

Note on the labour position in the
Bombay City.

NOTE

The Labour Force.

Nowhere in India and in few, if any other parts of the world, is the relationship which exists between Capital and Labour a subject of greater delicacy and importance than in Bombay City. And nowhere in this City is that relationship of graver import than in the Textile Industry. No figures showing the numbers employed in the industry as a whole are available later than those of the census of 1921, which are no longer an entirely trustworthy index of the position. They show that 36·86 per cent. of the total population of the City were engaged in industrial occupations, and out of an industrial population of 433,417 no fewer than 133,988 were actually engaged in textile industries. A better guide to the importance of Bombay City as an industrial centre is the number of persons employed in factories. This information is given in Appendix A.

Capital Investment.

The amount of capital invested in the textile industries of the City is not inconsiderable. The latest figures available (August 31, 1929) mention 81 cotton spinning and weaving mills in Bombay Island, representing a paid-up capital of 14·76 crores of rupees of which 7 mills with a paid-up capital of Rs. 1·18 crores are not working. This paid-up capital does not, of course, represent the actual amount of money invested in the industry. The block account of 73 companies which have been analysed amounts to Rs. 27½ crores. These 81 mills contain 3,451,000 spindles and 74,825 looms. The approximate quantity of cotton consumed during the year, in candies of 784 lbs. was 2,84,424 candies and the average number of hands employed daily was 130,000. Upon the well-being of the textile industry in Bombay City, there depends, not only the welfare of the workers directly engaged and the safety of the capital invested in it, but the prosperity of the countless subsidiary industries which must wax and wane with the fluctuations of the textile industry, flourishing only when it is flourishing. It is scarcely an exaggeration, indeed, to say that the well-being of Bombay City as an industrial centre is conditional upon the well-being of the textile industry. And an essential condition for that well-being is the maintenance of harmonious relationships between Capital and Labour.

Decline of Industry.

For some years past, unfortunately, this condition has been singularly lacking. The industry has been very severely hit, if not almost over-whelmed, by a period of extreme depression, a depression, it is true,

which originated in circumstances largely beyond human control. It was in part the geographical situation of Bombay, for example, which originally put the Bombay mills in a strong position in the export of yarn to Japan and China; but as that trade diminished and weaving increased, mofussil mills had the advantage of proximity to cotton supply and home markets. It would be too much to say that the situation cannot be remedied not only in the direction of industrial peace but in the direction of commercial efficiency. Such matters as the grouping of mills for specialisation in particular kinds of cloth, joint buying and joint marketing, writing down of capital and co-operative effort generally, are being closely examined by the Millowners' Association; and these matters, especially if the problem of foreign competition can be satisfactorily settled, may have important effects in retrieving the situation. But, as the experience of recent years shows, comparatively little has hitherto been done, so far as the co-operation of the two great partners in the industry is concerned, to remedy the situation.

Prevalence of Labour Disputes.

During the last eight years the labour force in Bombay City has been restless and discontented and this has been specially marked in the case of those employed in the cotton mill industry, though the underlying causes are general and particular economic conditions. The primary cause of the discontent has undoubtedly been the period of depression through which the industry is passing. During the eight years from April 1921 to the end of June 1929, 738 disputes occurred in the Bombay Presidency, of which 401 or 54 per cent. occurred in Bombay City. Out of 1,309,511 workpeople directly affected by these disputes, 1,077,927 or a little over 82 per cent. were involved in Bombay City. The total number of working days lost amounted to 54,000,000, out of which the time lost for Bombay City alone amounted to 49,000,000 working days. Out of the 401 disputes which occurred in Bombay City, 317 or 79 per cent. occurred in textile spinning and weaving mills; 19 or about 5 per cent. in metal and engineering concerns other than Railway workshops; 7 per cent. in Railway workshops; 7 per cent. in printing presses and allied concerns and the remaining 2 per cent. in miscellaneous concerns.

Summary of recent Industrial Disputes in Bombay City.

