

**A STUDY OF STRIKES  
IN THE BOMBAY COTTON TEXTILE INDUSTRY**

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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE STUDY

LG : Labour Gazette. Issued Monthly by the Office of the Commissioner of Labour, Government of Maharashtra, Bombay.

MOA : The Millowners' Association, Bombay.

Other abbreviations used in the study are explained in the relevant places.

A STUDY OF STRIKES IN THE BOMBAY COTTON TEXTILE INDUSTRY

AN OUTLINE OF THE APPROACH

Strikes occupy a special position in the field of industrial relations. While the impact of most other aspects of industrial relations is confined to the economic relationship between employers and workers, the effects of strikes extend to the social and political spheres also. It is largely for this reason that strikes have always attracted attention.

Although some information about strikes in the years before 1921 can be gathered from various sources, it is not possible to compile comprehensive statistics about the strikes in those years. Beginning with 1921, the Labour Bureau of the Government of India commenced systematic collection of the statistics of strikes in India, and the statistics were published through the Journal of Industries and Labour. Since then there has been a considerable improvement in the coverage and the reliability of these statistics. As may be expected, the available statistics have been a favourite subject of presentation and analysis among labour economists and others alike.

Taken by themselves, the statistics do not provide an adequate basis for a study of strikes. A study based exclusively on the statistics runs the risk of arriving at misleading conclusions and facile generalizations. For a

proper understanding of the nature of strikes, the statistics need to be examined in the context of the circumstances in which the strikes occurred. The circumstances relevant to a study of strike statistics may be enumerated as the nature of the industry affected by strikes, the policies of employers towards workers, the composition and common characteristics of workers, the activities of trade unions, the historical pattern of industrial relations and the role of the government.

However, these circumstances cannot be considered satisfactorily on an all-India basis within the scope of a single study. They vary in important respects as between different industrial centres in the country. They also vary from industry to industry, as well as within the same industry in different industrial centres, because of differences in the conditions of employment, the methods of solving industrial disputes and the historical background of the relationships between employers, workers and trade unions. In order to grasp the true nature and significance of strikes, a study of strikes, therefore, needs to confine itself, firstly, to a single industrial centre, and secondly, to a single industry within that centre. The study is enabled thereby to examine strikes in the perspective of a homogeneous background of inter-related circumstances.

The present study deals with strikes in the cotton textile industry in Bombay. It is chiefly concerned with strikes in the years 1922-1964, although developments in

the earlier years have been mentioned wherever necessary.

The study is divided into two parts: (A) the Milieu, and (B) the Strikes. The first part consists of four chapters, and the second of seven. The twelfth chapter which follows concludes the study by summing up the findings.

A brief account of the growth of the Bombay cotton textile industry and salient features of the employers' policies towards workers are given in the first chapter. The second chapter deals with the employment and the composition of workers in the industry, and also with labour turnover and absenteeism among the workers. A history of trade unions in the industry and an assessment of the present position of unionism form the subject of the third chapter. The fourth chapter discusses the role of the government in relation to the strikes and the working of the industrial disputes machinery provided by the government. Here ends the first part of the study, the Milieu.

The second part of the study begins with the fifth chapter which describes the nature, value and limitations of the statistics of strikes used. The sixth chapter examines the annual and seasonal fluctuations in the strike activity. The seventh chapter deals with causes of the strikes and importance of the different causes. The influence exercised on the strikes by employment and union membership, strikes in other industries in the city, the cost of living and the state of trade is examined in the eighth chapter. The duration and results of the strikes are discussed in

the ninth chapter. The tenth chapter examines the calculation, the magnitude and the significance of the cost of the strikes. The eleventh chapter, which concludes the second part of the study, describes eight important strikes in the industry. The findings of the two parts are brought together in the twelfth chapter and are viewed in the total perspective of the study.



PART A

THE MILIEU

CHAPTER I  
THE INDUSTRY AND THE EMPLOYERS

One of the important factors affecting the nature of strikes is the industry in which they occur. The fortunes of the industry and the traditions developed over the years have an important influence over the relations between employers and workers that characterize a particular industry.

This chepter studies the growth of the cotton textile industry in Bombay and the evolution of the employers' policies towards labour. Occasional references are made to the industry in other parts of India, since many factors affecting the industry in Bombay were in fact national in their operation. The chapter is divided into two parts, the first dealing with the growth of the industry and the second dealing with the employers' policies.

A : The Growth of the Cotton Textile Industry in Bombay

1. The development of the industry during the period before the World War I

The cotton textile industry in Bombay may be said to have started around the year 1854 when both Cowasjee Davar and Maneckjee Petit put their plans into execution. It was about the same time that James Landon planned his enterprise in Broach. Although there were isolated enterprises in the second and the third decades of the nineteenth century, these three are generally considered as the pioneers of the

cotton textile industry in India.<sup>1</sup>

With the beginning of the American Civil War in 1861, exports of cotton to England increased and the prices of cotton rose up rapidly. There was a boom in business prosperity in Bombay, but the growth of the cotton mill industry was held up temporarily.

The American Civil War was over in 1865. The mill industry entered shortly afterwards into a period of rapid expansion which lasted until the 1890's. Along with the improvements in the means of communication and transport and the widening of the home market, the number of mills increased considerably. China proved to be a profitable market for yarn and exports to that country were maintained at high levels.

The industry in the beginning consisted largely of spinning mills only. The bulk of yarn produced was of coarse counts. The ease with which the yarn could be marketed in India and in China was partly responsible for the delayed transformation of the industry into one spinning finer counts and also weaving the yarn it produced.

Ring spinning began to replace mule spinning in the 1890's. Another improvement was the introduction of revolving flat cards. These innovations increased the production considerably and facilitated better spinning. Electric

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1 S. D. Mehta, The Cotton Mills of India : 1854 to 1954 (Bombay: The Textile Association (India), 1954), pp. 5-21. This book is the source for much of the factual information given in this chapter.

lighting of mills also came in during these years, although this gathered momentum only in the early years of the present century, when it led to longer hours of work, which in turn caused many strikes and violent riots and disrupted the labour market.

The 1890's were unfortunate for the industry. The change in the currency policy of the Government in 1893 affected the exports adversely. In 1896 and 1897 there was a violent epidemic of plague in Bombay, Ahmedabad and some other cities. Frequent famines reduced the purchasing power of the people. Japan began to compete in the Chinese market. As a reaction to these factors, attempts were made to reduce costs by way of reductions in wages. The attempts were successful generally, but only after stubborn resistance on the part of the workers.

The next decade was somewhat better. Exports revived for a time. The Swadeshi movement in 1905, particularly keen in Bengal, encouraged the home industry. But taken as a whole, the period up to the commencement of the World War I was not in any sense very prosperous.

## 2. The World War I and the post-war boom

The war brought about a sudden fall in imports from England. Prices rose up and so did the profits. The government tried to check the rise in prices and introduced a scheme to produce 'standard cloth'. The profits continued to rule high, in spite of imports from Japan, famines, and an influenza epidemic in 1918 and 1919. The post-war boom

continued right upto 1922. The Swadeshi movement of 1921 also helped the industry.

The period of rapid expansion was almost over by about this time for the industry in Bombay. This can be seen from the fact that the total number of mills in India increased from 137 in 1890 to 253 in 1920, whereas the number of mills in Bombay increased from 70 in 1890 to only 83 in 1920.<sup>2</sup> This disparity in the rates of expansion became more conspicuous in the succeeding years, making the industry truly national in character and in operation, although Bombay continued to be its most important centre.

### 3. The industry in the inter-war years

The end of the post-war boom brought many difficulties to the industry in Bombay. Stocks began to accumulate at the end of 1922. The trade was depressed in 1923 and 1924. Profits declined and there was considerable idle capacity in the mills.

The capital structure of the Bombay mills had become greatly inflated during the boom years. This was due to speculative sales and purchases of many mills at high prices, which required revaluation of assets, issue of bonus shares out of reserves and such other factors. The larger capital employed led to enhanced depreciation charges and a lower rate of return over the investment. This became a serious

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<sup>2</sup> The Mill Statement, an annual publication of the Millowners' Association, Bombay, for the year 1925.

hardship once the boom was over. Among other adverse factors affecting the industry were the imports from Japan, the revival of imports from England, and serious labour unrest.

The difficulties of the Bombay mills continued to be serious, and were further aggravated by the great depression of the 1930's. The number of mills that closed down increased from 6 at the end of 1930 to 23 in March 1934. The position of the industry elsewhere in the country was not so bad, but in Bombay the depression affected the industry to a larger extent due to the existence of many other adverse circumstances. It is interesting to note what the report of the Labour Office in 1934 said in this regard:

An examination of the situation in other centres in this Presidency suggests that trade depression has effected the industry in varying degrees, but that, generally speaking, it enjoys a reasonable measure of prosperity. Therefore, while trade depression has undoubtedly affected the Bombay mills, there must be some other special factors to account for the deplorable condition of the Bombay mills. .... Broadly speaking, however, the explanation appears to be the involved financial position of the mills. A number of them make a fair trading profit but those profits are absorbed in the payment of heavy interest charges, which entirely wipe out any trading surplus which might otherwise be available for shareholders. 3/

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3      Labour Office, Government of Bombay, Wages and Un-employment in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry: Report of the Departmental Enquiry (Bombay: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, 1934), p. 43.

The "reasonable measure of prosperity" for the cotton textile industry outside Bombay, even during the years of the serious depression, may have been due to the negative correlation between the prices of foodgrains and the demand for mill-cloth, which was found by Mr. Krishnan for the years 1950 to 1962. T.N.Krishnan, "Demand for Mill-Cloth in India - A Study of the Interrelationship Between Industry and Agriculture", Artha Vijnana, VI, No.4, December 1964, pp.244-258.

In addition to the financial position, the report pointed out the lack of rationalization in manufacturing and selling methods as another cause of the depressed condition of the Bombay mills.<sup>4</sup>

The unemployment due to closure of many mills and the reductions in wage rates produced much discontent among the workers. The general strike of 1934 was the culmination of this unrest.

Recovery came in gradually by 1934-35, and in spite of a minor recession in 1937-38, the industry revived again. Strange as it may seem in the years of low profits, mills continued to be erected in many parts of the country, probably induced by the low cost of machinery and low wages. Thus the total number of mills in India rose from 348 in 1930 to 389 in 1939.<sup>5</sup>

4. From the World War II to the commencement of the Five Year Plans

The World War II began in September 1939. The civilian demand and the huge requirements of war together gave a great boost to the fortunes of the industry. Idle capacity in the mills went down quickly and two-shift working became common.

To check the rising prices of cloth, the government introduced a scheme to produce 'standard cloth' and imposed

4 Labour Office, Government of Bombay, Wages and Unemployment . . . . ., pp. 43-44.

5 The MOA's Mill Statement for the year 1939.

many controls by the end of 1942. Price controls and compulsory declaration of stocks were introduced in 1943. But these measures did not cause much anxiety to the industry. The black market in cloth flourished unchecked. The scarcity of cloth continued right upto the end of the war.

The industry was adversely affected by the uncertain political climate in 1946. There was much labour unrest, which often took a violent turn. The situation was made worse by repeated communal disturbances. There was a decline in production from the peak levels reached during the World War II.

The Partition of the country in 1947 deprived the industry not only of a part of the home market, but also of a good source of supply of long staple cotton. To regain its balance, the industry was forced to import larger quantities of long staple cotton from other countries and to seek export markets for its surplus production.

#### 5. The years of planning

Conditions changed greatly with the introduction of the Five Year Plans in 1951. The fortunes and the growth of the cotton textile industry became subject to the goals and objectives laid down by the Plans.<sup>6</sup>

Under the common production programmes of the Plans, the mill industry has been called upon to make some sacrifices

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<sup>6</sup> Information for these years has been taken from the relevant annual reports of the MOA.



in the interest of the decentralized small-scale sector of the textile industry. Production of certain varieties of cloth has been allowed for the decentralized sector alone. Besides, a small cess has been levied upon the output of the mill industry in order to help the handlooms and also to reduce the difference in the costs of production in the two sectors.

The experiment in de-control had been unsuccessful in 1948, because of the rapid rise in prices that had followed the removal of controls. All the controls over prices and distribution of cloth were ultimately removed in July 1953. However, the industry voluntarily adopted a system of price controls in 1960, and worked under the self-imposed regulations upto 1964. In October 1964, the Government replaced this voluntary scheme with statutory controls over the prices and production.

As regards the market conditions in recent years, the industry had a minor slump in 1952 and 1953. The depression in 1957 and 1958 was more serious, with large unsold stocks, idle capacity, closure of mills and a reduced output. The years up to 1964 have been moderately good for the industry, without any marked change in its fortunes.

#### 6. Statistics of the growth

Table 1.1 below presents, for Bombay as well as for India as a whole, the statistics for a few selected years regarding the number of mills and the number of spindles and looms installed. The figures help to show the relative

**Table 1.1 : The Growth of the Cotton Textile Industry in Bombay and in India**

Year	Bombay			India		
	No. of mills	No. of spindles	No. of looms	No. of mills	No. of spindles	No. of looms
1856	1	17,000	Nil	*	*	*
1865	10	249,984	3,378	*	*	*
1885	49	1,347,390	12,011	87	2,145,646	16,537
1895	69	2,123,892	20,217	148	3,809,929	35,338
1905	81	2,560,916	28,073	197	5,163,486	50,139
1915	86	2,994,367	51,846	272	6,848,744	108,009
1925	82	3,456,233	72,266	337	8,510,633	154,292
1935	74	2,990,088	68,385	365	9,685,175	198,867
1945	65	2,803,406	66,164	417	10,238,131	202,388
1955	66	3,101,672	65,904	461	12,068,544	207,347
1964	62	3,354,872	63,273	548	14,958,726	211,013

\* Figures not known.

**Sources :** For 1856, Mehta, The Cotton Mills ....., p. 17

For all the other years, various issues of the MOA's Mill Statement.

Figures from 1865 to 1905 are for years ending 30th June. The succeeding figures are for years ending 31st August.

importance of Bombay as a centre of the cotton textile industry in India.

As regards employment in the industry, of the total of 796,301 workers employed by all the mills in India in 1964, 197,269 were employed in Bombay alone.<sup>7</sup>

### B : The Employers and Their Policies Towards Labour

#### 1. The Millowners' Association, Bombay

The need for self-protection against imposition of unfavourable tariff policies and restrictive factory legislation led to the establishment of the Millowners' Association in February 1875. The objectives of the Association were "the promotion and protection of trade, commerce and manufactures of India in general, and of the cotton trade in particular ....."<sup>8</sup>

From the very beginning, the Association was accepted as the representative of the mill industry. It had considerable influence over policies pertaining to the industry. Its authority has grown with the passage of years. Generally speaking, the Association has always initiated the policies which the industry had to follow, and has on many occasions

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<sup>7</sup> From the MOA's Mill Statement, for the year 1964. The figures refer to the average number of workers employed daily during the year ending 31st August, 1964.

<sup>8</sup> S. D. Saklatvala, History of the Millowners' Association, Bombay: 1875-1930 (Bombay: The Millowners' Association, 1931), p. 1.

co-operated with the Government in solving the problems of the industry.

