conduct of the Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture, Commerce and Industries of that state. Its final report declares in part:

The exhibit speaks for itself . . . [it shows] violations of the criminal laws of South Carolina in regard to the regulations of working conditions in textile manufacturing corporations. In practically every instance the commissioner assumed absolute control over the reported instances of the violations . . . and *almost invariably excused same*, even though many of the violations were second offenses, third offenses and even as high as fifth offenses.

The report further found that:

There are 232 textile factories in South Carolina, and that there are only two field inspectors who are charged with the

duty of inspecting and investigating the same. . . . The textile factories and the conditions thereat could not be inspected and investigated more frequently than three times a year under the present force. The textile corporation can, with some degree of certainty, calculate almost the exact day on which the inspector will arrive at its plant. The laws can be observed on the day when the inspector is present, and for four months thereafter the laws can be disregarded without being detected.

#### YOUNG WORKERS

As distinguished from child labor, "young workers" include that group between the ages of 16 and 21, inclusive. Practically every person in a textile center goes to work before he is 21. Few get beyond 16 or 17 without going into the mills.

The child labor laws, of course, give no protection to workers in this age group, and only a few states have laws which prohibit young workers on certain kinds of dangerous machinery. So far as effective protective legislation goes in textile states the young worker is in the same position as an adult worker and exposed to practically the same occupational hazards.

Speed-up systems have given greater impetus than ever to the influx of young workers into the mills. Many of the younger children cannot keep pace with the machinery in all departments and, as we have indicated, the number of processes at which they can work is limited. On the other hand, the older workers, especially those over 45, are unable to carry the speeded-up work load. On all sides so-called "efficiency experts" and "industrial engineers" are advising the replacement of older "hands" by young workers whose youth and strength make them ideal employees under present conditions. The only exceptions to this policy are among the relatively few jobs where skill and long training are still required. The 1920 census, for example, showed only

208 out of a total of 15,961 loom fixers under 20 years of age.

It is extremely difficult to estimate the exact number of young workers employed to-day in the mills. In the first place the last published census of occupations was taken in 1920, whereas the speed-up system, and the replacement of old by young workers has been greatly intensified since that date. Secondly, the census divides its age groups into "16 years," "17 years," "18 and 19 years" and "20 to 24 years." There is no way of telling how many fell into the 20 and 21 year age groups and the picture presented of young workers in the mills is therefore incomplete.

The 1920 Census of Occupations showed the following number of workers between 16 and 19 years of age inclusive, in the cotton, woolen and worsted and dyeing and finishing mills, and the percentage that they constitute of the total number of workers:

<i>Industry</i>	YOUNG WORKERS			<i>Percentage of all Workers</i>
	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Total</i>	
Cotton Mills.....	35,197	41,475	76,672	20.2
Woolen & Worsted Mills	9,928	14,921	24,849	16.7
Textile Dyeing, Finish- ing and Printing.....	2,848	1,716	4,562	16.1

These figures are obviously incomplete for they fail to include the large number of workers 20 and 21 years of age. It is estimated that from 7 per cent to 9 per cent of the total working force in textiles is made up of 20 and 21 year old workers. Comparative statistics reveal that the number of young workers in the textile mills is greater than in any other manufacturing industry in the country.<sup>†</sup>

#### NEGRO LABOR IN TEXTILES

The southern states contain over 9,500,000 Negroes, who constitute about 25 per cent of the total population of that



WINDING DEPARTMENT OF A GEORGIA COTTON MILL



*—Photo International News Reel*

WOMEN WORKERS RESIST SOLDIERS IN SOUTHERN STRIKE

section of the country. As these same states now contain more than half of the active cotton spindles in the country, we might logically expect to find large numbers of Negro workers in the mills. But mill labor in the South has been made a white man's job. Negroes have been largely excluded from mill jobs by the mill bosses whose policy is "divide the workers," and exploit each group separately. In South Carolina the Negro workers are even legally Jim Crowed out of jobs. A law on the statute books prohibits the employment of Negro and white workers on the same machine.

How the ruling class employs racial antagonisms, in order to prevent working class organization, is best shown by recent activities of the Left Wing political and union groups in the South. When Stephen Graham, a white organizer from the North, addressed a meeting of Negroes in Norfolk, Virginia, he was arrested and placed on trial charged with "inciting Negroes to rebellion" against whites. When the National Textile Workers' Union called out on strike the white and Negro workers in the Loray Mill at Gastonia, North Carolina, the Charlotte and Gastonia papers leveled their main charge against the new union for "breaking the color line." Handbills distributed by the mill owners to the striking workers attempted to discredit the union in the same way. "You believe in White Supremacy. Would you belong to a union which opposes White Supremacy?" read one of them.

Organizers of the National Textile Workers Union were among the six indicted for "inciting to insurrection"—a charge carrying the death penalty,—at Atlanta, Georgia, in the summer of 1930. They were arrested at a meeting of Negro and white workers held to protest against unemployment and lynchings. The case has not yet (October, 1930) come to trial.

If they can be secured to work cheaper than whites, Negro masons are good enough to put up the walls of a mill, install



the machinery and build the streets of the village. But when Negro men or women seek work in these same mills, they are discriminated against in all save the most menial occupations, for which it is difficult to get white help at the wages paid. Deprived of other jobs the Negro worker is driven by desperate economic necessity to accept disagreeable work under any conditions.

While Negroes have not been numerous in the working force of textile plants, their numbers have increased as the industry expanded in the South. There were only 2,949 Negroes in the textile mills of the whole country in 1900. This number increased to 13,401 in 1910 and to 24,794 in 1920. In 1920 cotton mills employed 16,465 and woolen and worsted mills 661.

About 85 per cent of the Negroes in textiles worked in the five states of Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Alabama and Massachusetts.

In Louisiana, where the number of textile workers, however, is comparatively small, the percentage of Negroes was greater than in any other state. It amounted to 26 per cent of the total number of workers employed in the manufacture of cotton goods. In other states the proportion of Negroes to the total number of workers was: Georgia, 12.8 per cent; Alabama, 11 per cent; South Carolina, 7 per cent; North Carolina, 4.6 per cent, and Massachusetts, 1.3 per cent.

Particularly in southern states, where racial discrimination is most rampant, Negroes do almost exclusively the unskilled and irksome work. In that region 87 per cent of the Negroes in cotton mills are classed as laborers. The women are sweepers, scrubbers, cleaners of lint from the machines, pickers of waste matter from raw cotton, battery hands who fill the frames and looms with yarn, and haulers of roving. The men do the rough yard work, trucking, bale breaking and steam boiler firing. They also serve as porters and work in the picker rooms.

But rationalization is rapidly reducing the relative number of Negroes per plant. New processes are eliminating many of their jobs. New vacuum devices are supplanting the Negro machine cleaners. Improved bale breakers are coming into general use. Automatic stokers are being installed in the few remaining local steam power plants. Conveyors and other mechanical devices for handling material also throw out numbers of Negro hand truckers.

We shall see later how the wages of Negroes fall considerably below those of white workers. Their hours and conditions, moreover, are almost unbelievably bad. In one state where conditions were investigated by the Women's Bureau in 1925 it was stated that, "In four textile establishments . . . Negro women were employed but no toilet facilities were provided for them."<sup>8</sup> Another study by the same bureau reported that in a mill where Negroes were required to work from 6 A.M. until 8 P.M., the workers "were reported by the management to be working only the legitimate 10 hours a day because they were given 45 minutes each day for a midday dinner and were working only intermittently all during the day. According to the workers themselves, however, they had 'plenty to do during the whole 14 hours, and must be on the job all the time.'"<sup>9</sup>

Either on the very outskirts of a southern mill village, or on privately owned land immediately adjacent to it, there usually stand several run-down, unpainted houses. In most cases they contain neither running water nor lights and present a picture of misery and squalor. These shacks are the "homes" of the few Negro workers in the mill. Confined to a few departments, they are likewise put off by themselves in a little corner on the edge of the mill village usually called "Nigger Town" by the others in the community.

Because of low earnings standards, bad sanitation, poor ventilation, and improper dwellings, the death rate of Negroes in the South is approximately two and one-half times

greater than among the whites. Among unskilled white laborers, it is nearly twice as great as among the professional class.

The real explanation for discrimination against Negroes lies in the tactics of the employing class. With thousands of white southern farmers being ruined each year, and forced to take work in the mills on any terms, the bosses feel that they have a sufficient supply of cheap labor, and they strive to keep the working class divided. So they use the race issue. The Negroes are barred from the mills and they and the white workers are encouraged to fight each other instead of the bosses. Political disfranchisement is another weapon used by the employing class in attempting to divide the Negro and white workers and to stir up social and racial prejudice.

Where these tactics succeed, effective working class solidarity is prevented and, at the same time, the Negroes are kept as a labor surplus to be used as a club over the heads of the white workers. Threats are made or implied that Negroes will be brought in if the whites join a union or strike. Through these methods the companies hope to keep down the wage standards of all workers in the mill community.

#### FOREIGN-BORN WORKERS

Since the period immediately preceding the Civil War, the textile industry has employed more foreign-born workers than most American industries. The earliest immigrants from Great Britain were mostly skilled mechanics. What the manufacturers wanted, however, was unskilled, cheap labor, as technological changes were eliminating the necessity of skill and making strength and machine-tending the chief labor qualifications.

Agents were, therefore, sent to Europe. Glowing accounts of conditions in America were printed in the foreign press.

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Steamship companies advertised extensively, and everything possible was done to bring foreign labor into the American mills. The first to come were the Irish, French Canadians, Poles and Germans. After 1870, the employers recruited Italians and other races from southern and eastern Europe in great numbers. By 1920 the Census of Occupations showed that about 47 per cent of the cotton mill workers, 76 per cent of woolen and worsted workers, and 69 per cent of the workers in dyeing and finishing plants were either foreign-born or of foreign parentage:

<i>Industry</i>	<i>Total Number of Work- ers *</i>	<i>Foreign-born</i>		<i>Native-born of Foreign Parentage</i>	
		<i>Num- ber</i>	<i>Per Cent</i>	<i>Num- ber</i>	<i>Per Cent</i>
Cotton Mills .....	378,769	108,488	28.7	69,540	18.4
Woolen and Worsted Mills .....	148,645	64,830	43.6	47,635	32.0
Textile Dyeing, Print- ing and Finishing...	28,341	11,190	39.4	8,458	29.8

Undoubtedly the restriction of immigration has changed these proportions, but to just what extent will not be apparent until the 1930 census is published.

Predominating races among the foreign-born are French-Canadians, Portuguese, English, Irish, Greeks, Italians, Hungarians, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Syrians, Armenians and Poles. In Lowell the Greeks predominate; in Lawrence the Italians; in New Bedford the Portuguese, Poles and French-Canadians; in Fall River, Portuguese, Poles, French-Canadians and English; in Passaic, Poles and Hungarians. In New Hampshire and Massachusetts there are 29 different nationalities, but the majority of the workers are of the national groups just mentioned. There are whole textile communities in New England and the Middle Atlantic states where English is seldom heard. Even children in the streets speak a foreign tongue.

\* Exclusive of loom fixers.

Employers in the North play off the various nationalities against one another much as they use the Negro workers against the white workers in the South. When one New England mill superintendent was asked if he ever had any strikes in his plant his reply was: "There are 17 nationalities represented in this mill and the people of no one nationality can understand the language of the others and, therefore, they can never get together enough to make a strike."<sup>10</sup> In another Rhode Island mill the agent has the workers so divided that a weaver has to go halfway up the weave shop before he can find another worker who speaks the same language. The first is an Italian, the second an Irishman, then a Pole, Frenchman, Englishman and Slav. The workers are thus kept apart in the attempt to prevent group action.

However, during most textile strikes carried on under militant leadership these mill owner tactics have been drowned in waves of working class solidarity. In Lawrence, Passaic, and New Bedford strikes dozens of nationalities have been welded into fighting organizations that defied the employers' policy of "divide and rule."

In the southern states, 1 per cent or less of the workers are foreign-born. Southern chambers of commerce boast in paid advertisements of their "white, native, Anglo-Saxon labor supply." In periods of threatened labor shortage, however, these same southern employers have not been slower than New England employers in trying to bring in foreign labor. In 1906, for example, South Carolina, at the instigation of the manufacturers, set up a special commission to import foreign labor. Alabama encouraged the German Immigration Society. Georgia, Arkansas and Texas also made organized attempts to bring in foreign laborers, including Chinese. A North German Lloyd steamship, the *Wittekind*, actually made two voyages to Charleston, one in November, 1906, and the other in February, 1907, bringing to that city several hundred Belgians, Austrians and Gali-

cians. This was not continued, partly because the foreigners soon began to wander North, where wages were higher, and partly because subsequent developments brought streams of white farmers and mountaineers into the mill villages, in numbers more than sufficient to meet local labor needs. As late as 1929, however, the Houston, Texas, Chamber of Commerce sent a bulletin to every textile manufacturer in New England reading, in part, "Unorganizable Mexican labor in inexhaustible numbers can be secured in Texas for new textile mills." Mills in El Paso, San Antonio and other Texas cities employ Mexican labor—some of them exclusively.

#### SOUTHERN WORKERS

Special conditions facing southern textile workers are closely connected with the general agricultural crisis. The Piedmont counties of the southern states contain an Anglo-Saxon population whose beginnings in America date back to colonial times. For many decades few new people entered their ranks, either from abroad or from other states. For the most part they ignored the outside world, and went quietly about the task of growing cotton on small acreages. Incomes so earned were trifling and uncertain and it took the labor of the entire family to eke out a meager existence.

About two decades ago the invasion of the section by the boll weevil, the falling prices of raw cotton, and the restriction of credit for cotton growing, struck at the roots of the economic existence of these groups. Many thousands lost their holdings and either quit farming entirely or went to work as tenant farmers or as croppers. A cropper family works on a farm owned and equipped by a landlord and receives a part interest in the product. In some of the southern states nearly 65 per cent of the farms are operated on this form of tenure. Between 1923 and 1928 the number of farms in the South declined by 78,000. During the same

period farm owners decreased by 89,000 and tenants increased 20,000.

A recent survey by the Department of Agriculture of a typical southern county revealed that "after paying rent, the renter group sold 1924 crops to an average amount of \$368, and croppers, after paying half their crops to their employers, sold for their own accounts an average of \$280 of the crops they produced in 1924."<sup>11</sup> This money income represented the return for the labor of not one person but the entire family. Since they have no resources whatever, this entire income is usually borrowed against from the landlord or local store-keeper long before it is received.

Poor crops and poorer prices have thus "solved" the problem of labor supply for southern mill owners. Never out of debt and facing inevitable economic ruin, the cotton farmers of the Piedmont are deserting their farms by the thousands. The exodus to the mills is taking place in such numbers that whereas it was formerly necessary to send labor recruiting agents into the hills to hire "hands," there are now thousands of unemployed in the mill centers, starving and willing to take employment at any wage and under any conditions.

The southern mill worker soon finds in the mill a situation like that on the farm. He must put his entire family to work in order to keep the household together. The children leave school in the sixth grade or before. Not only the father but his "wimmen folks and chillen" must labor in the mill.

In the mill village, these workers live in a world apart. They do not vote. The mill owner determines their destiny. Through his system of paternalism he tries to reduce them to utter helplessness and dependence. Townspeople treat them with open contempt, considering it below their dignity to have social relations of any kind with "mill hands." The children of these workers are not permitted to seek other lines of work, for if a family fails to supply its quota of

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workers to the mill it is evicted from the company house and in many cases compelled to leave town. "We can't get a house from the mill," a Gastonia worker told us recently. "We've only been married a few years, and haven't any children old enough to work in the mill. And the Manville Jenckes people insist that there must be at least three workers in the family before they'll rent a house."

But the southern worker is awakening. Gastonia, Marion and the other struggles mentioned in a later chapter, represent but the first gropings of the chained giant of Southern Labor. When that giant is aroused there will be no Mason-Dixon line separating militant from "docile" labor. Nor will there be any color line, or jim-crowing of Negro workers. The lynching spirit and the vicious race pride, stimulated by the employers, will have given way to the solidarity of all workers, regardless of skill, sex, age, locality, color or nationality.



## CHAPTER V

### WAGES AND HOURS

THE wages of textile workers are the lowest for any manufacturing industry except tobacco. In 1927 wages in cotton mills were more than 37 per cent below the average earnings for workers in all manufacturing industries of the country. In the same year wool mill earnings were more than 10 per cent below the average for all industries. These low wages are still further reduced by unemployment due to shut-downs, seasonal fluctuations and production crises.

#### WAGE REDUCTIONS

Textile manufacturers have continually resorted to wage reductions to keep up profits. Full-time weekly wages in woolen mills in 1930 are over 24 per cent below those of 1920; in cotton mills the decrease between 1920 and 1928 has averaged over 30 per cent, while wage cuts in the last two years have made the decrease even greater by 1930.

Earnings of \$12, \$15 or \$16 a week are not uncommon for heads of families working in textile mills. Girls' wages run from \$7 to \$11. This is for a working week averaging anywhere from 48 to 60 hours, not counting the extra hour stolen in many mills by blowing the whistle a few minutes before the regular starting time or after the closing time.

The continuous downward trend in textile wages furnishes cause for bitter complaint and unrest among the workers. The following expressions of wage grievances are typical of hundreds which could be cited:

After eight years as a spinner, I received \$11 a week. Many who have been working for years get only \$8 to \$10 a week—

and some who have worked for eight or nine months now get \$4 to \$5 a week. I could name many workers now employed in the mill who receive such wages.

No mill enables a fellow to live decently. It's beyond 'me how they expect you to do right by your family when you work in a mill.

My man gets \$11 a week. He can't make enough to feed us.

Three of us in our family have to work so we can get by.

A mill-hand's got no chance.

Th' mill takes everything out of a body 'n' don't pay nothin', noway.

My husband and I go to the mill at seven. He's a stripper in the cardin' room and gets \$12.85 a week. . . . He's runnin' four jobs ever since they put this stretch-out system on him and he ain't gettin' any more than he used to get for one. Where'd they put the other three men?—Why they laid 'em off and they give him the same \$12.85 he got before. I work in the weavin' room and I get \$1.80 a day.

My job is running eight looms; or rather, they run me 10 hours a day. By working very hard we can earn \$15 a week, but every flaw in the cloth reduces our pay. . . . Some workers are docked as much as \$10 in two weeks, though they are all efficient and skilled.

My whole family is a-workin' and with this short time we just can't get along.

You slave your life away at our mill, and get nothing for it. But what can we do?

They tell you that here in the South we get free doctors. No, the company don't give you nothing, except your pay, and not much of that.

Many left the mill at Roanoke Rapids, N. C., when wages were cut 20%. We'd just as soon starve on the road as starve working in the Roanoke Rapids cotton mill.

In 1928, cotton mill wages in Massachusetts were 26 per cent less than in 1920; in Georgia they were 32 per cent less; in South Carolina, 41 per cent less, and in North

Carolina, 36 per cent less. Simultaneously, hours were lengthened in every textile state except Alabama, where there was a decrease.

During these years, there was hardly an issue of a trade or labor paper or periodical which did not contain an announcement of a wage cut in some section of the country. The following instances covering successive years are typical:

Effective January 1, 1921, textile workers' wages were slashed 22½ per cent. In 1923 the mill workers were given 12½ per cent increase in most places. Last fall and winter wages in cotton mills were again lowered 10 per cent and now they have been generally cut in the woolen and worsted mills. . . . Wages of over 60,000 woolen and worsted mill workers throughout New England have just been reduced 10 per cent. (*Federated Press*, August 6, 1925.)

The American Woolen Company announced "no more welfare work" and that its 16,000 workers at Lawrence, Mass., would be cut 10% on July 27. Other mills cut about 40,000 workers on July 27 or the following two weeks. (*American Labor Year Book*, 1926, p. 224.)

A 10 per cent wage reduction for all employees of the Massachusetts Cotton Mills in this city [Lowell] . . . was announced by the Pepperell Manufacturing Company today. (*New York Times*, October 31, 1927.)

Mill by mill the cotton textile plants of Maine have been reducing wages. (*Ibid.*, December 18, 1927.)

Swansea Print Works has announced a 10% reduction in wages effective Monday, May 7. (*Daily News Record*, May 2, 1928.)

Spinners in the employ of the Stone Mill Company here have left their work in protest against a 12½% reduction just announced by the management. (*Ibid.*, December 9, 1929.)

Notices posted throughout the mills of the Riverside and Dan River Cotton Mills, Inc., January 15, announced that all wages and salaries of employees and officials will undergo a reduction of 10%, effective as of February 1. (*Textile World*, January 25, 1930.)

## WHEAT WORKERS EARN

The *actual average weekly earnings* of cotton mill workers, as given to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics in 1928, were as follows:<sup>1</sup>

<i>State</i>	<i>Actual Weekly Earnings</i>
South Carolina .....	\$9.56
Alabama .....	10.19
Virginia .....	11.23
Georgia .....	11.73
North Carolina .....	12.23
Maine .....	13.81
New York .....	16.44
Massachusetts .....	16.47
New Hampshire .....	18.14
Connecticut .....	18.40
Rhode Island .....	18.93

The following average hourly earnings are found in cotton, woolen and worsted mills during the period from 1920 to 1930, according to two recent bulletins of the same bureau:<sup>2</sup>

<i>Year</i>	<i>Average Earnings Per Hour</i> <i>(All Occupations)</i>	
	<i>Cotton</i>	<i>Woolen and Worsted</i>
1920.....	\$.48	\$.63
1922.....	.33	.47
1924.....	.37	.53
1926.....	.32	.49
1928.....	.32	.51
1930.....	..	.46

The part-time system is general both North and South, bringing wages considerably below what they might otherwise be. The weekly figures given above are all based on earnings during a particular "one-week pay period." Workers testify that the weeks are many when actual earnings fall far below these averages, to say nothing of the many weeks when the mills are entirely closed down.

The figures, moreover, are the average earnings for all workers in the plants—from doffers and laborers to loom fixers. How greatly the wages of these groups vary may be

judged by the fact that in 1925, hourly earnings in the cotton mills were \$.22 for male spooler tenders, \$.28 for female frame spinners, \$.34 for male frame spinners, \$.37 for female weavers, \$.39 for male weavers, and \$.48 for loom fixers. In woolen and worsted mills the hourly earnings were \$.28 for female doffers, \$.30 for male doffers, \$.46 for dye house laborers and \$.66 for male weavers, \$.70 for male dresser tenders and \$.82 for loom fixers. The general averages thus conceal the miserably low wages of the many thousands of workers engaged in the less skilled departments.

In occupations employing both men and women, the latter generally receive lower wages. The comparative hourly earnings in typical cotton mill jobs (1928) and woolen and worsted mill jobs (1930) illustrate this difference:

Occupation	Cotton Mills		Occupation	Woolen and Worsted Mills	
	Men	Women		Men	Women
Drawing frame tenders .....	\$.28	\$.27	Wool sorters ....	\$.74	\$.51
Slubber tenders ..	.37	.40	Card tenders ....	.41	.37
Speeder tenders ..	.34	.36	Comber tenders ..	.47	.37
Spinners (frame).	.34	.28	Drawing frame tenders .....	.39	.36
Doffers .....	.31	.32	Doffers .....	.24	.27
Weavers .....	.39	.37	Weavers .....	.61	.54

Other occupations are primarily "women's jobs" and on these the rate is far below the wages received by men. In the four-year period, 1924 to 1928, the average full-time wages of women cotton-mill workers declined 13 per cent.

An even more exploited group are the Negro mill workers. No direct data exist on wages for all Negroes employed in the mills. Many of them receive about \$.17 an hour.<sup>a</sup> Various surveys of the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor clearly indicate that, even when performing the same operations as whites, Negro workers receive much lower wages. One investigation of Alabama industries showed that in 1921 twenty-two Negro women in the textile mills studied

averaged \$5.50 a week and \$291 a year. About the same time South Carolina mills paid Negro women a median wage of only \$6.25 a week and \$320 a year. Tennessee mills in 1924 paid an average of \$10.80 a week to white women, but only \$7.60 to Negro women. In these same years other Negro women were found who were making as little as \$172 and \$186 a year. And since these surveys were made textile wages have been declining.

One way the employers get labor cheap is through the apprentice system. Here, again, no exact statistics exist, but workers complain loudly on this score. One worker told the writers that, while learning, workers in his mill receive "almost nothing." His niece, he said, had four sides of spinning frames to watch and ran them for five weeks without pay. When the foreman was asked why they didn't pay her anything for her work, his reply was that she was "only learning." Another girl who worked in the spinning department of a big Gastonia mill told the writers that when she started to work the boss tricked her into working two weeks for 25 cents. In Marion many other young workers were found who received nothing. "I work for Mom," one of them said. "They don't pay me but Mom gets more 'cause I help her." It is common for apprentices to serve without pay when beginning. After a few weeks they are put on one-third pay, then half, and finally full pay. In other southern mills girls work 30 days without pay. For the four following months they are paid at a rate of five cents an hour for a 12-hour day. After this their apprenticeship period is considered over and they then get approximately \$10 a week.

In the southern states cotton mill wages are about 30 per cent below those in New England. The exact extent of this difference can be gauged by the following figures showing the average hourly rates for all occupations in New England and the South in 1928:

<i>New England</i>		<i>South</i>	
<i>State</i>	<i>Average Earnings Per Hour</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Average Earnings Per Hour</i>
Connecticut .....	\$.39	Alabama .....	\$.24
Maine .....	.32	Georgia .....	.26
Massachusetts .....	.39	North Carolina.....	.29
New Hampshire ....	.42	South Carolina.....	.26
Rhode Island .....	.41	Virginia .....	.31

It can be seen at a glance that the South is the mill owners' paradise of cheap labor. Southern chambers of commerce have shouted their wares throughout the country in their attempt to entice mills southward. Some of their answers to letters of inquiry are very revealing:

Hartsville, S. C.: Wages, 16 to 20 cents per hour. Hours worked, 10.

Spartanburg, S. C.: Textile labor in this section works 55 hours a week. Night operators work five 11-hour days and day operators five and one-half 10-hour days. Average wages paid \$13.37 to \$17.20, male; \$11.65 to \$13.80, female.

Clarksville, Tenn.: The weekly earnings of female operators average from \$12 to \$15 when working full time.

With such inducements northern mill owners continue to move their plants South.

#### COST OF LIVING

What do these wages actually mean to textile workers in terms of food, clothing, and shelter? In 1919 the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics made an investigation of workers' living costs. The budget provided only the bare essentials for a man with a wife and three children under 14 years of age.

The Labor Bureau, Inc., using the prices of June, 1928, estimated the cost of this minimum budget. For 10 scattered cities its average came to \$2,313 a year. This figure is almost double the cost of living estimates for certain textile communities, made by the National Industrial Conference Board, an open shop employers' research agency. Its origi-

nal estimates of cost of living were made in 1919-1920, but corrected to 1928 by using cost of living index numbers, they come to the following:

NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL CONFERENCE BOARD'S COST OF  
LIVING ESTIMATES (CORRECTED TO JUNE, 1928)

City	Yearly	Weekly
Fall River, Mass. ....	\$1,081.30	\$20.79
Lawrence, Mass. ....	1,182.05	22.73
Greenville, S. C. ....	1,188.66	22.86
Pelzer, S. C. ....	1,172.10	22.54
Charlotte, N. C. (living in company house).....	1,227.49	23.61
Charlotte, N. C. (living in non-company house)..	1,301.06	25.02

These employers' association budgets, which are far above the wages paid by the very employers who are members of the association, might be called "starvation budgets" for they provide hardly more than raggedness, squalor and the ever-present threat of starvation. And they average only about half the amount necessary to live on the budget set up by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Contrary to general opinion, the cost of living in southern towns is greater than in northern centers. Though rent and sundries are cheaper in the South, food, clothing and other items are more expensive. Southern workers do not have a low "cost of living." They have, rather, a low "standard of living." Their diet is made up chiefly of corn-bread, white flour, beans, "fat-back," sugar, coffee, cabbage and potatoes.