In 1924 a general strike occurred in the cotton mill industry in Bombay City which had its origin in the decision of the millowners of Bombay to discontinue the payment of the bonus which had been paid for five years. The Committee of Enquiry under the Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court which was appointed to enquire into the dispute reported that the mill workers had not established any enforceable claim—customary, legal or equitable—to the annual payment of

a bonus, and that the results of the working of the mill industry for the year 1923 did not admit of the payment of such a bonus. The strike lasted about two months. There was another general strike in the cotton mills in the City of Bombay at the end of the year 1925, which had its origin in the decision of the millowners to reduce the wages of all workpeople in the mills by $11\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. owing to the severe depression of the industry. The total number of workpeople directly involved in the strike amounted to 151,986. The strike was brought to an end after about $2\frac{1}{2}$ months by the issue of an ordinance by His Excellency the Viceroy suspending the collection of the excise duty with effect from December 1st, 1925. Whereupon the Millowners' Association in consonance with an assurance they had given to the then Governor of Bombay did away with the cut in wages.

In 1928 there was another general strike in the cotton mills which lasted from April 16th to October 6th and involved 147,644 workpeople. The underlying cause of this strike was the threatened general introduction of new systems of work and standardisation in accordance with the recommendations of the Textile Tariff Board published in 1927. The general strike was called off on the understanding that the rates of wages were to be those prevalent in March 1927 pending the report of a Committee (the Bombay Strike Enquiry Committee) to be appointed by Government to enquire into the whole dispute. This Committee sat for over 5 months and its report was published on 26th March 1929. While negotiations to give effect to the recommendations of this Committee were in progress, trouble arose in connection with the dismissal of a worker in the Wadia group of mills. On April 24th the Girni Kamgar Union called a general strike from April 26th and by the 1st May this strike had spread to 64 mills, affecting 109,232 operatives. As His Excellency the Governor and the Government were, after various efforts, unable to find any common ground between the parties which might serve as a basis for the appointment of a Board of Conciliation, a Court of Enquiry under the Trade Disputes Act was appointed on July 3, 1929. The report of this Court of Enquiry was published early in September (see Appendix B) and in the intervening period the strike had gradually broken down and before the report was published it was virtually over and the men drifted back to work, without any settlement being arrived at on the points at issue.

Concern of Government.

The Government of Bombay are alive to the vital importance to the City and Presidency of restoring the cotton mill industry to a healthy condition. The number of employees involved and the amount of capital invested directly and indirectly is so great, and the possibilities of disastrous disturbances of the public peace in connection with

industrial disputes so imminent, that they cannot afford to overlook any avenue which might lead to industrial peace. They have, therefore, been closely studying the position with a view to arriving at a correct assessment of the factors which have to be taken into account and clarifying the whole question and their own attitude towards it.

In view of the immense importance of a healthy mill industry to the general prosperity of the Presidency, and the disastrous consequences should it break down, and in order that the whole situation may be ventilated and every possible sound method of improvement examined and adopted, this Note has been prepared.

To clarify the position it is necessary, first of all, to define the responsibilities and examine the condition of the three great classes—Capital, Labour and the general public of Bombay—which, as well as Government, are affected by the depression in the textile industry ; and then to discuss the possible remedies for the situation.

Position of the Millowners.

With regard to the first-mentioned of these classes, the owners have been widely criticised for their failure to pay sufficient attention to the suggestions and recommendations put forward from time to time for the improvement of the industry.

The report of the Indian Cotton Textile Tariff Board usually known as the Noyce Committee, which was published in 1927, showed that the industry had not done all that could be done to meet competition. Up till the last few months at all events there had been a tendency on the part of the Bombay millowners to attribute their troubles to the lack of protective tariffs, without concurrently and sufficiently realising that further protection, while it might perhaps stimulate the production of up-country mills, would not inevitably safeguard their own position. Amongst individual firms there was a lack of continuity of organisation and of thoroughly trained and capable assistants. Some of the mills have been, and are being, bolstered up financially and they are a source of weakness to the whole industry. This aspect of the situation has been emphasised, both in public and in private, by the Head of the Bombay Government, and it is understood that the Millowners are now making a big effort to tackle the problem of rehabilitating the industry. The Committee of the Association has decided to accept the recommendations of the Fawcett Committee *in toto*. Revised standardisation schemes have been prepared as a basis for doing away with the proposed cut of $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. in the weaving section and in other ways the owners are trying to improve the relations with their workpeople. Particulars of these suggestions will be found later on in this Note. On the business side a concerted effort is being made to popularise Bombay goods and a special train has been chartered which is now touring India exhibiting

the products of Bombay mills. It is also understood that negotiations are proceeding between various groups with a view to some form of amalgamation and centralised buying and selling.

Efforts for Improvement.