Being a voluntary organization lacking punitive powers against recalcitrant members, the Association was required to carry the majority with it if its efforts were to succeed. It was a difficult task, because "the millowners, an unruly and opportunistic group, rarely missed the chance to break an agreement for convenience's sake."<sup>9</sup> Its repeated attempts at standardization of wages and conditions of work, and its efforts at regulation of output and hours of work are cases in point. Mr. Morris gives many instances to show how some of the resolutions passed by the Association were frustrated by the anarchic behaviour of its individual members.<sup>10</sup> Speaking on the resolution regarding hours of work in 1905, the Chairman threatened the members that if the resolution was not implemented, the Association would request the government to make its resolutions statutorily binding as part of the Factories Act.<sup>11</sup>

In spite of such apparent disunity in the early years, there can be no doubt that the Association has greatly helped

<sup>9</sup> M. D. Morris, The Emergence of an Industrial Labor Force in India : A Study of the Bombay Cotton Mills, 1854-1947 (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 38.

<sup>10</sup> Morris, The Emergence . . . . ., pp. 105, 107-108, 124-125, 138-140, 166-167, etc.

<sup>11</sup> Saklatvale, History . . . . ., p. 24.

to solve many major problems of the mill industry. Today it stands as one of the most powerful organizations of employers in India, commanding a moral authority over its members to an extent which is almost unbelievable.

## 2. The management and utilization of labour

Like many other industries which developed later, the cotton textile industry in Bombay grew up under the managing agency system. The managing agents usually had a stake in a number of varied enterprises, and cotton mills were merely one of them. This encouraged inefficiency and a tendency to look upon the industry only as a source of good profits, which were drained away as soon as they were made. In addition to dividends on their shares and the remuneration as managing agents, the managing agents often received extra commissions by acting as agents for the purchase of raw cotton and stores for the mills under their control.

Encouraged by the system of remuneration by a commission on mill output, the managing agents in early years were tempted to increase the output regardless of the effects on mill profits and financial implications for the company. In the 1890's the system of commission on output began to give way to the more equitable system of a commission on mill profits. But even as late as 1938, four mills were still paying their agents on the basis of

"production or deliveries." <sup>12</sup> Output as a basis for remuneration was finally done away with, along with many other abuses of the managing agency system, by the Companies Act of 1956.<sup>13</sup>

While the managing agents controlled the general policy of the mill company, the day-to-day matters were in the hands of the manager. Under the manager were the heads of departments and their assistants. Below them came the jobbers, who directly supervised the workers. But this hierarchy was more apparent than real. The managing agents often interfered and over-ruled the decisions of the manager. The jobbers were far more powerful than their position in the hierarchy suggested. In fact, it was the jobbers who determined the recruitment and administration of the labour force.

Discussing the lax discipline and the inefficient use of labour in the early mills, Mr. Morris writes of what he calls the "thoroughly rational economic judgment" of

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12 Out of the total 69 mills in Bombay in 1938, 57 mills paid the agents with a commission on profits, 5 mills paid with a commission on sales and 4 mills paid with a commission on production or deliveries. Of the 3 mills excluded from the break-down, one was a proprietary concern, one paid a fixed sum and the third did not pay any commission. Government of Bombay, Report of the Textile Labour Inquiry Committee, Volume II - Final Report (Bombay: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, 1941), pp. 253-254.

13 Government of India, Ministry of Law, The Companies Act, 1956 (New Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1956), pp. 99-100, 178, 180, and 181-183. Sections 198, 348, 352, 356, 358 and 359.

employers. Pointing out that labour was cheap while equipment costs were high, and that the remuneration of agents depended on the output, he says that "the relative price of factors and the specific incentives for the entrepreneur were both strongly on the side of having the mills operate long hours, producing as much product as possible, without particular regard to labour efficiency."<sup>14</sup> Apart from the economics of such use of labour, it is possible that it was also due to ignorance and inefficiency of the employers, and also due to the system of recruitment through jobbers. Mr. Morris himself says elsewhere that the opportunities to get bribes from fresh workers induced jobbers to keep up a high level of labour turnover.<sup>15</sup> The same reason may have naturally induced the jobbers to inflate the labour requirements of the mills and to encourage a wasteful utilization of labour.

The conditions have improved greatly in recent years. As mentioned earlier, the Company Law legislation has removed the abuses of the managing agency system. Attempts of the Millowners' Association, the Bedli Control Scheme of 1935, and the Decasualization Scheme introduced in 1949 have removed the old evils in labour recruitment and have reduced

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14 Morris, The Emergence ....., p. 117. Also pp. 32-33 and 61-62.

15 Morris, The Emergence ....., pp. 135-136.



the powers of the jobbers. Mr. Thakker, however, finds that jobbers wield considerable influence even under the Decasualization Scheme. <sup>16</sup>

### 3. Employers' policies towards trade unions

Mr. Mehta states that from the very beginning, the attitude of millowners to formation of unions among their workers was quite liberal. According to him, the Millowners' Association considered that its own existence as an employers' organization implied the right of workers to organize themselves into a union. <sup>17</sup>

Mr. Saklatvala also writes in his history of the Millowners' Association that the Association was always liberal and friendly to trade unions. <sup>18</sup>

However, after quoting from the speech of Mr. J. B. Petit, the Deputy Chairman of the Association in 1914, in which the latter had declared that capital and labour were like two partners in a joint business and that the two should work in peace and in harmony with each other, Mr. Saklatvala himself says: "Had these excellent sentiments been given a more practical shape, labour would not have so

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16 G. K. Thakker, Labour Problems of Textile Industry: A Study of the Labour Problems of the Cotton Mill Industry in Bombay (Bombay: Vora & Co., Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1962), pp. 32-38.

17 Mehta, The Cotton Mills ....., p. 133.

18 Saklatvala, History ....., pp. 39, 40-41, 44, 54 and 77-78.



easily fallen a prey to the machination of those who exploited it later for considerations of personal ambition or aggrandisement." 19

As a matter of fact, the actions of millowners until the 1930's would suggest that this regret of Mr. Saklatvala was more realistic than his claim that millowners were generous to trade unions. Black-listing of striking workers and refusal of employment to strikers in other mills,<sup>20</sup> summary dismissals of all strikers and replacement of strikers with fresh hands,<sup>21</sup> unwillingness to negotiate with trade unions on the convenient excuse that the unions were not run on proper lines or that the unions were controlled by outsiders with ulterior motives, all these circumstances indicate that the attitude to unions and union activities was far from generous.

But the millowners could not continue to ignore the trade unions for all time. The unions had come to stay. In fact, they compelled millowners to deal with them as representatives of their workers. Also, the government played an important part in changing the attitude of the mill-owners. Increasingly legislation stepped in to regulate

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19 Saklatvala, History ....., p. 32.

20 Saklatvala, History ....., p. 15.

21 Results of many strikes in the 1920's, as given in the relevant volumes of the Labour Gazette.

industrial relations, and it gave a definite role to trade unions which the employers had to accept.

Since 1949, the Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh has been the representative union for the cotton textile workers in Bombay, under the Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946.<sup>22</sup> The relations between the Sangh and the Millowners' Association have been quite friendly and co-operative. Unions other than the Sangh do not have any status under the above mentioned Act.

#### C : A Necessary Explanation

Before proceeding further with the study, it is desirable to prevent a likely misunderstanding that may arise in regard to the Bombay cotton textile industry.

For purposes of this chapter, as well as throughout the study, the term the Bombay cotton textile industry in any year refers to the group of mills that are included in the Millowners' Association's Mill Statement for that year. All these mills are at present - and most of them have always been during the years 1922-1964 to which the study is confined - members of the Millowners' Association. Also, it may be noted that this is the generally accepted connotation of the term the Bombay cotton textile industry.

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<sup>22</sup> The term the "representative union" will be explained in Chapters III and IV.

When defined as above, the industry presents a group of units which have followed similar policies in all important matters pertaining to labour, and in which the pattern of industrial relations and the conditions of work and wages have developed on more or less uniform lines.

But the government notification regarding the applicability of the Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946, defines the industry so as to include not only these mills, but also 47 more units in Bombay.<sup>23</sup> These 47 units are all very small in size, employ a total of less than 3,000 workers at present,<sup>24</sup> and have varied conditions of employment and wages. They are not bound by any of the agreements and awards which apply to the 62 mills that are members of the Millowners' Association. In fact, but for their inclusion by the government notification, they constitute a separate industry by themselves. However, as a result of the notification, these 47 small units as well as the group of 62 mills are required to deal with one and the same representative union, which is about the only thing they have in common with each other.

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23 The definition includes (a) all concerns using power and employing twenty or more workers which are engaged in cotton spinning, and (b) all concerns using power and employing twenty or more workers which are engaged in cotton weaving with or without an admixture of silk, rayon, artificial silk or one or more of these. Notifications issued by government from time to time regarding application of Bombay Industrial Relations Act to various industries, given in, Government of Maharashtra, The Bombay Industrial Relations Rules, 1947 (Bombay: Directorate of Printing and Stationery, 1964), p.35.

24 Records of employment, Office of the Commissioner of Labour, Bombay.

## CHAPTER II

### THE WORKERS

This chapter deals with some of the important characteristics of workers in the cotton mills of Bombay. The ability for organized action depends to some extent on the character of the labour force. Thus in a study of industrial disputes, an examination of the nature, the supply and the composition of workers is as important as a discussion of the role of trade unions.

#### 1. The Supply of Workers

Commencing production early in 1856, Mr. Devar's mill required less than 500 workers.<sup>1</sup> From such small numbers, the labour force has grown tremendously along with the increase in the number of mills and the growth of the industry. Table 2.1 below gives some idea of the expansion that has occurred.

Until recently it was generally believed that the Bombay mills felt a scarcity of labour time and again until 1921. Mr. Morris argues against the supposed existence of this scarcity, and shows convincingly that, except in the years 1896 and 1897 when an epidemic of plague led to a flight

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1 Mehta, The Cotton Mills ....., p. 116.

**Table 2.1 : The Average Number of Workers Employed Daily in the Mills of Bombay, in Selected Years**

Year	Number of Mills	Average Number of Workers Employed Daily
1865	10	6,557
1875	27	13,551
1885	49	41,545
1895	69	75,740
1905	81	92,924
1915	86	111,924
1925	82	153,009
1935	74	136,052
1945	65	213,085
1955	66	203,391
1964	62	197,269

Sources: For the figures from 1865 to 1925, the MOA's Mill Statement, for the year 1925. For the figures for 1935 and 1945, Morris, The Emergence ....., p.214. For the figures for 1955 and 1964, the MOA's Mill Statement, for the year 1964.

The figures upto 1905 are for years ending 30th June. The rest are for years ending 31st August.

The employment figures in all the annual Mill Statements up to, and including, the year 1956 refer only to the workers in the day-shift. The Mill Statements since 1957, however, refer to workers in all the shifts. Also, they give the statistics of the average daily employment in the Bombay cotton textile industry in all the shifts, for each year since 1946.

Since night-shift working was quite rare until 1930, taking only the day-shift workers in calculating the average daily employment did not lead to any significant distortion. But in the succeeding years it resulted in an increasing understatement, as night-shift working became more and more common among the Bombay mills. Mr. Morris, therefore, finds it necessary to adjust the Mill Statement figures to include the night-shift employment, in his study, The Emergence ...., p.214. He calculates the annual average night-shift employment for the years 1931-1947, with the help of the night-shift employment figures reported monthly in the Labour Gazette. He adds these averages to the corresponding employment figures in the Mill Statements and gives the corrected employment figures for the years 1931-1947.

of workers, the mills in Bombay always had an adequate supply of labour.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. The Place of Origin and Language

From the very beginning, the majority of workers came from the Konkan districts of Maharashtra. Others came from Satara, Kolhapur and other areas in the Deccan Plateau of Maharashtra. Workers from the U.P. in the north started coming in later years, and their proportion to the total labour force in the industry rose from 3.05 per cent in 1911 to 11.82 per cent in 1931.

Mr. Gokhale's survey of 20 mills in 1955 found that 45 per cent of the workers were from the Konkan districts, 29.6 per cent from the Deccan Plateau, and 17.8 per cent from the U.P., the rest (7.6 per cent) being from other parts of India.<sup>3</sup>

This classification seems to refer to the place of origin of the first generation of original migrants. For there can be no doubt that with the passing of years, an increasing proportion of the labour force came to be born in Bombay. There is no reason to believe that all those born in Bombay lost all contacts with the original villages. Thus

2 Morris, The Emergence ....., pp.39-62. This book provides much of the factual information in the rest of this chapter.

3 R. G. Gokhale, The Bombay Cotton Mill Worker (Bombay: The Millowners' Association, 1957), p. 17.

the classification helps to group the workers according to their regional ties, which have been throughout powerful common bonds uniting workers coming from the same region.

As would be expected from the places of origin, Marathi is the language of the majority of workers. Thus it was found in 1955 that Marathi was the language of 70 per cent, Hindustani of 17.4 per cent and Telugu of 6.8 per cent of the mill workers in Bombay. Apart from Urdu which was spoken by 2.2 per cent of the workers, other language-groups were quite small in numbers.<sup>4</sup>

### 3. The Age and Sex Composition

The bulk of the workers has always consisted of adult males. Women were about 20 to 25 per cent of the total labour force until 1931, but the proportion has declined in later years. Out of 74,669 workers covered by Mr. Gokhale's inquiry in 1955, only 5,462 or 13.7 per cent were women.<sup>5</sup>

The number of children was never large at any time. From being 4.5 per cent of the workers in 1915, they became fewer as the years passed. No children have been employed since the 1930's.

As regards the age of workers, Mr. Gokhale found that in 1955, 59.2 per cent of workers were between the ages 25 and 40 years. In 1940, the proportion of workers in this

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4 Gokhale, The Bombay Cotton Mill Worker, p. 20.

5 Gokhale, The Bombay Cotton Mill Worker, p. 7.



age-group was 62.9 per cent. The proportion of workers above 40 years was 34.4 per cent in 1955, as against only 16.7 per cent in 1940.<sup>6</sup>

The increased proportion of older workers is a natural consequence of greater stability in the labour force and the reduced opportunities of employment for fresh entrants.

#### 4. The Caste Composition

There is no satisfactory information available regarding the caste composition of workers. However, the broad groups may be indicated with the help of the classification made by the Millowners' Association in their inquiry in 1941.<sup>7</sup>

The inquiry covered 31,558 men and 6,072 women employed in 19 mills. It classified the workers by their religion as Hindus, Mohomedans, Zoroastrians, Christians, Jews, Jains and "Others". It classified the Hindus further into Marathas, Kunbis, Bhandaris, Bhayyas, Kamathis, Harijans and "Miscellaneous". Each of these Hindu groups was supposed to represent a different caste, but did not do so, for the important reason that some of the groups were divided within themselves into many more castes and sub-castes, and Bhayyas were not a caste at all. The term "Bhayya" is applied to

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6 Gokhale, The Bombay Cotton Mill Worker, pp. 8-9.

7 Gokhale, The Bombay Cotton Mill Worker, p. 116.



all Hindu workers from the U.P. irrespective of their belonging to different castes, and has thus mainly a geographical connotation. Even with all these limitations, it is interesting to note the findings of the survey in 1941.

Of the 31,558 male workers covered by the inquiry, 51.8 per cent were Marathas, 13.8 per cent Bhayyas, 11.9 per cent Harijans and 5.2 per cent Muslims.

The caste composition of women showed some differences. Of the 6,072 women covered by the inquiry, 52.1 per cent were Marathas, 24.5 per cent Harijans, 1.0 per cent Muslims, and only 0.2 per cent Bhayyas. Other important groups among women were Kunbis (6.1 per cent) and Bhandaris (4.2 per cent).