In December, 1929, the Labor Bureau, Inc., in discussing workers' budgets said that "no yearly earnings which fell below \$2,069.09 in any section of the country can be considered a living wage, since the total represents the lowest cost of the meager budget allowed by the government as the bottom level of health and decency."<sup>4</sup>

Yet even the meager budgets of the employers' association, averaging only slightly over a half of this figure, are



considerably in excess of what the workers actually earn. The earnings of Massachusetts cotton mill operatives in 1928 would have to be 26 per cent greater to meet the Fall River budget and 28 per cent greater to equal the Lawrence budget set by the Conference Board.

For the South the discrepancies are even more pronounced. Even to "get by" on a near-starvation basis the mill worker in Greenville, South Carolina, would require 139 per cent more than he actually earns; the Pelzer, South Carolina, mill hand would need 136 per cent more, while in Charlotte, North Carolina, he would need 94 per cent more even if he lived in a company house with somewhat lower rent. It can readily be seen, therefore, why it becomes necessary for whole families to enter the mills. The married man must send his wife and children to work in order to keep the family together.

Bearing in mind the facts that these budget figures are here compared with average wages earned during weeks when the operatives *actually worked* and do not take into consideration periods of mill shut-downs and lay-offs, we can see what a helpless financial morass the American textile worker is in under the capitalist organization of the industry.

#### HOURS OF WORK

Although textiles was the earliest industry in the country to operate on a factory basis, its workers have been less successful than those in most other industries in shortening their hours of work. Employers have stubbornly resisted every effort to decrease working hours while textile unions have been too weak to enforce demands for a shorter working day.

As in industry generally, textile workers profited by the movement for shorter hours during and immediately after the war. By 1920 many of them had the 48-hour week in

the woolen and worsted branch and a 48 to 52-hour week in cotton mills. Only a small percentage were left on the 60-hour week.

Since then, however, the workers have not been able to hold these gains and full-time hours of labor have been increasing in every state except Alabama where they were already longer than in most states. When the Manville Jenckes Co. put 2,000 of its Rhode Island operatives back on the 9-hour grind in July, 1928, it was only following the lead of other textile companies. In New Hampshire weekly hours of work for cotton mill workers increased by 12 per cent between 1920 and 1928.

State legislation, particularly in Massachusetts, has prevented some increases in hours of work. In nearly all cases the laws have restricted the working hours only of women and children. In practice, however, limitations upon the working day for women have usually established similar hours for men. With nearly half of the working force in the mills composed of female labor, it is usually impractical to carry on production after the women leave for the day. Identical hour schedules have become the general rule for both sexes.

There is no uniformity among the states either in labor laws or in actual hours of work. In the various cotton and wool manufacturing states the laws and full-time schedules, as reported to the government, are as given on page 116.

This table shows that the laws are not as progressive in New England as is commonly imagined. Maine, New Hampshire and Rhode Island permit a 54-hour week for women, Connecticut a 55-hour week, and Vermont one of 56 hours. Massachusetts is the only state in New England which has established the 48-hour standard.

Any textile worker can testify not only that these laws are not observed, but that weekly schedules are greater than officially reported. Plants and equipment represent fixed

State	Legal Working Hours for Women		Av. Hours Male and Female	
	Weekly	Daily	Cotton (1928)	Woolen and Worsted (1930)
Alabama .....	no limitation	....	55.0	...
Connecticut .....	55	10	50.8	48.9
Georgia .....	60	10	56.1	...
Maine .....	54	9	54.1	51.0
Massachusetts .....	48	9	48.8	48.3
New Hampshire .....	54	10½	53.6	50.7
New Jersey .....	54	10	...	48.4
New York .....	48	8	48.5	50.0
North Carolina .....	60	11	55.8	...
Pennsylvania .....	54	10	...	53.3
Rhode Island .....	54	10	52.2	48.5
South Carolina .....	55	10	55.0	...
Virginia .....	....	10	55.1	...
Vermont .....	56	10½	...	48.8

investments and the greater number of hours a day the machinery can be kept running the greater the profits. It is, moreover, difficult to secure conviction of employers who violate hours of work legislation.

No attempt is made to enforce the South Carolina 55-hour law. Although the mills of that state have a nominal 55-hour week, in practice most mills require the workers to report 20 minutes before the official starting time in the morning and to work 30 minutes of the "hour" assigned for lunch. In North Carolina, where there are no penalties for violation and no state department is charged with enforcing the hour laws, the Clinchfield Manufacturing Company, the Marion Manufacturing Company, and many other mills have been known in recent years to work 12 hours and more a day in violation of the state law. Many workers assert that they are required to be on hand early to clean their machines and that their working week therefore ranges from 68 to 74 hours. Many work even 80 hours in order to increase their wages.

Another employers' trick in the South is to keep machinery working during the lunch period. Two out of say three

workers go home for lunch while the other keeps production going on these looms or spindles. Each gets a lunch period every second or third day while the others supervise his machines. There are also fewer holidays in the South than in the North. Many mills in busy seasons may work on the Fourth of July and on Thanksgiving.

The South, however, has no monopoly on long hours. The working day in recent months has been 12 to 14 hours in the American Printing Company at Fall River. Other mills in the same city work 60 to 72-hour weeks during busy seasons. In May, 1929, weavers on the night shift at the Pemaquid Mill, New Bedford, went on strike demanding a 12-hour shift instead of the 13¾ hours they were working. In the Arlington Mill at Lawrence, workers report hours from 6 P.M. to 6 A.M. without a definite lunch or rest period. At North Pownal, Vermont, 56 hours a week is the rule, and 54 hours at Newmarket, New Hampshire. In 1928, the Gera Mills of Passaic hired workers on a 16-hour day basis to meet a rush order. In the upholstery shops at Mount Holly, New Jersey, some of the workers toil as many as 70 to 80 hours a week. These instances are far from uncommon and indicate the long hours often worked in some northern mills.

#### NIGHT WORK

**WANTED:** Families of spinners and spoolers for night work. We can use other members of families in other departments of the mill, and can let other members of the family work in the daytime, if necessary.

This advertisement from a Georgia paper illustrates the pressure being put on textile workers to work nights. Many mills require new workers to start on the night shift with a promise of day work later on.

No southern state prohibits night work for women. Massachusetts is the only state prohibiting women in textile mills

from working after 6 P.M., while Connecticut, New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania prohibit them from working after 10 P.M. The New Jersey law contains no penalty provision for violation of the law, and therefore is not effective.

Night work has been found to exist to some degree in every state where there are cotton and woolen mills.<sup>5</sup> In states where the law prohibits women from working after given hours, some mills attempt to run without them. Where this is not practical, only the preparatory departments, where women are not usually employed, operate at night.

About one-third of the country's cotton spindles have been running at night. About 60 per cent of the mills in South Carolina operate night shifts, between 35 per cent and 40 per cent of the persons employed in the night operations of that state being women and minors. In Georgia some 55 mills operate between 6 P.M. and 6 A.M., and night work is general in all the other southern states.

Cotton and woolen mills in Lawrence, Fall River and most other New England cities operate night shifts whenever orders warrant. A recent check-up in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, for example, revealed that the Glenark Mill operates days and nights with three shifts of workers. The Perseverance Worsted Company, River Mills, some departments of the Guerin Mills, Sydney Worsted, Jarrett Brothers, and the Bernon Worsted Mills are also among the plants in this typical New England mill city which either are operating nights or have done so recently. Much the same situation prevails in the Middle Atlantic States.

The workers suffer acutely from night work. Instead of steady day employment they have long periods of lay-offs, followed by feverish spells of day and night labor. The effects of night work on health are especially disastrous. Women night workers, in particular, are beset with the cares of their households and cannot get the necessary amount of

sleep during the day. It is also widely recognized that day sleep does not give the same degree of refreshment as night sleep. As a result the physical resistance of the workers is lowered so that they easily succumb to occupational and general diseases. Among night workers industrial accidents are much more numerous than among day workers.

We have noted in Chapter I how night work has aggravated capitalist overproduction. The depression period, 1929-1930, has brought this fact acutely to the attention of at least the cotton mill owners, and they have recently begun to talk about abolishing night work. The Cotton Textile Institute has crystallized this sentiment by voting to eliminate night work between 9 P.M. and 6 A.M. for women and for minors under 18 years of age. But night work for men will continue in some plants and departments.

If this measure is carried through in cotton mills during the next few years, it will not be for any humanitarian reasons but simply as a measure of controlling production forced by economic necessity. Should the market or a "national emergency"—a war—ever require it, the night shift for minors and women will, of course, return. Another reason for the action of the cotton capitalists is their desire to forestall legislation on the subject and to allay discontent of workers who might use the night work grievance in efforts to organize and press for more labor legislation and social insurance. So "voluntary action" is regarded as a means to keep off the statute books any law that might be a hindrance to operations whenever mill owners again consider it expedient and profitable to work women and children at night.

With hours of labor in American cotton and woolen mills ranging from 8 to 12 or more a day the workers in these mills should know that the seven-hour day is already in force for a large part of the textile workers in the Soviet Union. The five-day "continuous working week" is in operation,

each worker having one day's rest in five. Women are not forced to work all night in the mills as they do in so many mills in the United States.

American workers are handicapped by the oppressive hand of capitalism in their struggle to reach the high standards already attained in the land where workers rule. The fight against long hours and starvation wages, however, must be carried on; and organization is the only medium for winning better conditions.

Without organization intense international competition and the struggle for markets will make textile employers in all capitalist countries fasten on the workers even lower wages and longer hours. Such a degradation of workers' standards has definitely taken place since the war, particularly during the deepening of the world economic crisis with its increase in mass unemployment.

Textile workers in the United States need a militant union to lead them in raising standards in every craft and department. Such a union would fight night work and health-destroying overtime. It would insist on the immediate reduction of hours to a maximum of 35 a week. It would oppose all wage cuts and in their place demand immediate wage increases for all cotton and woolen workers.

## CHAPTER VI

### SPEEDING UP THE WORKERS

METHODS and devices for increasing speed in order to secure greater production per worker are now used in every industry. In textiles the speed-up movement has gone so far that the nervous strain upon the workers has almost reached the breaking point.

Although the number of spindles under the management of the larger corporations has increased in recent years, the number of workers has been decreasing. The aim is to lower costs and increase profits. In one instance, the treasurer of the Pacific Mills boasted that as a result of "stretching out," and "better leadership of the help," his corporation had saved about a million dollars a year. The Cocheco plant of this corporation, employing 800 workers, reduced costs at the annual rate of \$400,000.

If you want to make \$5,000 a year, advises the *American Wool and Cotton Reporter*, addressing mill overseers, prove that you are worth it. "Prove it by cutting down the costs, by doubling up the machinery per operative and saving wages."

We have seen that the movement to reduce labor costs and dependence on skill has been going on in the textile industry for many years. Since the war this movement has gained increased momentum. Employers' organizations meet regularly to devise and discuss practical ways of speeding up production. Superintendents of weaving, carding, spinning and other departments meet separately at these annual powwows and go into these matters in the greatest detail. "Labor specialization" has become a separate profession with



its agents going from mill to mill showing employers how to "extend" labor and increase the exploitation of the workers.

There is probably no other industry where this problem is attacked more energetically and deliberately. Thousands of patents for new textile machines bear evidence of the continuous replacement of workers by machinery and the production of more pounds of goods per operative. Products are carefully routed through the plant on the conveyor principle. Work is being more and more specialized and jobs thoroughly standardized. Displaced spinners, card room workers and weavers have learned that speeded up machinery and driving piece-work enables only the younger and faster workers to go the pace.

The cry of the so-called "efficiency men" is "double up the production per operative." In the drive to maintain dividend rates workers are being compelled to produce 50 per cent, 100 per cent and, in some instances, as much as 200 per cent more than they were producing a few years ago. "Wages are too high in any individual textile mill," mill owners are advised by the *American Wool and Cotton Reporter*, "unless that mill—on the basis of full time—is to-day operating its equipment with a little more than 50 per cent of the same number of operatives that it had on the payroll ten years ago." What the editor does not tell is the effect of this nerve-racking pace on the workers and how the speed-up has created unemployment that hangs like a black cloud over the workers and their families.

#### SPEED-UP AS A PROFESSION

"If there is any manufacturer who doesn't know how to successfully and efficiently stretch out his machinery, to work out plans and methods for increasing the production per operative," reads a leading editorial in this employers' magazine, "we will be glad to name service organizations who have had a very wide and wholly successful experience in

this work. . . . If you have not already doubled up your processes per operative these men can show you how to do it."<sup>1</sup>

"Spinners used to tend 10 sides—now they tend 24"; reads an editorial in a later issue of the same magazine. "Weavers used to tend eight to 20 looms—now they tend up to 100 looms each. That is for cotton manufacturing, and a similar stretching out of machinery . . . has been carried on in woolens and worsteds. But none of this work was initiated in the mill itself—practically all of it came about through the vision and work of trained engineers outside the industry."<sup>2</sup>

As these quotations indicate, the process of putting the work of the mills on an automatic basis, making it run more smoothly, speeding up the machinery, and depriving thousands of workers of their jobs by requiring each operative to tend more machines, has become a special profession. "Labor extension" is the "scientific" term applied by the employers to this line of work.

#### "EXTENDING" LABOR

The workers in a mill which has hired the services of one of these "industrial engineering" corporations suddenly find themselves being watched by strange men with stop-watches in their hands. These men will talk to no one nor will they answer any questions. They merely watch every motion of the workers, making notes on everything that happens.

These "minute men" calculate every movement of the worker. If the worker takes a drink of water, visits the lavatory, has to wait for material, speaks to a fellow-worker for a few minutes, it is timed and noted by the stop-watch men. The latter then retire and calculate the number of seconds in each minute that the worker stopped to breathe, went for a drink of water or went to the rest room. Additional work is then given him to occupy the time he has

"loafed" on the job, and machinery adjustments are made accordingly.

The Barnes Textile Service of Boston is a typical agency devoting full time to rationalizing textile mill processes. "Changes in operating methods made as a result of our time studies and under our supervision have shown real economies with a surprisingly small amount of labor trouble," reads one of their advertisements in the *Textile World*. This company also installs modern cost methods and bonus plans "as a means of rewarding key men for lowering costs" in the mills.

When a Barnes "industrial engineer" enters a spinning room, one of the first things he does is to diagram the floor, showing the layout of the frames and other physical conditions. These are then rearranged with a view to reducing the amount of walking by the spinner, in order to enable her to handle more frames.

In the weave room one of the first questions studied is, "What causes the looms to stop?" Studies are made of the warp, filling, mechanical troubles and similar matters. Stoppages from these causes are in many cases practically eliminated.

Intensive time studies are then made, through stop-watch devices, of every movement the weavers make. This time is divided into three main divisions: (1) The time used in work requiring training and skill. (2) The time spent in work requiring a shorter period of training, designated as semi-skilled. (3) The time spent on unskilled work which can be performed by workers with practically no training.

These time studies then form the basis of the stretch-out. The weaver who has been spending part of his time sweeping, filling batteries, cleaning and oiling, is relieved of these duties which are given to less experienced and more poorly paid workers. The more highly paid weaver must now concen-

trate on the one job of keeping his looms running. And the number run by each weaver is considerably increased.

Another set of engineers has been simultaneously timing every movement of the spinners. Time studies are compiled showing the time spent by the spinner in piecing broken ends, replacing runout bobbins in the creel, passing board, cleaning scavenger stock, cleaning roving rod, and the like. In four New Bedford mills, the Butler, Hathaway, Taber, and Wamsutta, where this system was instituted, spinners' operations on a 12-side job were reduced from an average of 20 to 6. The remaining work was given to another very poorly paid worker known as a cleaner. As a result, the spinners in these mills, who formerly averaged 12 sides, were stretched out to 22 sides.

How this system works out in practice is well illustrated by the experience of the Wamsutta Mill, one of the 17 New Bedford cotton mills to institute the Barnes "Labor Specialization Plan." In one of the spinning rooms the number of girl spinners was reduced from 16 to eight, the wages of those who remained were raised from \$17.10 to \$19, and four cleaners added at \$15. The total payroll of this mill was reduced 16 per cent and the number employed by 36 per cent.

#### NEW MACHINES—FEWER WORKERS

The head of the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics pointed out in a recent speech that "in no other industry in the world has so much ability been applied to the development of machinery. Not only has the automatic character of machines been carried to the utmost limit but the productive capacity has been developed far beyond the needs."

The goal of all machine designers is to perfect machines which are automatic in their action and require a minimum of attention. So successful have textile machinery experts been in approaching this goal that the first impression one

gets in a modern cotton mill is the number of automatic devices on the machines. Every process in the mills, from the handling of raw material to the packing and shipping of the finished product is being affected by present-day machinery improvements.

The mills are investing enormous sums in the newer high-speed machinery. The Cone Mills at Greensboro, North Carolina, for example, recently completed a machinery installation program involving an expenditure of about \$4,000,000. The Bibb Manufacturing Company spent more than \$1,000,000 for new equipment in 1927. The Wamsutta Mills has spent over \$2,500,000 in the last few years, largely in machine improvements. The Farr Alpaca Company bought new machinery worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. The Edwards Mill at Augusta, Maine, expended \$500,000 for new equipment in 1927. Even the smaller mills are installing high-speed machines that cut their wage costs.

A recent issue of the *Textile World* discloses the result of new machine installations from the corporation point of view. One coarse cotton goods mill is cited which, as a result of spending slightly over \$400,000 in a "modernization" program, has reduced its overhead and operating expenses by approximately \$330,000 annually on 11,000,000 pounds of production. Some \$500,000 spent by the Victor-Monaghan Mill, Greenville, South Carolina, operating about 65,000 spindles, reduced operating costs approximately 3 cents a pound. The vice-president of the Greenwood (South Carolina) Cotton Mills reported to the Southern Textile Association, "We installed automatic spooling and warping . . . using only one-half as many operatives on these machines as were required for the old spoolers and warpers. . . . Our labor cost for this department was reduced about 40 per cent." He added, "After these machines were installed a decided improvement was shown in the running

of our weaving. . . . As a result, we were able to cut out five weavers on each shift."

#### NEW MACHINES IN EVERY DEPARTMENT

The movement toward revamping and reëquipping mill machinery is growing. "Shortening the route" from raw material to finished product calls for many new inventions, practically all of which mean workers thrown out of jobs and, for those who remain, more intensified work and speed-up. A few of the more important machine replacements in various departments are as follows:

*Power Plants* (cotton and wool): To a large extent power plants have been eliminated entirely and power purchased from power companies is wired in. Where individual power plants are retained automatic stokers in the boilers eliminate the coal rollers.

*Conveyor Systems* (cotton and wool): Trucking and handling are largely being eliminated by the introduction of belt conveyors, elevators and chutes, equipped with automatic devices to handle the material between departments. These systems not only dispense with truckers but speed up the running of the machines.

*Picking Room* (cotton): A short time ago a picker room contained three separate machines. Two workers operated each machine. Now all three machines are combined in one by conveyor belts and only two workers remain where there formerly were six.

Pickers are now built on the single-process principle. They work continuously and some of the newest even doff themselves. A New England textile machinery concern recently advertised that they installed their "One Process" picking units in a prominent South Carolina mill. Four machines replaced 28 at a saving of 8,000 feet of floor space, and "two men now do the work formerly done by nine."

*Carding* (cotton): New vacuum machines take the place of many workers in card rooms by cleaning through suction the accumulated dust from the cards. They also bring all the dust into another room without any human labor. The old

fashioned "stripping" methods are no longer used in modern mills.

*Spinning* (cotton): The spinning frame of today, equipped with larger rings and longer traverse, gives larger package and reduces doffing costs. Mills find that by putting in longer frames they are able to operate several thousand additional spindles without any additional labor cost. The long draft system of spinning, now coming into general use, makes possible the use of coarser roving with many attendant savings. Mechanical perfection of the frames enables them to be maintained easily and cheaply.

*Spooling and Warping* (cotton): The high-speed spooler and warper speed up production considerably and deliver a better warp to the weaving department at greatly reduced labor costs. Automatic spooling is fast becoming the general rule. A saving of about 20% in labor cost is effected by the use of larger bobbins. In 1913 warpers could turn out about 350 yards a minute. In 1929 some mills were installing warpers that could warp 750 yards a minute. Only half as many workers are employed under modern conditions as were required to operate the old spoolers and warpers.

*Weaving* (cotton): The basic principle of weaving remains unchanged but improvements in loom designs speed up production and reduce labor costs. The modern loom has individual drive, large beam, improved feeler, cut gears and other improvements. Automatic heads on the looms eject the empty quills and insert new ones without stopping the machine. A recently perfected mechanism stops the looms, when the thread breaks, with the shuttle in the left-hand box, with harnesses level, with the crank in proper position for drawing in the thread, with bank indicated on which end is down and the yarn open where the end is broken. A weaver's work thus becomes limited to drawing in and tying the broken end, while other workers oil and clean the looms. A small machine weighing only five ounces, the "weavers' knotter" is claimed to increase production 30% to 40% over hand tying (it is also used for tying knots in spooling, winding, doubling, reeling and twisting). The speed of looms has increased since 1913 when they could run 120 picks a minute to as many as 220 a minute now. Mechanically perfected looms are also requiring less and less attention from the loom fixer.

*Bleaching* (cotton): A textile finishing expert recently de-

scribed how he operated a bleachery handling 800,000 yards of goods weekly with 50 hands. It ordinarily requires 100 to 125 workers for the same yardage.

*Machine Time Clocks* (cotton): Recording machines attached to looms, carders, slubbers, and other machines automatically record when and for how long the machines stop. This enables the boss to detect workers unable to keep their machines continuously active on speeded up production. "Then you *know* just what to do," advertises one manufacturer of this device.

In the woolen branch of the industry many manufacturers have permitted their standards of machine efficiency and speed-up devices to fall behind the cotton branch. But they are catching up. The following are a few of the new machines now being installed:

*Carding*: A large Massachusetts woolen mill claims 50% greater production from the new 72-inch cards than they get from comparatively new 60-inch cards. In many mills 48-inch cards are still used; the 72-inch cards produce at least 100% more carded wool for the same wages than 48-inch cards.

*Spinning*: Unusually heavy spindles on woolen mules, heat treated to prevent bending, make higher speeds possible. It is claimed that from 8% to 14% is gained by installing these new mules. In many other mills spinning frames, operated on a cotton system, are replacing mules in the spinning departments. The skilled mule spinner is thereby dispensed with and cheaper unskilled workers operate the frames. The frame also makes possible more machines per operative. "Double production compared with the mule," is claimed by one manufacturer of frames.

*Winding*: Extension of the cone system to worsted twisting, worsted section beaming and worsted jack spooling make possible greater speed, less frequent recreeling and reduced labor.

*Weaving*: Automatic and magazine looms are being installed in some mills which will run at speeds as high as 155 picks a minute as compared with 48 picks on old looms. The multiple loom system is being made possible by modern automatic looms with as many as 12 looms an operative instead of 2.

What are the results of these new machine installations? One mill has reduced the labor cost on a given amount of



cloth from \$100 to \$30. Another mill reports a 50 per cent saving in labor and a production increase of 20 per cent. It is estimated that, in the weaving department alone, savings run from 40 per cent to 60 per cent. A New England manufacturer reported that automatic looms paid for themselves in 20 weeks.<sup>3</sup>

#### EFFECT ON THE WORKERS

As a result of these methods of reducing labor costs textile workers are confronted with the "speed-up" system of operation, which makes the worker go a much faster pace in order to keep up with the machines, and the "stretch-out" system of assigning more machines to each operative. For all workers, whether machine tenders or cleaners, these changes not only require greater speed but less variety of work and more walking.

It is almost impossible to find a textile worker whose company has not resorted to these speed-up or stretch-out methods. The following reports indicate how they affect the workers:

In the Appleton Mills of Anderson, S. C., loom fixers were "stretched" from 70 to 76 looms; weavers, in two instances, from 20 to 60 looms; the warps per doffer from 29 to 32.

The Clinchfield Mfg. Co., Marion, N. C., has "stretched out" the number of looms per weaver from 24 to 60 with an unskilled worker as assistant.

A legislative committee of the state legislature of South Carolina reported the case of one weaver who had operated 24 looms at \$18.91 a week, but who had been speeded up to 114 looms at \$23.

On April 1, 1929, 300 operatives comprising the day shift at the Woodruff Mills, Woodruff, S. C. (owned by the Brandon Corp. of Greenville, S. C.), went on strike when weavers were asked to increase from the 30 to 40 looms then required to 72 looms for less pay.

A weaver in the Brookside Mill, Knoxville, Tenn., told the writers that a few years ago he operated eight looms on vel-

veteens and earned \$22 weekly. Now he operates 39 looms without helpers and receives only \$17.50. In the same mill, he added, one man is now doing the work of 12 in the opening room. Eleven are out of jobs. In other departments one out of every two men formerly employed has been dispensed with. The other does the work of both.

A worker in the No. 4 weave room of the West Boylston Mill at Easthampton, Mass., writes, "This department has pace setters, who earn a little more. When the weavers complain of small pay, the boss points out the ones making more."

Workers in the Amoskeag mills brought complaints to their company union in 1929 that "in some departments of the plant operatives have been asked to do 100% more work without any advance in pay."

On October 7, 1929 the weavers of the Bourne Mills, Fall River, struck as a protest against attempts of the management to put them on the 40-loom system. The workers contended that 20 automatic looms was sufficient on the type of goods they were producing, with even less on fancy constructions.

On November 18, 1927, the home office of the Manville Jenckes Company sent the following letter to G. A. Johnson, resident agent of the Loray Mill of that company at Gastonia, North Carolina:

DEAR MR. JOHNSON:

I have been keeping close tabs on your payroll and production at Loray Division and I am glad to say it is very gratifying to see your payroll come down and your production go up. I am frank to say I was sceptical about your being able to cut \$500,000 a year on the Loray payroll and keep your production up. I want to apologize for this scepticism. Now I think you can cut out \$1,000,000 a year and still keep your production up.

(signed) F. L. JENCKES.

This Manville Jenckes letter gives a clear picture from the "inside" of what is being accomplished by the stretch-out. For the workers it meant more machines, a killing pace, and the miserable conditions which led to the Gastonia strike of 1929.

## WAGE PAYMENT "INCENTIVES"

In addition to speeding up machinery and increasing the size and number of machines per operative, the mills use the piece-work system to drive the workers. The wage is made directly dependent upon keeping up production. Standards are set in such a way that only the fastest can earn the meager wage scale. Those who fall hopelessly behind are eventually driven from the mills. Deductions or non-payment for "seconds" effectively prevent workers from sacrificing quality for quantity.

Piece rates are the general rule in some textile states. The Women's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor found, for example, that 73.9 per cent of the women in Tennessee cotton mills and 62.4 per cent of the women in woolen mills of that state were on piece rates. The United States Department of Commerce reports that 43 per cent of the workers in woolen and worsted mills in New England were on a piece-work basis in 1929. For the country as a whole about 53 per cent of cotton mill workers and 36 per cent of wool mill workers are paid on this basis.