Moreover, in fairness to the Millowners, it should be pointed out that the Noyce Committee found that "by far the greatest disability in the cost of manufacture from which Bombay suffers in comparison with Ahmedabad and other up-country centres is in its high cost of labour and that the only alternative to a reduction in wages in the Bombay mill industry is increased labour efficiency and it is in this direction that the true line of advance lies." It was the attempt of the Millowners to attain increased labour efficiency by a standardisation scheme, which provided for more looms being looked after by weavers and more frames by spinners, that led to the strikes of 1928 and 1929, although the ostensible cause in the latter strike was not standardisation. The attitude of the Millowners, therefore, was that the Noyce Committee's recommendations should be taken as a whole and that if they were required to reorganise their methods of business they should also be able to reorganise their system of labour organisation and payment. Their failure to effect simultaneous standardisation and to adjust wages have made it clear to the millowners that they must seek other ways of reducing costs and improving their buying and selling organisation. And as indicated above, they are undoubtedly making efforts to improve the situation.

Number and strength of Unions.

On January 1st, 1930, there were 33 registered unions in the City, claiming a total membership of 144,230 in addition to 16 unregistered unions comprising 14,214 members. Of these unions, only five (all registered) exist in the Textile industry with a total membership of 58,246. One of these is the Bombay Girni Kamgar Union which claims a membership of 54,000 ; but as will be explained below, this figure cannot be accepted as even approximating to the facts as they exist to-day. Of the remaining 4 unions, the largest is the Bombay Textile Labour Union with a membership of only 2,484.

Next in order of numbers come the railways, including the railway workshops, but with these the Government of Bombay, so far as disputes rendering the use of the Trade Disputes Act necessary are concerned, have no direct concern because under the Trade Disputes Act the Government of India and the Railway Board are the authorities who appoint Boards of Conciliation or Courts of Enquiry in matters arising out of railways.

Next come seamen, but there has been no dispute in this industry for some years and here again the Government of India, through the

Shipping Master, are in closer touch with the industry than the local Government.

The engineering trade, apart from the railway workshops, is not organised; while another large industry—that connected with the oil companies—also has no effective trade unions, although there is one trade union registered.

When the Girni Kamgar Union called a general strike in the Bombay Presidency on April 26, 1929, it had undoubtedly more members than any other half a dozen unions put together. Its accumulated funds amounted to over Rs. 60,000 and its claim to a membership of 54,000 was probably not much exaggerated. The Bombay Textile Labour Union was opposed to the strike and succeeded in keeping its members, who were mostly in one geographical groups of mills, from going on strike. This, combined with the firm attitude of the millowners, broke the strike and the members of the Girni Kamgar Union started to go back to the mills within a few weeks of the strike being called. The failure of this strike had a disastrous effect not only on the Girni Kamgar Union, which lost the majority of its members and dissipated the whole of its funds, but upon the Bombay Textile Labour Union itself and the attempt of the latter Union to bring out the workers in one mill at Kurla just after the general strike had ended was a failure. Far from being able to profit by the disruption of the Girni Kamgar Union, the Bombay Textile Labour Union itself has lost many members, for, apparently, the millhands are at the moment distrustful of any form of trade unionism, seeing the hardships that the strikes of 1928 and 1929 had inflicted on them without any apparent benefit. There has been a slight recrudescence of activity in the past few weeks but the leaders of the last strike have quarrelled amongst themselves and both are trying to obtain adherents and to capture what organisation there is left. The Millowners' Association has withdrawn its recognition of the Girni Kamgar Union, basing its decision on the reports of the Strike Enquiry Committee and of the Riots Enquiry Committee (see Appendix B); and at the present time the Union cannot be regarded as an effective force amongst the workers in Bombay.

The Bombay Millworkers' Union never had more than a few hundred members and is ineffective; while the other Union—the Girni Kamgar Muhamandal—has a membership practically confined to the Colaba mills, which were not affected either by the strike of 1928 or 1929. The present position of mill labour may, therefore, be said to be that it is drifting, unorganised, and suspicious alike of trade unions and of its employers; while the millowners experience difficulty in proceeding with the recommendations of the Fawcett Committee as regards mediation, because those rules depend upon a reasonable organisation of the men into trade unions. It would, therefore, it is claimed by the millowners, be difficult

to enter into negotiations with the present labour leaders who could not give—and have frankly said they could not give—any guarantee that arrangements entered into by them would be accepted by the workers.

Public opinion and Government.