It is thus seen that the proportion of Marathas was much the same among both men as well as women. The small proportion of Muslim women may be attributed to social customs of Muslims, while the small proportion of Hindu women from the U.P. shows that Bhayyas generally leave their families behind when they come to Bombay. The considerable employment of Harijan women is again due to social customs.

Another curious feature of the caste composition is the presence of castewise clusters in different departments of the mills. Marathas were to be found in large numbers in every department, but the majority of Bhayyas were employed in the departments Mixing to Speed Frames, in which they formed 46.2 per cent of the total number employed. More than a half of all the Muslims were in the Weaving Sheds, and 72.5 per cent of all the Harijan male workers were in the Ring Spinning Departments.

This phenomenon of caste clusters arose on account of the earlier practice of recruitment through jobbers. Whenever workers were required, the jobbers generally brought friends and relatives from their villages, and this naturally resulted in a large number of workers from the same caste being employed in a particular department.

With the new formalized methods of recruitment under the Decasualization Scheme and diminution in the powers of jobbers, the labour force in all departments would tend to become more and more heterogeneous with the passage of time. Though such heterogeneity may not affect production, it may have some influence on the relations between workers and the supervisory staff, and also on the ability of workers in particular departments for organized collective action.

##### 5. Administration of Labour and Conditions of Work

Raw cotton is the major cost for the cotton textile industry. In 1958 it accounted for 48 to 52 per cent of the total costs. As against this, wages were only 25 to 32 per cent of the cost of production.<sup>8</sup> Mr. Morris estimates that in the 1920's and early 1930's wages were between 15 and 20 per cent of the costs, and believes that the proportion was even smaller in earlier years.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Report of the Sub-Committee of the Committee of the Indian Cotton Mills' Federation, given in Rannath A. Podar, The Indian Cotton Mill Industry: Nation's Premier Enterprise (Bombay: Podar Trading Company (Private) Limited, 1959), p.47.

<sup>9</sup> Morris, The Emergence ....., p. 33.

As compared to such low wage costs, the cost of machinery and equipment was relatively very high. This, coupled with the fact that remuneration of managing agents depended on the output, induced the agents to keep the mills running continuously and to produce as much as possible, without much attention to proper utilization of labour. Such an attitude led to low levels of labour deployment and slack labour discipline.

The early mills had no fixed hours of work. The hours varied from 13 to 14 per day in summer and from 10½ to 12 per day in winter. Regulation of hours started with the Factories Act of 1881, which limited the hours of children to seven and the hours of women to eleven per day. This was not much of an improvement, since the hours remained unregulated for the bulk of the labour force, which consisted of adult male workers. With the introduction of electric lighting in the 1890's, the hours increased to as many as 15 per day. They were finally brought down by the Factories Act of 1911, which limited the hours of work for adult male workers to 12 per day. Further legislation in later years has progressively curtailed the length of the working day. The hours for both men and women workers have been eight per day since 1946. <sup>10</sup>

Attempts by mills in the 1920's to rationalize the use of labour were not successful due to bitter opposition

on the part of workers. The Millowners' Association tried in the 1930's to enforce a list of uniform Standing Orders in all the mills, but the mills failed to give the necessary co-operation in the effort. Ultimately the problem was solved by the Payment of Wages Act, 1936, which required of all the mills that they obtain official approval of their Standing Orders. The Bombay Industrial Disputes Act of 1938 completed the standardization of work rules. This Act defined the matters to be covered by the Standing Orders and forbade any unilateral change in the Orders. A change could be made only after going through the detailed procedure prescribed by the law.

But rationalization of workloads remains a problem to this day. The standardization of wages in 1947 was not concerned with the levels of labour deployment in different mills.<sup>11</sup> In later years the Industrial Court has decided

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11 The Assessors appointed by the Industrial Court to frame the scheme of standardization of wages took Rs. 30 p.m. as the minimum basic wage and worked out other wages in the light of skills, strain and other conditions of work involved in different processes. Although this involved some consideration of how much work could reasonably be expected of each worker, it did not amount to fixing uniform workloads for the same kind of work, nor did it determine the levels of labour deployment. In fact, standardization of workloads was deliberately avoided, at least in the case of some occupations. "The assessors have accepted the millowners' view that Standardization of certain kinds of work in Speed Frame, Winding, Warping and Drawing-in Departments will create unnecessary discontent and they have not accordingly extended their scheme to them but have only recommended that steps should be taken to standardize working conditions." The Industrial Court Reporter:1946-1947 (Bombay: Office of the Deputy Commissioner of Labour (Information), Government of Bombay, 1951), p. 396.

the workloads for some occupations, but the problem remains largely unsolved. The absence of a proper assessment of workloads renders more difficult the introduction of new machinery and rationalized methods of work.

## 6. Labour Turnover and Absenteeism

### (a) Labour turnover

Mr. Mehta states that there was much instability in the labour force in the early mills, and adduces seasonal migration to villages and a high degree of absenteeism as the causes of such instability.<sup>12</sup> According to him, this instability necessitated a larger complement of workers in order to ensure that at least the number actually required turned up for work every day. "Although the evidence is not necessarily conclusive, it is possible that up to 1914, this excess might have been as high as 50 per cent of the daily complement."<sup>13</sup> Among other reasons for the instability, he mentions the growth of alternative opportunities for employment and the unattractiveness of the slum life in industrial centres.

There is no concrete evidence to believe that labour turnover was very high at any period. Even if it was high,

12 Mehta, The Cotton Mills ....., pp. 117-119.

13 Mehta, The Cotton Mills ....., p. 118.

it might have been due to a small proportion of the total labour force, or it might have been true only for individual mills and not for the industry as a whole. As Mr. Morris shows, the available data indicate that the length of service of workers has continuously increased over the years, and also that the length of service in the industry is considerably longer than the length of service in a particular mill. <sup>14</sup>

For the recent years, Mr. Thakker finds that the labour force is remarkably stable. He says, "the labour turnover is now no more a problem for the industry, because there is nothing abnormal in the rate of turnover."<sup>15</sup> The figures of accessions and separations of workers during the years 1960-1964 are given below: <sup>16</sup>

Table 2.2 : Labour Turnover in the Bombay Mills, 1960-64

Year	Rate per 100 workers	
	Accessions	Separations
1960	1.55	1.29
1961	1.96	1.32
1962	1.46	1.43
1963	1.73	1.34
1964	1.61	1.31

Source : Compiled from the Labour Gazette.

14 Morris, The Emergence ....., pp. 87-90.

15 Thakker, Labour Problems....., p. 50

16 "Accessions" represent the number of workers hired and "separations" represent the number of workers discontinued from employment. Together they show the shifting and replacement of labour required to maintain the work force. The figures in the table are averages for the years from monthly figures of accessions and separations published in the Labour Gazette.

(b) Absenteeism

The following figures give some idea of absenteeism in the Bombay mills: <sup>17</sup>

Table 2.3 : Average Daily Absenteeism in the Bombay Cotton Mills, for Selected Years

Year	Rate	Year	Rate
1922	14.8	1955	8.2
1925	12.2	1960	10.5
1930	9.3	1961	11.8
1935	7.9	1962	11.3
1940	9.1	1963	11.8
1945	11.8	1964	11.4
1950	14.5		

Source : Compiled from the Labour Gazette.

Commenting on the statistics of absenteeism collected by the Labour Office during the period 1922-1947, Mr. Morris writes that the statistics were highly exaggerated, mainly because of an inflated base of labour complement against which absenteeism was measured, and because absence due to any cause whatsoever was included in calculating absenteeism. He feels that the true rate of absenteeism was always below

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<sup>17</sup> The average percentage of daily absenteeism is calculated for each month and given in the Labour Gazette. The figures in the table are averages for the years from these monthly averages.



10 per cent, that a substantial part of this was again due to illness, and that wilful non-attendance at work was always quite low.<sup>18</sup>

For recent years, Mr. Thakker estimates that absenteeism would be only about 4 per cent, if calculated strictly according to the official definition of the Rules under the Bombay Industrial Relations Act of 1946.<sup>19</sup> The official definition takes into account regular workers only, includes as absence even if the place is filled by a substitute worker, and excludes absence due to authorized leave, play off, retrenchment and strikes.<sup>20</sup>

As regards seasonality in absenteeism, it is generally believed that seasonality is due to workers going to their villages during certain months each year. Thus, the social and cultural ties with the native villages, if not the need to assist in the cultivation of land, are supposed to be the cause of seasonal variations in absenteeism.<sup>21</sup>

Mr. Morris, however, argues that since a substantial part of the labour force did not make annual visits to the native villages, the rural links of workers should not be

18 Morris, The Emergence . . . . ., pp. 93-96.

19 Thakker, Labour Problems . . . . ., p. 45.

20 Government of Maharashtra, The Bombay Industrial Relations Rules, 1947 (Bombay: Directorate of Printing and Stationery, 1964), p. 30.

21 Thakker, Labour Problems . . . . ., pp. 45-46.



taken as the sole explanation of seasonality. He gives seasonal variations in the incidence of disease and seasonal variations in the demand for textiles as additional explanations of the seasonal pattern of absenteeism. Also, he points out that cyclical fluctuations in absenteeism are not reflected to any remarkable extent in the statistics for the years 1922 to 1947. <sup>22</sup>

**Table 2.4 : Average Daily Absenteeism in the Bombay Cotton Mills : Monthly Figures for 1960 to 1964**

Month	Year				
	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964
January	7.0	9.8	9.8	9.9	10.3
February	7.3	12.5	10.8	12.3	11.0
March	7.8	13.4	12.4	11.7	11.8
April	8.0	14.8	12.1	13.7	11.5
May	12.1	15.3	14.9	15.7	15.9
June	13.4	13.0	14.0	13.8	13.5
July	12.2	10.7	11.5	12.2	11.9
August	11.3	10.7	9.6	11.1	10.7
September	10.8	10.6	10.0	10.5	11.5
October	13.6	10.2	9.7	9.9	9.9
November	10.9	10.4	10.3	10.6	11.3
December	11.1	10.9	10.7	10.2	8.0
Average for the year	10.5	11.8	11.3	11.8	11.4

Source: Compiled from the Labour Gazette. The averages for the years have been calculated from the original figures which are given upto two decimal places. The monthly figures have been rounded up to one decimal place.

Whatever the reasons for seasonality, it is fact that seasonal variations in absenteeism are a general complaint among the Bombay mills. The figures for the years 1960 to 1964, given in Table 2.4, show that March to June are the months of high absenteeism, with the peak in the month of May or June. Except for 1960, the months September, October and November do not show another noticeable rise, which Mr. Thakker observed for the years 1955 to 1959.

#### 7. Collective Consciousness Among the Workers

The foregoing pages discussed some of the important characteristics of labour in the cotton textile industry of Bombay. Although the labour force has never been entirely homogeneous, it is seen that there are important common bonds - like the caste, the language and the place of origin - for sizable groups of workers.

The existence of such common bonds led to an early growth of collective consciousness among the mill workers. This was noticed as early as 1892, when the Factory Inspector stated: "... the workers have no organized trades union, still they are mostly of the same caste and from the same district, and have a strong tendency to hang together. ..."<sup>23</sup>

The collective consciousness made the workers capable

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23 Report on the Working of the Factory Act in the Town and Island of Bombay During the Calendar Year 1892, in East India (Factory Inspection) (London : H. M. S. O., 1894), p. 67.

of mass action by way of agitations and strikes. However, in the absence of proper education and leadership, it did not lead to the formation of trade unions from among the workers or to the establishment of orderly relations with the employers. <sup>24</sup>

Even after the trade unions came to be formed as a result of the efforts of outside leaders, the regional and caste feelings continued to exert their influence and provided an independent basis for uniting the workers for mass action. In fact, the significance of these ties appears to have been one of the important reasons for the failure of trade unions in developing an effective and consistent following among the workers.

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<sup>24</sup> As late as 1940, literacy was confined to only 29.7 per cent of the mill workers. In 1955, it had spread to 42.5 per cent of the workers. Gokhale, The Bombay Cotton Mill Worker, p. 23.

CHAPTER III  
THE TRADE UNIONS

This chapter discusses the trade union movement in the cotton textile industry of Bombay. An understanding of the nature and development of trade unions is indispensable to a study of industrial disputes. The origin and the course of industrial disputes depend greatly on the activities of trade unions. Whether powerful or weak, unions can at the least act as the catalyst, if not as the initiator and the sole determinant, of a particular course of action.

1. A Short History of Some Important Unions in the Cotton Textile Industry of Bombay

(a) The period up to the World War I

Not trade unions proper, but many types of welfare organizations are found in this period. Such welfare-organizations were formed as early as the 1870's by social reformers interested in improving the conditions of labour.<sup>1</sup>

One of these organizations was the Bombay Mill Hands Association (BMHA) started by Mr. N. M. Lokhande, a well-known leader of the socio-religious movement, the Satya-Shodhak Samaj. His interest in starting the BMHA seems to have sprung from a desire to bring the workers under the influence of the Satya-Shodhak Samaj.<sup>2</sup>

1 Morris, The Emergence . . . . ., pp. 111 and 179.

2 Dhananjay Keer, Mahatma Jotirao Phoolley : Father of Our Social Revolution (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1964), pp. 154-56 and 194.

The activities of the BMHA were confined to organizing meetings and making representations in favour of improved factory legislation, weekly holidays, reduction in the hours of work etc. The BMHA was not a trade union in the proper sense of the word. Writing in 1893, the Factory Inspector said:

..... that association has no existence as an organised body, having no roll of membership, no funds, and no rules. I understand that Mr. Lokhande simply acts as a volunteer adviser to any mill-hand who may come to him. The bond of union among the Bombay mill-hands is a bond of caste and birth-place, and not a trade organisation. <sup>3/</sup>

The BMHA ceased to exist after Mr. Lokhande died of plague in 1897.<sup>4</sup>

New welfare-organizations came into the field a few years later. Among them were the Kamgar Hitwardhek Sabha (founded in 1909),<sup>5</sup> and the Social Service League (founded in 1911).<sup>6</sup> Their work was mainly educating labour to improve its condition, representing the point of view of labour on the relevant issues affecting it and intervention in industrial disputes on behalf of workers.

3 Report on the working of the Factory Act in the Town and Island of Bombay During the Calendar Year 1892, in East India (Factory Inspection) (London:H.M.S.O., 1894), p.68.

4 S. M. Rutnagar, Bombay Industries : The Cotton Mills (Bombay: The Indian Textile Journal Limited, 1927), p. 712.

5 LG, V, No. 6, February 1926, pp. 559-560.

6 N. M. Joshi, The Trade Union Movement in India (Poona: Aryabhushan Press, 1927), p. 8.

(b) The period from the World War I to 1926

The welfare bodies of the previous period were not directly interested in organizing the workers into trade unions of their own. The years succeeding the World War I saw some attempts in this direction.

It is interesting to note the influence of general strikes in the industry on the origin and activities of trade unions formed in this period. Thus the Girni Kamgar Sangh of Kanji Dwarkadas was started shortly after the general strike of 1919.<sup>7</sup> After it had been in a state of inaction from 1920 to 1923, the commencement of the general strike of 1924 led to its revival under the new name of the Girni Kamgar Mahamandal (GKM).<sup>8</sup> Such close relation between general strikes and the rise and fall of unions is to be found in later years also.