Certain key occupations are always paid by the piece. In cotton mills, spooler tenders and those in the drawing processes are usually paid by indicator or piece; spinners work by piece or hour; weavers by piece. In woolen and worsted spinning, some mills pay by the hour and others by the pound. In spooling, piece rates prevail. Practically all wool weavers are paid by the yard.

Workers complain bitterly of the effects of the piece rate system. It requires a pace that fatigues and overstrains them. It guarantees no minimum wage and when production stops, due to machine breakdowns, waiting for material and other causes beyond their control, their pay also stops.

Piece rates also make it easier to cut wages. When the worker increases production, management often begins to

cut rates, on the pretext of improvements in equipment or on no pretext at all. The worker must then either take a wage cut or speed up to a still higher level of production.

Various kinds of bonus systems are also used to spur on workers to greater speed. The method generally used is to set a standard just barely attainable by the fastest and best workers. The entire working force is thus driven at a faster pace, with only a few actually receiving the bonus. Bonus systems were found in 53 out of 92 woolen and worsted mills and in 27 out of 158 cotton mills investigated by the Department of Labor in 1928. Exceeding specified standards of production was the usual basis of payments.

All these methods of speed-up, from faster machinery to back-breaking "incentives," are used to lower production costs under the capitalist system. And in no country are they more ruthlessly applied than in the United States.

Workers who have previously fought the textile mill bosses merely for more wages and shorter hours are now more and more compelled to oppose the speed-up menace. We shall note later that a large number of recent strikes have been revolts against the speed-up system and company efforts to rationalize plants and intensify the exploitation of the workers.

The present stage of capitalist development means drive for speed-up in all its forms. Faced with the crisis in the textile industry, desperately trying to undersell competitors in home and foreign markets, employers will apply it wherever possible. And this speed-up, as we shall see in the next chapter, increases unemployment, insecurity, sickness and industrial accidents.

A powerful union of textile workers is needed to counteract the speed-up and stretch-out systems by taking control of machine speed and by forcing reductions in hours, increases in wages, and improvements in working conditions.

## CHAPTER VII

### UNEMPLOYMENT AND OCCUPATIONAL HAZARDS

UNEMPLOYMENT is engulfing workers in almost every industry in every country except the Soviet Union. The world-wide industrial and agricultural crisis has only increased the intensity of this scourge, while the present crisis in the United States has increased the number of unemployed to seven or eight million.

Bread lines form in every city. Charity associations are swamped with requests for relief. City, state and federal administrations and capitalist politicians—before elections—are busy devising a wide variety of relief sops intended to delude the workers. The unemployed begin to organize and to demand work or wages.\*

Unemployment is clearly no passing phase in the life of the working class here or in other capitalist countries. It is a certainty for millions of workers and a growing menace for millions more.

Like all other workers dependent on capitalist production, textile workers live in perpetual terror of unemployment. To-day there is scarcely a textile community in the United States where mills are not closed or on part time, while thousands of lean and weary workers tramp from mill to mill in a vain search for jobs.

The cotton or wool worker may be dropped from his job permanently because his mill is dismantled. He may be laid

\* For a discussion of unemployment and the present crisis see Grace M. Burnham's pamphlet, *Work or Wages*, International Pamphlets, 1930.

off a few weeks when the company runs out of orders. He may be forced to stay at home for weeks because the company has made an agreement with other mills to curtail production for a certain period. Finally, as we have seen, the stretch-out system is continually increasing production per worker and making it possible for the company to run its mills with a smaller working force.

Periodic crises of overproduction, glutted markets, demoralized prices and mill shut-downs bring with them severe unemployment. Cotton manufacturing, for example, has moved in two-year cycles with recent production peaks in 1923, 1925, 1927, and 1929 and with periods of grave depression between these years.<sup>1</sup> We have seen in Chapter I the results of overproduction and overexpansion in these "sick" capitalist industries. Unemployment in varying degrees becomes a chronic condition of both cotton and wool workers.

No matter what the cause of his unemployment the wage worker gets no pay when he is laid off. There is no unemployment insurance to take care of him during his out-of-work days. He must find another job, ask for charity, or face starvation. And jobs are becoming increasingly difficult to get as the international crisis of capitalism deepens.

#### EXTENT OF UNEMPLOYMENT

How rapidly jobs are dwindling in textiles is indicated by the following index numbers of employment, compiled from data of the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics:

	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928
Woolen and Worsted.....	100	91	89	80	80	76
Cotton .....	100	83	84	83	87	79

Moreover, of the workers keeping jobs, in a group of representative mills studied by the same bureau in 1928, practically all were on part time. In a particular one-week

period the cotton mill workers were employed only between an average of 3.9 days for male frame spinners to five days for male loom fixers and female trimmers. In woolen and worsted mills employment varied from an average of 2.8 days during the week for female wool sorters to five days for male doffers.

What the New England textile worker faces as he looks for a job is indicated by the following extracts from the *American Wool and Cotton Reporter*, which describe the closing down of cotton mills:

How much equipment is going to be left in Fall River after the present liquidation and machinery selling plans have been completed? The Ancona Mills, with 40,000 spindles is gone; so is the Concanicut, with 29,000 spindles, and the Connecticut Mills, with 33,000 spindles. The No. 1 Flint Mills have been dismantled, and 55,000 spindles from that plant have been junked. Eighty thousand spindles of the Pocasset have been done away with. Forty thousand spindles still remain in the Pocasset, and the owners of the corporation are trying to sell this remaining equipment as a going mill—but this does not seem practical. It is generally believed that 51,000 spindles are going out of the Troy; that 50,000 at the Durfee are doomed to go. At the Wampanoag, with 82,000 spindles, it is believed that half of the equipment will be done away with. There is a strong belief that the 105,000 spindles in the Weeta-moe are doomed, that the American Linen with 102,000 spindles, the Narragansett with 59,000, the Osborn with 61,000, the Shove with 48,000 and the Stafford with 114,000 will finally be liquidated. . . . The Border City, with 113,000 spindles, the Merchants with 139,000 spindles, the Richard Borden with 100,000 spindles, the Davol with 128,000 and the Union with 109,000 spindles are all questionable. . . . More than 1,000,000 spindles and complementary looms in this one great old cotton manufacturing center are permanently out of business.<sup>2</sup>

In Lowell, Mass., 175,000 spindles in the Massachusetts Cotton Mills have gone; 180,000 spindles have gone out of the Hamilton; 160,000 spindles have gone out of the Appleton; 40,000 spindles have gone out of the New England Southern; 100,000 spindles

have gone out of the Lawrence Mfg. Co.—totaling 855,000 spindles, complementary looms, etc.

In Fitchburg, Mass., the Parkhill Mills, the Orswell Mills and the Nockege Mills have gone. . . . Once there were 5,000 cotton looms in Fitchburg; now there are 40 cotton looms there.<sup>2</sup>

The mill situation in New England is, of course, worse than in other parts of the country. In 1928 employment in New England was 35 per cent below the 1923 level. In 1930 mill operations in Fall River and New Bedford were cut well below half of normal. Workers over 40 years of age have been specially hard hit. Others are out of employment for months at a time and on short time even when working.

There are, in 1930, nearly 100,000 unemployed textile workers in New England. This includes at least 15,000 unemployed workers in Maine, 18,000 in New Hampshire, 3,000 in Vermont, 8,500 in Rhode Island, 6,000 in Connecticut, and about 45,000 in Massachusetts. In the latter state, there are about 10,000 totally unemployed in Fall River, not counting operatives who have left town because they could not get work. In New Bedford, 15,000 (about half of the normal working force) are out of work. In September, 1929, the mayor of Lawrence estimated that there were 4,500 idle textile workers in that city. Since then the situation has grown much worse.

In the Middle Atlantic States there are at least 22,000 out in New York, 23,000 in New Jersey, and 30,000 in Pennsylvania. In the South unemployment has also been increasing in 1930. Practically all mills are curtailing production. This, together with rationalization of plants and equipment, has thrown out at least 30,000 workers in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama. This brings the total unemployed in the Middle Atlantic and Southern states to over 100,000. These estimates include workers affected by intermittent mill shut-downs of from two weeks to a month or more, but not those on part-time schedules.



## HOW JOBS ARE LOST

During 1929, 61 woolen and worsted mills of which 16 belonged to the American Woolen Company closed indefinitely. No mercy was shown to the workers in these mills, some of whom had worked all their lives for the same company. The manufacturers, no longer wanting their services, simply told them that they had better find jobs elsewhere. The Chase Mills of the American Woolen Company, for example, closed on December 12, 1929. Workers stood by in despair as the factory whistle blew its final blast at 5 p.m. on that day. This whistle had been heard in every section of the town, morning, noon and night for 70 years.

Some mills ceased operations because of "business conditions." Others stopped as the result of mergers and consolidations followed by attempts to decrease labor cost, managerial expense and overhead through concentration of production. More than 1,000 workers were made jobless in this manner when the Sharp Manufacturing Company, New Bedford, was purchased by the Butler interests. Likewise, Strong, Hewat & Company purchased the Hinsdale Woolen Mill in 1925. Later it transferred all the work of this plant to its North Adams mills leaving 150 Hinsdale workers without jobs.

Curtailement of production has also thrown thousands out of jobs, even in those mills which still operate. Take the case of the Botany Worsted Mills, of Passaic, New Jersey. When these plants were running full time in 1917 they employed an average of 6,359 workers. In 1926 their machinery operated at only 30 per cent of capacity; in 1927, 39 per cent; in 1928, 35 per cent; and for the first three months of 1929, 41 per cent. The greatest number of workers employed at any one time between 1925 and 1929 was 3,300. A foreman at the Botany plant testified before a Senate Committee in 1929 that "we have mobs coming to our employment office."

Another foreman testified that the employment situation "is going from bad to worse."

Conditions are similar in almost every textile community. Mills are practically all running part time when operating at all. Part time and curtailment are general in all sections. In some places, such as New Bedford or Fall River, operations are (1930) on a basis of only 50 per cent or less of normal. In other regions, including the South, hundreds of mills are running half time or less. The workers' pay envelopes are, of course, reduced. Besides, the army of jobless workers is used by employers as a lever in cutting wage rates for those still at work.

We have seen how new machinery and the stretch-out increase unemployment. There is no way of estimating exactly how many workers have lost their jobs in this way, especially those 40 years of age and over who cannot keep up the pace.

Workers also lose much time as a result of the "spare hand system" which is practiced in most southern and a few northern mills. The custom is to have more workers report each morning than are required. The "extras," or "spares," are used to fill in when the regular workers are absent. If there are not enough absentees to give bare support to the extras, some of the regular workers are sent home while spare hands run the machines for that day. About 15 per cent of the workers on the payrolls of the southern mills are "spares." These live on a starvation level while the other workers never know, when they enter the mill in the morning, whether they are going to be permitted to work that day or not.

Lack of balance between mill departments, with one getting ahead of another in production, also contributes its share to time lost by the worker. This is, of course, a by-product of "inefficient management" under the planless capitalist system of production.

Neither the employers nor the government make any pro-

vision for workers who have been laid off or who have had their income reduced by part-time work. At the 1929 meeting of agents and superintendents of all mills affiliated with the National Association of Cotton Manufacturers, a member asked whether any one present knew of "unemployment reserve funds . . . to stabilize the income of the employee during such periods as may arise when the mill is shut down." Nobody present had such funds in force in his plant, or had even heard of such a thing.<sup>4</sup>

But even if "unemployment reserve funds" were not only discussed at employers' meetings but adopted by the corporations this would mean no real relief against unemployment. For such schemes as used by certain employers in other industries are nothing but "welfare" devices to keep the best "pace setters" attached to the mills during shut-downs. The mass of workers, particularly those squeezed out of the industry in its futile efforts to "stabilize" itself, are not even considered as a textile problem, and no insurance of any kind is provided for them. They are simply scrapped like out-of-date machinery.

#### ACCIDENTS

It is frequently contended by employers and their organizations that accidents in cotton and woolen mills are infrequent and that the industry is not hazardous. This is not true. While cotton and woolen mills do not have as many accidents as the extra-hazardous industries, the accident insurance rates paid indicate that the danger encountered by the workers is about equal to that in the average industry. In fact, accident frequency rates in textiles have actually been higher in recent years than in the better constructed steel plants.<sup>5</sup> In three states studied by the Women's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor, textiles, domestic and personal service, and iron and steel plants, lead in the

number of accidents to women workers.<sup>6</sup> The accident rate among men parallels that among women.

It is practically impossible to ascertain accident rates, except for the small group of mills affiliated with the National Safety Council, where conditions are better than in the industry as a whole. Compensation accident returns furnish the best index available, but the data from the various states are not comparable. The data compiled even in the best states are incomplete. In some states an accident that keeps the worker out more than one day must be reported. In others the disability need not be reported unless it lasts three days. In some the worker must be disabled seven days before he is entitled to compensation, while in others the disability must last two weeks before it is counted. South Carolina, Mississippi and Arkansas are textile states which have no workmen's compensation laws, and hence furnish no accident reports at all.

The number of serious accidents in textile mills has been increasing in recent years. Between 1916 and 1928, the best mills, which do safety work and report to the National Safety Council, showed an increase in the frequency rate of 2 per cent, and an increase in the severity rate of 32 per cent.

A committee of the American Engineering Council which made a study on *Safety and Production*, found that in the mills of four textile companies investigated, the production rate had *decreased* 14.3 per cent from 1921 to 1926 but that the accident frequency rate had *increased* 22.3 per cent and the accident *severity* rate 185.8 per cent. This great increase in severity rates is attributed by the committee to the increase in mechanization of mills and "the consequent speeding up of industry which have a direct tendency to increase the seriousness of accidents."

"The whole trouble," writes a textile worker, "is too many machines per operative. We have had more accidents in the

last twelve months at this mill than we have had for as many years before."

Responsibility for these accidents rests squarely on the mill owners. Accident frequency and severity can be greatly reduced, but real safety work costs money. It requires a drastic reduction in the speed-up system. But the mill owners prefer to confine their safety work to putting up pretty posters on the bulletin boards. Their attitude was well expressed in 1928 by the vice-president of a New Bedford mill: "No one is really justified in spending any money unless they can get their money back in a year. . . . Our policy is that if we can't make a saving in one year we don't do it at all. . . . We consider the premium saving."† In other words, if these money savings on insurance premiums or labor saving on automatic devices cannot repay the cost of safety appliances within a year, the policy is to permit workers to continue being injured.

Textile mills are notorious for their crowding of the maximum number of machines into a minimum amount of space. A spinner who is responsible for 24 sides or a weaver who has 50 to 100 looms to tend, must constantly dodge unguarded moving parts of machinery and must be on the continual watch lest he collide with trucks or other workers in the too narrow aisles. Machinery was found to be responsible for 44 per cent of the accidents in the cotton mills of Massachusetts while in all other industries it caused only 22 per cent of the accidents. The deafening roar of machinery increases fatigue and snaps nerves already strained by speed-up and long hours. The vibration of machinery and floors adds to the difficulties of concentration and alertness. Flying shuttles are likely to strike in all directions. In such an atmosphere accidents are inevitable. Yet employers often add to the hazard by insisting that floors be washed while the machinery is running.

Slips and falls occur also because floors around many

of the wool washing machines, for example, are wet and soapy. Floors in the dye houses are unusually wet and slippery, often constructed without proper drainage facilities. In many mills there is a continual drip of oil to the floor, thus further increasing the danger of accidents from slips and falls. Especially where piece rates prevail, with the payments scaled down to promote maximum production, workers often wipe off the loose waste or "fly" while machines are running. Slivers or cuts in the hand occur while stripping thread off bobbins. Acid and boiling water cause frequent burns in the dye houses. Inadequate lighting, poor material-handling equipment, improper ventilation and poor air are likewise contributory causes of textile accidents.

Seventy-seven accidents, involving 19 per cent of the workers examined, were reported by 404 textile operatives of Passaic and vicinity, who were given medical examinations by the Workers' Health Bureau in 1926.<sup>8</sup> Ten of these injuries resulted in loss, or loss of use, of a part of the body.

A spinner slipped on an oily floor and fractured his leg which had to be amputated. He was incapacitated for ten months and received no compensation. A machine tender had his wrist broken when it was caught in the machine. He was incapacitated for two months for which he received \$78. A dye worker had his eye burned with a splash of vitriol. He was unable to work for two weeks and received only \$6.16 compensation. Another worker had his hands burned by chemicals and was out of work nine weeks. A finisher was ruptured through heavy lifting and was out for three months for which he received \$50 compensation. An 18-year-old boy had his wrist broken by a frame machine. He lost the use of his right hand for life. Thirty of the 54 accidents reported by woolen and worsted workers occurred in the weaving, spinning and carding departments, 15 in the wool washing, drying and finishing departments, and the remaining nine in general inside work. Over 75 per cent

of the compensable accidents incapacitated workers for one month or more.

#### OCCUPATIONAL DISEASES

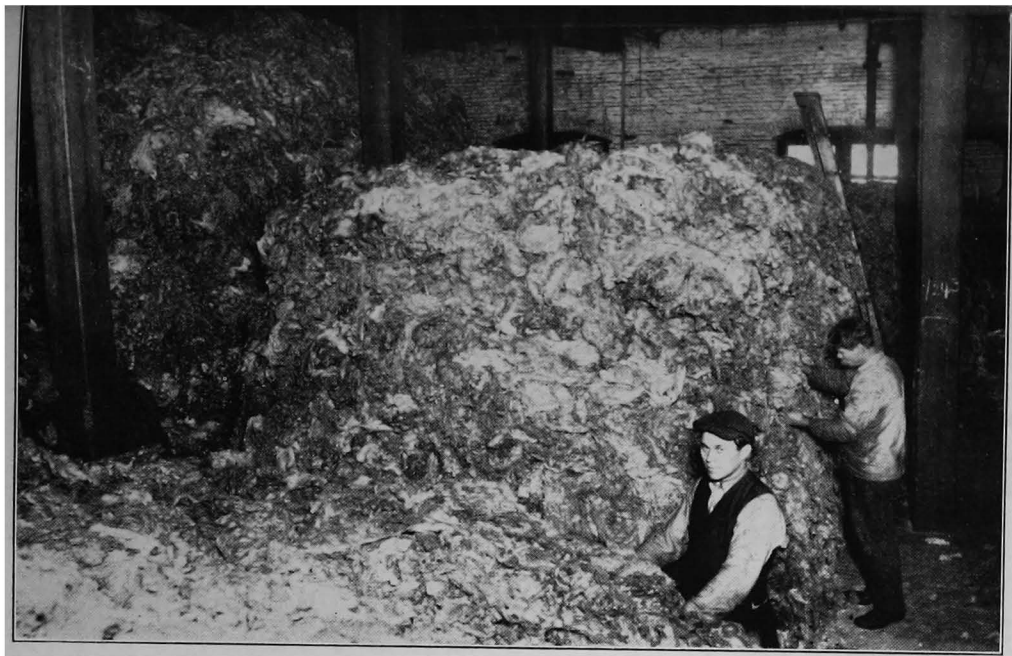
Tuberculosis is the outstanding disease in textiles. In a study of preventable deaths in cotton manufacturing published by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics in 1919, deaths from tuberculosis among textile workers were found to be from seven to eight times greater than those from accidents and violence combined, and 100 per cent greater than among the general population between the ages of 15 and 44.

In spite of the fact that the death rate from tuberculosis among textile workers has declined in the 14-year period, 1912 to 1926—part of this decline being doubtless due to the campaign for treating tuberculosis in its early stages—the most recent report admits that the proportion of deaths from tuberculosis is still higher for textile workers than for industrial workers generally.

Especially high death rates from the disease are recorded for wool and worsted card, comb and frame tenders, which show a rate of 59 per cent above the average. The same report admits that the industry has been lax in the installation of the latest types of ventilation and humidification equipment which it says would greatly improve atmospheric conditions in textile mills.<sup>9</sup>

Professor Rosenau, of Harvard University, writes:

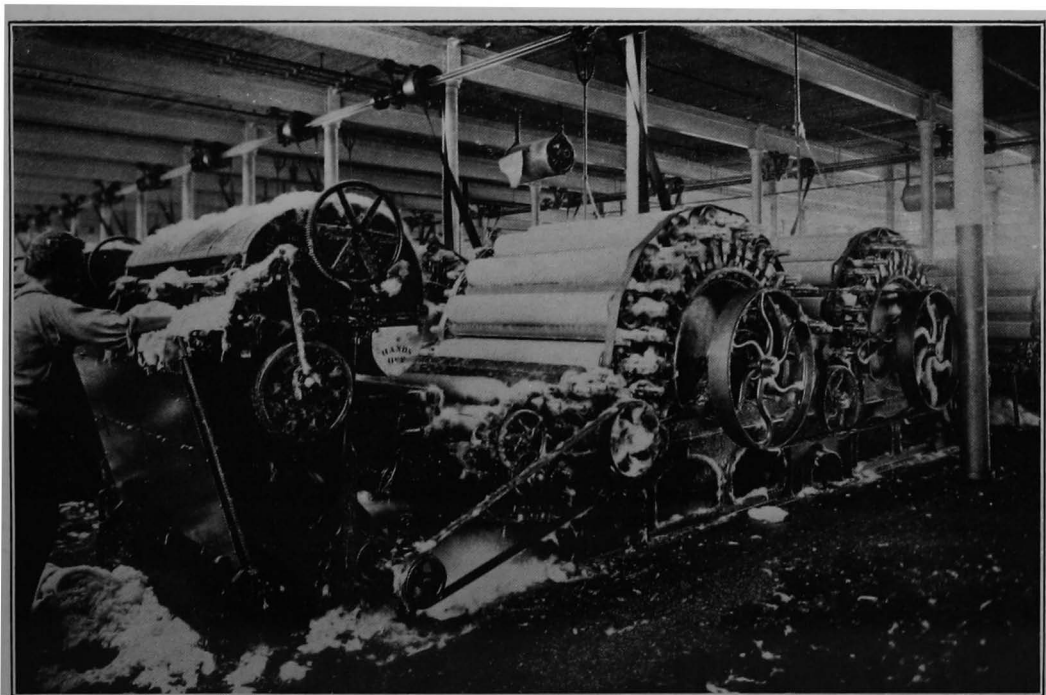
The principal conditions which affect health in the textile industries are working in a dusty atmosphere which is often kept very moist and usually very warm in order to keep the fibre pliable and workable. . . . Working in an atmosphere which is excessively moist and frequently very warm, and further, containing an excessive amount of organic dust, subjects the workmen to artificial and unnatural conditions which cannot be conducive to health. Presumably the heat and moisture predispose to rheumatic states and inflammatory conditions of the respiratory



—Photo International News Reel

WOOL SORTING. ANTHRAX IS THE WOOL SORTERS' DISEASE





—Photo Publishers' Service

CARDING MACHINES IN A WOOLEN MILL

tract which are aggravated by the irritation of the fibrous dust. It is believed that workmen so exposed are more prone to contract common colds, bronchitis, pneumonia, tuberculosis, and other inflammatory diseases of the respiratory tract.<sup>10</sup>

Sir Thomas Oliver, a leading authority on industrial hygiene, describes some conditions leading to disease and death among textile workers.

[A spinner] is on his feet all the day long: he has to keep moving over the floor space allotted to the machinery which he tends—there is never a minute of rest except when he is mending broken threads and then it is not cessation of work but change. His nervous system is in a state of tension from the time he commences work until he finishes. Strain is known to be more exhausting than work. To strain must also be added the influence of the monotony of employment, the influence of noise and of work carried on in overheated rooms and a humid atmosphere. . . . In all textile factories the main object is to get out of machinery the greatest production possible, to secure which machinery has to be sped up to a degree almost impossible for human strength to cope with it for any great length of time.<sup>11</sup>

Twenty-five cases of positive pulmonary tuberculosis were found among the 404 textile workers examined by the Workers' Health Bureau in 1926. This is a little over six out of every 100 workers suffering from this disease. It is significant that in this group the highest rate of tuberculosis, 28 per cent, occurs among the youngest workers—14 to 19 years of age.

#### *Tuberculosis Rates*

The following table shows the high rate of tuberculosis among textile workers compared with workers at large (Metropolitan Life Insurance policyholders) and with previous studies of workers in particular trades:

PERCENTAGE OF TUBERCULOSIS FOUND AMONG TEXTILE WORKERS  
 COMPARED WITH OTHER INDUSTRIES

<i>Trade</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Study Made by</i>	<i>Workers Ex- amined</i>	<i>Tubercu- losis Cases</i>	<i>Per Cent</i>
Textiles .....	1926	W. Health Bur.	404	24	6.0
Furriers .....	1915	Harris .....	542	11	2.0
Printers .....	1925	Harris .....	1,044	13	1.2
Garment Workers..	1923	Price .....	50,000	500	1.0
Department Store..	1922	Swan & Em- mons .....	1,397	3	.2
Metropolitan Policy- holders .....	1921	Dublin .....	16,662	..	.4

In studying this table it should be remembered that with the exception of the Metropolitan policyholders, who are a mixed group not confined to any one industry, the workers were all engaged in indoor occupations, with industrial hazards—heat, dust, fatigue, largely controllable. These factors have a direct relation to the rate of tuberculosis in a trade as have also long hours, low wages and speeding up. In three of the industrial groups—garment workers, furriers and printers—known for their high rate of tuberculosis, progress has been made in reducing the number of cases. The reduction of tuberculosis in these trades bears out Professor Rosenau's statement that the textile industry need not necessarily be hazardous to health.

Further proof that industrial tuberculosis can be controlled is brought out in statistics of the Prudential Life Insurance Company, which show a decrease in deaths from tuberculosis in several of the most dangerous trades in New Jersey, while *the percentage of deaths from tuberculosis among textile workers actually increased* during the same period, 1909 to 1918.<sup>12</sup>

INCREASE AND DECREASE IN DEATHS FROM TUBERCULOSIS IN  
NEW JERSEY, 1909-1918

Trade	Per Cent 1909-1913	Per Cent 1914-1918	Per Cent Increase	Per Cent Decrease
Textiles .....	21.3	21.7	.18	..
Hatters .....	29.7	23.6	..	20.0
Stone Cutters ....	26.3	19.7	..	25.0
Metal Grinders...	39.2	29.1	..	25.6
Molders, Founders and Casters....	19.7	17.4	..	11.6
Other Iron and Steel workers...	24.0	17.2	..	28.3
Plumbers .....	32.5	22.6	..	30.0

*Tuberculosis in Passaic*

Some typical tuberculosis cases found in the Passaic study of the Workers' Health Bureau, follow:

Case No. 37—A girl 15 years old, incipient tuberculosis, 14 pounds underweight, anemic, employed in the mills for one year, sweeping dusty floors and cleaning bobbins from 8 A.M. to 5 P.M., averaging \$7.45 to \$11 a week wages. Stands constantly breathing dust in a room "where the windows are never opened because the ends of the wool will break." She and her brother are the sole support of a family of six.

Case No. 386 and 329—Widow, 43 years old, active tuberculosis, mother of five children, four living, weaver for 18 years, employed in Passaic four years, this woman averages from \$9 to \$16 a week for 53 hours work, tends 700 spools, stands continuously all day with one foot on the machine. One of her children, a boy of 16, also works in the mill, earning from \$6 to \$9 a week. He too is a victim of pulmonary tuberculosis after a year and a half in the mills, working in a steam-filled room, running errands, exposed to sudden sharp changes of temperature from heat to the out-of-doors, working 44 hours a week.

Case No. 266.—Widow, mother of 8 children, 4 dependent on her, active tuberculosis, emaciated, 18% underweight, 43 years old, employed in the steam room for five years, averaging 48 hours a week and from \$18 to \$20 in wages. This woman never worked until she entered the industry five years ago. During those five years exposure to a hot damp atmo-

phere, steam, clothes constantly damp and wet, breathing in wool dust, brought on tuberculosis.