The calling of a general strike in April 1929 with the prospect of a long stoppage of work supervening upon the disastrous strike of the previous year greatly perturbed public opinion. The abstention of the Bombay Textile Labour Union, threw into relief the activities of the Girni Kamgar Union more particularly as several of the leaders of that Union had been arrested in connection with the Meerut case, while the public felt that the communal riots in the early part of the year had been fomented by the activities of these same leaders in stirring up animosity against the Pathans who helped to break the oil workers' strike. There was, too, a feeling that the object of the leaders of the Girni Kamgar Union in calling the strike in April 1929 was not to fight the cause of the workers and of trade unionism, but was in support of communist doctrines. Opinion on this point was definitely expressed in June, when His Excellency the Governor convened a conference of public and semi-public bodies to discuss the best method of dealing with the general strike. There was a strong opinion that action should be taken against the Girni Kamgar Union if sufficient evidence of its unlawful activities was forthcoming to justify that step. It was, however, soon apparent that the strike would not be so widespread as it was in 1928 and when the reports of the Court of Enquiry and the Riots Enquiry Committee, which confirmed the public opinion of the Girni Kamgar Union's activities were published, the strike was virtually over. The publication of these reports was not followed by any strongly expressed feeling for action against the Union such as was shown at the June conference. Communal trouble had disappeared, the order prohibiting meetings was ensuring peace and quietness in the mill area, and the mills were working. There was a somewhat widespread feeling that it would be best to let sleeping dogs lie. The Millowners' Association were naturally insistent that Government should take action on the facts disclosed by the reports, but the other bodies appeared to be content to leave it to Government to do what it thought best. A close examination by Government of the legal position showed that the only action that could be taken was to declare the Union an unlawful association under the Criminal Law Amendment Act—a use of the criminal law which did not appear to Government to be justified, especially when the Union had ceased to exist as a source of danger. After the lapse of five months since the Court of Enquiry's report was published, public opinion has ceased to express itself on those questions which were the principal issues at the Conference last June.

Government and the Industrial situation.

The position of Government as the fourth of the interested parties is simple. On the one hand it is anxious to do all that it can to assist the mill industry in Bombay, because it recognises the enormous importance of this industry to its capital city and indirectly to all India. In the second place, it desires to maintain industrial peace and it believes that such industrial peace can only be obtained if the mill operatives in Bombay are reasonably contented. Such contentment involves, not only sympathy on the part of the millowners, translated into practice by the payment of the highest wages that the industry can afford consistent with labour efficiency and by the provision of welfare activities and decent housing, but at the same time the exclusion of those external forces which seek to use labour for the propagation of subversive doctrines. It is unfortunate that certain individuals are fastening upon the workers deluding them with promises incapable of fulfilment and endeavouring to use the cloak of trade unionism as a mask for revolution. Such exploitation is disastrous to the working classes themselves and the Government desire to do everything possible to check it. The object of Government is in no sense to crush labour or to stifle the growth of any genuine trade union movement but rather to assist labour to organise itself generally for its own protection and for the purpose of enabling the employers to proceed with the consideration of the recommendations of the Textile Tariff Board and of the Bombay Strike Enquiry Committee.

Attitude of the Workers.

Having briefly indicated the general situation and the individual factors in the labour position, it is desirable to look at the problem as a whole and endeavour to visualise practical solutions, especially those which affect the workers. There is in Bombay a solid mass of some 140,000 mill operatives. The considerations which have been set out in an Appendix (C) indicating how and whence these workers are recruited appear to militate against their organisation. In 1919 and in 1924 the mill operatives came out on strike in a body. But they did not come out in pursuance of a call to action raised by a properly constituted trade union of which they were members. A widespread grievance gave them temporary unity but they owed no allegiance to any trade union and they had no organisation or funds behind them. The Girni Kamgar Union was the first union to undertake intensive propaganda and to organise a large body of workers into a trade union, with a regular organisation, collection of subscriptions and accumulation of funds. The other trade unions had only a limited membership, although their organisation was on sound enough lines and they were controlled by well known social workers. The strike of 1929, so far as the great body of workers was concerned, was mainly economic and not communistic. The

men came out, not because their leaders preached red flag doctrines, the taking over of the mills by the workers and so on, but because they feared reduction in wages and loss of employment; and once having come out, the violent attitude of a comparatively few Girni Kamgar Union members prevented many of them from returning until they felt reasonably secure against intimidation. Their leaders were, however, under no delusions as to the objects of the strike. Most of them were new to the labour movement in the textile industry and their object in entering it was to cause trouble to the capitalist class. So far from doing anything to bring about an improvement in the industrial situation and to save the men from the consequences of their own folly, they did everything in their power to hamper negotiations and to make a settlement impossible.