Another feature of many unions of the Bombay mill workers, that of factional fights and multiplication of unions because of personal rivalries of union leaders, makes its appearance even in this early period. Thus the original

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7 LG, V, No. 6, February 1926, p. 562. Mr. Kanji Dwarkadas writes that he asked Gandhiji to help him in organizing the mill-workers of Bombay, and that the latter refused to do so, saying that "he (Gandhiji) did not consider himself strong enough to handle and tackle the Maharashtra workers of Bombay." Kanji Dwarkadas, Forty-Five Years With Labour (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1962), p. 21.

8 LG, III, No. 7, March 1924, p. 21, called it a strike-committee. It was only two years later that the LG began to count it as a trade union. LG, V, No. 6, February 1926, p. 549.

GKM split into two in 1925 because of differences of opinion between its secretary, Mr. D. R. Mayekar, and the president, Mr. D. A. Bhatwadekar.<sup>9</sup> Mr. Mayekar founded another union under the same name and opened two more GKMs under his control in other parts of the city.<sup>10</sup> The general strike of 1928 led to the re-unification of these GKMs into one union again.<sup>11</sup>

The favourable atmosphere created by the success of the general strike of 1925 helped to establish the Bombay Textile Labour Union (BTLU) in January 1926. The realization that the success of any strike depends on a proper organized effort secured the co-operation of workers. The union came into being as the result of an amalgamation of nine already existing unions.<sup>12</sup> Mr. R. R. Bakhale of the Servants of India Society was the moving spirit behind the union.

9 LG, V, No. 6, February 1926, p. 563.

10 All the four GKMs were run entirely by workers themselves. Outsiders were not permitted to interfere with the management and conduct of these unions. LG, V, No. 6, February 1926, pp. 563-564. Such independence from outside interference is in the nature of an exception. As a rule, all the unions in the Bombay cotton textile industry have had many outsiders as office-bearers, and have been controlled by outsiders to a large extent.

11 Government of Bombay, Report of the Bombay Strike Enquiry Committee, 1928-29, Volume I, Report (Bombay : Superintendent of Government Printing and Stationery, 1929), p. 4.

12 The unions which merged to form the BTLU were small unions working in a few mill localities of the city. The Bombay Textile Labour Union: First Annual Report (From 1st January 1926 to 31st December 1926) (Bombay : The Bombay Textile Labour Union, 1927) p. 2, gives the names of all the nine unions.



The BTLU was the first union in the Bombay cotton textile industry to get registered under the Indian Trade Unions Act of 1926. Organized on sound lines, it had 9,545 members in March 1927 and 7,573 members in March 1928.<sup>13</sup> But it was soon swept aside summarily by the rising tide of Communist influence on the trade union movement.

(c) From 1926 up to the World War II

These years saw many important developments in the field of trade unions. The welfare-organizations and the moderate trade unions of the earlier years were pushed into the background. New unions organized by Communists came to dominate the trade union movement. In the absence of any effective opposition, the Communists retained their powerful position right up to the World War II.

The Communists entered the scene early in 1927. The Workers and Peasants Party, formed in March 1927, began to take a keen interest in organizing the mill workers.<sup>14</sup> Mr. S. H. Jhabwala, a member of the Workers and Peasants Party and one of the vice-presidents of the BTLU, left the BTLU

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13 Annual Report on the Working of the Indian Trade Unions Act (Act XVI of 1926) for the Bombay Presidency (Bombay : Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery), report for the year 1927-28.

14 LG, VIII, No. 2, October 1928, p. 147. Also, the Marathi pamphlet "Lal Bawatyachi Mohim", published in April 1934, by Kamgar Vangmaya Prasarak Mandal, Bombay.



to start the Bombay Mill Workers Union in March 1928.<sup>15</sup> Also, the Communists won over to their side the President of the GKM<sup>16</sup> and organized another union in May 1928 under the name of the Bombay Girni Kamgar Union.

The Bombay Girni Kamgar Union (BGKU) consolidated its influence during the general strike of 1928. In spite of its doubtful success in the strike, the BGKU increased its membership shortly afterwards, from 324 in the third quarter of 1928 to 54,000 in the next quarter.<sup>17</sup> The BTLU with 6,749 members and the GKM with 1,200 members in the last quarter of 1928<sup>18</sup> could no longer claim much importance.

The rise of Communists was inevitable under the prevailing circumstances. The depressed condition of the industry after 1922 and the consequent unemployment, reductions in earnings of workers and increase in workloads brought

15 The changed leadership of the Bombay Mill Workers Union since 1929 (as seen from the lists of unions published in LG volumes) suggests that the union went out of control of the Communists. The union ceased to exist in 1946-47. Annual Report on the Working of the Indian Trade Unions Act....., for the year 1946-47.

16 This president of the GKM, Mr. A. A. Alve, was the president of the second GKM formed in 1925 by Mr. Mayekar, the secretary of the original GKM. Soon after Mr. Alve joined the Communists, Mr. Mayekar combined all the GKMs into one union and registered it under the Indian Trade Unions Act, 1926, as the Girni Kamgar Mahamandal. Government of Bombay, Report of the Bombay Strike Enquiry Committee, 1928-29 ....., pp. 2-4.

17 Government of Bombay, Report of the Court of Inquiry, 1929 (Bombay: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, 1929), p. 11.

18 LG, VIII, No. 5, January 1929, pp. 475-477.

about a situation against which no moderate leadership could contend. The clear divergence of interests of the employers and the workers favoured the growth of militant and radical trade unionism, which the Communists readily provided. The virulent anti-employer propaganda of the BGKU and talk of "workers' raj" by Communist leaders suited the sullen and suspicious mood of the workers, who feared the loss of their means of livelihood.

Messrs. S. A. Dange, R. S. Nimbkar, K. N. Joglekar and some other Communist leaders of the BGKU were arrested in March 1929 on charges of sedition in the famous Meerut Conspiracy Case.<sup>19</sup> But the arrests did not reduce the militancy of the BGKU. New office-bearers were appointed and the aggressive propaganda against employers continued.<sup>20</sup>

As a part of its struggle against the millowners and to monopolize the loyalties of workers, the BGKU organized the general strike of 1929. But the strike was a failure and the BGKU suffered heavily. Its membership fell to a mere 800 in the first quarter of 1930.<sup>21</sup> It was further

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19 R. Palme Dutt, India Today (Bombay: People's Publishing House, 1947), pp. 341-343, gives the names of all the 32 persons committed for trial.

20 Government of Bombay, Report of the Court of Inquiry, 1929, p. 11.

21 The failure of the strike affected the BTLU also. Membership of the BTLU fell from 5,959 in March 1929 to 704 in the first quarter of 1930. Annual Report on the Working of the Indian Trade Unions Act . . . ., for the year 1928-29, and LG, IX, No. 9, May 1930, pp. 928-929.

weakened from within by factional fights for control of the union.<sup>22</sup>

Rivalries within the BGKU came to a head in 1934 during the general strike organized by the BGKU and another Communist union, the Lal Bawta Girni Kamgar Union.<sup>23</sup> The registration of the BGKU under the Indian Trade Unions Act, 1926, was cancelled in January 1935 due to failure to submit the annual return prescribed under the Act.<sup>24</sup> There were two groups within the union, one led by Mr. N. S. Nimbkar and the other led by Messrs. A. A. Alve and G. L. Kandelkar. The Nimbkar-group emerged successful, and together with persons working in the Lal Bawta Girni Kamgar Union and Mr. S. A. Dange who had been released from prison in the meantime, revived the BGKU and had it registered again under the Indian Trade Unions Act, 1926, in October 1935.<sup>25</sup> The Alve-Kandelkar-group, which had left the BGKU some time before, had already organized its own union, the Girni Kamgar Union, in February 1935.<sup>26</sup>

The Alve-Kandelkar group split further when Mr. B. L. Sarang within the group started another union, the New Bombay

22 LG, IX, No. 7, March 1930, p. 701.

23 The Lal Bawta Girni Kamgar Union was formed in October 1932 by Mr. B. T. Ranadive. It ceased to exist after it was declared illegal by the Government in the fourth quarter of 1934. LG, XIV, No. 6, February 1935, p. 449.

24 The report, in Marathi, of activities of the BGKU during 1934-37, published by the BGKU.

25 The report of the BGKU for 1934-37.

26 The report of the BGKU for 1934-37.

Girni Kamgar Union, in 1935. Nor did the BGKU fare any better, since one of its vice-presidents, Mr. N. B. Nerkar had organized his own union, the Swatantra Kamgar Sangh in 1934. The latter, however, ceased to exist in 1936, after its registration under the Trade Unions Act was cancelled some time before. The New Bombay Girni Kamgar Union also disappeared in 1936.<sup>27</sup>

These internal dissensions within the Communist leadership caused a serious disruption in the trade union movement. The Communist influence was greatly weakened, but there was no other group to take advantage of the situation. Unionism seemed to be at a low ebb in the Bombay cotton textile industry.

The Communists began to regain their power by the end of 1937. The active participation of the BGKU in many strikes culminated in the organization of the general strike of 1940. The strike, however, was not successful.

The World War II started in September 1939. The Communists were opposed to the War until Russia came to be involved in it in June 1941. Soon after the involvement of Russia, the BGKU commenced propaganda in support of the war-effort. In consonance with the policy of Communists towards the war, the BGKU advised workers against strikes during the course of the war and advocated peaceful solutions to industrial disputes.

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27 The report of the BGKU for 1934-37.

The BGKU had to pay a heavy price for its support of the war. Its abdication of the role of being an ardent champion of every grievance of the mill workers made it difficult to command the loyalties of workers. In the context of the renewal of the struggle for political independence and the Quit India Movement in 1942, support of the war became a clearly anti-national act. This discredited the BGKU further in the eyes of the workers. The unpopularity of the BGKU helped the rise of the Congress-controlled union, the Rashtriya Girni Kamgar Sangh.

The Rashtriya Girni Kamgar Sangh (RGKS) was established in May 1940 by Messrs. G. D. Ambekar, S. G. Athavale, K. K. Khadilkar and others.<sup>28</sup> Many of these persons had been trained in union work by the Hindustan Mazdoor Sevak Sangh and the Textile Labour Association of Ahmedabad. They had been working in Bombay since 1938 and had succeeded in organizing the workers in the cotton godowns in the Cotton Green area of the city. Under the initiative of Mr. G. D. Ambekar, they extended their activities to include the cotton mill workers also.

Originally started as the Kamgar Seva Sangh in May 1939, the RGKS was formally established in May 1940, shortly

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28 "Karmayogi Kamgar Neta", a collection of Marathi articles in honour of Mr. G. D. Ambekar, published in 1950 by Hindmata Prakashan, Bombay.

after the general strike organized by the BGKU.<sup>29</sup> The failure of the strike favoured the RGKS, since the RGKS had opposed the strike from the very beginning as ill-conceived and pointless. The Kurla Girni Kamgar Sangh, the Kurla Textile Clerks Union and the Bombay Textile Clerks Union were all started around this time as sister-organizations of the RGKS.

The RGKS could not immediately profit by the popular sentiment in favour of the Congress and the unpopularity of the BGKU, because many of its leaders and important Congress leaders were put in detention during the Quit India Movement in 1942. But by 1945 it resumed its activities with renewed vigour, and soon it was clear that the undisputed authority, which the Communists had exercised over the trade union movement for nearly 20 years, faced a serious challenge from the RGKS.

(d) From the World War II up to the present

Trade unionism in the Bombay cotton textile industry greatly increased in stability during this period. The institution of the "representative union" provided for in the Bombay Industrial Disputes Act, 1938, and continued by the Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946, was mainly responsible for this stability. Being eminently suited to play

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29 V. V. Sarangdhar, Structure and Functioning of Nashtriva Mill Mazdoor Sangh, Bombay (unpublished dissertation in part fulfilment of the diploma in social service administration of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Bombay, 1951).



the new role required of a "representative union", the RGKS slowly gained the upper hand over all its rivals. Having no locus standi under the Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946, the Communists were forced to occupy a secondary place.

As may be expected, the RGKS also had its share of troubles within its leadership. For a few months in 1944-45, some Congressmen conducted a new union, the Bombay Mill Mazdoor Sangh, as a rival to the RGKS.<sup>30</sup> But a major split came in 1947 with the establishment of the Mill Mazdoor Sabha. The Mill Mazdoor Sabha (MMS) was started as a Socialist union by persons working in the RGKS, shortly after the secession of Socialists from the Congress and the formation of an independent Socialist Party in 1947.<sup>31</sup>

The RGKS changed its name to Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh (RMMS) in September 1947. It faced stiff opposition from the MMS and the BGKU in its bid for ascendancy. But with the support - moral and financial - of the ruling political party, the RMMS slowly consolidated its position, to become the "approved union" under the Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946, in 1947, and the "representative union" under the same Act in May 1949.<sup>32</sup> It has remained the

30 Sarangdhar, Structure and Functioning .....

31 Sarangdhar, Structure and Functioning .....

32 MOA, Annual Review of the Labour Situation in the Bombay Cotton Mill Industry (Bombay: The Millowners' Association), reviews for 1947 and 1949. Morris, The Emergence ..., p. 193, hints at the moral and financial support received by the RMMS.

"approved and representative union" for the Bombay cotton textile industry ever since.

The representative status of the RMMS was quite shaky upto 1951. The RMMS had 34,000 members in May 1949 and the membership increased to 37,000 in the next two or three months. But in September, October and November of the same year the membership declined below the minimum level required of a representative union under the Bombay Industrial Act, 1946.<sup>33</sup> Upon an application made by the Mill Mazdoor Sabha, the Registrar under the Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946, held an enquiry and cancelled the representative status of the RMMS. The RMMS appealed to the Industrial Court against this decision. The Industrial Court held that the RMMS continued to be the representative union as it had the requisite membership on the 24th December 1949 when the Registrar had cancelled its representative status.<sup>34</sup>

The very next year the RMMS faced another challenge to its representative status. In July 1950 the Industrial

33 The Act, as it stood then, required that a representative union for an industry must have a membership of at least 15 per cent of the total employment in that industry. Government of Maharashtra, The Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946. (Bombay: Director, Government Printing and Stationery, 1965), Sec. 13, p. 2370.

MOA, Annual Review of the Labour Situation . . . ., for the year 1949, and Morris, The Emergence . . . ., p. 194, say that the decline in membership of the RMMS was due to the fact that RMMS supported the Government Ordinance by which one-third of the bonus for the year 1948 was to be given in National Savings Certificates.

34 MOA, Annual Review of the Labour Situation . . . ., for the year 1949.



Court awarded one-sixth of basic wages in 1949 as the bonus for the year 1949. The quantum of bonus was smaller than in the previous years and four mills were exempted from the liability to pay it. Taking advantage of this proximate cause, the Mill Mazdoor Sabha sought to destroy the influence of the RMMS through a general strike that lasted 63 days in the months of August, September and October, 1950.<sup>35</sup> The strike had the support of the BGKU also. But the strike failed, with disastrous consequences for the MMS and the BGKU. The MMS lost its hold over the workers in the cotton textile industry, particularly after some of its militant leaders left it to join the BGKU. The BGKU itself had been seriously weakened by the strike, and together with the group that joined it from the MMS, it organized a new union in August 1951, under the name of the Mill Mazdoor Union. The MMS withdrew from the field of cotton textiles in 1952 after constituting a separate union, The Cotton Mill Mazdoor Sabha, with whatever membership it had been left with among the cotton mill workers.