Other lung conditions which rank high among textile workers must also be taken into account as predisposing factors leading to tuberculosis and ill health. There were 33 cases of bronchitis, pleurisy and emphysema in the group of textile workers examined by the Workers' Health Bureau, or 8.1 per cent of the workers not listed as having active or suspected tuberculosis. The Metropolitan Life Insurance Company examinations show only a little more than 1 per cent of similar cases among policyholders generally and among the garment workers a rate of only 2 per cent.

Conditions in textile mills which make for this exceptionally high rate for tuberculosis and respiratory diseases could be eliminated and the trade made reasonably safe. But efficient ventilating systems, control of moisture and exhausts to draw off fumes, dust and lint cost money. Human life, the employers figure, is cheaper. One boss at a conference of textile master mechanics and chief engineers complained of his difficulties in getting thermostatic control of atmospheric conditions installed in his plant. "I couldn't really go out and say to the man who is in charge of the finances that thermostatic control was going to save 30 per cent or 40 per cent on the investment or anything like that. That is what they want you to do to-day, to show 30 or 40 per cent saving before they will consider spending the money. . . . They have got over listening to you when you talk 10 per cent."<sup>18</sup>

Low wages, unemployment and fatigue also play a sinister rôle in the health of textile workers. One out of every ten workers in the Passaic group was more than 20 per cent underweight. The Women's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor found that women in cotton mills lose 22 per cent and men 16 per cent of possible

working time because of illness, accidents and other personal causes. It found also "more days lost through sickness by women workers in the cotton mills than by the workers in other industries."<sup>14</sup> Some 60 per cent of 2,214 women studied, lost three weeks or more a year from this cause.

### *Pellagra*

Pellagra—a "poverty disease" caused by malnutrition—is a veritable scourge among the cotton workers of the South. It has increased significantly during the depression years with their unemployment, part-time work and wage cuts.

It is difficult to obtain exact figures on the extent of pellagra. In some states it is not reported by doctors. And in most cases the workers are so poverty-stricken they cannot even call a doctor. However, it is estimated by reliable authorities that 20,000 men, women and children in the industrial towns in addition to an equal number of poor farmers are now suffering from the disease in North Carolina alone. During the first six months of 1930 there were 607 deaths from pellagra reported to the state bureau of vital statistics. This makes the pellagra death rate there at least three times that of Italy in its worst year when the whole world was alarmed over the scourge of pellagra among that country's "pauper population."<sup>15</sup>

"Tell me how I can buy the lean meat, milk, and fresh vegetables the doctor says I must have on \$6 or \$7 or even \$8 a week?" This is the question the southern cotton mill worker asks when pellagra remedies are mentioned. The disease strikes the women workers even more seriously than the men. Here is a pellagra "case" in Gastonia described by a competent correspondent of the *Raleigh News and Observer*:

A mite of a girl, she wasn't yet 20 years old, mother of two babies and expecting a third, this little woman was working half a week as a spinner. She was about the most emaciated

pellagra victim I have observed in that part of the State. Her forearms and shins were covered with characteristic blistered appearing skin abrasions that accompany a well-established case of pellagra. This was cracking and scaling off. One of her babies had pellagra sores on its feet. Her mother, with whom the young woman lives, told me that they could not afford milk, lean meat, and fresh fruits and vegetables.

A worker in one of the Cone mills of North Carolina who works from 6:30 A.M. to 6 P.M., receiving about \$10 a week, explained to the same observer the cause of pellagra in his family:

Me and my family had to eat food the very cheapest we could buy, and because of this my wife has pellagra. She is suffering something terrible, and unless conditions are made better in the Cone mills, these conditions will be worse. There is but one way to do that. The people will have to be paid a little more money so they won't have to eat the same thing all the time. There are more pellagra cases in these mill villages than I have ever known.

Food—more of it, and a variation from the eternal fatback and grits—is the only preventive of pellagra. But this is out of the question on present wages in many southern mills.

In addition to the general hazards of the industry workers in certain sections of the trade are exposed to specific risks. Wool sorters, for example, are liable to contract anthrax, a disease often resulting in death, caused by breathing dusts or handling infected animal skins. This horrible disease could be entirely prevented through disinfection of hides and skins and adequate exhaust ventilation.

#### *Dyers' Diseases*

The dyeing and finishing of textiles, an increasingly important section of the industry, has specially serious health

risks for workers. Bleaches, fixing agents, cleaning fluids and a variety of coloring materials contain harmful acids and poisons.

Half the workers from these departments, examined in the Workers' Health Bureau study, came from dye plants attached to woolen and worsted mills. The color mixing room where "the steam is so thick you cannot see in front of you and you are always dripping wet so that you always have colds, rheumatism and coughing," the dry room "where the heat (about 140 degrees) chokes you," the "ice box" or acid room which must be kept cold in order not to injure the materials and where men must wear sponges over their mouths because the acids are so strong—these were some of the conditions responsible for the fact that not one of the 77 dye workers in this group was found free from serious physical defects.

Ten or twelve hours of labor, day or night, in soaking wet clothes, breathing the irritating fumes of acid and bleaches, means inevitable breakdown of lungs, heart and digestive organs. One-third of the workers were found to have heart disease, high blood pressure or both. Yet these very men were doing the most exhausting work with hours ranging from 50 to 72 a week. Eight out of every ten workers complained of severe irritation of the eyes, nose or throat. Over one-third were no longer able to digest their food, complaining of belching, cramps, nausea and frequent vomiting. Over a third had constant headaches, and almost as many were suffering from rheumatism or muscular pains.

These dye workers had a higher percentage of high blood pressure than painters who are exposed to all kinds of poisonous materials, a higher percentage of heart disease than painters, furriers or bakers, a higher percentage of tuberculosis and other respiratory diseases than printers, painters, food handlers or furriers. Compared with a representative



group of general workers not exposed to these hazards, dyers show 20 times the percentage for active and suspected tuberculosis, three times the percentage for high blood pressure, and 14 times that for heart disease.

The histories of two Passaic workers examined tell a story of suffering, want and physical collapse for which the industry is directly responsible:

The first, age 48, worked for four years in the boil-off room. He starts work at 5 o'clock in the afternoon and quits at 6:40 in the morning. During the night he gets 20 minutes for lunch. In the busy season he averages 70 hours a week. He complains of the heat, steam and fumes. His clothes are always dripping wet and there is no place to change before going home. The year before last he had the "flu" and last year his thumb was caught in the machine and he was out of work for four months without a cent of compensation for the accident. He told the doctor he had headaches, pains in the legs and his ears bothered him. He didn't think there was anything special the matter with him. He was found to have tuberculosis, pleurisy, bronchitis, diabetes, anæmia and hardening of the arteries!

The second worker earns from \$15 to \$20 a week for 65 hours. He has a wife and two children dependent on him. He has been in the washing and drying department for two and a half years; worked 65 hours a week, so that "people sleep on the wet floor" from exhaustion. The toilets are described as a "trench in the ground, out of doors," and "you go out in your wet clothes." Wooden shoes are worn because the water and the steam "give you rheumatism." Other complaints were headaches, stomach trouble and noise in the ears. The doctor found this worker 12 pounds underweight, anæmic, with an enlarged thyroid, probable diabetes, and a blood pressure far above the normal for his age. He is now 47 years old.

Rest rooms, wash rooms, places to keep street clothes and to change into dry garments before going home, are in most instances unheard of. In her report on woolen mills for the National Consumers' League in 1919, Florence Kelley told how in one Passaic mill "women were trying to steal

a few minutes' rest by sitting over a narrow board in which holes were set over a common trough, flushed automatically at intervals." <sup>16</sup> Fifteen workers from the same mill, examined in 1926, stated that they were forced to use such troughs. Thirty workers reported that toilets were foul and filthy.

With even these common decencies denied it is not surprising to find no attempt at controlling the basic hazards of the industry such as heat, steam, dust, lint and poisonous fumes.

Obviously, not all of these complaints apply to any one mill, although many of them, and scores of others like them, apply to most mills. Some of the modern structures are up-to-date in their sanitary equipment, but the majority of mills, especially in the North, are decades old and continue to operate without thought to the welfare of the workers.

#### NEED FOR SOCIAL INSURANCE

Textile workers who have the bad fortune to succumb to occupational diseases are, for the most part, left unprovided for. Only two textile states, Connecticut and Massachusetts, compensate for all occupational diseases, and even in those states the laws are so worded as to make it difficult for the worker to prove the direct relation between mill conditions and his bad health. In no state is insurance for general sickness provided for by law.

All these facts show clearly the urgent need for a comprehensive system of accident and disease prevention and social insurance. Workers cannot rely on obsolete safety laws poorly enforced. Compulsory and adequate regulations for all cotton and wool mills and union health and safety committees, elected by the workers in every mill, are essential. In addition, social insurance should cover every hazard of the textile worker's life including unemployment, accidents, dis-

ability, occupational diseases, periods of child birth, ordinary sickness and old age retirement.

This social insurance should provide the worker with full wages—with a minimum of not less than \$25 a week—while he is unemployed or forced to be away from work for any of these causes. Workers should not be contributors to the insurance fund, which should come entirely from the employing class in the form of levies on capital, incomes, profits and inheritances. The fund should be administered by an elected commission of workers and not by the corporation-controlled politicians of the government.

In the Soviet Union a thorough system of social insurance is in force providing a model for the workers throughout the world. Even in other European countries the workers, through organized action, have forced limited concessions of this kind from the governments. But in the United States, the land of so-called "free labor," no adequate benefits are provided. Labor is insecure and unprotected from the many hazards of the job. The state compensation laws are entirely inadequate, badly enforced, and manipulated by insurance companies to enhance their profits. Laws to cover other risks of a worker's life are almost entirely absent.

The struggle for social insurance to meet all these daily hazards is one of the main tasks of the textile workers. It is clear that they can carry on such a struggle only through a militant and uncompromising labor organization and in coöperation with other workers who likewise suffer from the absence of any protection against the ravages of capitalist industry.

## CHAPTER VIII

### EMPLOYERS' ORGANIZATIONS AND TACTICS

#### THE MILL OWNERS UNITE

WHILE opposing every move of the workers to organize, textile companies have successfully organized themselves. Although we have called these manufacturers "individualistic," as compared with those in industries where much larger mergers exist, we must recognize the fact that their associations have grown very powerful. Not only have textile firms united in nation-wide trade groups of various types, but they have also formed strong state and local associations. They also participate actively in the general trade and industrial bodies representing the capitalists of all industries. Many of these associations contend that they have nothing to do with labor but in practice we find them belligerently opposing all workers' organizations and all efforts to pass effective labor legislation.

Two outstanding associations in the cotton industry are the National Association of Cotton Manufacturers, and the American Cotton Manufacturers' Association. The former is 75 years old and is made up of practically all cotton mills in New England. Among other things it holds "textile forums" at which executives, mill agents, and superintendents discuss "employee relations," employment methods, and speed-up technique. The association is also making careful preparation for the coming imperialist war, as indicated by the following remarks of the secretary, R. T. Fisher, in a recent speech at the Harvard Club in Boston:

We have also worked with the War and Navy Department in helping prepare the peace-time allocation of war-time contracts.

In case you do not know of this work, it is particularly interesting to know that contracts for the requirements of approximately 3,000,000 men have been placed with the manufacturers with all the details specified except price. Copies of these contracts are in the hands of the mills and require only telegraphic instructions to start production.<sup>1</sup>

The second body, the American Cotton Manufacturers' Association, is confined primarily to southern mills. It has an Industrial Relations Committee which handles the "labor end" of its work. Governor Gardner of North Carolina conferred with officials of this association in 1929 in connection with his efforts to assist the employers to combat unionism. It stands for the 100 per cent anti-union "open shop."

These two major associations work together on tariff lobbying and legislative matters through a joint body known as the National Council of American Cotton Manufacturers. They also cooperate, as do most of the cotton mills of the country, in the Cotton Textile Institute. So far the institute has not directly entered the political or legislative field. But its decisions and acts regarding wages, hours and employment policies are of the greatest importance to the industry and to all those who work in cotton mills.

A similar organization in the wool industry is the Wool Institute which reported to the Hoover business conference in 1929 that it represented about 70 per cent of the worsted cloth makers and 80 per cent of the yarn manufacturers of the country. One of its chief purposes is "to prepare the wool industry for mobilization in national emergencies," meaning war. In June, 1930, this institute was enjoined from price fixing by a federal judge when it was found, according to the complaint, to have "conspired to restrain trade." It is doubtful, however, if such a decision will have any effect on its activities which are aimed at keeping up prices and making maximum profits.

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A much older association is the National Association of Wool Manufacturers, founded in 1864. For years its special interest has been to secure higher tariffs, and it has supervised the writing of practically all of the wool goods tariffs. Its lobby activities were examined by the Senate Lobby Investigating Committee in 1930. It has a "wage committee" which secures data from members, in this way helping the employers to effect a united front on the wage question.

The Southern Textile Association stated in 1929 that its objects were "purely educational, and we never discuss wages or labor." But this was admitted to be a misstatement even by one of the textile trade magazines which pointed out that the 1929 convention of this association bristled with discussion of the "human factor," labor costs, and speed-up schemes. In fact, "Human Relations" was the leading subject at this annual meeting, and one of the chief addresses was a scathing, ill-informed attack on labor unions. The president of the association attacked the "evil forces" (the unions) and the "false leaders" (union organizers) in the South. These "foreign agitators," he said, would disrupt the "sincere spirit of brotherly love [*sic*] which for so long has been a bond between employer and employee in our southern mills." Aptly enough he followed this with a vigorous plea for more "specialized work" or what the workers correctly call the "stretch-out."

### *Militant State Associations*

The state-wide associations are much more active than any national body in definitely fighting the workers' efforts to organize. The Cotton Manufacturers' Association of North Carolina coöperated with the Governor of that state in 1929 in an effort to rid the state of radical organizers. This association also footed the bills for certain expenses entailed by the Marion Manufacturing Company in breaking a strike

and evicting its workers in that year.\* In return for this substantial backing the Marion company pledged itself not to concede the workers' demands.

Then there is the Cotton Manufacturers' Association of South Carolina which during the 1929 strikes instituted an advertising campaign "for the purpose of educating the public concerning the advantages and merit of the principles of extended labor operations as applied in textile plants."<sup>2</sup> In plainer words this means that they tried to "sell" the speed-up system to the public through advertisements, in which, incidentally, they neglected to state the actual wages received by mill workers. This association is also active in opposing laws advocated by labor which it calls "legislation of an injurious and unreasonable type."

The Cotton Manufacturers' Association of Georgia takes an equally bitter stand against the workers. It was organized "to combat destructive influences from the outside world" and "unfavorable bills" introduced in the state legislature. Speakers at its annual meeting in 1930 "urged the manufacturers of Georgia . . . to adopt such measures as may be necessary to successfully combat destructive forces, such as the doctrine of Communism." In the same manner the president of the Texas Textile Association in 1929 attacked "organized labor" which he declared had "destroyed the textile industry in New England." He added: "We owe it to our employees to protect them against the union organizers."

State textile associations in the North are no less active in their hostility to union labor and in their efforts to make all governmental agencies work loyally for them in combating unionization. Observe, for example, the friends and political agents of the mill owners brought into the spotlight at the annual meeting and banquet of the Rhode Island Textile Association in January, 1930. President Hoover, head of the high-tariff government, sent a cheery message. At

\* See page 228.

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the table sat United States Senator Herbert and several former Senators, Governor Case, together with the state tax commissioner, and the chairman and secretary of the Republican state and city committees. Such occasions show the workers that the mill owners and the capitalist class politicians work hand in glove against the unions. Both are the bitter enemies of working class organization.

### *Other Types of Mill Owners' Associations*

Not only state but also local mill associations are constantly on the alert to defeat labor's aims. Local bodies at Fall River and New Bedford for decades have secured joint action of the mills on such a matter as a wage cut. When it has suited their purposes they have made agreements with officials of the conservative local craft unions. The chief function of these local textile employers' associations has been to "deal with labor troubles" and to "present a solid front to labor."<sup>8</sup>

Of a somewhat different type is the Arkwright Club, composed of most of the cotton mill treasurers, with offices in Boston. Originally organized in 1880 as a "luncheon club" it has long been engaged in opposing labor legislation. A few years ago it carried on a strenuous campaign to secure the repeal of the Massachusetts 48 hour law for women, and to extend the hours of labor to at least 54. Fortunately it has not yet been successful. The consolidation of this club with the National Association of Cotton Manufacturers is now being discussed.

Owners of textile mills also play an active part in the general and more inclusive organizations engaged in fighting unions, such as the Associated Industries of Alabama and a similar organization in Massachusetts. There is also the aggressively anti-labor National Association of Manufacturers whose president is a Tennessee woolen mill owner and child labor exploiter. Textile mill men likewise participate in



sectional booster organizations, such as the New England Council, which tried to get hours of labor extended by the Massachusetts legislature in 1928. The main business of such organizations, no matter how indirectly achieved, is to feather their own financial nests and to fight any force, such as effectively unionized labor, that might stand in their way.

### FIGHTING UNIONS AND STRIKES

Every worker knows that his boss does not like a militant labor union, that he hates strikes. The worker is also familiar with the various methods used to smash unions and break strikes. The following pages will merely summarize some of the major anti-union tactics of the textile corporations, usually backed by the associations which we have just described. The mills in the North, quite as much as those in the South, have long used them. And mill owners who have built up a reputation as "liberals" or "progressives" are often the most ruthless in the application of these methods.

Discrimination and discharge is a universal practice in union-smashing. Strikes in textiles have often been precipitated by the discharge of courageous workers who took the initiative in organizing fellow-workers. The best and most intelligent workers have been fired for the mere suspicion of having labor connections. For example, workers seen reading a labor paper were recently discharged from the Avondale Mills at Birmingham, Alabama. Workers seen reading a comparatively progressive capitalist newspaper were discharged from one of the Cone Mills in Greensboro, North Carolina. Employers always try to "weed out" the leaders hoping thereby to prevent unionization of their plants. Hundreds of similar examples could be cited from recent experience. Even the most "liberal" of the mill owners are invariably resorting to this practice in frantic efforts to destroy the union.



PICKET-LINE AT A NORTH CAROLINA MILL

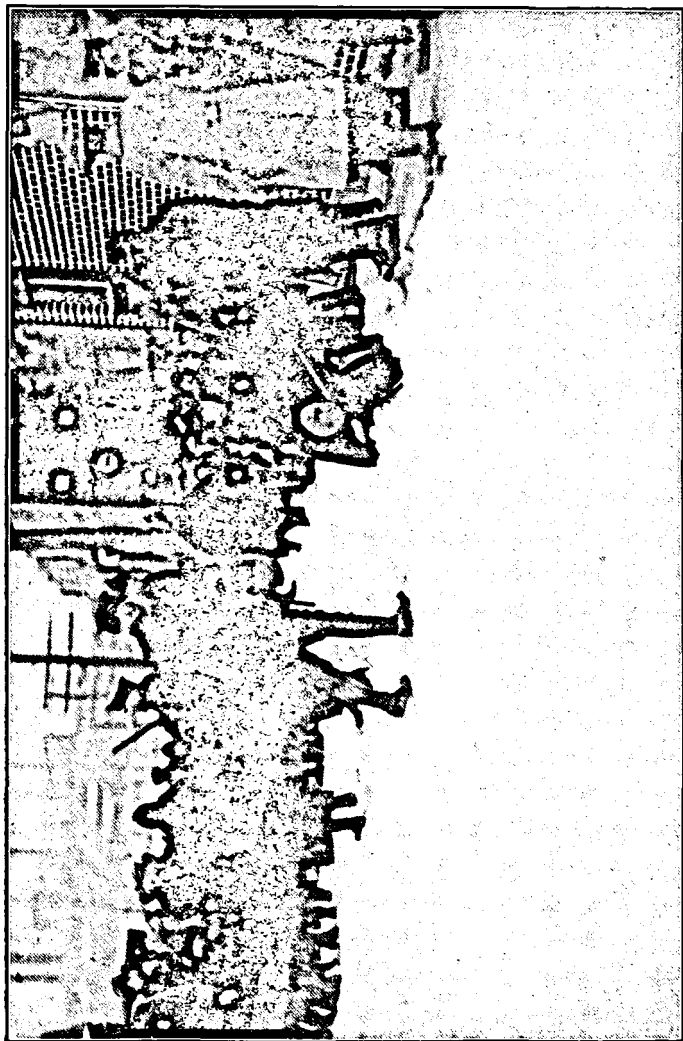


PICKET-LINE AT A NORTH CAROLINA MILL



—Photo International News Reel

PASSAIC WOMEN PICKETS BEATEN BY POLICE



—Photo International News Reel

PASSAIC WOMEN PICKETS BEATEN BY POLICE

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A related practice is the establishment of a blacklist which usually covers the mills of an entire city or section. Although illegal in some states, the employers break the law and blacklist workers secretly. One of the most elaborate blacklisting systems ever used in textiles was directed by the Industrial Council of Wool Manufacturers, a local mill organization in Passaic, New Jersey.<sup>4</sup>

The individual or yellow dog contract, binding the worker to stay out of unions, is another device used by mill owners. However, it is not yet as common in textiles as in coal mines where unions have always been more "threatening." Sometimes the employer will not force the workers to sign a contract but will merely post it on the wall. Such a notice in the Dixie Cotton Mills at La Grange, Georgia, read:

We believe it to be to the best interest of this mill and of our employees not to employ union labor. For this reason, we will continue our past policy and will not employ members of labor unions. All employees are employed on the condition that they are not members of labor unions and will not become members.

All our employees continuing in our employ do so with the agreement between us and them that they are not members of labor unions, and that they will not become members while in our employment.

A similar agreement, explicitly signed, is in force in the Callaway mills of the same place and in the mills of the Goodrich Rubber Company of Thomaston, Georgia. Workers in certain other Georgia mills were forced to sign "loyalty pledges" in 1930. The forcing of a form of yellow dog contract on the workers was one cause of the strike at the Riverside and Dan River Mills in Virginia in 1930. After the strike in Fall River, in 1928, workers, before they were given jobs, were forced to swear they were not members of the National Textile Workers' Union.

Textile plants have likewise offered fertile soil for the "labor harmonization" agencies, the "engineering bureaus"

and other such companies. They put "operatives" into plants to tell the company what is going on among the workers. In practically every textile strike labor spies have been exposed. Sometimes the companies have their own "undercover" systems and employ no outside agency; but usually the mills, at least in time of trouble, will resort to one of the professional spy bureaus such as the Sherman Corporation or the Corporations' Auxiliary Company. All of the big companies, and hundreds of the smaller ones, have been discovered using spies against the workers in the course of the long years of effort toward unionization in cotton and wool.<sup>5</sup>

In strike times the individual company, sometimes with the help of the association, will bring in scabs from other mills or other towns and use them to break the strike. If the workers live in a mill village, they will cut off their credit at the company store or force the grocers to refuse credit to the strikers. They will also influence the local Red Cross or charity agencies to refuse all aid to strikers' families. Where company houses are involved, they almost invariably resort to evictions.

#### THE GOVERNMENT-STRIKEBREAKER

The use of the power of the government against the workers in the interest of the business class is a common feature of every strike in this as in every other industry. The state reacts almost automatically in favor of its rulers, the capitalist class.

Even when no strike is in progress the police will intimidate organizers or arrest speakers or those giving out leaflets. Let the National Textile Workers' Union try to hold a meeting in front of a mill gate anywhere from Biddeford, Maine, to Anniston, Alabama, and it will almost inevitably meet with interference and arrests by the police. Meetings are prohibited in the "closed" mill villages of the South, while in the North organization meetings are usually broken up unless

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the workers organize strongly enough to defend themselves. During strikes, the clubbings, wholesale arrests, and savage assaults are events so common as hardly to be considered "news." The story of strikes in Chapter XI will amply illustrate this point. Workers coming in contact with the clubs of the cops soon see clearly that so-called civil liberties are practically non-existent in the United States except for the employing class. A short Fall River strike in 1928, when over 100 workers were clubbed and arrested within a few days, shows that northern police are quite as brutal as the southern mill cops in their attacks on the workers. Passaic, New Bedford, Lawrence tell the same story.

Where the police are insufficient to terrorize the workers, deputy sheriffs, whose salaries are often paid by the companies, are called in. Their murderous work in dozens of textile strikes was illustrated most recently in the Marion Massacre. When the bosses need still more help, state militia, National Guardsmen or state constabulary are sent by a Governor, who, like the one in North Carolina, may also be a mill owner. Even when no militant union has threatened, as in 1929 at Ware Shoals, North Carolina, troops have been sent in to terrorize strikers.

### MILL COURT "JUSTICE"

Having paid these various mercenaries to club and arrest workers the textile employers start their machinery of "justice" grinding. If there are no adequate sedition or "criminal syndicalism" laws on the statute books they begin immediately to agitate for them, as in North Carolina in 1929-1930. Meanwhile they hold arrested workers on every conceivable charge from "obstructing traffic" or "trespassing" to "rebellion and insurrection." After arraigning the workers on these counts they are likely to hold them on exorbitant bail or to refuse bail altogether.

Recent strikes in the South and in New Bedford saw all



of these weapons used by the textile employing class. Where they can find the worker guilty of no technical violation of a law they will proceed to "frame" him. Frequently the accusation is carrying a concealed weapon, or alienating the affections of a woman, or any other crime or excuse that may serve to discredit the workers' leader. On the other hand, no matter what crime is committed against the strikers it is almost impossible to get a conviction under the servile magistrates and judges in the courts of the mill owners. Not one of the terrorists who killed, kidnapped and flogged workers in North Carolina in 1929 was convicted of his crime.

The courts are also used to grant injunctions against picketing and to curb every legitimate strike activity, even to the holding of defense meetings, soliciting relief, writing letters to scabs, and similar acts indispensable to the carrying on of the workers' struggle. Textile strikers have experienced almost every kind of injunction imaginable. From Fall River to Marion and Danville they have been freely granted by the mill-owned judges.

Evicting strikers, if they happen to live in company houses, is another function performed for the mill owners by the courts. Eviction is one of the oldest strike-breaking methods in textiles, since so many workers are forced to live in company houses. In the company villages of Rhode Island and Connecticut as well as in the mill towns of the South courts have evicted both workers on strike and those who simply joined a union. Sheriffs or state troops have carried out court orders in throwing workers' furniture onto the streets and in driving the striker from all that he could call "home." Evictions may even be used when there is no strike in progress. In fact, if any one member of a family in a southern mill village does something displeasing to the boss, he is discharged and the whole family is then ordered out of the company house.

Not only local and state governments but the national

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government does its work for the mill owners. Especially has the Department of Labor, through its so-called "conciliation service," been involved in recent strike-breaking activities. Charles G. Wood, an official of this department, not only advised employers in a number of strikes not to deal with the National Textile Workers' Union, but went further and tried to secure the deportation and cancellation of citizenship papers of active union workers. After the police of Fall River had smashed picket lines and arrested workers of the National Textile Workers' Union in August, 1928, this "commissioner of conciliation" said, "I want at this time to commend your police department for its initiative in maintaining law and order." <sup>6</sup> At the same time Wood paid a glowing tribute to the reactionary local labor leaders who had clearly sold out the interests of the workers to the Fall River Cotton Manufacturers' Association.