The organisation of labour is not impossible but the urgent necessity is good leadership by men who come into the movement purely as trade unionists, pledged to rectify the economic grievances of the men and not to mix them up with politics. A great benefit to labour would ensue if men of that type came into the labour movement in greater numbers than they have yet done.

Improving relations between Capital and Labour.

That it is possible to organise Indian labour on sound trade union lines is shown by what has happened at Ahmedabad. In that centre there is a strong trade union run by disinterested officials uninfluenced in their dealings on behalf of labour by the politics which it is known they strongly profess. With the assistance of this trade union it has been possible to attain a considerable measure of success in conciliation methods culminating in a tribunal of two arbitrators, Mr. Gandhi and Sheth Mangaldas, the leading millowner of Ahmedabad; and to its existence, amongst other factors, may be attributed the comparative stability and freedom from strikes of the Ahmedabad textile industry. It is true that these harmonious relations may be largely attributed to the personal influence of Mr. Gandhi with the employers as well as the employees and it is also true that the Ahmedabad Trade Union boycotted the Whitley Commission in pursuance of Mr. Gandhi's policy of non-co-operation with Government. But making every allowance for these factors, it can be said that Ahmedabad offers an interesting and encouraging example of what can be done in the way of organising labour. In Bombay there is no equivalent to Mr. Gandhi, nor is there the same close personal touch between the workers and the employers that one finds in Ahmedabad, where the average millowner spends the greater part of his time in his mill. As has been pointed out, the trade unions in the textile trade in Bombay are virtually non-existent and recognising this the millowners are endeavouring to get in touch with their men direct.

The committee of the Bombay Millowners' Association have already decided to take action in many matters which do not depend for their effectiveness on negotiations with trade union leaders. They have circularised their members with the recommendation that they should prevent the accumulation of grievances and complaints by placing a complaint box, to which operatives should have free access, in the compound of all mills; that mill dispensaries should be made free and that an effort should be made in all cases to engage fully qualified medical officers to attend to them; that all mills should establish creches and that steps should be taken to supply information to mills intending to establish new creches as to the methods of running them and the approximate monthly cost. The committee have further recommended that the policy of direct recruitment of labour should be encouraged by posting a notice in all mills stating (a) that all persons will be engaged by the manager and by the head of the department, (b) that any heads of departments, assistants or jobbers accepting bribes from the workpeople will be instantly dismissed. The committee advise that a system of providing "discharge certificates" to operatives leaving service should be introduced, the certificate containing a record of service of the operative concerned, and that in all cases of recruitment the men presenting themselves for employment should be asked to produce their discharge certificates.

The management of the mills have been advised to make it clear to the workpeople that they are always ready and willing to consider sympathetically any complaints or suggestions that the workers may bring forward personally and the men have been told that whenever they feel they have cause for complaint they should speak about it to the head of their department at any time during the day and if the latter is unable to deal with a complaint the workmen should approach the manager personally when he comes into the department, the object being that no complaint should remain uninvestigated.

These measures—if only as an instalment—seem to be of a nature definitely calculated to improve the labour situation and it is to be hoped that the various millowners concerned will accept the recommendations of the committee of the Millowners' Association and will act upon them without delay.

Possible remedies.

The suggestion has also been made that because the trade union leaders are, for the most part, ignorant of the technicalities of the trade from which the members of the union are drawn, the Trade Union Congress or the General Federation of Trade Unions in England should be asked to send out a man knowing the technicalities of the textile trade, who would be paid either by Government or by the industry and

would not only represent the millhands in negotiations with individual employers or the Millowners' Association, but should also be a sort of permanent labour representative to sit on Boards of Conciliation or Courts of Enquiry, or preferably, Boards of Arbitration. An analogy has been drawn between a post of this kind and that of a conciliation officer under the Ministry of Labour in England and also with the labour representatives who sit on the Industrial Court. There is, however, no complete analogy. The conciliation officer is an impartial officer, whose duty is to keep the British Government informed as to the possibility or progress of disputes and to offer his services on either side, if his advice or mediation is required. The panel of arbitrators from whom the members of the Industrial Court are drawn is a considerable one and it is the invariable practice to select, as the workers' representative, a labour leader entirely unconnected with the trade which is the subject of the reference. For example, in a dispute affecting Lancashire weavers the workers' representative might be a railway man, and the employers' representative an engineer. In Bombay City, where the leading trade unionists are connected with a number of trade unions, this would be difficult while the suggested technical adviser to labour would obviously be partial because it is inevitable that in some stage of the dispute—probably at all stages—leading up to the Court or Board, he shall have represented labour in the negotiations with the employers. Concurrently it might be possible for the General Federation of Trade Unions in conjunction with organised labour in India to arrange for one or two workers of the right type to study the organisation of trade unions in England.