The RMMS was of course adversely affected by the strike, but it could recover quickly, particularly in the absence of any effective competition. With the help of the privileges it enjoyed as a representative union, the RMMS soon increased its membership and established itself as the

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<sup>35</sup> The causes and consequences of this strike are dealt with more fully in Chapter XI.

only important union in the field.

The next serious challenge to RMMS came in the year 1959. During the political agitation for the formation of the State of Maharashtra, many political parties - the Republicans, the Communists, the Praja Socialists and others - came together in a new body called the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti. As an extension of this political movement to the field of trade unions, the Mumbai Girni Kamgar Union was formed in February 1959.<sup>36</sup> The Mumbai Girni Kamgar Union (MGKU) claimed to be a union with no political affiliations. But it was soon clear that it was merely a new name for the Mill Mazdoor Union, which had merged into it some time before. And it is needless to repeat that excepting the addition from the BMS, the Mill Mazdoor Union was the same Communist union, the Bombay Girni Kamgar Union, established in 1928.

In June 1959, the MGKU applied to the Registrar under the Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946, stating that it should be recognized as the representative union, since it had 92,000 members in the preceding three months, as against 74,000 members of the RMMS in the month of April.<sup>37</sup> The

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36 MOA, Annual Review of the Labour Situation ..., for the year 1959.

37 MOA, Annual Review of the Labour Situation ..., for the year 1959. The law required that the prescribed minimum membership be maintained for a period of three months preceding the month of application. Government of Maharashtra, The Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946. (Bombay: Director, Government Printing and Stationery, 1965), Sec. 13, p.2370.

RMMS objected, mainly on the ground that the application was invalid because the office-bearers of the MGKU had not been elected according to the constitution of the union. When the Registrar rejected the arguments, the RMMS went in appeal to the Industrial Court. The Industrial Court upheld the arguments of the RMMS and directed the Registrar to dismiss the application of the MGKU.<sup>38</sup> This decision of the Industrial Court came in April 1960. The MGKU had lost much of its membership in the meantime and could not renew its challenge to the RMMS.

The RMMS commands by far the largest membership among the cotton textile unions in Bombay. With the formation of the State of Maharashtra in May 1960 and the subsequent differences in the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti and the end of the political struggle, the membership of the MGKU went down very rapidly, so that by March 1961 it was estimated to be less than 26,000 and only 975 by March 1962. The membership had, however, increased again to 35,875 in March 1963 and to 46,857 in March 1964.<sup>39</sup>

## 2. Union Membership and Multiplicity of Unions

The preceding section gave a brief account of the trade

<sup>38</sup> MOA, Annual Review of the Labour Situation . . . ., for the year 1960.

<sup>39</sup> The estimates as well as the actual membership figures are from Annual Report on the Working of the Indian Trade Unions Act . . . . . for 1960-61, 1961-62 and 1963-64. The report for 1963-64 was published in a highly condensed form. The unabridged full report was made available for reference through the kindness of the Office of the Commissioner of Labour, Bombay.

union movement in the Bombay cotton textile industry. The membership of some unions was mentioned occasionally in the course of that account. Here it is proposed to look into the question of membership in greater detail.

Table 3.1 shows the union membership in the industry, membership of the two largest unions every year and the employment in the industry, during the years 1926-1964.

The table shows clearly how the Communist union replaced the moderate unions after 1928 and how the Congress union replaced the Communist union after 1947. There was, however, a difference in the two changes of power. Whereas in the first case the BGKU drove out the moderate BTLU and the GKM completely, in the second case when RMMS has been the largest union, the Communists have remained quite powerful, and except in 1949 and 1950, the second place has always gone to the Communist unions, the MMU in the 1950's and the MGKU afterwards. The strength of the Communists may be seen from the fact that the MGKU occupied the first place as the largest union in 1960.

It is also seen from the table that over the years the proportion of unionized workers in the industry has increased considerably. The highest level reached so far was in 1960 when 38.6 per cent of all the workers were members of one union or the other.

As shown by columns (10) and (11) in the table, the bulk of the total union membership has always belonged to the largest union. If the second largest union were also

Table 3.1 : Total Union Membership, Membership of the Two Largest Unions and Average Daily Employment in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry, 1926-1964

Year	No. of Unions included	Total Membership of all Unions	Principal Union with the largest membership	Membership of the principal union	Second largest union	Membership of second largest union	Average No. of hands employed daily in the industry	Percentage of Col.(3) to Col.(8)	Percentage of Col.(5) to Col.(3)	Percentage of Col.(7) to Col.(3)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
1926	5	8,741	BTLU	7,019	GKM	1,543	149,099	5.9	80.3	17.7
1927	4	11,388	BTLU	9,545	GKM	1,661	154,698	7.4	83.8	14.6
1928	5	9,895	BTLU	7,573	GKM	2,022	129,275	7.7	76.5	20.4
1929	4	52,509	BGKU	44,822	BTLU	5,959	106,710	49.2	85.4	11.3
1930	4	5,006	BGKU	2,350	GKM	1,200	136,774	3.7	46.9	24.0
1931	4	3,129	BGKU	2,625	BMWU	307	136,404	2.3	83.9	9.8
1932	4	5,466	BGKU	4,655	BTLU	465	143,120	3.8	85.2	8.5
1933	4	5,072	BGKU	4,122	BTLU	750	129,213	3.9	81.3	14.8
1934	4	7,804	BGKU	6,000	BMWU	1,600	105,271	7.4	76.9	20.5
1935	5	8,439	BGKU	6,000	BMWU	2,020	136,052	6.2	71.1	23.9
1936	4	9,859	BGKU	6,700	BMWU	2,692	137,326	7.2	68.0	27.3
1937	4	10,075	BGKU	5,500	BMWU	4,076	139,215	7.2	54.6	40.5
1938	4	17,653	BGKU	8,000	BMWU	5,594	168,130	10.5	45.3	31.7
1939	2	12,837	BGKU	8,340	BMWU	4,497	156,046	8.2	65.0	35.0
1940	3	19,703	BGKU	16,871	BMWU	2,547	140,093	14.1	85.6	12.9
1941	4	41,491	BGKU	37,000	BMWU	2,473	175,656	23.6	89.2	6.0
1942	6	25,749	BGKU	20,000	RGKS & KGKS	2,449	192,430	13.4	77.7	9.5
1943	7	20,271	BGKU	17,000	MMU	1,108	210,735	9.6	83.9	5.5
1944	6	19,839	BGKU	17,124	MMU	1,111	212,471	9.3	86.3	5.6
1945	6	33,658	BGKU	26,099	RGKS & KGKS	3,989	213,085	15.8	77.5	11.9
1946	6	34,072	BGKU	18,731	RGKS & KGKS	11,206	190,795	17.9	55.0	32.9
1947	5	74,400	BGKU	39,537	RGKS & KGKS	32,528	211,347	35.2	53.1	43.7

(continued)



Table 3.1 : (continued)

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
1948	7	66,745	RMMS & KGKS	24,590	BGKU	24,431	201,083	33.2	36.8	36.6
1949	7	83,145	RMMS & KGKS	40,723	MMS	24,915	209,508	39.7	49.0	30.0
1950	6	92,538	RMMS & KGKS	52,800	MMS	23,819	200,135	46.2	57.1	25.7
1951	3	67,166	RMMS	41,158	BGKU	25,992	196,363	34.2	61.3	38.7
1952	3	54,167	RMMS	42,782	MMU	11,195	197,900	27.4	79.0	20.7
1953	4	84,922	RMMS	64,398	MMU	13,443	204,274	41.6	75.8	15.8
1954	4	76,695	RMMS	49,672	MMU	22,612	207,179	37.0	64.8	29.5
1955	4	111,331	RMMS	76,712	MMU	22,612	203,391	54.7	68.9	20.3
1956	4	84,107	RMMS	55,710	MMU	22,612	212,762	39.5	66.2	26.9
1957	5	88,908	RMMS	61,688	MMU	22,612	212,608	41.8	69.4	25.4
1958	6	83,488	RMMS	55,889	MMU	22,612	200,446	41.7	66.9	27.1
1959	7	97,172	RMMS	71,169	MMU	22,612	191,335	50.8	73.2	23.3
1960	6	172,193	MGKU	92,011	RMMS	78,082	194,398	88.6	53.4	45.3
1961	4	145,014	RMMS	118,916	MGKU	25,868	197,404	73.5	82.0	17.8
1962	5	86,705	RMMS	84,936	MGKU	975	197,922	43.8	98.0	1.1
1963	6	108,561	RMMS	69,171	MGKU	35,875	193,303	56.2	63.7	33.0
1964	7	138,772	RMMS	87,851	MGKU	46,857	197,269	70.3	63.3	33.8

**Sources :** Figures of average daily employment in the industry for the years 1926-1930 are from the MOA's Mill Statement for 1930. For the years 1931-1945 they are from Morris, The Emergence ..., p. 214. For the years 1946-1964 they are from the MOA's Mill Statement for 1964. All the figures are for years ending 31st August. The note on the sources of Table 2.1 gives some more details about the employment figures.

The abbreviations used for names of the unions are :

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. BTLU : Bombay Textile Labour Union.  | 6. KGKS : Kurla Girni Kamgar Sangh.     |
| 2. GKM : Girni Kamgar Mahamandel.       | 7. MMU : Mill Mazdoor Union.            |
| 3. BGKU : Bombay Girni Kamgar Union.    | 8. RMMS : Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh. |
| 4. BMWU : Bombay Mill Workers Union.    | 9. MMS : Mill Mazdoor Sabha.            |
| 5. RGKS : Rashtriya Girni Kamgar Sangh. | 10. MGKU : Mumbai Girni Kamgar Union.   |

Figures of union membership have been compiled in the following manner:

(1) For 1926, 1927 and 1928, all the figures except that for the BTLU in 1927 and 1928, are from the lists of trade unions published in the Labour Gazette for those years. The figures are as in the first quarter of each year. Membership of the BTLU for 1927 and 1928 is from the Annual Report on the Working of the Indian Trade Unions Act ..., for the year 1927-28.

(continued)

(2) From 1929 to 1941, the figures are from the Annual Report on the Working of the Indian Trade Unions Act, for the respective years. For 1941, however, membership of the RKKS as on 1st March of the year has been added from the Labour Gazette. All the other figures are as on 31st March in each year.

(3) For 1942 and 1943, the figures are from the lists of unions published in the Labour Gazette. For 1942, all the figures are as on 1st March of the year. For 1943, membership of 3 unions is as on 1st June, for one union as on 31st March, and for the other 3 unions membership is as on 1st March of the year.

(4) From 1944 to 1954 the figures are again from the Annual Report on the Working of the Indian Trade Unions Act, for the years 1945 to 1954. The membership of 1944 is taken from the report for the next year, as every report for any year gives the figures of membership as on 31st March of that year as well as figures of membership as on 31st March of the previous year.

(5) Not all the unions registered under the Indian Trade Unions Act, 1926, submitted their annual returns regularly. Hence the variation in the number of unions included in calculating the total membership of every year.

Since 1958, however, the annual reports on the Trade Unions Act give estimates of membership whenever unions fail to submit their returns. In the absence of any other more reliable information, these estimates have been accepted in the above table.

The MMU did not submit the returns for four years from 1955 to 1959. The reports for 1957-58 and 1958-59 estimated its membership at 22,612, which was the same as in 1953-54. Therefore the same figure was used for its membership in the three years, 1955, 1956 and 1957 also.

(6) Of the 5 unions included to calculate the total membership in 1957, only the membership for the RMMS is from the annual report on the Trade Unions Act for 1956-57. Membership for the other four unions is from the estimates given in the report for the next year.

(7) With the qualifications mentioned in (5) and (6) above, the figures for the years from 1955 to 1963 are from the annual reports on the Trade Unions Act for the respective years. However, the estimates of membership for the MGKU and the Textile Workers Union in 1963 have been discarded in favour of the actual figures of membership from the report for 1963-64.

(8) The annual report on the Trade Unions Act for 1963-64 was published in a greatly abridged form, without any details of membership of individual unions. The figures for 1964 are from the unabridged full report, made available for reference through the kindness of the Office of the Commissioner of Labour, Bombay.

(9) It goes without saying that the table includes only those unions, the membership of which consists mostly of cotton mill workers only. Thus unions of clerks, supervisory and technical staff and such other non-workers have been excluded.

Until the early 1950's many cotton mill unions had among their members some workers from the silk and woollen mills also. There would thus be a slight over-estimation if all the membership of these unions is taken as being exclusively from among the cotton mill workers. But the extent of such over-estimation cannot be very serious.

The Mill Mazdoor Sabha has been included from 1948 to 1950, since its principal membership was from cotton mills in those years. The union did not submit its annual returns in 1951 and 1952. It has been excluded from 1953 onwards, because it constituted its following in cotton textiles into a separate union, the Cotton Mill Mazdoor Sabha in 1952, and confined its activities to the silk textile, textile processing and hosiery industries.

(10) Some discretion has been used in showing the largest and the second largest unions in the above table. Unions, which were nominally separate, but were under the same control and acted as a single union in all important matters, have been shown as a single union.

Thus the GKM in 1926 consists of the three unions of the same name under the control of Mr. D.R. Mayekar. One of these three was dissolved in 1926 itself. The fourth union of the same name came under the control of Mr. Mayekar in 1927. Hence this also was included in calculating the membership of the GKM in 1927. All these unions were combined into a single GKM in 1928.

Similarly the RKKS and the KGKS have been shown together as a single union. In September 1947 the RKKS changed its name to RMMS. The KGKS merged with the RMMS in the year 1950-51.

(11) The MMU shown in 1943 and 1944 has no relation whatsoever to the MMU of the 1950's. The earlier MMU, or the Bombay Mill Kanger Union as it was known when founded in 1942, ceased functioning in 1946-47. The MMU of the 1950's was a Communist-dominated union, organized in 1951 by Communists in the BOKU and the militant faction from the MMS.

(12) In addition to the slight over-estimation of union membership for the reason mentioned in (9) above, some over-estimation is again likely because the unions may have some members from among the workers in the 47 small units which are treated under the Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946, as units in the cotton textile industry. However, this over-estimation cannot be more than a few hundreds, since these units, which are excluded from this study, employ a total of less than 3,000 workers of whom only a few are likely to be members of the unions included in the above table.

taken into account, most of the membership in the industry is covered by these two unions alone. This brings out the fact of the small size and the insignificance of other unions in the industry.

Thus one is led to doubt the existence and the importance of multiplicity of trade unions, which is mentioned by Mr. Thakker.<sup>40</sup> The mere existence of many unions does not amount to any serious multiplicity of unions, since an overwhelming majority of all the unionized workers always belonged to only one or two of these unions.

Table 3.2 gives a list of all the unions organized in various years in the Bombay cotton textile industry.

The long list of 49 unions may at first give an impression of extreme multiplicity of unions in the industry. But this impression disappears when the list is examined in the light of the following considerations:

1. Many of these unions had a very short life, and the period for which they were really active was shorter still. Thus the number of unions that existed in any particular year was quite small.

2. Eight of these 49 unions are not unions of workers at all. Besides, many of the unions formed in different years are merely so many names for one and the same union. Thus the Bombay Girni Kamgar Union formed in 1928 and the Bombay Girni Kamgar Union registered in 1935, the Mill

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40 Thakker, Labour Problems ....., pp. 87 and 93.