### A REIGN OF TERROR

In addition to official governmental action against textile strikers employers have repeatedly resorted to every form of illegal and extra-legal violence and terrorism. In the strike at Little Falls, New York, in 1912, gunmen were hired to beat up the workers. In almost every strike, North and South, this practice has continued. Workers were kidnapped by mobs at Lawrence, in 1919, and in Lumberton, North Carolina, in 1929. Union halls were destroyed and strikers' homes dynamited. Leaders were taken out, flogged and lynched. Workers unarmed, going to meetings, like Ella May Wiggins, near Gastonia, were murdered in cold blood by these mill-owner bands. Even organizers of the A. F. of L. were ordered out of Ware Shoals, North Carolina, by an armed band in 1929, while others were kidnapped at Elizabethton during the rayon workers' strikes of the same year. In spite of a pretense of "investigations" and,

in a few instances, a mock trial, none of the known criminals has been punished by the mill owners' courts.

#### "WELFARE"—AN ANTI-UNION DEVICE

Welfare work, in its broadest sense, is also used to ward off unionism. It is a weapon used by employers both as individual companies and sometimes as associations. This is true of all American industries.<sup>7</sup> It is particularly true of textiles.

Much has been written in recent years about the "paternalism" of the textile mill owners and the "wage equivalents" provided by the "benevolent" cotton mill owners, especially in the southern states. We have room here for only a brief listing of some of the more outstanding types of welfare bait now used to keep workers "contented" and immune from the appeals of militant union organizers. Some of these schemes, such as company housing and mill villages, may have been due to a combination of social and economic causes. But in effect all of these schemes fit into the employer's pattern of a "paradise" where workers know nothing of independent action on the economic or political field. These devices are used to make more money for the company, to provide a shabby excuse for low wages, to keep the workers more "loyal" and efficient, and, finally, to check unionization. The fact that the mill owners have advertised these schemes so confidently as aids to the defeat of unions shows how much they depend on them as weapons against the labor movement.

This is just as true of New England mills as of those in the South. When National Textile Workers' Union organizers appeared in Ludlow and Easthampton, Massachusetts, in the fall of 1929 the *Textile World*, organ of the employers, expressed the true purpose of "welfare." In an article entitled, "Thwart the Labor Radicals," it said:

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Anything under the present disturbed labor conditions that will assure employees that their welfare is a chief concern of mill officials and operating heads, will go far toward keeping employees satisfied and eliminating opportunities for labor radicals.

It urged employers during the holiday season "to demonstrate that the welfare and contentment of their employees is a very personal matter." It implied that a cheap Christmas basket would go a long way to make up for low wages the rest of the year. The Manville Jenckes Company immediately followed the suggestion by handing out baskets of fat back and potatoes to its starving and exploited workers in Gastonia.

The true aim of "welfare" was likewise expressed by the same journal when, in reviewing a number of company union plans in operation in 1922, it declared that "probably never before in the history of the industry have relations between employers and employees been so mutually satisfactory. *The manner in which wage reductions were accepted is an illustration of this fact.*"<sup>8</sup> (Our italics.)

### COMPANY UNIONS

Practically none of the smaller cotton mills has installed company union schemes for its workers. However, a few of the larger concerns such as Amoskeag, Pacific, Riverside and Dan River, and Crompton have used this device with some success in counteracting efforts to organize the workers into real trade unions.<sup>9</sup>

An entire session of the National Association of Cotton Manufacturers in 1929 was devoted to company unions, which were described in favorable terms by large employers. But a few weeks after one of the Riverside and Dan River executives had given a glowing account of its "industrial democracy" plan, the workers in Danville were in revolt against it. A similar plan "patterned after the United States government" is used at the Crompton Company in Rhode

Island where employees work as long hours as in the South. Under this plan the "Cabinet" is composed of the heads of the company. It has the power to veto all the acts of the House of Representatives composed of workers who are permitted to "vote" on matters of no vital concern.

The Amoskeag plan is one of the most farcical in the industry and the period of its operation has seen a steady decline in wages and an increase in speed-up. It has frequently been used to put over wage cuts. The plan at the Pacific Mills was likewise introduced to prevent real unions from getting a foothold. The Pacific workers are permitted to "legislate" about insignificant items, the company having the final decision in all matters.

#### MAGAZINES, STOCKS, INSURANCE, BONUSES

Some textile mills issue company papers or "employee magazines" as they are called by the personnel managers. They are full of baby pictures, personal chit chat, production speed-up hints, patriotic appeals and anti-union propaganda. Such magazines are now published by the Bibb Manufacturing Company, Pacific Mills, Botany Mills, Tallassee Mills, Mount Hope Finishing Company, the Cone Mills, and by a number of other companies. They seem, however, to have less vogue than they had a few years ago during the post-war epidemic of welfare work when employers were more anxious to keep down labor turn-over rates.

Comparatively few stock ownership schemes have been used among textile workers. This is partly because wages are so low that stock buying by workers is out of the question, and also because few companies are large concerns of the type that consider it good "public policy" to distribute stock among employees. In the days of fat dividends the companies were, naturally, not interested in sharing profits with workers. More recently the stocks of these companies have not been such attractive "buys," even had the workers

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any money to purchase them. A few woolen concerns have made efforts to sell stock to their higher paid workers. But when depression hit the industry, most of these plans were discontinued, sometimes with losses to the workers. This was the fate of the American Woolen Company plan adopted in 1921.

Group insurance has been used by a few mills with a view to decreasing labor turn-over and creating "company loyalty." Both life insurance and insurance for sickness are in operation, in most cases the workers contributing to the funds. Some 40 cotton plants out of 322 studied in North Carolina in 1928 still had some form of group insurance in force.<sup>10</sup> The arbitrary character of this insurance is illustrated in the case of the Riverside and Dan River Mills. The company withdrew its group insurance when the workers organized its plants in 1930.

A number of so-called "incentive" schemes are also used by the mills. Meager wage bonuses have sometimes been granted on the basis of length of service with the company. The Bibb Manufacturing Company gave two bonuses in 1929 when union agitation was active in the South. The Farr Alpaca Company, of Holyoke, Massachusetts, gives what it calls a "wage dividend"; and the Cone Mills also gave a week's wages, calling it a "bonus" when they closed down for ten days at the end of 1929. Some mills present special "attendance bonuses" to encourage steadier work during the busy season. Like all welfare handouts these bonuses are paid at the whim of the company, when it thinks they will have some effect in keeping the workers "loyal."

Other mills hand "service pins" to workers who have been with the company for a number of years. The Beacon Manufacturing Company, of New Bedford, has such a system of rewards. Others give them something high-sounding, called a "profit-sharing dividend." The Bourne Mills of Fall River

gave one recently. It consisted of about one-half week's wages to a few of its workers.

A still cheaper racket was conducted by the Manville Jenckes Company in 1930. Its Loray Mill, at Gastonia, staged an "essay contest" on the subject, "Why I Enjoy Working at the Loray," the princely prizes to the three winners being \$5, \$10 and \$15. At the same time the mill ran a series of full-page advertisements in local papers describing the delights of sweating for the mill that had crushed the Gastonia strike of 1929 with blood and iron. The chief slogan of this advertising campaign was: "Loray—Where the Boss Is the Operative's Friend."

#### THE MILL VILLAGE

The mill villages of the South have received considerable attention from writers and investigators in the last few years.<sup>11</sup> In these unincorporated, segregated villages the houses as well as the land, stores, churches, schools, police and other institutions are owned by the company. The very souls of the workers are completely dominated by the mill. Although these villages may vary greatly in their physical appearance, regardless of their relative decency or squalor the institution itself is bad. Even the mill-owning Governor of North Carolina said in 1929 that it "would constitute improvement if the mill village and company housing system were abolished and the workers given their full pay in cash."

No such thing as free speech or civil liberties exists for the workers in these villages. They do not vote on local questions and there is no political life. They are under the dictatorship of the bosses and in complete industrial bondage.

Mill villages are by no means confined to the South although the great majority of the workers there live in them. Similar villages are found in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. In one valley in Rhode Island there are 21, many

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of them built years ago. They are not only composed of cramped one-family houses but in many cases are described as a "village of tenements." Some 30,000, comprising workers of 12 nationalities, are in these villages. One observer describes them as follows:

Countless mill communities are composed of row on row of drab houses, dark gray and uncertain brown prevailing. Separate houses, huddled together or tenement rows housing 8 to 64 families find shelter on a hillside, or the edge of the city, or marooned between railroad tracks. Patches of gravel are often the only spots children have to transform for their playgrounds.<sup>13</sup>

Rules and regulations of these northern villages may not be quite so rigid and paternalistic as those in the South. But in essence the employer has much the same powers. Evictions come just as swiftly when the workers dare to rebel against the companies. Some northern interests such as the West Boylston Mfg. Co. and the Dwight Mfg. Co. of Massachusetts, control mill villages both North and South.

Seven out of every ten workers in North Carolina live in company houses. In Georgia, 90 per cent of the mills have their own villages and probably 75 per cent of the workers are in these houses. In the South as a whole not less than 70 per cent of the cotton mill workers are so housed. Even in the North in certain textile communities the majority of the workers live in company shacks. An investigation by the Department of Labor and Industries of Massachusetts in 1924 showed that about 22 per cent of the textile workers employed by companies with company houses were living in these houses.

### SCHOOLS, CHURCHES AND STORES

Southern cotton mills boast of the educational advantages provided their workers as part of the mill village system. These schools are for workers' children until they are 13



to 16 years of age or the age at which the law allows them to enter the mills. Recent authoritative studies made by native southern experts show the character of this education. Dr. J. H. Cook, a southern school official, says that in every case the mill school is inferior to the regular public schools, inadequate as the latter are. His report shows why mills prefer to maintain their own schools. Instead of paying taxes for the upkeep of regular schools they subsidize their own schools thus saving tens of thousands of dollars. If ten representative mills, studied by Dr. Cook, were to allow their property to be taxed for school purposes at the same rate as the other property around them, they would pay about three times as much as they now do.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, by maintaining their own schools they keep a firm hold over the minds of the growing generation of mill hands, and fill them with company loyalty and anti-union propaganda. Where the schools are not owned outright, companies frequently put mill officials on the school boards or make them superintendents of local schools.

Preachers in these southern communities, as in many northern ones, serve the mill owners quite as faithfully as the school teachers. Ministers and their churches are literally bought and paid for by the mill barons. The parsons tell the workers to be satisfied with their jobs and to fix their minds on "things above," and events in "the world to come." If they preach any other kind of gospel, or criticize hours or wages, they are quickly removed from their posts. A conservative union organizer from Greenville, South Carolina, characterizes these fundamentalist hirelings when he says:

The preachers in the textile districts here are nothing but paid agents for the mills. The overseers are the deacons and stewards in the churches, regardless of whether they have religion or not. The fact is they do not want a deacon who has any religion, because if he has he will not do their dirty

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work. Some of the preachers tell the people the Lord won't love anyone who works in a mill and makes over ten dollars a week.<sup>14</sup>

Salaries of these preachers of contentment and submission are usually paid by the mill owners. Most of the Y. M. C. A. secretaries are in the same position, but if anything, tied more closely to the company payroll. All these "spiritual" agents are effective channels for the reactionary propaganda of the mill owners. Dues for the Y. M. C. A. are often checked out of the worker's pay without his consent.

Company stores are usually a part of the mill village system, but they are now not so common a feature as formerly. They are used to keep wages down, bind the worker to the company, and further to exploit him. A study of the system at Marion, North Carolina, by the Federal Council of Churches describes the system most objectively:

While workers were not compelled to trade at the company stores maintained by both the companies, they said that the credit system in effect often compels them to do so, because credit is issued against future pay by means of books of tickets good for trade at the company stores. New families, in particular, families with the lower weekly earnings, and those who may get behind because of sickness, unemployment or accident have no cash reserves, become indebted to the company stores in a way that sometimes involves in advance a high per cent of their wages, leaving them little or no cash. According to workers and others who have investigated, cash is often obtained by such employes by selling books of tickets which are bought in at a considerable discount by overseers or others who have money. Thus, at some sacrifice, they can obtain cash to purchase goods in the independent stores or for other purposes. They say that the prices charged by the company stores are considerably higher than the prices of corresponding articles in the independent stores.

Side by side with this store practice often goes the business of making small loans to the worker. The company will charge him at the rate of 50 cents for a \$5.00 loan for

one week. For example, one Georgia worker of our acquaintance borrowed \$5.00 at the beginning of the week. At the end of the week he had \$7.00 in wages coming to him. He actually received \$1.50. In the Forsyth Cotton Mills, Georgia, the mills charge white workers 15 per cent for one-week loans, and 20 per cent for Negro workers who borrow under this system. In the mills at Danville, Virginia, workers are reported by conservative union officials to be paying even higher rates for such loans, averaging around 40 per cent, with some at even higher rates.

#### OTHER "SERVICES"

Mills and mill villages often provide a number of things that might be called "personal service hand-outs." They serve the same purposes as the other welfare institutions we have discussed. Visiting nurses, hospitals, lunch rooms, gardens, social workers, community secretaries, saving clubs, Christmas baskets, Bible classes and the like come under this heading. In some places the workers contribute out of their own pocket to maintain this welfare. At Marion, North Carolina, they helped to build the local hospital, but when the same workers were shot down by company gunmen \* the hospital refused to serve them until payment had been guaranteed in advance. One wife who had given her \$2 assessment to the hospital fund reported that this hospital "Let my husband die like a dog."

Company doctors serve a useful purpose to their paymasters. In case of accidents both doctors and hospitals are profitable to the employer for they lessen compensation to the workers for injuries and help the company to avoid legal damage suits. The plant doctor also helps to keep sick and fainting workers on the job, reviving them in his office and then sending them back to their machines with the glib assurance that "there is nothing the matter." In

\* See page 229.

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general, they give inferior medical and surgical care to the injured workers. For this "service" the workers often have to pay a fee.

A mass of items fall in the category of "recreation" and "social activities." They are furnished by a larger number of companies than any other welfare device. The workers are often assessed for the upkeep of some of them, which include all sorts of social affairs, brass bands, athletic teams, clubs and boy scout troops, community houses and classes in domestic science.

In the days when it most feared the unions, the American Woolen Co. conducted sewing circles for women workers, and the President of the company himself attended ice cream parties given for the mill workers' children by the company's "labor department." Most of these tricks were dropped when the labor situation became more "favorable" for the company. However, many of the larger concerns still use this sort of welfare bait, some of them, like Pacific Mills, running it as an adjunct to the company union. The arrangement of such affairs gives the members of the company union committees something harmless to talk about at their meetings.

The number of workers who participate in the various company recreational stunts is likely to be exaggerated by the mill owners. In her intensive study of certain North and South Carolina cotton mill villages, Myra Page found that less than a fifth of the workers took any part in any of them, while about two-thirds of the workers expressed unfavorable opinions of welfare work in general.

Through these tricks, devices, "services"—whatever you may choose to call them—the companies dupe and drive the workers. If the workers are roused and rebel against this semifeudalism, as some did in the South in 1929, the mills are quick to supplement welfare with warfare. Police terror, injunctions, frame-ups and blacklists are added to

picnics and swimming pools. The mills do these things individually. They do them as organized groups. They unite to advance their own interests and to oppose the workers. What the workers in turn have done to combat the offensive of the mill owners, both the offensive of physical force and the more subtle "welfare offensive," we shall discuss in later chapters.

		BRANDON CORPORATION POINSETT PLANT
WAGES	10 80	
RENT	95	
FUEL	3.25	
CASH		
LAUNDRY		
CLOTH		
ICE	6.60	
STORE		
BANK		
BALANCE DUE AND ENCLOSED	0 0 0	

PAY CHECK OF SOUTHERN COTTON  
MILL WORKER

No cash was received after 60 hours of work in the mill.

## CHAPTER IX

### ORGANIZING THE WORKERS

THE textile capitalists are well organized to protect their interests and to oppose attempts of labor to secure better conditions. Their tactics, as we have seen, are similar to those of the owning class in all industries. We must now review what the workers have done to organize, and how they have struggled for some share of the wealth which they have created.

#### EARLY CRAFT AND GENERAL UNIONS

Long before the development of any national industrial unions in textiles came unions that took in workers of only one craft or one department of a mill. They were first organized locally and then brought together to cover a group of cities. Such a union was the National Cotton Mule Spinners Ass'n, formed originally in 1858, and reorganized several times thereafter. The old mule spinners were the first group in the industry to organize on a national scale, and to strike for their demands.

Then came locals and federations of other crafts such as carders, weavers, slasher-tenders and loomfixers. These groups carried on the first strikes in Fall River and New Bedford. They were composed largely of British immigrants who had brought with them Lancashire ideas and forms of unionism.

Cotton workers from Paterson and Fall River predominated in the International Labor Union formed in 1878 by textile leaders from these cities. The union was open to workers in all industries but actually the textile operatives

made up the great majority of its members. This union claimed at its peak a membership of 8,000 chiefly from the unskilled workers. It has been described as "the first deliberately planned effort in the country to organize on a comprehensive scale the unskilled wage-earners."<sup>1</sup>

### *Knights of Labor*

The Knights of Labor was the second union to attempt the same thing but on a much broader scale a few years later.

It was a national union embracing all industries. It formed many locals and carried on strikes in the cotton industry. It was active in the last quarter of the 19th century and enrolled large numbers of skilled and semi-skilled workers. Philadelphia shawl and carpet weavers and wool sorters had their locals as far back as 1872. The Knights formed industrial locals including all crafts in Fall River in 1882.

They organized general "labor" locals in the South, and included cotton workers in North Carolina and Georgia. One of their strikes in Augusta, Georgia, in 1886, ended in a lock-out that involved twice as many workers as participated in the Gastonia strike in 1929.

In 1888, the Knights were connected with sporadic disputes involving cotton workers in mill towns in Alabama, Tennessee and South Carolina. When the national organization dropped out of the picture after 1890 some of these textile locals joined the new National Union of Textile Workers.

### *National Union of Textile Workers*

One of the first efforts to form a nationwide union of workers, chiefly in the cotton industry, was in 1891, when the National Union of Textile Workers was organized in Lowell. It existed—later under the name of International

Union of Textile Workers—till 1901. Then it was merged with other unions which had seceded from it, to form the present United Textile Workers of America. The highest membership on which the "National" ever paid per capita tax to the American Federation of Labor was 3,600. Once it publicly claimed a membership of over 5,000, and more than 160 locals, but apparently quite small ones.

In spite of its numerical weakness this union carried on vigorous struggles, and especially in the South. At one time or another it had as many as 100 locals there. During the last two years of the century it was unusually active in that field and received some support from the A. F. of L. In the 10 years of its existence it organized nearly 300 locals in both the North and the South. It formed locals at Rock Hill, Macon, Greensboro, Danville, and some 30 other cotton towns in five southern states. Strikes of some importance were conducted in Augusta in 1898, Columbus in 1899, and Danville in 1901. The union participated in a number of strikes and lockouts in the Carolinas in 1900, including one that involved 16 mills in Alamance County.

#### UNITED TEXTILE WORKERS OF AMERICA

##### *Formation and Growth*

The American Federation of Labor fostered the organization of the United Textile Workers of America in 1901. It merged almost all the textile unions then in existence including the International Union of Textile Workers and the old cotton craft unions of New England, chiefly weavers and card room workers. The strong mule spinners' and lace operatives' national unions were the only ones not included. At that time they were permitted to hold separate charters granted by the A. F. of L.

Cotton workers predominated in the new union. Fall River was its backbone. Its first president, James Tansey,



still heads the Textile Council in that city, although it is no longer in the United. In addition to the Fall River delegation, the 1901 convention of the U. T. W., showed 20 delegates from Augusta, Georgia, four each from Lowell, Massachusetts, and Dover, New Hampshire, three from Jamestown, New York, two each from Ashton, Rhode Island, Thompsonville, Connecticut, and Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, and one each from 20 other cotton and woolen centers.

The preamble to the new union's constitution sounded radical. It spoke of a "grand organization . . . for mutual protection against the grasping combinations of organized capital." This clause was eliminated later, and by 1903 the United was offering its first union label to attract "friendly employers."

The development of the United from 1901 to date is shown in the table on p. 181. During the last 30 years this union has formed locals in practically every cotton and woolen town in the country. It claims to have issued some 650,000 membership cards and formed about 1,600 locals. This does not seem exaggerated in view of the secessions and losses in membership. In some years the "dropped out" and disbanded locals totaled more than the number of new charters.

As we have seen the war brought great prosperity to the textile industry. With the cost of living going up, wages lagged and the workers forced the union into struggles for increases. It was a most favorable period for the union. It reached its peak strength of about 105,000 in 1920, but lost more than two-thirds of this in the following two years of depression.

During the boom period it succeeded in organizing some of the larger cotton and woolen mills, but its membership never included even 10 per cent of all the workers in these industries. In 1919, Amoskeag was nearly 100 per cent

# ORGANIZING THE WORKERS

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## UNITED TEXTILE WORKERS, 1901-1930

(MEMBERSHIP, LOCALS, DELEGATES)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Members Reported</i>	<i>Delegates at Convention</i>	<i>Local Unions Represented at Convention</i>	<i>Total Local Unions Reported in Existence</i>
1901.....	.....	57	...	...
1902.....	10,600	62	32	185
1903.....	15,000	60	32	157
1904.....	10,500	65	38	130
1905.....	10,000	57	30	117
1906.....	13,500	50	43	...
1907.....	15,500	95	49	...
1908.....	13,000	57	43	...
1909.....	10,000	37	24	154
1910.....	13,000	61	43	...
1911.....	10,000	...	...	...
1912.....	16,500	88	59	...
1913.....	16,200	...	...	...
1914.....	20,000	82	50	181
1915.....	19,000	81	...	185
1916.....	32,000	103	64	...
1917.....	40,000	125	77	192
1918.....	46,000	137	70	...
1919.....	100,000	202	97	...
1920.....	105,000	...	...	400*
1921.....	30,000	...	...	...
1922.....	30,000	129	87	...
1923.....	30,000	...	...	...
1924.....	30,000	109	...	...
1925.....	30,000	...	...	...
1926.....	30,000	126	102	...
1927.....	30,000	...	...	...
1928.....	30,000	121	...	...
1929.....	30,000	...	...	250*
1930.....	30,000**	162	95	...

\* With exception of these two figures—estimates by union officials—all figures in table are taken from U. T. W. or A. F. of L. *Proceedings*. Figures are for all textile workers, including silk, knit goods and other branches not discussed in this book.

\*\* The stationary total membership figure for the last decade is taken from U. T. W. reports to the A. F. of L. The U. T. W. has failed to make public any other figures for total membership.

organized with recognized union committees. The union even had a closed shop agreement in a few mills. In the Brookside Mills of Knoxville, Tennessee, with 1,400 workers, the company signed such an agreement annually for a decade ending with the depression.

The U. T. W. leaders tried for years to get a higher per capita payment from the locals. At the beginning the dues paid to the national office were only five cents a month. They were raised to 10 cents in 1904. Further attempts to raise dues caused more dissension in the union than any other matter. Several cotton locals in lower New England seceded over this question in 1908. It was considered a great victory by the national leaders when they persuaded the convention delegates in 1915 to raise dues to 20 cents a month. The present rate is 35 cents. The union always had a sharp "business union" attitude on per capita. In 1914, the national secretary reported that she had gone to a local where some grievances were to be taken up with the mill owner. But the local's dues were in arrears and she reported to the convention: "I absolutely refused to go into their grievances, or attempt to adjust them, until they paid up their back dues and per capita tax."<sup>2</sup>

As the table shows, the membership has declined to about 30,000. About half of this number are the members of the American Federation of Full Fashioned Hosiery Workers which affiliated, but as a completely autonomous body, in 1923. The membership also includes several thousand more in braids, upholstery, woven labels, tapestry, knit goods, carpets and other specialty or novelty lines where workers of considerable skill and higher pay are employed. This leaves a very small number actually organized in the two basic industries of cotton and wool, possibly between 1 and 2 per cent. Most of these were admitted in recent years, and were recruited chiefly from Salem, New Bedford, and new southern locals.

The other northern centers where the United has small groups of cotton or woolen workers are Pawtucket, Woonsocket, Warren, Providence, and a few smaller centers in Rhode Island; Lawrence (a few wool sorters formerly in an independent national union of wool sorters), Lowell, Fall River, Clinton, Maynard, Holyoke, Housatonic, and North Adams, Massachusetts. Small locals, chiefly of one craft, are in Maine, New Hampshire, Connecticut, and New York. Most of these unions are inactive bodies of more skilled workers doing little if any organization work. Some of them hold no regular meetings, and come together only "on call."

#### *A Craft or Industrial Union?*

Contrary to the prevailing impression in labor circles, the United is, jurisdictionally at least, an industrial union. It is, in fact, an *interindustrial* union if we consider all the textile industries which the A. F. of L. has given it the sole and exclusive right to organize. This "jurisdiction" covers the most widely diversified group of crafts and jobs assigned to any union in the A. F. of L. The very nature of the "textile industry"—really a group of textile industries—leads to the prevalence of "dual unionism." A union with so many fronts to guard is especially exposed to splits and break-aways.

At the beginning, however, the U. T. W. had as its nucleus a most craft-conscious group of unions, some of which later seceded. The long dispute between the United and the frequently seceding New England craft unions was concerned partly with the question of structure. The United was the champion of an all-embracing industrial union as against the notion of "sectional" craft unions which the Lancashire cotton weavers and spinners had brought with them to New England. Records of the United in its early days show John Golden, its former president, waxing elo-

quent over the superiority of the industrial form. "The time when local craft unions could win strikes has passed, never to return," he argued in referring to "the old bewhiskered policy of craft unionism" of the Fall River and New Bedford groups.

In 1918-19, out of 200 locals chartered by the United, about 120, or more than half, were "Textile Locals," presumably open to every worker in the mill. In the South, where differences in skill were not so great and where there were no craft traditions the workers insisted on the broader type of local.

In practice, however, especially in the North, many of the general locals have been confined to one or two crafts. This is particularly true of the dominant and more enduring locals. Workers in Fall River, New Bedford, Pawtucket and other centers are still divided into craft bodies, in New Bedford, for example, into 10 separate locals. Strikes of one local have even been carried on while other locals in the same plant were kept at work and offered no support.

It is clear from the history of the United that it has generally followed the line of least resistance. In an industry with hundreds of crafts and occupations, the more skilled workers were easier to hold, steadier in dues payments, and more likely to be attracted to a body like the United, which has all the characteristics of the typical A. F. of L. "business unionism."

#### *Early Efforts in the South*

Representatives of mill towns in five southern states took part in the convention that launched the U. T. W. in 1901. A score came from Augusta, Georgia. One of the biggest strikes following this convention was the seven-week general strike of 7,000 cotton workers in that city. The workers walked out for a wage increase. The U. T. W. endorsed

the strike and collected funds. Tent colonies and union commissaries were set up.

In the 1903 convention of the U. T. W. efforts to create locals in 12 towns in the two Carolinas and Georgia were reported. In some cases locals were set up only to be wiped out later by strikes. During the next eight years the union organized locals in the South at the rate of seven or eight a year, but none of them was permanent. Dominated, at that time, by Fall River craft leaders the U. T. W. lost interest in the South.

In 1912, activity somewhat revived and U. T. W. locals were formed in Danville, Lynchburg and Knoxville. The leading mill in Knoxville offered no resistance to the union. From 1912 to 1921 these Knoxville workers were used as a basis from which to penetrate other sections of the South.<sup>8</sup> In 1914, came a long and bitter strike at the Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills in Atlanta. About 130 of the 1,200 strikers were children under 16, while two-thirds of the total were women. Some 125 families were fed by the union commissary; 85 of them had been evicted from company houses and lived in union tents for over a year. The strike failed, and many of the workers had their transportation paid by the union when they went in search of jobs in other plants.