Another suggestion which would depend upon the Government of India is that the Trade Unions Act should be amended so as to vest the Registrar with greater powers of supervision and intervention. The present Act which is based on the British model assumes that the trade unions will observe their rules and pursue the objects for which they are formed. Such an assumption is not justified in India, where the labouring population is ignorant and disorganised and easily falls a prey to unscrupulous and designing agitators who often seek objects which, if correctly understood, the members of their unions would not approve. At the present stage, the labourers need, above all things, impartial advice and guidance. It is possible that if the Registrar were vested with powers of inspection and possibly of audit, such a measure would assist trade unions—as it has already assisted co-operative societies—in getting on to sounder lines.

Another amendment of the Act which appears desirable is the extension of the powers of cancellation. It is unsatisfactory that a union which wilfully infringes its own by-laws and which seeks objects

other than those for which it was registered cannot be cancelled but continue to enjoy immunities which it ought not to possess.

It is also for consideration whether the Registrar should not be vested with power to ascertain the correct membership of a union.

It should again be emphasised that in making these suggestions, Government does not desire to stifle the growth of any genuine trade union movement but does desire to see that that movement proceeds on lines which will really benefit the workers and not merely those persons who constitute themselves the leaders of the workers. Government would indeed welcome and would do its best to foster the growth of strong trade unions in Bombay which would genuinely set to work to solve the economic problems of the workers not forgetting the economic problems of the industry and will use the machinery of the Trade Disputes Act on any major occasion for the information and guidance of the public. Failing such trade unions, the action of the millowners in endeavouring to provide machinery for hearing the grievances of their workers is to be welcomed as at least one step towards securing industrial peace. Clearly much still remains to be done. More welfare work is an obvious line of approach; while, if the haphazard system of recruitment and the opportunity it affords for exploiting the workmen is replaced by some form of Employment Bureau or other system of regulation, improved harmony is likely to result.

It is not the primary object of this Note to deal with the economic difficulties of the textile industry in Bombay or to consider whether or not the admitted depression in the industry can be met only by the imposition of a tariff. Admittedly, the disputes with labour have accentuated the difficulties and in order to escape from this trouble some owners are considering the possibility of moving to the mofussil, where labour is less likely to be affected by mass psychology. It is certainly a remarkable circumstance that neither in the general strike of 1928 nor in the strike of 1929, did the two mills at Colaba in the South of the Island come out on strike. They continued to work without any interruption for no other reason that can be ascertained than that they were undisturbed by propagandists from the North of the Island or by the general feeling of unrest which permeated that area. It is not necessary to elaborate by arguments how serious it would be for the capital city of the Presidency, if any substantial section of its principal industry were to move elsewhere.

General Conclusions.

To sum up, the position is that the Textile Industry in Bombay City is suffering from severe depression, partly due to the impossibility of selling the cloth it produces at remunerative rates and partly owing to unsettled labour conditions. The Millowners are now making strong

efforts to set their own house in order and remedy the defects which the Noyce Committee pointed out. They are also endeavouring to improve their relations with their labour. If the millowners clearly demonstrate their definite steps towards and good faith in establishing a sound position it would seem very desirable that the industry should receive assistance during the transitional period. The Government of Bombay has taken up with the Government of India the question of amending the Trade Unions Act and the Trade Disputes Act and is also considering whether it would be of assistance to the industry if it set up a department on the lines of the Industrial Relations Department in the United Kingdom.

With regard to the question of a tariff, it seems to the Government of Bombay, that provided effect is given to the considerations mentioned, a case has been made out for protection against foreign competition. The present depression in the Bombay textile industry is economic rather than political and labour disputes are largely the result of the depression, not its primary cause. At the same time, the reorganisation of the industry and the promotion of a more healthy atmosphere within it are the preliminaries essential to economic recovery. And it is agreed that these must be the conditions upon the satisfaction of which must depend the imposition of any protective tariff. Such a tariff must be carefully devised not to bolster up indefinitely uneconomic mills but simply to give the industry a breathing space in which it may effect its reorganisation, and after a suitable period the tariff should be withdrawn if necessary.