**Table 3.2 : Trade Unions in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry**

Serial Number	Name of the Union	Year of formation or registration	Year in which it ceased functioning or registration was cancelled
1	Girni Kamgar Sangh <sup>®</sup>	1919	1923
2	Girni Kamgar Mahamandal (Chinchpokli Mandal) <sup>®</sup>	1924	1928
3	Girni Kamgar Mahamandal (Prabhadevi Mandal)	1925	1936
4	Girni Kamgar Mahamandal (Colaba Mandal) <sup>®</sup>	1925	1926
5	Girni Kamgar Mahamandal (Ghorupdeo Mandal) <sup>®</sup>	1925	1928
6	Bombay Textile Labour Union	1926	1939
7	Bombay Mill Workers' Union	1928	1946-47
8	Bombay Girni Kamgar Union	1928	1935
9 *	Bombay Mill Clerks Union <sup>®</sup>	1928	1930
10	Chinchpokli Textile Workmen's Union	1929	1930
11*	Bombay Parsee Textile League (earlier known as the Grant Road Parsee Association Textile League)	1930	Exists
12	Lal Bawta Girni Kamgar Union (also known as the Lal Textile Kamgar Union) <sup>®</sup>	1932	1934
13	Red Flag Girni Kamgar Union, Kurla <sup>®</sup>	1932	1940
14	Swatantra Kamgar Sangh	1934	1936
15	Girni Kamgar Union	1935	1938-39
16	New Bombay Girni Kamgar Union	1935	1936
17	Bombay Girni Kamgar Union (Red Flag)	1935	1955
18	Kurla Girni Kamgar Sangh	1939	1951
19 *	Bombay Textile Clerks Union	1940	Exists
20	Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh (earlier known as the Rashtriya Girni Kamgar Sangh)	1940	Exists
21	Girni Kamgar Mandal	1941	1943
22 *	Kurla Textile Clerks Union	1942	1950
23	Mill Mazdoor Union (earlier known as the Bombay Mill Kamgar Union)	1942	1946-47
24	Textile Labour Union (earlier known as the Textile Workers Union)	1943	1957
25	Bombay Mill Mazdoor Sangh	1944	1945
26	India United Mills Employees Union	1946	1950
27	Meyer Mills Employees Union	1947	1952
28	Mill Mazdoor Sabha	1947	Exists
29 *	Bombay Textile Technical and Supervisory Staff Union	1947	1955
30	Apollo Mills Employees Union	1948	1948
31	Mill Mazdoor Union (Red Flag)	1951	1959
32	Bombay Textile Weaving Jobbers Union	1951	1955
33	Textile Engineering Mazdoor Association	1952	1958
34	Cotton Mill Mazdoor Sabha	1952	Exists
35	Swatantra Girni Kamgar Sangh, Kurla	1953	1953
36	Bombay Cotton Textile Employees Union	1954	1960
37	Suti Mazdoor Sangh	1957	Exists

(continued)

Table 3.2 : (continued)

Serial Number	Name of the Union	Year of formation or registration	Year in which it ceased functioning or registration was cancelled
38 *	Personnel Officers Union	1957	Exists
39 *	Union of Textile Technical and Administrative Personnel	1957	Exists
40	Shri Krishna Weaving Factory Kamgar Union	1958	1959
41	Shakur Fine Weaving Mills Workers Union	1958	1960
42	Mumbai Girni Kamgar Union	1959	Exists
43	Bombay Textile Mills Kamgar Union	1960	1961
44 *	Rashtriya Girni Karkun Sangh	1962	Exists
45	Modern Textile Labour Union	1962	1963
46	Textile Workers Union	1962	Exists
47	Colaba Textile Mills Employees Union	1963	Exists
48	Morarjee Goculdas Mills Employees Union	1963	Exists
49	Edward Mill Kamgar Union	1964	Exists

© Not registered under the Indian Trade Unions Act, 1926.

\* Membership not of workers.

**Sources :** Annual Report on the Working of the Indian Trade Unions Act ..., from 1927-28 to 1963-64. The report for 1963-64 has been published in a highly abridged form. The unabridged report was made available for reference through the kindness of the Office of the Commissioner of Labour, Bombay.

Another important source is the lists of unions and the working of the Indian Trade Unions Act, 1926, published in the Labour Gazette.

Two unions, (40) and (41) in the above table, are of workers who work in the small cotton textile units which have been excluded from this study. Nevertheless, they have been mentioned above, because in their absence some of their members could reasonably be expected to join one or more of the other unions included in the table.

Mazdoor Union formed in 1951 and the Mumbai Girni Kamgar Union which exists today, are essentially a single union with four different names in different years. The Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh and the Kurla Girni Kamgar Sangh had again a nominally separate existence until the Kurla union merged with the Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh in 1950-51. To take a third example, the Cotton Mill Mazdoor Sabha is only a new name given to a part of the Mill Mazdoor Sabha, after the latter withdrew from the field of cotton textiles in 1952.

3. Excepting the year 1929, the proportion of total union membership to the total employment in the industry was quite small until the 1950's. Multiplicity of unions, therefore, did not have much significance at all. The membership of each union was confined to only a few mills, and every union could expend its activities and its membership without any noticeable encroachment into the sphere of other unions. Multiplicity did not mean any keen rivalry or competition between unions.

4. It has already been shown earlier how the important unions at any time were only one or two, and how the others were small and insignificant. The situation, therefore, was one of a struggle for predominance between the important unions, and not of any fragmentation of unionism and multiplicity of trade unions.

Even the struggle between the important unions was to an extent an extension of the far bigger struggle for power

conducted elsewhere, in the political field. The predominant position of the Bombay Girni Kamgar Union before 1947 and the success of the Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh afterwards is in some measure a reflection of the importance of the political parties, the Communists and the Congress. The rivalries and the struggles between unions are not of much significance in themselves, when fortunes of a trade union depend on the fortunes of the political party controlling it.

### 3. Membership as an Indication of the Strength of a Union

It is true that generally the union with the largest membership would be the most powerful union at any time. Thus membership may be taken as a useful index in rating the importance of different unions in the same industry.

But the unions in the Bombay cotton textile industry provide many interesting instances where the strength of a union had no apparent relationship to its actual membership. This was not because the membership figures were falsely reported or because the unions received financial and other assistance from political parties. Inflated membership figures and such external assistance have only a limited importance in this context. The real cause lies elsewhere.

Thus it is found that whatever the level of its membership, the Bombay Girni Kamgar Union succeeded remarkably well in the past in organizing many long general strikes of all the workers in the industry. The present Mumbai Girni Kamgar Union also shows the same ability to call out all

the workers on many token strikes and "morchas" or demonstrations. No union has so far succeeded in getting all the workers to become its members. Even to this day a considerable proportion of the workers has not joined any of the unions. But there have been many occasions, particularly the token-strikes in recent years, when all the workers responded to the call of a particular union as if they were its members and that union was the most representative one.

On the other hand, it is also found that membership of a union does not mean any loyalty to the policies of that union. This makes it difficult to believe that a union is strong merely because it has a large membership. A recent instance of such lack of loyalty is given below.

During the course of the dispute regarding the bonus for the year 1963, the Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh (RMMS) favoured the payment of an advance equivalent to one month's basic wages to be recovered in three instalments from wages in the succeeding months. As against this, the Mumbai Girni Kamgar Union (MGKU) favoured the payment of an interim bonus equivalent to 4 per cent of the basic wages and dearness allowance in 1963. The Millowners' Association directed the member-mills to give an option to their workers to accept either the advance against wages or the interim bonus. Accordingly the mills paid the advance on the 28th October 1964, and the interim bonus four days later. <sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> MOA, annual report for 1964, pp. 175-176.

In March 1964, the membership of the RMMS was 87,851 and that of the MGKU was 46,857.<sup>42</sup> The RMMS had exhorted the workers to accept the advance against wages, while the MGKU had made propaganda for acceptance of the interim bonus. Considering the figures of union membership, one would expect that the majority of workers followed the advice of the RMMS and accepted the advance against wages. But as a matter of fact an overwhelming majority of the workers accepted the interim bonus favoured by the MGKU. Table 3.3 shows the membership of the RMMS in 48 mills and the proportion of workers accepting the advance against wages to the number of workers who were entitled to the regular bonus. The latter excludes the "badlis" or substitute workers, who form between 15 per cent and 30 per cent of the total labour force in these mills. The badlis mainly accepted the advance against wages, because the bonus to which they were entitled was much smaller than either the advance or the interim bonus offered to other workers.

But acceptance of the interim bonus was no indication of any loyalty to the MGKU. Workers accepted the interim bonus mainly because its quantum was larger than that of the advance against wages and involved no deductions from wages

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42. Annual Report on the Working of the Indian Trade Unions Act ....., for the year 1963-64. The report was published in a highly abridged form. But the unabridged full report was made available for reference through the kindness of the Office of the Commissioner of Labour, Bombay.



**Table 3.3: Union Membership and Union Loyalties: Acceptance of the Advance Against Wages as Recommended by the Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh in October 1964**

Serial Number	Name of the Mill	Average daily employment in the mill	Membership of RUMS in the mill	Percentage of Col.(4) to Col.(3)	Percentage of the No. of workers accepting the advance to the number entitled to regular bonus
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1	Apollo	3,215	2,400	74.6	10
2	Bradbury	2,541	1,700	66.9	14
3	Century	11,761	2,900	24.7	17
4	Crown	2,708	1,500	55.4	7
5	Dawn	2,142	1,800	84.0	20
6	Digvijay	3,441	1,800	52.3	30
7	Edward	3,042	900	29.6	9
8	Elphinstone	2,997	1,600	53.4	13
9	Finlay	3,445	1,500	43.5	30
10	Gold Mohur	2,940	3,400	115.6	15
11	Hindustan	2,525	1,600	63.4	21
12	India United No. 1	6,593	3,300	50.7	11
13	India United Nos.2 and 3	7,266	3,900	53.7	14
14	India United No. 4	2,222	700	31.5	2
15	India United No. 5	1,677	700	41.7	7
16	Jam Mfg. Co.	2,345	1,100	46.9	12
17	Jupiter (Hind)	4,155	2,300	55.4	14
18	Kamala	3,460	2,500	72.3	5
19	Khatau	4,970	3,500	70.4	16
20	Kohinoor Nos. 1 and 2	7,651	4,700	53.9	39
21	Kohinoor No. 3	1,064			77
22	Modern No. 1	1,030	500	48.5	28
23	Modern No. 2	1,501	1,500	99.9	10
24	Mukesh	2,361	500	21.2	2
25	Morarjee No. 1	5,527	3,700	66.9	18
26	Morarjee No. 2	2,676	2,300	85.9	22
27	New China	2,000	1,400	70.0	26
28	New City of Bombay	2,330	1,700	73.0	14
29	New Great Eastern	3,158	2,300	72.8	22
30	New Kaiser-I-Hind	4,356	2,100	48.2	9
31	New Union	1,969	1,500	76.2	16
32	Phoenix	4,263	2,600	61.0	20
33	Podar	2,307	2,900	125.7	66
34	Prakash	2,073	400	19.3	1
35	Raghuvanshi	1,342	1,100	82.0	16
36	Rajesh Textile	3,303	2,000	60.6	7
37	Ruby	1,226	900	73.4	24

(continued)

Table 3.3 : (continued)

Serial Number	Name of the Mill	Average daily employment in the mill	Membership of RIMS in the mill	Percentage of Col.(4) to Col.(3)	Percentage of the no. of workers accepting the advance to the number entitled to regular bonus
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
38	Sayaji No. 2	3,476	1,600	46.0	12
39	Seksaria	5,062	2,300	45.4	18
40	Shree Madhusudan	4,278	900	21.0	12
41	Shree Ram	4,948	2,700	54.6	60
42	Simplex	2,487	2,000	80.4	30
43	Standard	4,513	1,900	42.1	50
44	Owen	2,590	1,800	69.5	17
45	Tata	5,001	2,700	54.0	12
46	Textile	6,982	1,700	24.3	15
47	Victoria	3,038	1,600	52.7	7
48	Western India	3,215	2,300	71.5	15

Sources :

Of the 62 mills in Bombay at present, only 48 mills have been covered in the above table.

The percentages in column (6) are as published in the Marathi daily, "Nava Kal" of 31st October 1964. It is not known how the figures were collected. These statistics were collected by the Millowners' Association also, but were treated by them as highly confidential. In informal discussions, however, officials in the Association confirmed that the figures in the Marathi daily were approximately identical with the figures collected by themselves.

The average daily employment of workers in individual mills is from the MOA's Mill Statement for the year ending 31st August 1964.

"Kongor", the official weekly of the RIMS, in its issue of 14th May 1965, published the number of representatives to be elected from different departments of the mills to the Joint Board of Representatives of the union for the period 1965-67. Membership of the RIMS in each mill was estimated by multiplying with 100 the number of representatives fixed for each mill, since the constitution of the RIMS lays down that one representative be elected for every 100 members or a fraction thereof. The number of representatives fixed for clerks and the technical staff was excluded in calculating these estimates. Even then there is some unavoidable over-estimation of membership amongst the workers, because a representative is allowed for less than a hundred members also. The extent of such over-estimation, however, cannot be very serious.

Membership in which month or months was chosen to fix the number of representatives is not known. As the figures were published in May 1965, it is likely that the membership figures chosen were for some month or months towards the end of 1964 or the beginning of 1965.

It is difficult to say why the estimated membership for the two mills, (10) and (33) in the above table, is larger than the employment in those mills. False membership claims of course may be one reason. Also, it may be due to the fact that the figures of membership and those of employment do not refer to exactly the same period. A third reason may be that there may have been an unusually large turnover among the "badli" workers in these mills, and membership among all such workers may have been counted with reference to these mills irrespective of the fact whether or not all these workers were employed in those mills at one and the same time.



in the succeeding months. It was only a coincidence that the interim bonus was favoured by the MGKU.

Such instances may lead one to doubt the value of membership as an index of the strength of a union. The secret ballot may be suggested as a better index. In fact, the ballot is sometimes put forward as a more democratic measure of union strength, and the Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946 is criticized for its use of membership in the choice of the representative union.

While it is true that the ballot is a more democratic method than membership in knowing the strength of unions, it should also be pointed out that the ballot is susceptible to a number of momentary influences. The results of the ballot would depend on the particular time and atmosphere in which it is held. The indifference with which the workers treat the policies of different unions and the marked preference of workers for immediate gains would ensure that the ballot would favour any union which agitates for a larger number of such immediate gains. The support shown to a union in the ballot would suddenly disappear if another union were to emerge with promises of still better advantages for the workers. In essence, the ballot would not indicate the preference for any union as such, but would merely indicate the obvious preference for larger and quicker economic gains.

As regards the criticism of the Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946, the advocates of the ballot may say that

the workers would learn from experience to distinguish between the mere agitators and the unions capable of delivering the goods. But, while it is a matter of conjecture how long it would be before the workers learn to make this distinction, it is a clear certainty that discarding the use of membership in favour of the ballot would be followed immediately by a great deal of instability and a virtual breakdown of the present framework of industrial relations. Whether the ballot should be preferred even under these circumstances is a question which should more appropriately be left to the decision of the policy-makers.

With all its limitations, membership is still a good measure of the strength of a union. This can be seen from the membership figures of different unions in Table 3.1 and the history of these unions. In times of crises such as the agitation for the formation of the State of Maharashtra and during general strikes over various economic questions, the influence and the power of the Communist union may have grown disproportionately to its actual membership. Barring such anomalous situations, membership serves as a good index of the strength of a union.