In the same year, a rival union, the Industrial Workers of the World (I. W. W.), fresh from its spectacular work in Lawrence and Paterson, carried a red flag through the streets of Greenville when 750 workers in the Brandon Mills struck under their leadership.

Two years later, 1916, came what U. T. W. leaders called "our first real endorsed legitimate, organized strike in the South" at the Gluck and Equinox mills in Anderson, South Carolina. The workers went out for a wage increase of 10 per cent. Evictions followed after 3 or 4 months and troops were sent in to help the company. The strike was

lost but was described by union officials as a "moral victory." Still more bitter was the strike, the same year, of 650 workers at the Judson Mills in Greenville, caused by the discharge of 30 union members. The bosses urged the workers to come back and form their own company union, and not let their money "go North." A union picket was stabbed by a company thug on the picket line. Five innocent workers, who were 100 feet from the killing, received two years each in prison, but the gunman who did the "job" was not even called to trial.

A strike at Griffin, Georgia, in 1916, also caused by the discharge of U. T. W. members, closed two mills and crippled the force in five others. It was won, but the following year other strikes in the same mills were lost, and the best the union reported it could do was to get 1,600 of the workers jobs on farms or in other mills.

The rush days of war production brought many strikes during which the workers affiliated with the U. T. W. Columbus saw a number of such strikes. One strike in 1918, in a mill making army cloth brought in not only deputies but U. S. "Regulars" as well as Home Guard companies. Martial law was declared. The U. T. W. claimed some 4,500 members in Columbus that year. Another strike, early the following year, which called out 7,000 workers in the city, was lost, but the mills later reduced working hours to 55. The following May, a union meeting was fired at by a group of "company men." One worker was killed and several others wounded. But the union continued to grow and later secured a wage increase without a strike.

The movement which was chiefly for shorter hours was so widespread that by the fall of 1919 the union claimed 40,000 paid-up members in North Carolina and 5,000 in South Carolina. If these figures are correct, then the total southern membership must have been over half the total membership of the U. T. W. It reported that 67 new

southern locals had been organized that year, 43 of them in North Carolina.

Six locals were formed in Macon in 1919 and 2,000 workers struck for shorter hours and union recognition in six mills. Some were forced to return to work under yellow dog contracts. In a Chattanooga mill a "closed shop" agreement and a 54-hour week were secured in one mill. About 3,000 workers also joined the union in Charlotte that year, some of them striking and gaining shorter hours and the abolition of unpopular bonus systems. There were also disputes and "small disturbances" at Nashville, Rock Hill, Albemarle, Concord, and Belmont, Mooresville, Salisbury, McAdenville, Raleigh and Gastonia. But the movement waned, and only 30 new locals were organized in the whole South in the 12 months after September, 1919. With the post-war business crisis setting in, the mills began to reduce wages in 1920 and 1921. By May of the latter year reductions in southern mills amounted to between 30 per cent and 50 per cent.

Southern locals decided to put up a "last stand" fight against mill owners; 9,000 workers struck in Charlotte, Huntersville, Rock Hill, Concord and Kannapolis against the wage cut and to secure shorter hours and union recognition. The International union claimed it was financially bankrupt, and no regular strike benefits were paid. A commissary supplied relief to about 8,000 strikers and dependents for a time. The strike began June 1, 1921, and collapsed in August. Violence on the part of militia and employers, coupled with the sabotage of the A. F. of L., drove the workers back to the mills.

This was the last big cotton strike of U. T. W. locals in the South. A few weak attempts at revival came later, a few locals were nursed along by southern militants, a textile council continued to function sporadically; small spontaneous strikes occurred in 1922, 1925 and 1926. Otherwise



nothing was left but the charters on the walls of the central labor bodies.

In 1927, some 800 workers at the Harriet Mill of the Cooper Cotton Mill Co. in Henderson, North Carolina, struck for the restoration of wages cut some years before. The national office of the U. T. W. did nothing except offer them a charter. An organizer for the Full Fashioned Hosiery Workers encouraged them for a few weeks and helped raise relief. Two companies of militia were sent in by the Governor. The strike was broken after five weeks when the mill began evictions.

### *Reëntering the South*

With agitation against the stretch-out sweeping southern states in the spring of 1929 and with the radical National Textile Workers Union leading the Gastonia strike\* the United was again forced to take the field in the South. Although most of the strikes in South Carolina were spontaneous outbreaks under local leadership, in some cases the workers were signed up in locals of the U. T. W. when A. F. of L. and state federation organizers approached them. Some workers at Anderson Mills, Mills Mill, Ware Shoals Mfg. Co., and several units of the Brandon Corp., were temporarily enrolled in the U. T. W.

Following this, officials of the U. T. W. began issuing statements on its southern growth. On May 25th, they claimed 16,000 workers in 17 locals in and around Greenville, South Carolina (Greenville itself has only 13,000 workers in all its mills). By June 24th, President Thomas F. McMahon claimed 60 new locals organized in the South since March. A few days later the South Carolina State Federation of Labor at its convention reported 28 textile locals chartered in the state, a dozen of them represented at the convention. But, by October 25, 1929,

\* See page 230.

U. T. W. headquarters in Greenville claimed only 3,000 members, and only 12 dues-paying locals in all South Carolina. Francis J. Gorman, the U. T. W. representative on the A. F. of L. southern organization committee, stated early in April, 1930, that more than 15 locals had been set up in the South in the first three months of the year. The local at Danville claimed 2,500 members.

Apparently many workers were signed up during the spring and summer of 1929, but most of them fell away before the end of the year, with a slight revival about the time of the Danville organization effort early in 1930. By October, 1930, previous claims were reduced considerably, the national convention of the union being told that about 10,000 members had at least paid initiation fees during the whole drive and that some 30 locals had been set up.

In this 1929-30 southern campaign the United Textile Workers had the support of the American Federation of Labor. At the Toronto Convention of the A. F. of L., in 1929, it was decided to "organize the South" on all fronts. This meant that the U. T. W. became one with the A. F. of L. in its desire to avoid "trouble" and to serve the employers.

The U. T. W. and the A. F. of L. thus started on a joint campaign to form southern locals with words of meekness and apology on their lips. Never in the history of organized labor in any advanced industrial country had such servile approach been made to capitalists. Union officials went South advocating efficiency, cost reduction, moderation, co-operation, and elimination of waste. They went gently, pleading for a chance to show themselves "useful" to the companies. There were to be no mass efforts, no wide-scale or "spectacular" tactics. "Business methods" instead were to prevail. There were to be no strikes or strike slogans, no moves for higher wages—the conference of A. F. of L. leaders with Hoover in December, 1929, had settled that point—no "chaos and violence" which the

U. T. W. officials had learned from the Open Shop employers to associate with the word "strike." It was to be a "mission of peace and helpfulness" as William Green, President of the American Federation of Labor, told the employers at Montgomery, Alabama—where textile workers are paid \$10 for a work week of 60 hours.

*Mr. Green Lends a Hand*

One gets the full flavor of this hat-in-hand approach to the southern companies only after examining the speeches delivered by Green during his two trips on behalf of the general southern organizing campaign early in 1930. His sentiments were those of the U. T. W. leaders, only somewhat more gracefully and unctuously expressed.

Mr. Green's trips were virtually triumphant processions from one chamber of commerce to another, in which he carried the message of the "new capitalism" in the language of "personnel management" and industrial peace. He spoke before three state legislatures. He was entertained by governors, mayors and scores of lesser politicians. As one A. F. of L. journal put it, "employers of labor, civic officials, business men and law makers" heard him "expound the theories and principles of the A. F. of L., and many of them admitted frankly that the great labor organization had come into the South with a constructive program."

What are these theories and principles with which the labor official set out to enlist the support of southern mill owners? In the words of Green, "Either we will speak for the southern workers or the Communists will assume that function." He would fight them and thus "protect society" and "defend American institutions," meaning obviously private property and capitalist exploitation. "We are fighting on two fronts against the same influence that mabe Russia go Bolsheviki."

Again, that there could be no doubt as to why the southern campaign had been undertaken, he said:

If there is a class war it is between the American Federation of Labor and this group clothed in the garb of Communism. . . . There must be an endless conflict between this group and us.

To which the capitalist press answered with ringing applause and congratulation. The ultrareactionary *Chicago Tribune*, for example:

The effort of the Federation to organize the mill workers of the South deserves the endorsement of far-seeing business men throughout the country.

And the *Charlotte Observer*:

If the Federation can succeed in clearing the Southern field of the infestation of Communist agitators, that much will have been gained.

While waging "class war" against the Communists, Green turned to the employing, the business, and the professional classes of the South with sweet words of assurance:

The American Federation of Labor respects Capital. We believe in industry and we believe that Capital is as necessary and as essential to our national development as men and women. We believe that capital has a right to organize. We believe that financial institutions should be built up.

"It is our desire," he said, "to help make more profits for the employer and at the same time have a just and equitable division of the profits among the workers."

But the workers are not to have an increase in their starvation wages unless they help the boss speed up production. In Green's mind a union would enable the workers "to take constructive part in improving work conditions and methods through their union, by increasing productivity, by improving the quality of work, by reducing manufacturing cost."

After this last statement the organ of the anti-union mill owners, *The Textile World*, for which Mr. Green had writ-

ten an article, observed editorially: "We know that Mr. Green himself could secure the enthusiastic coöperation of any thoughtful manufacturer."

Finally, Mr. Green told a group of 200 business and professional men at a luncheon in Memphis that "American labor will never seek to capture the government as British labor has done." He was introduced by a local judge who said, "The guiding principle of the labor movement has become the guiding principle of American business to-day." This luncheon scene impressed the editor of the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, a leading southern daily, so much that he wrote:

William Green, president of the American Federation of Labor, might be taken for the president of a bank, the president of a railroad, a United States senator or a great corporation lawyer. . . . He is the kind of person who deplures strikes and walkouts and considers friction between employer and employe a result of misunderstanding of economic conditions. . . . Mr. Green made a favorable impression on those who heard him in Memphis. The policies he advocated might have come with propriety from the president of the American Bankers' Association or the head of any group of business or professional men.<sup>4</sup>

Green's ideas were eagerly echoed by all the lesser officials in the state federations and the international unions. For example, Paul J. Aymon, of the State Federation of Tennessee, insisted, "We've got to sell the trade union movement to the business element." And the president of the South Carolina federation, a Democratic politician, declared that his organization had "inaugurated an organization campaign, with the hope of not antagonizing capital, but trusting that those with invested capital in this state will see the advisability of coöperating with labor unions in matters of mutual interest."

Not to be outdone in expressing his desire to be "moderate," President McMahan, of the U. T. W., said:

We aren't talking higher wages. We aren't talking shorter hours. You can't express our objectives in those terms. We want to sit down with the mill owners, we want to take up their problems as our problems, we want the mill owners, ourselves, and the general public to sit down and diagnose the industry's ills and seek mutually a means to heal them.<sup>5</sup>

### *Union Panaceas*

Just how the U. T. W. officials would cure the "ills" of the industry has been suggested in their statements and writings. Their "solutions" are much like those proposed by the mill owners which we discussed in Chapter I. When the Rockefeller-owned Consolidation Coal Co., in quest of more profits, fired 20 per cent of its miners in 1928, McMahan applauded. He advised the textile capitalists to do likewise, to curtail "uneconomical operations," to close mills and to displace workers. What would happen to the discharged textile workers? McMahan's reply was, "Let them seek employment elsewhere." They must be sacrificed in order to bring more "stable" employment to the others. This, McMahan thinks, could be brought about if only he could "sit down" with the capitalists, and "coöperate."

Other organizers of the U. T. W. seem equally indifferent as to what happens to workers when they are thrown out of jobs. In fact, one of them, Jos. R. White, would like to shut down some cotton mills, in order to throw business to a mill making a union-labeled product. He writes to the *Textile Worker* (January, 1930), that the mills in Utica, New York, are on part time "including the Utica Steam and Mohawk Valley Cotton Mills." Notwithstanding the lowest production costs of any mill in the sheeting industry, this mill "cannot run full time," writes Mr. White. And his "solution" is: "Let us continue to buy Pequot"—a rival, union-made sheet—"and perhaps these mills will close entirely."

*The Pequot Plan*

Economists and liberal admirers of "law and order in industry" have hailed the union-management coöperation plan now in operation at the Pequot Mills (formerly Naumkeag Steam Cotton Co.), of Salem, the only cotton plant in the country which is claimed to be 100 per cent unionized. The A. F. of L. used this plan as a prize exhibit of its "constructive" aims in appealing to southern employers in the campaign of 1929-30.

The Pequot plan applies at most to 2,500 workers. The chief initiative for its introduction has come from management which frankly states that it is a method of increasing production and securing a sales lead over competitors.

In return for wages, said to average somewhat better than those paid in non-union mills, the union agrees to deliver more efficient production and to work out jointly with management schemes whereby production costs are lowered, even though it means the discharge of a certain number of workers.

Under this agreement no strike is permitted until after two months of conferences, and if the workers should refuse to wait, and go out on strike, the U. T. W. pledges itself to coöperate with the company in breaking the strike. Under the agreement a joint committee is set up with officials of the two Salem locals of the U. T. W. representing the workers. The company has an equal number, while a "technician" casts the deciding vote and has final authority. Salaries of the technician, the two company agents, as well as the two union officials are all paid by the company. This reminds one of the regular company unions where the "employee representatives" always have their salaries paid by the employers.

An important feature of the plan is its "educational" emphasis aimed to give the workers "right views" of their capi-

talist environment. The committee, to eliminate waste and increase production, is furnished with certain figures on costs and similar matters. "It will then," says an enthusiastic union official, "be possible to indoctrinate the employees at every operation with a concrete picture of their part in the goal, to wit, costs and quality which enable Pequot to compete successfully." It is evident from this that the workers, as one admirer puts it, will find "emotional escapes along constructive channels." This involves increasing machines per operative or labor "extension." It means also more specialization while many higher paid weavers are either being discharged or placed in lower wage categories.

The Pequot "plan" does nothing for some workers but throw them out of work. All they can do is look "elsewhere" for a job in an industry where unemployment and part-time work has already reached the proportions of an incurable capitalist disease.

It is also clear that when applied to one mill or company such a scheme may bring some slight additions to wages for those who are lucky enough to keep their jobs. So long as this mill or company can maintain its market edge on competitors it may bring a temporary financial benefit to a few more skilled Pequot workers able to keep up the faster pace. But suppose the same plan were introduced also in the plants of the competitors and that they, too, began to carry the union label. Pequot would immediately lose the advantage now enjoyed under its unique arrangement. It would be thrown on the same competitive level with the other companies, with wage cuts and more unemployment as the inevitable results.

Such a scheme, in short, is but an advanced phase of the rationalization program of the employers being gradually introduced in all industries both in this and other capitalist countries. It would use the conservative union as a means of speeding up production and cutting costs. .What happens



to workers dropped from their jobs by this process does not concern the Pequot managers or any other profit-takers. Nor does it worry the editors of the employers' organ, the *Textile World*, who have lauded the plan and the union officials connected with it. A scheme of this kind serves to illustrate the impossibility of solving the contradictions of capitalist economy by unions working "coöperatively" with any particular company or group of companies in an effort to "stabilize" industry.

### *The "Official Organ"*

The capitalist point of view of the U. T. W. is also clearly shown in its official monthly organ, the *Textile Worker*, which is full of clippings from the employers' trade papers and advertisements of dozens of non-union textile companies which have long anti-union records. For example, in the issue of December, 1929, the American Woolen Co. has an advertisement entitled "Economy in Production" which tells the reader of the *Textile Worker* that it has "more than 35,000 skilled employees, ably and tactfully directed, working under pleasant conditions and receiving consistently fair treatment: sixty mills equipped with every labor-saving, time-saving device known. . . ." It does not state, nor would the U. T. W. think it "good business" to state, that a handful of skilled workers in the American Woolen pay dues to the U. T. W., that the remainder are mercilessly exploited, thrown on the human scrap heap by "labor-saving devices," paid wages far below a decent standard of living, and ruthlessly fired if they talk organization.

Such advertisements reflect the demoralization of the U. T. W., as do the pages of free advertisements carried in this official organ for such non-union firms as the Du Pont Rayon Co. Almost every month these free "Bulletins" from the Du Pont Style Service, from Du Pont's "Fabric Development Service," and from other publicity bureaus of anti-union

corporations, appear in this supposedly "workers" journal, along with speeches by union-hating textile manufacturers, the unedited publicity material of the employers' National Industrial Conference Board, and the endless speeches of a leading government strike-breaker, James J. Davis, Secretary of Labor in the Hoover cabinet.

### *Jim-Crowing the Negro*

The U. T. W. has taken the conventional A. F. of L. position on organizing Negroes. It has catered to the race prejudices of the white ruling class. It has made no efforts to organize Negro workers, and when these workers have, in a few instances, wanted to join the union, they have been put in separate Jim Crow locals. Union officials have dodged criticism of this practice by taking refuge behind the farcical doctrine of "local autonomy."

McMahon gave an excellent exhibition of this dodging when he replied to a southern white fanatic, David Clark, that "the southern people are quite capable of deciding these problems for themselves." He further called Mr. Clark a liar when the latter charged him with "proclaiming social equality with Negroes when speaking in the North."<sup>6</sup> On another occasion, when asked by one of the writers whether he would organize Negroes in the same locals with white workers he shouted an emphatic "No!" This means that if the Negro still wants to organize in the U. T. W. he will be shunted into Jim Crow locals. In Danville in 1930, the Negroes were put into a "separate local union" which held meetings separate from the whites.<sup>7</sup> Mr. Green and the A. F. of L. speakers avoided the Negro question when speaking in the South in the campaign of 1930.

### *Fighting the Radicals*

The U. T. W. officials have always been opposed to every form of radical activity. The position of the union was

stated somewhat grotesquely by McMahon in his presidential address to the convention in 1925:

This organization has stood as a bulwark against insidious methods being used at any time to injure or destroy the purity of mind as it exists within the home. Against every and all kinds of "isms," the A. F. of L. has fought and worked.

Officials of the U. T. W. have repeatedly referred to the radicals as "howling dervishes," "crew of helions," "leeches with false propaganda" and "self-elected demagogues of rump organizations." Practically the same epithets now used against the National Textile Workers Union were hurled at the dual Amalgamated Textile Workers in 1919-21. McMahon called the Amalgamated "rule or ruin propagandists," a "wildcat organization," and "demagogues who thunder out their vomit."

At the same time representatives of the National Security League, all sorts of professional patriotic red-baiters, and propagandists for imperialist war have been welcomed at conventions of the U. T. W. The most crude and vulgar lies about the Soviet Union and the Communists have been peddled at these conventions. In fact the reactionary fervor of the leading officials of this union has, at times, seemed even to surpass that observed for years at conventions of the A. F. of L. itself.

Opposition to radicals has not been confined to mere phrases. It has, wherever possible, been translated into action—coöperation with the police. Representatives of the militant National Textile Workers Union were arrested at Elizabethton, Tenn., at the suggestion of U. T. W. officials. Organizers of the U. T. W. reported with approval the deportation of N. T. W. organizers from Mystic, Conn., by the state police. Another and quite ingenious method of getting rid of "obstructionists" was described to one of the writers by a U. T. W. official a few years ago. He claimed to have an understanding with agents of certain Lowell cot-

ton mills whereby any worker expelled from the union for "obstruction" would be discriminated against by the agent. An "obstructionist" was defined as a member who is always looking for little faults in the harmonious relations between mill agents and the union.

Still another U. T. W. official in New Bedford wrote about the same time: "When we discover a radical (this was even before the days of Communists) in our midst charges are preferred against him and he is expelled altogether." Expulsion has been frequently resorted to by both national and local union officials in their successful efforts to defeat all radicalism. It has accounted for much of the dual unionism in the industry.

#### *Other Policies and Practices*

In its policies and its activities the U. T. W. has shown itself to be one of the most reactionary unions in the American Federation of Labor. It subscribes completely to the National Civic Federation doctrines of the A. F. of L. Its presidents have, in fact, for years been on the Executive Committee of the Civic Federation, an organization controlled by capitalists, which devotes most of its attention to fighting social insurance and to fanatical professional patriotic activities.<sup>9</sup>

Out of such connections come the U. T. W.'s opposition to political action through a workers' party, its slanderous and unscrupulous attacks on radicals of every hue, its failure to understand or to apply its organizing efforts to the more radical immigrant workers, its fear of mass action and wide-scale strikes, its hesitancy and pessimism in the face of the readiness of the mass of textile workers to move against their exploiters, its readiness to smother the workers' rebellion with "conciliation" and sell-outs engineered by government agents, its failure to organize the low paid and unskilled workers, its resistance to united fronts with more radical unions as

indicated in the history of attempts at amalgamation. Its "no strike" policies in the South and its desire to "serve" employers as a sort of research bureau and engineering appendage are likewise the logical expression of this typical A. F. of L. point of view.

Secessionists from the U. T. W.—both those who comprised the Amalgamated in 1919-23 and the National Textile Workers Union to-day—have criticized it for its tendency to "talk big" but "fight little" and for its desertion of strikes after promising aid. They also charge it with strike-breaking, especially in those strikes where it refused to call out its own members actually doing scab work in other plants. Cases have been cited of U. T. W. weavers working on warps sent them from plants where other union weavers were on strike.

Where another rival union was concerned these practices have been specially in evidence. During the strike of independently organized workers in Lawrence in 1919, American Woolen Co. workers in Providence, who had struck in sympathy, were ordered to return to their jobs. In other places such as Maynard, Mass., the U. T. W. has sent in its own union men to scab on the rival union. When even its own members have refused to work under certain conditions—as in Maine some years ago when woolen weavers protested against working on an additional loom—the national office recruited other workers to come in and run the struck jobs.

Such practices have naturally led to secession movements. Tens of thousands of workers, unable to oust the reactionary officialdom and disgusted with these methods during the past three decades, have broken away from the U. T. W. and formed new unions. The history of some of these secession movements we shall examine in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER X

### INDEPENDENT AND LEFT WING UNIONS

EVER since the American Federation of Labor began its efforts to establish one single union for the textile industries there have been repeated secessions and the formation of outside "dual" or independent unions.

One of the earliest of these was the group of Fall River and New Bedford craft unions, which withdrew from the National Union of Textile Workers in the nineties and set up the National Federation of Textile Operatives. They were primarily local groups of spinners, weavers and carders who believed in a loose federation of their craft bodies rather than loss of identity in one centralized A. F. of L. union. Although they reluctantly gave up their federation and came into the United Textile Workers when it was formed in 1901, they seceded later and reverted to their British type of federated craft associations.

The reasons given for withdrawing were not based on differences in political or social philosophy. They were chiefly financial. The secretary of the Fall River slasher tenders' local explained to one of the writers the withdrawal of his union from the U. T. W. in 1906. "It was caused," he declared, "by (1) the increase in the national per capita tax; (2) large assessments for strikes; (3) failure of the U. T. W. to give support we thought we deserved; (4) desire to handle our own funds."

#### AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEXTILE OPERATIVES

Whatever their reasons, the fact remains that these cotton unions in southern New England withdrew from the U. T. W., some as early as 1904, and some as late as 1915, after a

dues increase had been adopted. In 1916 most of them came together again to form the present American Federation of Textile Operatives, which for a time used the name, "National Amalgamation of Textile Workers." By 1920 it claimed a membership of 25,000.

The vast majority of its members were from the cotton craft unions of New Bedford and Fall River. At the tenth annual convention in 1925 the Federation claimed cotton locals, usually of one craft, also in Plainfield, Danielson and Baltic, Conn., Chicopee, Holyoke, Adams, Lawrence and Salem, Mass., Dover and Nashua, N. H., Biddeford and Lewiston, Me., and Brattleboro, Vt. But by 1929, after the large Salem and New Bedford locals had withdrawn, there remained only the craft unions of Fall River, loom fixers locals in five other New England towns, a quillers and beamers local in Easthampton, Mass., and an "industrial" local in Baltic, Conn.

The Federation no longer puts organizers in the field. Each craft local tends to its own business; and some of them have been quite wealthy. The New Bedford locals in 1923 claimed they owned property worth over \$100,000. They have since joined the U. T. W. Because of the low dues, the income of the Federation itself for the year ending June, 1929, was only \$1,500, and its "general expenses" even less.

Its Fall River leaders are extremely conservative. They are prominent in local Republican politics and are regarded as among the most reactionary labor executives in the country. The Fall River Textile Council has for years made verbal agreements with the local textile manufacturers' association. On occasions these leaders have gone to Washington to lobby for high tariffs and to recite the speeches prepared for them by the manufacturers' association. In 1923 a group of them went on a tour of the South, the trip being financed by the Fall River *Globe*, a capitalist news-

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paper. Accompanied by the mill owners, they visited mills in the vicinity of Charlotte, N. C., and were dined by the Rotary Club. They made no contacts with workers or unions. They had no members in the South at the time. They have none now.

### THE AMALGAMATED

In the wave of strikes that swept through the textile industry in 1919 many new local independent unions were formed. A convention of delegates from these unions organized the Amalgamated Textile Workers of America on April 12, 1919. This union, whose founders were mainly from the woolen factories of Passaic and Lawrence as well as from silk centers in New Jersey, was an industrial body. Its jurisdictional claims were as wide as those of the monopolistic U. T. W. It opened its doors to "all persons" employed in the textile industries.

It was not, like the A. F. T. O., an aggregation of craft associations bent on loose federation and local autonomy. It was primarily a group of the more radical workers who saw no hope in the policies and methods of the United Textile Workers. Some of its leaders had previous experience with the U. T. W. and would have nothing to do with it. Others came from locals that grew out of spontaneous strikes which they had led in the face of the indifference or open opposition of the U. T. W. They represented a large proportion of foreign-born and unskilled workers. Some had been identified previously with the I. W. W. but saw no future under its banner. They wanted a vigorous industrial union devoted solely to textiles.

The elements that formed the Amalgamated were dissatisfied with the U. T. W. and criticized it for (1) failure to support locals during strikes after promising regular benefits; (2) arbitrary control by the national office, including dictation over the calling and settling of strikes; (3) draining



of local treasuries to meet a mounting per capita tax; (4) undemocratic methods of handling grievances; (5) secret consultations with employers; (6) failure to listen to the desires of the rank and file; and (7) generally reactionary policies, timidity and lack of aggressiveness.

Into the Amalgamated in the following year or two came many locals of the U. T. W. They had long wanted to join a more progressive national industrial union. So the Amalgamated grew until it had as high as 50,000 members in 1920. Unsuccessful efforts were made to secure the affiliation of the cotton craft associations in New England. With the exception of a few scattered locals the Amalgamated enrolled few members from the cotton industry until the New England strike of 1922 brought a large number into the fold for a brief period. It made no efforts in the South. The big woolen locals in Lawrence and Passaic lost members gradually, and the 1920-21 depression slowed up organization work. The woolen employers, especially in Passaic, made vicious attacks on the union, filling it with spies and disrupters. The union held a much firmer grip in the silk shops of Paterson and Hudson County, N. J., and particularly on the silk ribbon industry around New York City where a collective bargaining arrangement was in force for several years.

The last big strike of the Amalgamated was in 1922\* and its final (fifth) convention was held in New York City in the spring of the following year. Shortly after this its leaders became discouraged and withdrew from the field, abandoning militants in a number of still-existing locals. In spite of this inglorious finish the Amalgamated's record included some successful strikes and some vigorously conducted mass picketing. It organized large masses of the foreign-born and most exploited workers. A few of its struggles are among the brightest pages in textile history.

\* See page 220.