APPENDIX A.

The following figures extracted from the latest annual report of the Chief Inspector of Factories in the Bombay Presidency for 1928 show the average number of persons employed in factories* registered under the Factories Act and their distribution between the different industries that are carried on on the island :—

Average daily number of persons employed by different industries under the Factory Act in the Town and Island of Bombay :—

			Number of persons employed.
(1) Government and Local Fund Factories	..	..	14,635
(2) Textile Factories	..	..	1,21,323
(3) Engineering Factories	..	..	17,921
(4) Mineral and Metals Factories	..	..	476
(5) Food, drink and tobacco Factories	..	..	2,195
(6) Chemicals, dyes, etc., Factories	..	..	4,944
(7) Paper and Printing Factories	..	..	5,234
(8) Process relating to wood, stone and glass	..	..	1,118
(9) Process connected with skins and hides	..	..	234
(10) Gins and Presses	..	..	748
(11) Miscellaneous (Laundries, etc.)	..	..	145
Total	..	..	168,973

* A factory is a place where mechanical power is used and twenty or more hands are employed. In a few cases establishments employing ten hands may be included. Figures relating to factory workers would not therefore include large labour-employing industries such as the railways, docks, transport, building and construction, etc.

APPENDIX B.

Communism in the Labour Movement in Bombay City.

Communism entered the Labour movement in Bombay City in January 1927 when a group of the National Congress, having failed to obtain acceptance of their ideas by the Congress, formed a Workers and Peasants Party, one of whose objects was "to promote the organization of trade unions and to wrest them from their alien control." In May 1927 they started a paper called the *Kranti* (Revolution) which ceased publication at the end of the year owing to financial difficulties but was revived during the 1928 strike and was prominent in 1929. Towards the end of 1927 the leaders of the Workers and Peasants Party penetrated the existing labour organisations and a number succeeded in getting elected as office-bearers of the All-India Trade Union Congress. The first strike with which the Workers and Peasants Party was connected was in January 1928, when they were active in issuing leaflets and propaganda, but their efforts to bring about a general strike were frustrated by the counsels of the older leaders of labour. Soon after this, the leaders of the party gained a footing in the Girni Kamgar Mahamandal and issued propaganda to bring about the general strike which took place in April 1928. On the 23rd May 1928 they registered the Girni Kamgar Union, and it was soon apparent that their object was the destruction of capital and the establishment of a labour raj. They endeavoured to organise railway, transport and municipal workers, etc., and formed unions with members of the Workers and Peasants Party on their executive. In December 1928 they carried on a strike in the Oil installations at Sewri.

**Findings of the Riots Enquiry Committee and Court of Enquiry
regarding the Girni Kamgar Union in 1929.**

The Riots Enquiry Committee and the Court of Enquiry under the Trade Disputes Act found as follows, regarding the Girni Kamgar Union :—

- (1) that some of the leaders of the Union are communists ;
- (2) that the Girni Kamgar Union was the basic cause of the riots in February 1929 ;
- (3) that the leaders of the Girni Kamgar Union were reckless and violent in their speeches ;
- (4) that they caused lightning strikes without just cause for the purpose of fomenting unrest ;
- (5) that the blame lies wholly at the door of the officials of the union for the state of affairs which prevailed during the months of March and April 1929 resulting in the general strike ;
- (6) that the strike was prolonged by—
 - (a) the aggressive and mischievous propaganda of the officials of the Girni Kamgar Union,
 - (b) the inflammatory appeals made by them to the workers,
 - (c) picketing and intimidation by the strikers and acts of violence committed by them on non-strikers.
- (7) that the main difficulty in the way of settling the strike was the uncompromising attitude of the officials of the Girni Kamgar Union.

These facts regarding the activities of the Girni Kamgar Union having been brought to the notice of Government, consideration was given to the question whether it would be possible to take action against the leaders of the Union, whose activities constituted a danger to the community and a menace to the welfare to the trade union movement in Bombay City. It was found however that no action under the Indian Trade Unions Act, either for the cancellation of the registration of the Union or otherwise, could be taken. It would have been possible to declare the Girni Kamgar Union an unlawful association under the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908, but it was not considered desirable to put this Act into operation against the Union which, as subsequent enquiries showed, had been disrupted by the strike and the members of which had not, so far as the great majority of them were concerned, been guilty of objectionable activities. The present position of the Girni Kamgar Union is that owing to various reasons it has for the time being at any rate ceased to be an effective force.