#### 4. An Assessment of the Present Situation

As shown by Table 3.2, of the 49 unions formed in various years, 14 unions continue to exist to this day. Among these 14 unions, the Mill Mazdoor Sabha has withdrawn from the cotton textile industry since 1952 and 5 unions

are of clerks, technical and administrative staff and such other non-workers. Therefore there are 8 unions of the cotton mill workers at present.

Of these 8 unions again, three are confined to individual mills, and only five unions seek to represent the workers in all the mills. Table 3.4 gives the figures of membership of these five unions.

Table 3.4 : Membership of Five Unions in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry, As On 31st March, 1964

Serial No.	Name of the Union	Membership
1	Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh	87,851
2	Mumbai Girni Kamgar Union	46,857
3	Suti Mazdoor Sangh	993
4	Cotton Mill Mazdoor Sabha	76
5	Textile Workers' Union	64

Source : Annual Report on the Working of the Indian Trade Unions Act ..... for the year 1963-64. The full report, which was later published in a highly condensed form, was kindly made available for reference by the Office of the Commissioner of Labour, Bombay.

The affiliations of these unions are also significant. All the central federations of unions owing allegiance to different political parties are represented in the Bombay cotton textile industry. Thus the Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh (RMMS) is affiliated to the Indian National Trade Union

Congress (INTUC) of the Congress, the Mumbai Girni Kamgar Union (MGKU) to the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) of the Communists, the Suti Mazdoor Sangh to the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) of the Jan Sangh, the Cotton Mill Mazdoor Sabha to the Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS) of the Praja Socialist Party and the Textile Workers Union is affiliated to the United Trade Union Congress (UTUC) of the Revolutionary Socialist Party.<sup>43</sup>

Since May 1949, the RMMS has been the "approved and representative" union for the Bombay cotton textile industry under the Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946.<sup>44</sup> The law has conferred on it certain privileges in matters of representation of workers, collection of membership subscriptions, etc., and also has imposed many obligations on the union as regards its management, and policies in industrial disputes.<sup>45</sup>

The MGKU is the only important rival to the RMMS. As

43 In March 1966, a new union called the Girni Mazdoor Union was registered under the Indian Trade Unions Act, 1926. Organized by leaders of the Samyukta Socialist Party, it is affiliated to the Hind Mazdoor Panchayat (HMP), the trade union federation controlled by that party.

44 The status of the "approved union" had been secured even earlier, in 1947. The status of the "representative union" was attained in May 1949. MOA, Annual Review of the Labour Situation . . . . ., reviews for 1947 and 1949.

45 Government of Maharashtra, The Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946 (Bombay: Director, Government Printing and Stationery, 1965), Sections 13, 15, 17-19, 23, 25, 26 and 30, pp. 2370-2381.

pointed out earlier, the MGKU has been active under different names for nearly forty years now. Excepting the period of the World War II, it has consistently fought for the betterment of workers and is well known for its antipathy towards employers. Since it does not have any locus standi under the Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946, it is free to pursue its militant policies without any fears as to loss of rights or violation of obligations. Its position enables it to take advantage of any and every grievance of the workers, whether it be against the employers, the RMMS or the government.

As compared to the AMMS and the MGKU, the other three unions are too small and unimportant to merit much notice. They confine their activities mainly to legal advice to their members.

Mr. Morris says that between 1949 and 1951 the representative character of the RMMS was merely a "legal fiction".<sup>46</sup> Even if its membership was larger than that of other unions, he suggests that its authority was restricted because its membership was concentrated in a limited number of mills and workers in other mills were controlled by the rival unions. But with the passing of the years, the RMMS has increased remarkably in stability and has become more broad-based as regards its membership. Table 3.5 shows the millwise increase in the membership in 1951 and in 1964.

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46 Morris, The Emergence . . . . ., p. 194.

**Table 3.5 : Millwise Membership of the RMMS in 1951 and in 1964**

Serial Number	Name of the Mill	Membership in 1951	Membership in 1964	Average daily employment in 1964
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1	Apollo	560	2,500	3,215
2	Bradbury	239	1,700	2,541
3	Century	969	3,200	11,761
4	Crown	679	1,500	2,708
5	Dawn	238	1,900	2,142
6	Dhanraj	702	1,500	1,126
7	Digvijay	730	2,000	3,441
8	Edward	591	1,000	3,042
9	Elphinstone	336	1,600	2,997
10	Finlay	140	1,800	3,445
11	Gold Mohur	388	3,600	2,940
12	Hindustan	342	1,700	2,525
13	Jupiter (Hind)	1,104	2,500	4,155
14	Rajesh Textile	555	2,100	3,303
15	India United No. 1	444	3,500	6,503
16	India United No. 2 and 3	827	4,000	7,266
17	India United No. 4	154	800	2,222
18	India United No. 5	72	700	1,677
19	Indian Mfg. Co.	1,179	2,000	2,877
20	Jam Mfg. Co.	1,000	1,200	2,345
21	Kamala	274	2,700	3,460
22	Khatau	566	3,600	4,970
23	Kohinoor Nos. 1, 2 and 3	295	4,800	8,715
24	Modern No. 1	212	600	1,030
25	Modern No. 2	74	1,700	1,501
26	Morarjee No. 1	337	3,900	5,527
27	New China	118	1,500	2,000
28	New City of Bombay	11	1,800	2,330
29	New Kaiser-I-Hind	2,590	2,200	4,356
30	New Great Eastern	399	2,500	3,158
31	New Union	758	1,600	1,969
32	Phoenix	880	2,700	4,263
33	Podar	165	3,100	2,307
34	Prakash	575	400	2,073
35	Reghuvanshi	22	1,100	1,342
36	Ruby	166	1,000	1,226
37	Sassoon Spg.	3,879	2,300	3,446
38	Seksaria	1,644	2,500	5,062
39	Shree Siteram	318	4,200	3,887
40	Shree Madhusudan	1,477	900	4,278

(continued)



Table 3.5 : (continued)

Serial Number	Name of the Mill	Membership in 1951	Membership in 1964	Average daily employment in 1964
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
41	Shree Niwas	130	1,800	4,257
42	Shree Ram	590	2,800	4,948
43	Simplex	1,481	2,100	2,487
44	Spring	271	4,100	5,531
45	Standard	437	2,000	4,513
46	Svadeshi	1,716	5,000	4,766
47	Swan	118	1,900	2,590
48	Tata	217	2,900	5,001
49	Textile	111	1,800	6,982
50	Victoria	524	1,800	3,038
51	Western India	122	2,400	3,215

**Sources:**

Of the total 62 mills in Bombay at present, only 52 have been covered in the above table. Being independent of the other two, Kohinoor No. 3 is generally counted as a separate mill, while Kohinoor Nos. 1 and 2 are treated as a single mill.

The figures of membership for 1951 are from Sarangdhar, Structure and Functioning..... The figures are as in May 1951.

The official Marathi weekly of the RMMS, the Kamgar, of 14th May 1965 published the number of representatives to be elected from different departments of the mills to the Joint Board of Representatives of the union for the period 1965-67. As the constitution of the RMMS lays down that one representative be elected for every 100 members or a fraction thereof, the membership per mill in 1964 was estimated by multiplying with 100 the number of representatives fixed for each mill. This naturally leads to some over-estimation of the membership, because a representative is allowed even for less than a hundred members. But the extent of such over-estimation cannot be very serious.

Membership in which month or months was chosen to fix the number of representatives is not known. As the figures were published in May 1965, it is likely that the membership figures chosen were for some month or months towards the end of 1964 or the beginning of 1965.

The estimated membership per mill given in Table 3.3 is less than that in the above table, because it excludes the number of representatives for clerks and technical staff in arriving at the estimates of membership.

The figures of average daily employment in 1964 are from the MOA's Mill Statement for the year ending 31st August 1964. For the reasons mentioned in the note on sources for Table 2.1, millwise employment figures for all shifts are not available for 1951, although the total employment in the industry in all shifts for that year is given in the Mill Statements since 1957. However, the change in the total employment between these two years is not considerable, the employment being 196,363 workers in 1951 and 197,269 workers in 1964. Union membership figures for both 1951 and 1964 may, therefore, be compared to the employment figures in 1964 to get some idea of the increased stability of the RMMS.

It may be observed that for a few mills in the above table membership estimates are larger than the employment. In addition to the probable reasons given in the note on the sources of Table 3.3, this is also due to the fact that the membership figures include clerks and other non-workers also, while the employment figures refer to the workers only.

The total membership of the RMMS in all the mills every year is given in Table 3.6. Since the KGKS had only a nominally separate existence until it merged into the RMMS in the year 1950-51, membership of the two unions should be added together while considering the membership of the RMMS.

Apparently the rivalry between the RMMS and the MGKU may look like an undesirable split in the trade union movement of the Bombay cotton textile industry. But the precise effects of such a rivalry depend on many circumstances.

The RMMS is the only union entitled to make agreements on behalf of the workers. If the rivalry renders it unable to carry out some of the agreements it makes, the employers would be reluctant to commit themselves to the RMMS regarding such agreements. The workers may thus get smaller benefits than they would have got under a single powerful union.

But the same rivalry protects the workers from introduction of unpalatable measures through arbitrary union-employer agreements. The bargaining union has to take into account the possibility of its membership deserting to the rival union if the former were to conclude agreements of doubtful benefit to the workers.

Under the present circumstances, the rivalry seems to have profited the workers in some ways. The presence of the MGKU forces the RMMS to be more militant in its dealings with the millowners. Being not bound to implement what all



**Table 3.6 : Total Membership of the RMMS, 1940-1964**

Year	Membership of the RMMS	Membership of the KGKS	Total
1940	Not known	285	Not known
1941	955	1,063	2,018
1942	819	1,630	2,449
1943	44	750	794
1944	182	574	756
1945	934	3,055	3,989
1946	7,429	3,777	11,206
1947	29,301	3,227	32,528
1948	20,462	4,128	24,590
1949	35,935	4,788	40,723
1950	48,887	3,913	52,800
1951	41,158		41,158
1952	42,782		42,782
1953	64,398		64,398
1954	49,672		49,672
1955	76,712		76,712
1956	55,710		55,710
1957	61,688		61,688
1958	55,889		55,889
1959	71,169		71,169
1960	78,082		78,082
1961	118,916		118,916
1962	84,936		84,936
1963	69,171		69,171
1964	87,851		87,851

**Sources:** Annual Reports on the Working of the Indian Trade Unions Act ..., for all the years, except (a) 1942 and 1943 and (b) membership of RMMS in 1941. These latter have been taken from the lists of unions published in the Labour Gazette for the respective years.

All the figures are as on 31st March in each year. Only, the RMMS figure for 1941 is as on 1st March of that year and the KGKS figure for 1943 is as on 1st June of that year.

it says, the MGKU is free to make any demands, whether feasible or not. To retain its hold over the workers, the RMMS has to agitate for at least a few of the demands raised by the MGKU. As Mr. James says, "... the frequently challenged RMMS must keep changing and keep producing economic gains in order to maintain its position as the 'representative' union in Bombay cotton textiles." <sup>47</sup>

It is sometimes said that the strength of the RMMS depends greatly on its status as the "representative union" under the law, and that the union would collapse but for this legal support. This is not true. It may be that the law has given the RMMS some exclusive privileges. But if the RMMS were to lose its legal status, it would not only lose these privileges but would also be free from the present obligations imposed by the law. It would then be free to choose any strategy and tactics to make itself popular among the workers and thus re-establish itself as a powerful union. In other words, a part of what the RMMS stands for at present is dictated by the law, and in the absence of its legal status, the RMMS may not retain many of its present policies and principles.

It was mentioned above that workers have benefited in some ways under the present situation. The RMMS serves them as the formal agency provided by the law, to seek

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<sup>47</sup> Ralph C. James, "Trade Union Democracy: Indian Textiles", The Western Political Quarterly, Vol. XI, No. 3, September 1958, p. 572.

redress of grievances through prescribed means, to bargain with employers and to make agreements. The MGKU serves them as the means for ventilation of all grievances - reasonable and unreasonable, real and imaginary - and as the extra-legal agency to secure their demands. Although secondary in importance as compared to the RMMS, the activities of the MGKU are rendered effective by direct intervention of the government, which by-passes the prescribed legal machinery in the interest of quicker solutions to controversial questions like the bonus and rationalization.

But the benefits realized by the workers under this situation of union rivalries are of a very limited value as compared to the seriously adverse repercussions it has had on the development of an orderly pattern of industrial relations. Firstly, the rivalries have acted against commitment of workers' loyalties to any single union. None of the unions, therefore, is in a position to claim that the workers are a genuinely willing party to all its actions. Secondly, no framework of industrial relations can be developed successfully as long as methods outside the framework succeed in achieving their objectives. The RMMS has been much inhibited in discharging its obligations satisfactorily, because there is always a possibility present that whatsoever the RMMS does, the MGKU can do it equally well with the extra-legal channels open to it.

In a sense, the history of unions traced in this chapter illustrates the principles of natural selection in

the course of the development of unionism. One of the underlying causes of the dominant position of a union in any period is the fact that that particular union was the best suited to the then prevalent circumstances.

Thus, moderate unions can generally operate only during periods when the industry has a reasonable measure of prosperity, when the essential harmony of interests between employers and workers can be emphasized without appearing ridiculous and when major upheavals in related fields like politics and social institutions are neither present nor expected. An important reason why the moderate unions and welfare bodies of the early years lost their influence after 1928 was the disappearance of these favourable circumstances. The militant anti-employer Bombay Girni Kamgar Union of the Communists was the best suited to the conditions of continued depression which had overtaken the Bombay cotton textile industry after 1922 and the fear of large-scale unemployment and wage reductions.

But the Bombay Girni Kamgar Union could not retain its supremacy after 1947 in the changed context of increased labour legislation and attempts at moulding industrial relations according to the formal framework provided by the law. Under the circumstances, the Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh was better adapted to play the new role, which required that the union should accept its share of responsibility in making a success of the industrial relations machinery,

should strive to stabilize industrial relations according to a formal pattern, should avoid too narrow an interpretation of its functions as the representative of workers and should seek an amicable settlement of all industrial disputes. Being unable to adapt itself, the Bombay Girni Kamgar Union was forced to occupy a secondary place in the changed conditions. As mentioned before, the occasional predominance of the present Communist union, the Mumbai Girni Kamgar Union, is partly due to the extra-legal and direct intervention of the government, which amounts to a temporary suspension of the formal industrial relations machinery.

#### 5. Concluding Remarks

The relationship of trade unions to strike activity has been indicated in many places in this chapter. The nature and implications of this relationship will become clearer in the course of the succeeding chapters. But a few important points may be anticipated here.

Union rivalries and the desire of unions to increase or to exhibit their hold over the workers have of course been the cause of a number of strikes in the Bombay cotton textile industry. Also, the occurrence of some strikes may be attributed to a large extent to the political convictions of different unions and to the struggle for power between the political parties controlling those unions. Some of the strikes discussed in Chapter XI may be cited as illustrations in this context.

While the number of workers involved and the mandays lost in these strikes may have been considerable, it is necessary to note that the incidence or the number of such strikes has been quite small as compared to the total number of strikes in the industry. Most of the strikes in the industry are commenced spontaneously by workers without consulting any of the unions, although it is true that the unions do interest themselves in these strikes later and participate in their conduct and settlement.<sup>48</sup> To be sure, such participation of unions does have much influence on the duration and the results of the strikes, but it remains a fact that much of the strike activity is not initiated by any of the unions.