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### FEDERATED TEXTILE UNIONS OF AMERICA

In 1921 the Amalgamated initiated a series of conferences that finally led to the formation of a large but loose-jointed body known as the Federated Textile Unions of America. It was planned to include all "outlaw" unions.<sup>1</sup> The new federation was finally organized in August, 1922. It included the Amalgamated, the American Federation of Textile Operatives, two craft associations—International Mule Spinners Ass'n and the National Ass'n of Loomfixers—and the following unions confined to one specialized branch of textiles or one locality: Amalgamated Lace Operatives, Tapestry Carpet Workers of America, Body Brussels Carpet Weavers Ass'n, Amalgamated Knit Goods Workers of Cohoes, N. Y., Art Square Workers, and Philadelphia Loomfixers No. 1.

The chief feature of this federation was its provision, as one official stated, for "a great deal of home rule," and for maximum autonomy of the constituent unions consistent with any kind of federation. Its Executive Board was "departmentalized," that is, it was made up of representatives of each of the unions in the Federation. Finally, it provided for an assessment method of raising funds for members of constituent unions on strike.

Attempts were made the following year to bring about an amalgamation of this federation with the United Textile Workers, but after a series of long conferences the effort failed, "finances" being the main stumbling block to unity. Meanwhile the Amalgamated itself had withdrawn, contending that the Federated was getting nowhere in "advancing the ideals" for which the Amalgamated was founded.

The Federated hung together for over four years, making occasional assessments to help strikes of various organizations. By 1926 all the unions had dropped out except the lace operatives, tapestry carpet workers, spinners, knit goods

workers and the A. F. T. O. The largest local of the A. F. T. O., the Salem sheeting workers, had withdrawn from both the Federated and the A. F. T. O., and joined the United Textile Workers in 1925. Finally in December, 1926, the A. F. T. O., comprising about three-quarters of its membership, withdrew from the Federated, thus leaving it without any connection in the basic cotton industry. It soon expired.

Dissatisfaction with the assessments, combined with the narrow craft conceit of the Fall River officials that had mothered so many secessions in textile labor history, was the chief factor in the break-up of the Federated. It was the last grand attempt to bring together all the "outlaw" unions of the industry.

Certain unions which had been in the Federated later joined the United, among these being the Tapestry Carpet Workers, which had previously merged with the Wilton Carpet Workers, also of Philadelphia. To-day we find outside of the U. T. W. only the radical National Textile Workers, the dying remnants of the A. F. T. O., the venerable but nearly moribund mule spinners, and the lace workers. In the near future we may find in the field only the United Textile Workers, representing the reactionary and class collaborationist A. F. of L. policy in textiles, and the National Textile Workers Union speaking for the definitely militant elements.

#### NATIONAL TEXTILE WORKERS UNION

Just as the Amalgamated Textile Workers developed out of a strike led by radicals in Lawrence in 1919, so the National Textile Workers Union of America came close upon the New Bedford strike of 1928.\* The organization convention of Sept. 22-23, 1928, was dominated by the large New Bedford delegation, but groups from other centers, dis-

\* See page 225.

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satisfied with the policies of the United Textile Workers, helped to make it a body fully representative of the Left Wing in textiles. It was the second "ideologic dual union" to be formed in this industry on a national scale. But it had a much more revolutionary aim and program than the Amalgamated.

Some 160 delegates attended the convention, over 90 of them from the cotton industry, although none were from the South. Twenty-four came from the wool industry; the remainder from other branches of textiles. Some 45 delegates were women. Resolutions adopted at the convention emphasized the fight against speed-up and favored an immediate 40-hour, 5-day week, the abolition of all overtime, the struggle against the piece-rate system of wage payment, and efforts to resist wage cuts symbolized by the New Bedford strike. The delegates were especially conscious of the need to organize the South.

### *The Southern Drive—1929*

As soon as the convention adjourned organizers were sent to Gastonia, N. C., to begin forming mill locals in the center of the southern combed yarn industry. This resulted in the calling of the Gastonia strike.\*

With Gastonia as a nucleus an effort was made to spread the strike to other of the 112 mills in Gaston County with the result that three mills went out in nearby Bessemer City, one in Pineville, one in Charlotte and one in Lexington. But none of these groups was out for more than a few days. They returned to work when relief fell short of expectations. The general criticism by union leaders was that there had been "lack of preparation." Although these strikes amounted to very little, mill locals and committees were formed in a large number of mills, including some in Dallas, Belmont, Charlotte, South Gastonia, Kings Mountain, Bessemer City,

\* See page 230.

and Mount Holly. By July it was announced that connections had been made with workers in about 90 mills. Meanwhile locals and committees were formed outside of North Carolina in Danville, Chattanooga, Rome, Thomaston, Greenville, Atlanta, and Nashville. In one or two mills as many as 40 per cent of the workers were organized in the union. In the Leaksville Woolen Mills at Homestead some 160 workers organized. When their committee was discharged they struck against the three-shift system, the elimination of the lunch period, and the stretch-out. They were finally beaten.

A union conference was held at Bessemer City late in July, 1929. Some 225 delegates came from over 50 mill centers in five southern states, but most of them from North Carolina. After smaller state conferences in South Carolina and Georgia, a still larger conference was held in Charlotte in October. It was attended by over 300 rank and file delegates from about 175 plants in 65 mill centers throughout the five states. Twenty-three of the delegates were southern Negroes, this being the first time that a southern textile conference had ever included them. They took a leading part in the program and were given a great ovation by the delegates in spite of vicious attacks by the white press.

The conference adopted a program for work in the South which featured such demands as the end of the stretch-out system; abolition of night work, especially for women; abolition of the labor of children under 16; 8-hour day for adult workers and the 6-hour day for young workers up to 21; equal pay for equal work for men, women and young workers—Negro and white alike; recognition of the union; and a minimum wage of \$20 a week.

In addition there were certain political demands indispensable to a vigorous campaign in the South. Some of them were put forward for the first time by any textile union. These included: disarming the terrorist bands of the mill

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owners; the right of workers to defend themselves against attacks by these gangs; the right to organize, strike and picket; the right of free speech and free assemblage.

After this conference at least a dozen organizers were sent to various parts of the South to open district offices and to organize secret committees in the mills.

### *Second National Convention*

Considerable progress was reported by southern delegates at the Second National Convention of the union which met in Paterson in December, 1929. Special attention was given to the southern campaign. Delegates present included native-born whites from both South and North, as well as Negroes, Hindus, Portuguese, Slavs, Lithuanians, Italians and Czechs from the northern mills. It was reported that about 22,000 workers had participated in the election of delegates to the convention, this number including, of course, some silk and knit goods workers. The largest single delegation again came from New Bedford. Other northern cotton and woolen centers represented were Fall River, Passaic, and Lawrence. Altogether there were 20 delegates from "general locals," 125 from "mill locals," and 25 from "unorganized" workers. About 170 textile mills were represented by workers who came from 39 mill centers in 12 states.

Emphasis was again laid on the development of mill locals and departmental committees. The convention also stressed the proper editing of mill papers—scores of which had already been issued by the workers of individual mills, especially in New Bedford—resistance to wage cuts, adequate strike preparations, organization of defense corps, mass picketing, and the urgent matter of organizing the growing number of unemployed.

This gathering helped to reflect the strength as well as the weaknesses of the new union. Some of its strong points are:

It fights vigorously and boldly in the face of the most sav-

age persecution. It is led by young, enthusiastic leaders working for salaries as low or lower than those of the average textile worker. Bureaucratic tendencies are few. It plays up youth and its important place in the fight.

It has few traditions to hamper it and its mobility and striking power are consequently increased. It is a union of workers, not officials, depending especially on the most unskilled worker, whom it aims to train for leadership in the union. It also emphasizes the development of local leadership.

Its whole strategy is based upon the class struggle and an ardent belief in the decisive rôle of the unions in the class battles ahead that will finally lead to the abolition of capitalism. It is affiliated with the Trade Union Unity League, the militant Left Wing union federation, which fights the treacherous policies of the A. F. of L. leadership.

It holds out a strong hand to the Negro workers and counts on them to participate in all struggles, as well as in the administration of the union. It also develops the women to take a leading part in its work.

These elements of strength, by their very nature, suggest some of the difficulties that lie ahead. Among the radical-minded Portuguese workers of New Bedford the N. T. W. U. remains almost as strong as it was during the strike of 1928. But among the mass of conservative, native-born whites of the South the union has made only its first advances. Its political ideals are new to this class of workers. Its revolutionary slogans are only gradually understood and accepted by workers who have long been doped by capitalist news sheets and company magazines. In its stand for complete political, economic and social equality for Negroes the union sets the mill owners and the white hierarchy of the South against it in a life and death struggle.

Experience in organizing textile workers has shown that there is no short cut to effective unionism. The obstacles are

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many, especially for revolutionary unions like the N. T. W. U. With unemployment so widespread, with the employed workers in terror of losing their jobs, with the employers and their police often combining with the A. F. of L. unions to fight the Reds, the task of uniting the workers is not an easy one. Only the most systematic, persevering and practical organization work will build this new union. It will not be built in a day. Patience, planned and tireless effort, will be required of the rank and file as well as the leaders. Failure will doubtless be the fruits of the first efforts to organize.

In spite of all these considerations it is clear that only a union with such a militant program can line up the textile workers for a fight for improvements in day-to-day conditions as well as for the final abolition of the capitalist system of exploitation.





## CHAPTER XI

### STRUGGLES IN TEXTILES

TEXTILE workers have always been good strikers. In the earliest days of the cotton and woolen industry in New England we read of spirited strikes. Women and girls, who then made up the majority of workers in cotton mills, often took the lead in these struggles.

Even so early as in 1828-36 there were many militant strikes of cotton workers in New England and the Middle Atlantic states. In 1828 "the first recorded strike of factory operatives" occurred at Paterson, N. J., which then had cotton instead of silk mills.<sup>1</sup> The militia was called out and the workers defeated, but later, as a result of the strike certain concessions were made.

Other outstanding strikes of this period described in labor histories were among cotton and wool workers in Philadelphia and vicinity, in Baltimore, Md., in Lowell, Taunton and Springfield, Mass., Thompsonville, Conn., and Dover, N. H. They were chiefly for wage increases or against wage reductions, but some were against early forms of the speed-up system. In 1836 the girl weavers in an Amesbury, Mass., factory struck successfully against the orders of management doubling the number of looms.

The number of strikes in the cotton and wool branches of the textile industry are not listed separately in the compilations of the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Incomplete statistics for all textiles, however, are useful to show the trend. The figures for recent years are:

## STRIKES IN THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY, 1916-1929

Year	Number of		Year	Number of	
	Strikes	Workers		Strikes	Workers
1916	261	....	1923	134	....
1917	247	....	1924	80	28,332
1918	212	....	1925	139	25,824
1919	273	....	1926	90	25,229
1920	211	....	1927	80	9,328
1921	114	....	1928	65	35,284
1922	115	....	1929	130	26,393

As in virtually all industries the peak in the number of strikes was reached in 1919. In that year textile unions were fighting for the 48-hour week and against increasing wage cuts. The United, the Amalgamated, independent unions and unorganized workers were engaged that year in many struggles, the chief of which occurred at Lawrence and Passaic.

The number of workers involved in strikes in certain earlier years is not available. Government information on both strikes and workers involved, even in later years, is obviously incomplete since the Bureau of Labor Statistics has no means of learning about all strikes which occur. Scores of small strikes and departmental strikes are missed by those who compile the government figures.

## CAUSES AND RESULTS

Strikes in cotton and wool industries have been concerned chiefly with wages. Analysis of strikes mentioned in the *Proceedings* of United Textile Workers' conventions between its organization in 1901 and 1916 shows that the greatest number involved wage demands or resistance to wage reductions.

The next most important cause of strikes was the discharge of workers for union activity; but strikes also resulted from demands for shorter hours and recognition of the union, or from opposition to increase in machines, increase in work,

and objectionable shop rules and conditions. Common grievances leading to disputes were the (weavers') fining system, breach of agreement by the employer, laying off workers during depression and hiring new ones later, bad warps (for weavers), favoritism, oppressive treatment by foremen, and harmful working conditions.

The strikes of the war and immediate post-war years were primarily for shorter hours and higher wages. During the years of depression strikes in resistance to wage cuts and against increases in hours predominated. In more recent years strikes against "labor extension" and speed-up have gained the most attention, especially in the South.

It is difficult to estimate the percentage of strikes that were won or the number of workers involved. Periods when the industry was booming, as during the war, saw a large measure of success. More depressed periods witnessed a majority of failures. Government figures for the quarter of a century from 1881 to 1905 show 665 strikes and lock-outs in the cotton industry, affecting 832 establishments. The strikes in 153 of them are marked "successful"; 97 are partially successful and the remainder lost.<sup>3</sup> In later records, covering the U. T. W. strikes in the cotton and woollen industry from 1902 to 1916, as reported to their conventions, the great majority seem to have been won. In the period most favorable for the success of strikes, 1915-19, reports of the U. T. W. to the A. F. of L. for 1915, show 10 won, 26 "compromised"; 1916, 11 won; 1917, 16 won; 1918, 15 won; 1919, 9 won, 3 compromised. Lost strikes, however, were not recorded. Compared with the number of textile strikes which the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported in those years, it appears that the U. T. W. was involved in comparatively few.

## "UNOFFICIAL" STRIKES

Only a small percentage of these strikes were actually "sanctioned" by a union. Strikes "sanctioned" or "endorsed" by the U. T. W. have, in fact, been few and far between. From 1901 to 1910 the number of strikes actually approved by this organization was never more than three a year. Sometimes, as in 1905 and 1906, none was officially sanctioned. In 1912 the number endorsed was nine; in the two years, 1913-14, only six were endorsed but thirteen more were "supported." The records for subsequent years are incomplete, although the number of strikes endorsed must have increased somewhat in 1918-19 as the amounts paid in strike benefits by the U. T. W. rose in those years. Since 1921 official sanction has meant less to the locals of this organization because the international union has stopped paying a fixed strike benefit.

Records for an earlier period show that comparatively few strikes were called by official labor organizations. Between 1881 and 1905, for instance, of 665 cotton strikes recorded only 162 were ordered by a trade union, and only 18 out of 111 strikes involving both cotton and wool workers, were called by a union. The rest were unauthorized or "outlaw."

Many strikes, both North and South, in most recent years have been spontaneous strikes called by no union. Most of the cotton strikes in South Carolina in 1929 were of this nature.

Strike benefits have been paid by most of the craft unions. In its early days the United Textile Workers paid strike benefits of \$2 a week to workers involved in "sanctioned" strikes. The amount was later raised to \$4, and then to \$6 for all members who had been in "good standing" for six months. Since 1921, however, in case of a "duly authorized strike," such assistance may be provided "as may be determined by the Emergency Committee in accord with

the situation and the funds of the International Union, this assistance to be given either as a donation or through the establishment of a commissary." The international union has been very sparing with its help in recent years, and no strike assessments have been made on the membership since 1919.

Figures on the length of strikes in textiles are not exact. The U. S. Commissioner of Labor, reporting on cotton mill strikes between 1881 and 1905, showed that the average time per establishment closed by strikes was 40 days. From an examination of cotton and woolen strikes mentioned in U. T. W. convention proceedings from 1902 to 1916, we find strikes lasting from a few days to 15 months. The average length was about ten weeks. But some strikes in recent years, such as the Willimantic, Connecticut, strike, lasted much longer.

Weavers were involved in most U. T. W. strikes, although in possibly one-fourth of the strikes examined "all operatives" went out. Some of the chief groups involved in single-craft strikes between 1902 and 1916 were loomfixers, mule spinners, slasher tenders, beamers and folders.

### STRIKE PANORAMA, 1850-1930

Beginning with the middle of the last century we list 26 of the more significant textile strikes:

#### SOME SIGNIFICANT STRIKES IN COTTON AND WOOLEN INDUSTRY

- 1850 Fall River—Six months' spinners' strike for shorter hours.
- 1867 Lawrence—Spinners' strike for 10-hour day. Lost.
- 1868 New Bedford—Spinners' strike for 10-hour day. Lost.
- 1870 Fall River (see below).
- 1874 Lowell—General strike of cotton operatives.
- 1875 Fall River (see below).
- 1876 New Bedford—Granite Mill spinners; against reduction; failed.

- 1879 Fall River—Three months' general strike for wage increase; failed.
- 1882 Lawrence—Against 20 per cent wage cut.
- 1898 New Bedford—General strike against cuts. Lost after nine weeks.
- 1904 Fall River (see below).
- 1912 New Bedford—Weavers' strike against fining system; turned into general strike.
- 1912 Lawrence (see below).
- 1918 Manchester—Won 15 per cent increase.
- 1918 Lowell—One week's general strike for wage increase. Won.
- 1919 Passaic—Won 48-hour week and 15 per cent increase in some mills.
- 1919 Lawrence (see below).
- 1919 Utica—Eleven months' strike for 25 per cent increase and reinstatement of discharged workers.
- 1921 Charlotte (see page 187).
- 1922 New England (see below).
- 1925 Willimantic (see below).
- 1926 Passaic (see below).
- 1928 New Bedford (see below).
- 1929 Marion (see below).
- 1929 Gastonia (see below).
- 1930 Danville—Against discrimination and for union recognition. Still in progress as this book is written.

A few of the more spectacular of these walk-outs during the past 80 years may be briefly described, beginning with some of the early strikes in what was then the key cotton city—Fall River. It was the scene of the most important strikes of that period.

#### *Some Fall River Strikes*

In the Fall River spinners' strike against a 10 per cent wage reduction in 1870, the local fire department was called out to aid the police against the workers. Four military companies assisted. After nine weeks the powerful local spinners' union was broken and the workers were forced back under the reduced scale.

In 1875, the Fall River Weavers' Association, composed of men, voted to accept a wage cut of 10 per cent, but the

women weavers in six mills called a meeting and excluded the males. The women voted to strike. The men were eventually persuaded to join. With the help of the spinners, who also came out, the strike involving 3,000 workers was won.<sup>2</sup>

A longer general strike of 15,000 cotton workers in Fall River, later in 1875, ended disastrously. Troops were called out and the workers compelled to sign yellow dog contracts in which they agreed "to join no association in which individual members were to be governed by the will of the majority in respect to wages or hours of labor."

The historic Fall River strike of 1904 was one of the first big walk-outs after the organization of the United Textile Workers. Some 27,000 workers were involved—about 6,000 were union members. The general wage cut was 12½ per cent. Weavers were cut over 35 per cent during the eight months preceding the strike, and were also being forced to operate more looms than previously. The strike lasted six months and received financial support from the A. F. of L. When John Golden, President of the U. T. W., told the story of the heroic Fall River workers to an A. F. of L. convention, the scene, according to Samuel Gompers himself, "made strong men weep." The strike ended with state intervention and a unique sliding scale arrangement for wages, which actually meant a reduction. Many of the best workers were blacklisted.

#### *Lawrence—1912 and 1919*

In Lawrence, leading wool manufacturing center, occurred two of the most important strikes in all textile history, the first led by the Industrial Workers of the World, the second by a local committee that later formed the nucleus of the Amalgamated.

The Massachusetts legislature passed a law in 1912 reducing hours of labor for women from 56 to 54 a week. The

Lawrence wool manufacturers obeyed the law but also reduced wages. The result was a spontaneous walk-out of 27,000 workers. The strikers demanded a 15 per cent increase in wages, time and a quarter for overtime, readjustment of the premium system and no discrimination against strikers. The United Textile Workers attempted to induce the workers to go back to work satisfied with a 5 per cent increase, but the masses refused.

The American Woolen Co. and the other companies involved, tried frame-ups, dynamite planting, state militia and gunmen to break the iron solidarity of the workers. A militiaman bayoneted a boy picket who died later. In breaking up a picket line the police shot and killed a girl striker. Three I. W. W. leaders, Ettor, Giovanitti, and Caruso, were framed up as being "accessories before the fact" in this murder. But the "evidence" was so ridiculous that the jury, with a few workers on it, cleared them.<sup>4</sup>

Officials of the United Textile Workers, as usual engaged in fighting radicals, admitted later that the result of the two months' strike "was a decisive victory of the workers and one which materially affected conditions of textile workers through the country."<sup>5</sup> This strike also showed the possibility of uniting a large number of nationalities into a strong strike organization. Its aftermath illustrated, however, the difficulties of maintaining a permanent organization no matter how effective the strike.

Seven years later when the United Textile Workers, representing only 200 workers, agreed to let the same Lawrence mill owners reduce hours from 54 to 48 without increasing the hourly wages to make up for the difference, the mass of workers again struck spontaneously, under local radical leadership. Some 30,000 walked out on February 3, 1919.

The United Textile officials called the strikers "Bolsheviks" and refused to support their demands for the old



wages. The capitalist press, A. F. of L. officials, and the Secretary of Labor also attacked the strike. The "undesirable foreign element" was again faced with a united front of conservative trade union officials and the government. The latter, with its machine guns and brutal police, did everything possible to break the strike. But the general relief committee, made up of eleven nationalities, raised funds throughout the country and fed the workers.

A masked band took two strike leaders from their hotel, beat them with clubs and nearly lynched them. This strengthened the morale of the workers, and most of them held out until the companies, with orders picking up in the spring, posted a wage increase of 15 per cent, or  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent more than the strikers had demanded. Thus, on May 20th, the strike was won and in a few plants union committees were recognized. This was one of the most spirited strikes ever waged in the history of the woolen industry. And out of it came the leadership of a new national union.

#### *New England—1922*

Three years later, in January, 1922, came the largest and longest textile strike that had ever swept New England. It started in the mills of the Pawtuxet Valley, in Rhode Island. A notice of a 20 per cent cut in wages was posted in scores of mills only a year after New England workers had been forced to take a cut of  $22\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. In the Pawtuxet Valley, 8,000 workers walked out in 11 villages and 15 mills. The strike spread to the neighboring Blackstone Valley, then to Lawrence, Lowell, Nashua, Manchester, and other cotton and woolen centers in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, until from 60,000 to 80,000 workers were out. In New Hampshire, the strike was also against increasing working hours from 48 to 54 a week.

The Amalgamated led the strike in the Pawtuxet Valley and Fitchburg, Massachusetts. The United was in charge

in four centers in Massachusetts, several in Rhode Island, and seven in New Hampshire. The One Big Union, an ephemeral body that claimed to be more revolutionary than the Amalgamated, led the majority of those who struck in Lawrence.

Dozens of injunctions were hurled at the strikers, while state police, deputy sheriffs, and militia did their worst. Gunmen, employed by Jenckes Spinning Co., killed one striker and wounded 14 girl strikers, some of the wounded being crippled for life. Evictions were followed by the setting up of tent colonies, as at the Lonsdale plant in Rhode Island. Relief was provided by the unions through commissaries, and general appeals for aid were made to the labor movement.

The strike, which lasted nine months, was successful in that wages were restored to previous levels. The New Hampshire mills, however, refused to rescind the hour increase, and workers at Amoskeag and other mills, were finally forced to work the 54 hours permissible under the state law.

#### *Willimantic—1925*

Most of the strikes in the few years following were small local affairs, some called by no union, some supported by the U. T. W. One of these one-mill strikes started in March, 1925, when over 2,500 workers of the prosperous American Thread Co., of Willimantic, Connecticut, walked out. The strike began in the finishing department and spread to all other departments. The cause was a 10 per cent reduction in wages which then averaged about \$15 a week.

A local of skilled workers had existed in the city for 17 years, but at least 65 per cent of those who struck were unorganized. The U. T. W. sanctioned the strike and for a time supported it with food and tents for those evicted from

company houses. At least 75 per cent of the strikers were women. State police were called in to browbeat them and were housed in the homes from which they had evicted the strikers.

Scabs were imported from other New England cities, but no mass picketing was done. Instead the U. T. W. organizer placed but two pickets at each gate in accordance with police directions. The method of dealing with scabs was to "socially ignore them." No strike could be won by such passive methods. Gradually the strikers drifted into other work, although the strike has not yet (1930) been officially called off. It illustrates the U. T. W. method of prolonging a strike while failing to employ militant methods to win it. There have been many such strikes in U. T. W. history.

#### *Passaic—1926*

The Passaic strike was one of the greatest from the standpoint of the spirit in which it was waged and the excellence of its organization, as well as for the widespread interest which it aroused throughout the entire labor movement.

It grew out of a wage cut of 10 per cent in the Botany Mills, in October, 1925. Immediately after the cut a new group, the United Front Committee, organized under Communist auspices to achieve unity among all textile workers, began to organize mill workers. When on January 23, 1926, a committee of 45 workers presented the demands for the abolition of the cut, time and a half for overtime, and no discrimination against unionists, they were all discharged. This action precipitated the strike of 5,000 Botany workers. In a few days the employees of other worsted mills were out, and in a few weeks workers of the United Piece Dye Works of Lodi joined them. This made approximately 16,000 on strike in the vicinity, about 12,000 of them being worsted workers.

Demands formulated by the strike committee called for

(1) 10 per cent increase over the old wage scale; (2) time and a half for overtime; (3) a 44-hour week; (4) decent sanitary conditions; (5) no discrimination against union workers; and (6) recognition of the union.

The corporations used every conceivable strike-breaking device. Workers were attacked and clubbed by police and deputy sheriffs with firehose, guns, and tear-gas bombs. Even the cameras of press photographers taking pictures of these atrocities, were smashed by the police. Riot acts were read, injunctions issued, leaders framed, halls closed and meetings prohibited. Arrests were made without warrants, exorbitant bail demanded and civil liberties completely wiped out. Nearly 1,000 arrests were made during the course of the strike. All the political tools of the mill owners, from mayors and petty magistrates to United States Senators, were thrown into the fight against the workers. Shrieks of "Communism" rent the air as the A. F. of L., the National Security League, the American Legion and other professional patriots, united in strike-breaking maneuvers along with the U. S. Secretary of Labor and a local "Citizens' Committee."\* Even the religious weekly, *The Christian Century*, in a careful study of the strike (August 5, 1926), said: "It is within the truth to say that, if the strike is broken, the A. F. of L. will have borne a conspicuous part in breaking it."

The strikers fought bravely on through the summer of 1926. The United Front Committee was persuaded in September to have the United Textile Workers take charge of the strike and to have the workers join that union. But even after the strikers had voted to join the U. T. W. the mill owners still refused to deal with any union and tried to put over company unions in some of the mills. They also continued to smash the picket lines. Their aim was still to crush all unionism with violence.

Finally, one mill agreed to hire workers without discrimi-

nation and to recognize the right to organize and bargain collectively. It also agreed to employ no outside help until all strikers were back on the job. On December 13 the Botany and a subsidiary mill agreed to the same conditions and a small silk mill later fell into line.

But other mills including the big Forstmann and Huffman Company held out, refusing to have anything to do with the union except to write a letter to an outsider giving a vague promise of no discrimination. Workers in these mills finally called off the strike. Because of discrimination and the depression that hit the industry later, many of them failed to get back their jobs.

Many of the more active Botany workers were also discriminated against, the personnel staff of the company exercising the right to choose the workers to be taken back. U. T. W. officials confined themselves to mild negotiations with the mills and made no efforts to keep up the militant spirit of the workers. This was further dampened by the introduction of A. F. of L. "educational" methods and the holding of a "Labor Chautauqua" addressed by local Chamber of Commerce officials and other Open Shop advocates.

Gradually the workers saw they had been "let down," and that the promised rewards of going into the "main stream of the labor movement" in the hope of a good settlement had not been realized. The four U. T. W. locals continued to function for a time under local leadership but the national office of the union did nothing to help or encourage them. Their membership dwindled. They withdrew from the U. T. W. in 1928 when some of their young leaders were expelled by the national union for their Left Wing activity in the New Bedford strike of that year.