APPENDIX C.

Instability of Labour.

Industrial labour in Bombay City is largely drawn from the surrounding districts who are attracted to the city by the higher wages paid there as compared with agricultural wages and also because there is not enough work in the mofussil to support them. The bulk of the immigrants come from the Ratnagiri district, and other places next in order of importance are Poona, Kathiawar, the United Provinces and Satara. Only 16 per cent. of the total population of Bombay City was born in the city at the census of 1921. The sex ratio is only 525 females to 1,000 males as compared with a sex ratio in the Presidency as a whole of 919 females to 1,000 males. The figure of 525 for Bombay City may be compared with that for the big non-industrial city of Poona where the figure is 912. In a recent enquiry made by the Bombay Labour Office into the length of service of mill workers, which covered 1,400 mill-hands, it was found that not one of them had been born in Bombay City, 63 per cent. were born in the Konkan and 27 per cent. in the Deccan, the remainder coming from different parts of the country. The labour force in Bombay is therefore not permanent in the sense that the workers have permanently settled in the city where they follow industrial or other occupations and have lost all contact with their villages. On the contrary contact with the village is closely maintained. The family itself remains domiciled in the mofussil and the centre of the family life is in the ancestral village, to which the womenfolk return to bear their children and the menfolk when old age or disability comes to them, or when death causes a vacancy in the agricultural workers of the family. It may, however, be said that so far as the Bombay textile workers are concerned although they maintain a very close and living contact with their villages, most of them are permanent in the sense that they continue to work in the industry over a considerable period of time once they join it.

Migration.

The bulk of the passenger traffic between Bombay City and the Konkan including Kolaba, the Ratnagiri District and Janjira State is carried by small coasting steamers and figures obtained from the steamship companies show the great volume which this traffic attains. From Bombay, in round figures, the number of passengers to these three districts has been as follows :—

1925	..	..	..	..	384,000
1926	..	..	..	..	301,000
1927	..	..	..	..	338,000
1928	..	..	..	..	303,000
1929 (up to the end of October)	..	..	..	..	232,000

From these districts to Bombay the figures are :—

1925	..	..	..	..	374,000
1926	..	..	..	..	319,000
1927	..	..	..	..	342,000
1928	..	..	..	..	314,000
1929 (up to the end of October)	..	..	..	..	232,000

Two-thirds of these passengers come from and go to Ratnagiri district. The length of service enquiry, to which reference has been made above, shows that quite a considerable percentage of millhands enter the industry at a comparatively late age. While 21 per cent. of the operatives began work in the mills before their fifteenth year and 38 per cent. between the fifteenth and the twentieth year, 30 per cent. did not join until between their twentieth and thirtieth years while 9 per cent. joined their first mill after they had attained the age of thirty. One of the results of constant visits to the native village is to cause frequent changes in the personnel of a mill. In most cases the men do not ask for leave even if there is a regular system of leave in the mill, which is unusual. They simply leave their work, take their holiday and then come back to Bombay where they may or may not find employment in their old mill. Probably in 40 per cent. of the cases where workers leave their mill it is due to this cause combined with leaving the mill owing to illness and the desire to go to their native place for convalescence. Out of the 1,348 cases examined, 643 or 47·7 per cent. had served in only one mill, 294 or 21·81 per cent. in two mills, and 172 or 12·76 per cent. in three mills, 8·16 per cent. in four mills and the remainder, about 10 per cent., in five mills or more, the highest number of mills served by any one individual being 15. The above figures, of course, do not take into consideration the age of the workers or the length of time they have been in the industry. From this point of view the enquiry shows that in the case of operatives with less than five years' service to their credit 67 per cent. had remained in the same mill, while 42 per cent. of the workers with 5 to 10 years' service had also remained in one mill. Beyond that period the percentage varied between 25 and 45. Thirty-five per cent. of the workers between 15 and 35 years' service had served in four or more mills. The general conclusion therefore appears to be that quite a fair proportion of the operatives are able to remain with one or two mills for a considerable period, not because they never leave the mill, but because they are fortunate in being able to return to it.