One of the outstanding features of this strike was the relief organization initiated and carried on by the Left Wing. Even A. F. of L. officials who had done all they could to sabotage the strike admitted that the relief machinery was

competently and efficiently handled. Another feature of the strike was the scientific examination of the health of the workers made by the Workers' Health Bureau of America.\*

*New Bedford—1928*

Less than two years later came the next big strike in textiles, this one in the leading fine cotton goods center of New England. When the New Bedford Textile Manufacturers Association posted a notice of a 10 per cent slash in wages in April, 1928, some 27,000 workers in 56 New Bedford mills, controlled by 27 corporations, fought for six months against the cut. The strike began on April 16 and lasted till October 5. Earlier in the year wage cuts of the same amount had been accepted by the reactionary unions of Fall River. But the New Bedford workers put up a long and bitter fight to prevent the like from happening to them. Their average weekly wages were around \$17.

About 3,000 workers were organized at the start of the strike in the seven craft unions of skilled workers united in the Textile Council of the American Federation of Textile Operatives.<sup>7</sup> In order to widen relief possibilities and get support from the A. F. of L., these unions joined the United Textile Workers during the course of the strike.

The more radical workers, chiefly unskilled and foreign-born, found their strike leadership in the Textile Mill Committee, a national organization continuing the tactics and traditions of the United Front Committee which led the Passaic strike. Some of the Passaic figures were prominent in this group in New Bedford. During the course of the strike workers who followed this leadership were organized in the New Bedford Textile Workers' Union, which later became the chief local in the new National Textile Workers Union. The demands of this group called for more than abolition of the wage cut. They included a demand for a 20 per cent

\* See page 143.

increase in wages, equal pay for equal work, the 40 hour week, and the abolition of speed-up methods.

Most of the workers arrested were members of this union, and these arrests increased after the manufacturers failed in a tremendous effort to open the mills on the old scale on July 9. Only 25 workers went in. Thereafter, police and national guardsmen became increasingly violent. Altogether over 2,000 workers were arrested, 275 of them being jailed within a single day. Some 800 workers were convicted in the lower courts and appealed to the Superior Court which placed them "on probation" from six months to one year.

Peaceful picketing was held by the authorities to be "rioting." The more radical workers were threatened with deportation, were blackjacked, beaten while on the picket line and given savage sentences by the courts. The mass picketing of the Left Wing which proved the most vigorous and well-organized feature of the strike, was especially annoying to the employers who gradually began to understand the hold this group had secured over the previously unorganized workers.

Officials of the U. T. W. voted to accept a wage cut of 5 per cent proposed as a compromise by a Citizens' Mediation Committee working in collaboration with the Massachusetts State Board of Conciliation and Arbitration. The rank and file voted against this proposal. In a second balloting, with few members participating, acceptance of the compromise won by a small margin. The results were announced by a New Bedford paper half an hour before the balloting was completed.

After this ballot the radical union continued the fight. The combined power of the New Bedford police and those of five neighboring cities soon had all the leaders in jail. City officials closed down the relief stores thus cutting off the maintenance supplies of the Left Wing workers. Against such overwhelming odds the remaining workers were com-

pelled to submit to the cut. Contrary to the experience of many other textile strikes both unions were able to keep substantial locals going after the end of the struggle.

*Southern Cotton Strikes—1929*

The sudden strike wave in southern cotton mills the following spring was confined to the two Carolinas although it was simultaneous with the big strikes of rayon workers at Elizabethton, Tennessee. Strikes in North Carolina were at Gastonia, Lexington, Pineville, Homestead, Forest City, Bessemer City, Marion and a few other places. In South Carolina the chief walk-outs were at Greenville, Ware Shoals, Union, Anderson, Woodruff, Whitmire, Central, and Pelzer.

With the exception of the Loray Mill strike\* the North Carolina strikes, led by the National Textile Workers Union, lasted only a few days and involved possibly 2,000 workers. The longest of them lasted three weeks. Most were settled unsatisfactorily for the workers.

The South Carolina strikes involved about 18,000 workers in 20 or more plants. These strikes were spontaneous and "leaderless," not being directly instigated by any union. Strike committees, however, were formed and local relief committees raised money and food in the vicinity. A majority of these strikes resulted in at least a few temporary gains for the strikers, but in some cases the workers, in return for some small concession, were compelled to sign statements that opened the way for later speeding and wage cutting.

Most of these South Carolina strikes were against some phase of the stretch-out system. They lasted from one week to two months. In a few cases the mere threat of a strike won slight concessions for the workers, but it is doubtful if these were retained after the strike wave had passed.

The two most dramatic and important cotton strikes in

\* See page 230.



the South in 1929 were those at Marion and Gastonia, North Carolina, the former called by the U. T. W., the latter by the N. T. W.

### *Marion*

The strike of nearly 700 workers at the Marion Manufacturing Company began July 11, 1929, when 22 members of the United Textile Workers were discharged. The strikers demanded reinstatement of these workers, reduction of working time from 12 hours and 20 minutes to 10 hours a day, and union recognition.

Later the 1,200 workers of the nearby Clinchfield Manufacturing Company were locked out when they protested against the discharge of 150 unionists. After the lockout had continued three weeks it was transformed into a strike and, on August 30, the workers forcibly prevented the mill from opening with strikebreakers.

The usual methods—injunctions, arrests, evictions, imported scabs, militia—were used against workers at both mills, the troops later providing a lame excuse for U. T. W. officials to give up the fight. At any rate they accepted a “settlement” which amounted to complete defeat.

This “settlement” of September 11 cut the hours from 60 and 65 to 55 without any corresponding wage increase. This meant that wages for the week were reduced at least 8 per cent. It gave a vague “no discrimination” promise, but the 14 leaders who had been discharged were not taken back. Finally it recognized not the union but nebulous “grievance committees” under the influence of the mill owners.

Even though this “settlement” promised the workers practically nothing it was immediately violated by the company. Over 100 workers were blacklisted at the Marion company and imported scabs took their places. Clinchfield refused to take back any strikers. A “gentlemen’s agreement” had been

made with union officials that the cases of the 180 strikers arrested during the strike would be dropped. But this was broken when indictments were brought against six of the leaders. Evictions were also continued.

As a result another spontaneous strike broke out at the Marion mill on October 2. The night shift struck and waited at the gate to tell the day workers. Without warning the sheriff and his deputies threw tear gas bombs and then opened fire on the unarmed workers. Six were killed and 24 wounded. All were shot in the back. No deputy was injured. It was one of the most brutal massacres in all labor history. The body of one old worker, a cripple of about 65, was riddled with bullets. He was handcuffed, thrown into a police car and, still handcuffed, was placed on the operating table in the hospital where he died. R. W. Baldwin, president of the Marion Company, commenting on these murderers a few days later said: "I understand there were 60 to 75 shots fired. If this is true, 30 to 35 of these bullets are accounted for. I think the officers are damn good marksmen. If I ever raise an army I will call on the sheriff and his deputies."

For this murder not one of the deputy sheriff killers received a single day in jail although scores of eyewitnesses testified to their guilt. Murder and terrorism against strikers were once more completely condoned by the mill bosses' courts. At the same time three Marion strikers who had harmed no one were sentenced to six months on the chain gang for "rioting," and another one given a month in jail and a fine of \$1,000, while at this writing (1930) more than 60 other strikers face framed-up charges of the same nature.

Even after the massacre the strike continued in the face of more evictions, terrorism, and troops. Strike leaders demanded only the discharge of imported scabs from both mills and an "impartial board" to rule on the evictions and the discharge of the unionists. The owners cynically refused

to budge, asserting that they were "through with the union.

The conduct of the U. T. W. in this strike was characterized even by the cautiously liberal *Nation* as "almost criminal sluggishness." When the strike started and U. T. W. members in Marion turned to it for help they were told they must finance their own strike in North Carolina. There was no U. T. W. relief machinery. The A. F. of L. did not give one cent. What relief there was came from social and religious organizations. No effort was made by the U. T. W. to organize another mill in Tarboro, North Carolina, owned by the Clinchfield interests, or to extend the strike in any direction. Finally, an A. F. of L. spokesman spread rumors against the local leadership and tried to sabotage such efforts as were being made to wage a militant struggle. When the strike was over, William Green himself, in a speech in Richmond, Virginia, January 26, 1930, repudiated the strike and the very martyrs who had been killed. The record of the A. F. of L. in Marion was thus one of strike-breaking and betrayal from start to finish. It contrasts sharply with the militant and courageous stand of the N. T. W. U. in Gastonia. There the workers were vigorously led, and they defended themselves. In Marion they were misled and massacred.

### *Gastonia*

The Gastonia strike, early the same year, centered in the Loray Mill of the Manville Jenckes Company, which had always fought bitterly against any kind of union in its northern mills. In March, 1929, the National Textile Workers Union had organized several hundred of the 1,700 workers in Loray. When the company discharged some 20 of these the strike was precipitated.

Five companies of militia were sent by the mill-owning Governor of North Carolina to help break the strike. A Federal "conciliation" agent advised the mill owners to have

no dealings with the union. The strikers demanded: (1) a \$20 minimum wage for all workers with equal pay for equal work for women and young workers; (2) the abolition of hank clocks and piece work; (3) the 5-day week and 8-hour day; (4) better working conditions; (5) repairs and improvements in the mill houses and rent reductions; (6) union recognition.

The corporation resorted to legal and illegal terrorism. On April 19, a masked mob of bossmen destroyed the union headquarters with ax and sledgehammer. They raided the store of the Workers International Relief, throwing food into the street and pouring kerosene over it. National guardsmen nearby did nothing to prevent this violence. Instead they arrested union men whose property was being destroyed! No legal action was taken against the terrorists although their identity was known.

When the soldiers were withdrawn heavily armed special deputy sheriffs took their places. Some of these were members of the "Committee of 100" organized by the company to smash the strike with force and violence. The Gastonia city council did its part by passing an ordinance making picketing and parading illegal. Evictions, arrests and beatings of strikers occurred almost daily.

In June, after the strikers had built a new headquarters and a tent colony for evicted strikers, the bossmen's gangsters redoubled their efforts to destroy the union. On June 7, those who were then working on the night shift threatened to join the strike. The union tried to picket the mill but their line was savagely broken up by the police.

Later the same evening the chief of police of Gastonia accompanied by four others, at least two of whom were drunk, raided the tent colony. The workers' guard asked them for their search warrant. They had none. The police drew their pistols and began shooting. The union guards defended themselves and their wives and children in the

tents behind them, thus preventing what might have been another Ludlow massacre. The chief of police was mortally wounded, two of his drunken aides slightly wounded, and a union guard shot in the arm.

A veritable reign of terror followed. The "Committee of 100" raided the colony and workers' homes, and threw more than 100 workers into jail, unmercifully beating many of them. Some 70 strikers were charged with murder, assault with intent to kill, and conspiracy. Later 16 were charged with conspiracy to murder and eight with felonious assault. The trial of the 16, which began on August 26, turned into a mistrial when one juror went mad. Interviewed later, not one of the jury, most of whom were workers and tenant farmers, said he was for conviction after the police and prosecution had presented their side of the case.

Following the mistrial came more bloody violence from the impatient mill gang. Manville Jenckes hirelings, in one instance assisted by "peace officers," damaged several local headquarters of the International Labor Defense, kidnapped three organizers and beat one unconscious. They even threatened defense lawyers. A week later they killed Ella May Wiggins, a strike leader and the mother of five children, while on her way to a meeting. Other workers with her were pursued and shot at by the armed gang. Similar mobs later continued to kidnap, threaten and beat union, defense and relief organizers.

The final trial began September 30. The state had cut the number of defendants to seven and the charge to second degree murder in order to restrict the jury challenges of the defense and because it was easier to secure conviction with the three women defendants eliminated. The drunken policemen lied more wildly than before. The ranting prosecutors were as vile and provocative as any ever seen in an American labor trial. The jury, composed mostly of farmers and containing a millionaire, declared all seven guilty. The "im-

partial" judge dealt out savage sentences especially against the four northern organizers, giving them each 17 to 20 years. Two southerners got 12 to 15 years, and one 5 to 7. Weimar Jones, a North Carolina newspaperman, puts it correctly when he says: "The conviction of murder was merely technical; actually the seven men face prison sentences because of their beliefs."

The strikers who defended themselves against the mob terrorism of the mill owning class helped to break open the South anew to textile organizers. Gastonia called the country's attention to the awakened militancy of southern workers. Although the strikers did not win their demands, the union did more in a few weeks to expose the misery of southern workers than the "regular" labor unions had done in many years.

Those who fought at Gastonia for their right to organize, strike, picket, and to defend their union, themselves and their families against agents of the mill-owning class, did a good job. These southern workers carried forward the flag of militancy in the textile mills. Their work will be an inspiration to textile workers in the difficult days ahead.



## CHAPTER XII

### THE WORKERS' OUTLOOK

THE textile workers have shown time and again how they could fight. More than a decade ago southern workers had begun to struggle even if under the most conservative union leadership. More recently they have rallied under the banner of a militant union. The northern workers have a no less enviable tradition of sharp battles with the mill owners. It reaches from the earliest Fall River strikes to the long New Bedford siege of 1928. This strike history indicates that the textile workers will organize not only for immediate demands but against the grip of capitalist exploitation.

All these struggles also indicate that the workers must organize into a union that will be ready and able to fight. No one who has read our description of the mill owners' organization and tactics can still be so innocent as to believe that the corporations will concede demands without the most vigorous struggle. Gentle offers of class collaboration will not organize these workers. Neither will "no strike" pronouncements nor talk of the "mutual interests" of capital and labor. With their mills stretching from Maine to Alabama textile corporations are not in the habit of surrendering at the sound of sweet words from labor leaders.

Workers who have had no experience with the United Textile Workers may be persuaded to join it for a while. But once they have seen at first hand the workings of its reactionary policies, they will rebel against its purely "educational" campaigns and its efforts to win favor with employers by attacks on Communists. The mass of textile workers will, in the long run, join a union that is prepared

to battle with the employers all along the line, and one that is not intimidated by big companies with chains of mills in all parts of the country.

The textile union the workers build must obviously be an industrial union open to every worker in any of the textile industries, regardless of skill or lack of skill, age, craft, sex, nationality or color. It must be built on the basis of the mill local, the form already used with success by the National Textile Workers Union. It cannot be a union that calls itself "industrial" merely because it has a certain "jurisdiction," while it actually draws the majority of its members, in its most important locals, into craft bodies operating on craft lines, and even at times scabbing on one another. An effective textile union must not only be organized on a genuine mill local basis. It must also keep a running fire of mill gate meetings for the workers of particular companies. It must issue shop and mill papers to arouse and mobilize workers for struggle as well as to counteract the poisonous influence of the "employee magazines" and other propaganda and welfare dope issued by the companies.

To gain the confidence of textile workers and really represent their interests a union must make the most systematic efforts to enroll and hold the young workers, the women workers, the Negroes and the foreign-born. The U. T. W. has practically ignored these elements except when circumstances have thrust them in its face. And then, as we have seen, it has segregated the Negro workers, and fled from the militant spirit of the foreign-born. Because of the numerical importance in the industry of the young workers and the women, only a union that places their demands at the head of its program can appeal successfully to the textile masses.

A union that leads the fight of the textile workers must not only work for shorter hours, higher wages, and for the abolition of child labor, night work and speed-up.<sup>4</sup> It must also fight for social insurance. With unemployment and



part-time employment spreading like a plague in the industry, the union will have to fight aggressively for unemployment insurance carried by the industry. It will also work for full insurance, on the same basis, for accidents, sickness, disability, old age and death. These efforts for social insurance will not only help to discredit the anti-union paternalistic group insurance, and the related welfare schemes which we have shown to be so common in the mills. They will also reveal to the workers the true character of the capitalist state.

Struggling for social legislation and at the same time fighting, in the course of their strikes, for the "civil rights" supposed to be "enjoyed" under the American constitution, textile workers will inevitably be forced to resort to political action. They are finding that none of the capitalist parties with whom the leaders of the United Textile Workers have always played will help them to defeat injunctions, yellow dog contracts, sedition laws, deportations, frame-ups, police terror and all the other weapons of the mill-owning class and its government. Nor will social reformist parties, favoring class-collaboration schemes, and urging the election of liberals and pacifists to public office, advance the cause of the workers. Only an independent workers' party can seriously combat these conditions. And experience in strikes and union organization provides the material out of which the textile workers are taught that only a party with a revolutionary objective can achieve the ultimate abolition of the capitalist system of exploitation, and thereby secure those conditions indispensable for their freedom, health and general welfare.

The crisis in the textile industry which we have pictured in Chapter I cannot be ended by any of the schemes advanced by the employers or their associations. Neither will the class peace policies of the United Textile Workers and its union-management coöperation plans lead to a solution

of the crisis. With the industry permanently afflicted under capitalism with overproduction, market stagnation, tariff walls, struggles for export trade, and general misery and mass unemployment for the workers, no measures of "reform" will avail. Capitalist rationalization and "labor extension" mean worse and worse conditions for the masses in all the textile producing countries. Only the militant workers' organizations, both economic and political, acting on an international scale, can ever destroy this whole system of exploitation and wage slavery.

The union that effectively organizes American textile workers must, therefore, maintain international connections. It must be affiliated for joint action with textile workers in other lands. The United Textile Workers is so narrow and reactionary that it is not affiliated even with the International Federation of Textile Workers' Associations, a loose secretariat of European textile unions affiliated to the International Federation of Trade Unions. The latter coöperates with the rationalization policies of the European textile mill owners. But even this sort of international connection is too "foreign" or too radical for the U. T. W. with super-patriotic 100 per cent Americanism as its guiding philosophy.

The international situation calls aloud for an international federation of the militant unions in textiles not only in America and Europe but also in the Far East and the colonial countries. The Indian textile workers are playing an important part in the movement for independence from the imperialist rule of Great Britain. The Chinese cotton workers were among the first to struggle for workers' rule in China and against their native and foreign exploiters. A union of these revolutionary workers with those in all other countries is urgently needed. Such an "International" would naturally be affiliated to and follow the leadership of the Red International of Labor Unions with headquarters in Moscow. The National Textile Workers Union is affiliated to

this R. I. L. U. and to its American branch, the Trade Union Unity League, the organizer of the new industrial unions in the United States.

### *Soviet Textile Workers*

In this connection the textile workers here, as throughout all capitalist countries, will receive the steady and helpful encouragement of the 870,000 organized textile workers in the Soviet Union. The Russian textile workers are organized almost 100 per cent having, through organization and in coöperation with the other workers in revolutionary struggle, won freedom from the rule of the capitalists. No injunctions, strike-breakers, massacres by police and deputy sheriffs, anti-picketing laws, kidnapping or lynching of worker organizers, mill village feudalism, frame-ups, child labor, yellow dog agreements, and mill owner tyranny can exist in a country where the workers are building socialism. The textile workers there are magnificently organized and take an active part in the upbuilding of the socialist economy under the Five-Year Plan.

Both authors of this volume have seen the Soviet textile organizations functioning on the job. We inspected Soviet mills and talked with scores of their cotton and woolen workers. Some 60 per cent of textile workers in Russia have already achieved the 7-hour day or less, while the remainder will be working on this basis by the end of 1931. The Soviet Textile Union has built great clubs and cultural institutions. It has, with the help of the workers' state, provided rest homes, free medical assistance and insurance against unemployment, accidents, sickness and death. It has relieved tens of thousands of women textile workers from heavy domestic burdens by building hundreds of nursery schools, kindergartens, laundries, factory kitchens and dining rooms, all attached to the mills and all for the service of the workers. In short, it has helped the textile workers to free

themselves for citizenship and responsibility in a land where they, instead of mill owners' associations and lobbies, "run the government." Under such a government, and in an industry so controlled, efforts to increase production are in place, while under a boss-owned government, as in America, they can only lead to more speed-up for workers and more profits for employers. Socialist rationalization in the Soviet Union is quite a different thing from capitalist rationalization in Massachusetts or North Carolina. In the Soviet Union the benefits of increased production are reaped by the workers in the form of steadily increasing real wages, fewer hours of work and decreasing unemployment.<sup>1</sup> In the American textile mills the results of rationalization schemes are wage-cuts, longer hours, intensified speed-up and increasing numbers of jobless.

Because of their achievements the textile workers of the Soviet Union are a great source of inspiration to American textile workers, giving them a picture of the sort of world they can win for themselves if they organize effectively and fight along the lines we have outlined. Because of their experience these Russian workers would naturally be the most helpful section in a militant textile workers' international, assisting the workers in America and elsewhere to achieve their emancipation from capitalist slavery.

That the American textile workers will be able to develop such a strong union, affiliated to a militant international of textile workers, there is not the slightest doubt in the minds of the writers of this book. How soon they will do it depends upon the objective economic situation which, as we have indicated, is growing worse throughout the textile industries of the world. It also depends upon the vigor and intelligence with which the job is tackled by the National Textile Workers Union, the only union in the industry that has the correct policies for organizing these workers.

To strengthen the forces of this new union and to help it build an organization of the type we have described should be the aim of every textile worker in America. It should be the aim of every worker who reads this book and who has at heart the creation of a better society for all workers in every industry. The strong organization of textile workers is one of the major problems before the working class in America to-day.



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## APPENDIX

### DESCRIPTION OF PROCESSES AND OCCUPATIONS \*

#### *Cotton Manufacturing*

*Opening and Picking:* Several picking machines or "pickers" open the cotton, loosen fiber, and beat out dirt, seeds and foreign substances, finally turning out a downy roll of cotton or lap. (Picker Tender, Opener Tender.)

*Carding:* Large machines with revolving cylinders, covered with wire teeth, comb the fibers into parallel position removing the shortest fibers and turning out a white rope-like "sliver." (Card Tender—who feeds the lap into the cards and doffs, or takes off the cans of sliver as they become filled. Card Stripper—who cleans the card cylinders. Card Grinder—who sharpens the fine teeth on the cylinders.)

*Combing:* A continuation of carding process which takes out more of the shorter fibers. This process is used only when very strong and fine yarn is required. (Comber Tender.)

*Drawing:* Machines combine several slivers into one, running them through a series of rollers. (Drawing-frame Tender.)

From the drawing frame the sliver passes through several fly frames called slubber, intermediate and roving frames, the function of which is to draw, twist and reduce it further until the strand of cotton is about the size of an ordinary string. (Slubber Tender, Speeder Tender and others.)

*Spinning:* Completes the drawing out of the fibers to the required size, at the same time firmly twisting them into a compact thread, or yarn. The slender rod which holds the bobbin on

\* There are hundreds of separate occupations or jobs in each industry. In a typical large worsted mill, for example, there are, exclusive of the general help (yard labor, carpenters, oilers, painters, pipers, etc.), some 175 different occupations demanding separate attention and remuneration. A complete list of these telling what each worker does in the mill is given in *Description of Occupations, Textiles and Clothing*, prepared by the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1918. Those here described are only a few of the major occupations.

which the thread is wound is called a spindle. The old form of spinning was called mule spinning but only 1,400,000 such spindles are left in American mills. The prevalent form in this country is ring spinning done on a "ring frame" with two sides, each spinner tending a definite number of sides. (Mule Spinner and Helper, Ring Frame Spinner and Helper, Doffer—who takes the full bobbins off the spinning frame.)

*Spooling*: Is done by a machine which winds the yarn from the bobbins on large spools. (Spooler Tender.)

*Creeling*: Unwinding the full spools from a creel, or frame, preparatory to running the yarn on to a beam. (Creeler.)

*Beaming, Slashing and Warping*: The yarn from the creel runs to a beam (Beamer Tender). From this beam the yarn is run through a solution which coats it with "size" and gives it greater strength preparatory to weaving (Slasher Tender). The yarn is then run on to another beam—warp-beam—which is later put on the back of the loom. (Warper Tender.)

*Drawing-in*: The ends of the yarn from the warp-beam are drawn in through the eyes in the heddles of the loom harness. (Drawer-in.) In modern mills the warp-tying machine takes the place of this process. (Warp-Tying Machine Tender.)

*Weaving*: A machine, known as a loom, actually makes the fabric by raising and lowering the alternate lengthwise threads of yarn (warp) while a shuttle is thrown back and forth between them, carrying the crosswise threads (weft) which fill the warp threads thus producing the cloth. (Weaver, Loom Fixer.)

*Converting and Finishing*: These processes include bleaching, printing, dyeing, mercerizing and other finishing operations which prepare the cloth for the market. The operation, of course, varies with the type and quality of goods. (Dyer, Dyer's Helper, Printer, Inspector, Folder, Mangle Tender, Calender Tender, Singer, Washer Tender and others.)

#### *Woolen and Worsted Manufacturing*

*Sorting*: The bundles of wool fleece are opened in the sorting room and the fleeces classified according to their various grades and qualities. (Wool Sorter.)

*Scouring*: The fibers are moved through a long vat-like machine and washed with a solution to remove oils, grease and dust. (Wool-washer Feeder, Wool-washer Tender.)

*Burring and Carbonizing*: This machine process either beats

out burrs and remaining foreign matter or removes them by chemicals. (Burr Picker Tender or Soaking-tank Man.)

*Carding*: Similar to the process described for cotton above with the same occupations.

### *Worsted Only*

Up to this point the processes for woolen and worsteds are the same. There follow certain processes peculiar to worsteds, the chief of which are:

*Backwashing and Gilling*: A back-wash machine takes several of the slivers as they come out of the carding machine and combines them into one, at the same time washing and drying them. (Back Washer Tender.) Then the sliver is fed into a series of gill boxes, machines where the fibers are pressed and straightened, a process kindred to that of drawing in cotton mills. (Gill-box Tenders.)

*Combing*: These machines separate the short fibers, or *noils*, from the relatively long ones, or *tops*, at the same time combing the latter in parallel position. (Comber Tender.)

After the *tops* come from the comb they are again run through a series of gill boxes with the object of further drawing them out and combing several slivers into one. (Drawing-Frame Tender.)

*Spinning*: There are several systems of spinning worsted yarns, the main three being flyer, cap, and ring frame, but the same general operation as in cotton spinning takes place. (Spinner, Doffer and others.)

*Twisting*: Several strands of the yarn as it comes from the spindle are twisted together to make it stronger for weaving. (Twister Tender.)

### *Woolens Only*

In woolens the elaborate drawing and combing processes are omitted and the spinning comes immediately after the carding.

*Mule Spinning*: Is a process similar to that mentioned under cotton, a movable "mule" being used instead of a ring frame. (Mule Spinner and Helper.)

*Woolen and Worsted*

After spinning, the preparing of the threads for weaving is much the same as in cotton the processes of *spooling*, *warping*, *beaming* and *sizing* (similar to *slashing* in cotton) and *drawing-in* following in turn. (Workers in these departments are Spooler Tenders, Dresser Tenders, Drawers-in, Size Makers, Winder Tenders, etc.)

The *Weaving* also follows the same principles as in cotton, the workers, of course, watching much fewer looms. (Weaver, Loom Fixer.)

The *finishing* of woolens involves a percher, who inspects the cloth, a *curling and mending* process to remove imperfections, a *fulling* operation which reduces the cloth to the desired weight or thickness, and a washing and drying process. (Some of the workers are Burlers, Menders, Perchers, Fillers, Cloth Inspectors, Washer Tenders and Dryer Tenders.) Some of the final processes are *gigging*, *napping*, and *packing*.

While the finishing processes are very important in woolens, in worsteds, on the contrary, the materials are practically unchanged after they come off the loom. The yarns are usually dyed before weaving. In woolens the dye may be applied to the fiber, the yarn or the finished fabric.

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