It is probable that many of these spontaneous outbursts on the part of workers would not have occurred if the workers did not expect the unions to come in after the commencement of the strikes. Even with this probable dependence on union participation in strikes, the workers apparently do not feel the need to consult the unions before the commencement of the strikes. Much of the strike activity, therefore, occurs independently of the trade unions in the industry.

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<sup>48</sup> No statistical data are available as regards how many strikes were sponsored by unions and how many were not. These lines are based on interviews with union leaders and labour officers of various mills, and the records of the Labour Court.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE GOVERNMENT

Strikes in the Bombay cotton textiles have received a great deal of attention at the hands of the government.<sup>1</sup> This chapter discusses the role played by the government under three broad headings: the law about strikes, other legislation affecting strikes and direct intervention. In addition, an assessment of the working of the present industrial disputes machinery is also attempted.

#### 1. The Law About Strikes

Until 1929 there was no legislation regarding strikes. It was assumed that strikes were governed by the principles of the English common law, according to which the right to strike could be exercised lawfully only at the end of the period of the contract of employment.<sup>2</sup>

The Trade Disputes Act, 1929, was the first piece of legislation about strikes.<sup>3</sup> It laid down that a strike in

1 Throughout this discussion the term "government" refers to the State (formerly the Provincial) Government; although the Factories Act, 1881, the Indian Trade Unions Act, 1926, the Trade Disputes Act, 1929, and the general order of March 1942 under the Defence of India Rules which are mentioned in the discussion were introduced by the Central Government, all of them were administered by the State Government.

2 "The Right to Strike: The Law on the Subject" LG, I, No. 2, October 1921, pp. 25-26.

3 LG, VIII, No. 8, April 1929, pp. 774-781, give the text of the Trade Disputes Act, 1929.



public utility services was illegal if it was commenced in breach of contract without giving to the employer, within one month before so striking, not less than 14 days' previous notice of the intention. The cotton textile industry, not being a public utility service, was governed by other provisions which rendered a strike illegal if the strike was not in furtherance of a dispute within the industry, or if it was calculated to compel the government, through the hardship caused to the society, to take or abstain from taking a particular course of action.

Under this Act of 1929, the illegality of strikes in industries other than public utility services did not in any way affect the workers who participated in the strikes. The purpose of this legal distinction was to penalize persons who declared, instigated or incited others to take part in, such illegal strikes.

The law about strikes changed again with the passing of the Bombay Industrial Disputes Act, 1938.<sup>4</sup> This Act, unlike the Trade Disputes Act, 1929, rendered the workers also liable to punishment for participation in illegal strikes. A strike was illegal under this Act unless it was

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<sup>4</sup> Government of Bombay, The Bombay Industrial Disputes Act, 1938, with the Bombay Industrial Disputes Rules, 1939 (Bombay: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, 1939).

The slightly earlier enactment, the Bombay Trade Disputes Conciliation Act, 1934, did not affect the law about strikes. Initially confined in its operation only to the textile industry in Bombay City and the Bombay Suburban District, it created a permanent machinery for conciliation of disputes. The Conciliators could act either on the report of the Labour Officers or at the request of one or both the parties to the dispute. LG, XIV, No.1, September 1934, pp. 37-43 give the text of the Act.



preceded by a notice of change to the employer and, on failure of negotiations, compulsory conciliation proceedings. A strike was illegal even then if it did not occur within two months of the failure of conciliation, or if the parties had previously agreed mutually to accept voluntary arbitration. The Act was amended in 1941 to authorize the government to refer, on its own initiative, any disputes to arbitration of the Industrial Court, and strikes were rendered illegal both during the period of such arbitration and also during the period for which the award remained in operation.<sup>5</sup>

The general order issued in March 1942 under Rule 81A of the Defence of India Rules made all strikes illegal unless they were preceded, within one month before the commencement, by not less than 14 days' previous notice to the employers.<sup>6</sup> Also, the strikes were illegal if they occurred when the disputes were subject to proceedings of a Court of Inquiry, conciliation or adjudication, and within two months of the conclusion of such proceedings.

The Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946, which came into force in September 1947, was only a more rigorous version of the Bombay Industrial Disputes Act, 1938.<sup>7</sup> The right to strike came to be entirely denied thereby in respect

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5 LG, XX, No. 10, June 1941, pp. 832-833.

6 LG, XXI, No. 7, March 1942, pp. 715-717.

7 LG, XXVI, No. 9, May 1947, pp. 681-713, give the text of the Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946.

of disputes relating to certain classes of industrial matters specified in the first and the third schedules of the new Act. As regards disputes about other industrial matters, strikes were made illegal unless they were preceded by a notice of change to the employer, and, on failure of negotiations, compulsory conciliation proceedings. Strikes were illegal even then if the parties had previously agreed mutually to accept voluntary arbitration in such matters. The Act also authorized the government to refer, on its own initiative, any dispute to arbitration of the Industrial Court or the Labour Court. Strikes were illegal both during the arbitration proceedings and during the period for which the awards remained in operation. Thus the right to strike could be exercised lawfully in disputes relating to only a particular variety of industrial matters, and that too only within two months of the failure of conciliation proceedings, provided of course that the disputes did not go to arbitration and that there was no previous agreement to accept arbitration.

The present law about strikes according to the Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946, remains the same as outlined above, with some additional conditions and restrictions laid down by amendments to the original Act. Thus, an amendment in 1948 created the Wage Board as another authority with powers of arbitration in certain industrial matters.<sup>8</sup> Unions, which were registered under the Act and which agreed to

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<sup>8</sup> LG, XXVII, No. 12, August 1948, pp. 1633-1642.

resort to a strike only after using all the industrial disputes machinery under the Act for the settlement of disputes and after the majority of its members had favoured the strike through a strike ballot, were authorized by the same amendment to refer, on their own initiative, any dispute to the arbitration of the Industrial Court. Strikes, which had the object of compelling the government to take or abstain from taking any particular course of action, or which were in sympathy with other illegal strikes, were rendered illegal by another amendment in the same year.<sup>9</sup> The amendment in 1953 modified the conditions under which the unions could refer disputes to the arbitration of the Industrial Court, and also made strikes illegal if they occurred within ten days of the failure of conciliation proceedings.<sup>10</sup> By an amendment in 1965, the employers also were authorized to refer, on their own initiative, any dispute to the arbitration of the Industrial Court.<sup>11</sup>

The last mentioned amendment of 1965 is particularly notable for the reason that it enables the employers to make a lawful strike totally impossible for the workers. In view of the fact that a strike is illegal both during the arbitration proceedings and during the period for which the award

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9 LG, XXVIII, No. 7, March 1949, pp. 850-851.

10 LG, XXXIII, No. 5, January 1954, pp. 557-558.

11 LG, XLIV, No. 8, April 1965, p. 1049.

remains in operation, and that the employers have been authorized to refer any dispute to arbitration, the workers cannot have a lawful strike under the circumstances, except with the co-operation or at least the tacit consent of their employers. With regard to some strikes under certain specified conditions, the law provides that the strikers would incur no penalties if they resume work within 48 hours of the strike being declared illegal, but this is a poor concession when compared to the virtual denial of the right to strike.<sup>12</sup>

## 2. Other Legislation Affecting Strikes

Besides the law about strikes, many other legislative measures enacted from time to time have affected the strike activity in the Bombay cotton textile industry. They have generally covered one or more of the following three subjects: (a) conditions of employment and well-being of workers, (b) rights and obligations of unions, and (c) provision of an industrial disputes machinery.

Legislation about conditions of employment and well-being of workers began with the Factories Act of 1881, and has become quite extensive in recent years, particularly in regard to provision of social security measures. The Indian Trade Unions Act, 1926, marks the beginning of legislation about the second subject. The Bombay Industrial Relations

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<sup>12</sup> Besides the legislation discussed in this section, laws about criminal intimidation and violence have also had an occasional relevance to strike activity.

Act, 1946, provides for the status of a "representative" and "approved" union, such a union being given exclusive bargaining rights and many other privileges.<sup>13</sup> The Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh became an "approved" union in 1947, and since May 1949 it has also been the "representative" union for the Bombay cotton textile industry. As regards the provision of an industrial disputes machinery, legislation has progressed

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13 Any union which had, for three consecutive months, a minimum membership of 15 per cent of the total number of workers in the Bombay cotton textile industry, could seek to become a "representative" union under this Act. By the amendment in May 1965, the necessary minimum membership has been raised to 25 per cent. If two or more unions come to have this membership, then the union with the largest membership becomes the representative union. The law makes the representative union the exclusive bargaining agent and representative of all the workers in the industry.

Any union which agrees to resort to strikes only after all the methods provided under this Act fail to settle the disputes and after getting the support of the majority of its members through a strike ballot, and agrees to observe certain conditions regarding membership subscription, accounts and administration of the union, can seek to become an "approved" union under the Act. If two or more unions were to fulfil the necessary conditions, then the union with the largest membership becomes the approved union. The approved union gets exclusive rights to enter the mills for purposes of collection of subscriptions, display of notices and discussions with the managements, and it can also seek legal aid at the expense of the government in certain proceedings before the Labour Court and the Industrial Court. Government of Maharashtra, The Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946 (Bombay: Director, Government Printing and Stationery, 1965), pp. 2370-2381.

It may also be noted here that the institution of the "representative" union was created for the first time under the Bombay Industrial Disputes Act, 1938. But no union succeeded in getting the status under that Act because of the minimum membership limit of 25 per cent, which was too high to be achieved by any union in those years. It was chiefly to enable unions to get the status that the membership limit was lowered to 15 per cent under the Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946.

far beyond the ad hoc Courts of Inquiry and Boards of Conciliation under the Trade Disputes Act, 1929. The Conciliators, the Labour Court, the Industrial Court and the Wage Board together provide at present an elaborate and comprehensive machinery under the Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946, for conciliation and arbitration of all industrial disputes.

Depending upon the subjects they covered, these laws have affected strikes in one or more of three major ways. Firstly, through introduction of uniformity in hours of work and working conditions, and by making it possible to have standardization of wages, they have removed, or at least reduced the significance of, important sources of conflict. Secondly, through conferment of exclusive rights and privileges on unions accepting certain obligations, they have tried to encourage a sense of responsibility in trade union activities and to build more stable union-employer relations. Thirdly, through provision of additional means for settlement of industrial disputes by conciliation and arbitration, they have tried to reduce the need for resort to strikes.

### 3. Working of the Present Industrial Disputes Machinery

#### (a) Illegal strikes and disciplinary action

Until the enforcement of the standing orders through the Bombay Industrial Disputes Act, 1938, union pressure and possible repercussions in the way of further labour trouble were the only restraint on the employers' freedom to punish workers who went on strikes. The law at present allows this



freedom to employers in cases of illegal strikes, and requires that employers should exercise it in accordance with the standing orders in force.

But in practice it is found that employers often avoid taking any disciplinary action against participation in illegal strikes.<sup>14</sup> The risk of antagonizing the unions and workers is of course one reason for the avoidance. But another important reason is that disciplinary action under the standing orders can be challenged in the Labour Court, and when so challenged, it becomes quite difficult to prove to the satisfaction of the Court that the workers in question had actually participated in an illegal strike.

The purpose of the legal distinction between lawful and unlawful strikes was obviously to encourage the use of the conciliation and arbitration machinery for the settlement of disputes. It was for this reason that illegal strikes were made a punishable misconduct under the standing orders. But in view of the fact that disciplinary action is not taken in the case of many illegal strikes, the legal distinction between strikes loses much of its significance. It is not surprising, therefore, that the frequency of strikes has not been affected in any noticeable way by the fear of contemplated strikes being illegal. Of the 55 strikes that were

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14 Administrative Aspects of Factory and Labour Legislation, Report of a Study Course Organized by the Indian Institute of Public Administration, Maharashtra Regional Branch (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1964), p. 47.



taken to the Labour Court between 1960 and June 1964, 36 were declared illegal, one was pending at the time of the visit, and the others were withdrawn by the respective mill managements.<sup>15</sup> Interviews with trade unions and officials of the Millowners' Association and the Labour Court lead one to believe that there has not been a single lawful strike during the years the Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946 has been in operation.

(b) Use of the industrial disputes machinery before resorting to strikes

Between 1960 and June 1964, 80 applications in respect of 55 strikes were filed with the Labour Court for getting the strikes declared illegal.<sup>16</sup> An examination of the applications shows that none of these strikes was preceded by the notice of change and conciliation proceedings provided under the law. It is found that all these strikes were spontaneous, and that the mill managements were not even informed of the decisions to strike work, except in two strikes wherein the concerned managements were threatened with strikes without, however, being told about the particular dates of their commencement.

(c) Use of the industrial disputes machinery as a substitute for strikes

Negotiations after the notice of change and concilia-

15 From the records of the Labour Court.

16 From the records of the Labour Court.

tion proceedings on failure of negotiations are conditions precedent before the unions or the employers can take the dispute to arbitration. Because of this, the arbitration machinery starts with an initial handicap, since strikes are generally spontaneous and do not brook the delay due to negotiations and conciliation.

It is true that the government is authorized to refer any dispute, at any stage, to adjudication, otherwise called compulsory arbitration. But the considerable time taken for each case of arbitration or adjudication is a disadvantage, which makes it difficult for the disputes machinery to act as a passable substitute for strikes in the settlement of industrial disputes. The table below shows the time taken by the Labour Court, Industrial Court and the Wage Board in performing their functions.

Whatever the reasons for the delays involved, the time taken by the industrial disputes machinery makes it unsuitable as an alternative to strikes.<sup>17</sup>

(d) Responsibility of the representative union towards strikes

The Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh is liable to lose its status of the representative and approved union under the Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946, if it instigated

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<sup>17</sup> In addition to the disputes machinery provided by the law, the Millowners' Association and the Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh together have set up another private body for arbitration. The latter, called the Joint Machinery for Settlement of Industrial Disputes, has been in operation since 1956. MOA, annual report for the year 1956, pp.66-67 and 223-227.

**Table 4.1 : Distribution of Cases in the Labour Court, Industrial Court and the Wage Board According to Time Taken, for the year 1963**

Time Taken (in months)	Labour Court	Industrial Court	Wage Board
One month or less	2	4	-
1 - 2	4	-	-
2 - 4	15	6	-
4 - 6	28	1	1
6 - 8	24	-	-
8 - 10	34	2	1
10 - 12	30	1	4
More than 12	52	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7</b>

#### Sources

The data refer to the Bombay cotton textile industry. The sources are the records of the Labour Court, Industrial Court and the Wage Board.

Cases in the Labour Court refer to the applications filed between the months of January and June 1963. Sixty-two applications were pending at the time of the visit.

Cases in the Industrial Court refer only to references for arbitration, made in the year 1963. Appeals, submissions and review applications have not been considered. One reference was pending at the time of the visit.

Cases in the Wage Board refer only to references made in the year 1963. No review applications were made in that year.

or assisted an illegal strike. The question, however, does not arise at all, because the union has never declared or otherwise associated itself officially with any strikes. It has, of course, threatened individual mills with strikes on many occasions, and in one or two instances it has also taken a strike ballot among the workers, but the disputes were ultimately settled in other ways and it was not required to carry out its threats at any time.

If the purpose of the law was to hold the representative union responsible for maintenance of industrial peace, then the strikes that have occurred every year show that the law has not been successful in this regard. However, it must be noted that the Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh has helped to settle many of these strikes and has tried to defend the workers against the consequent penalties. But the Sangh has been quite selective in this respect, as is shown by the fact that of the 55 strikes brought to the Labour Court between 1960 and June 1964, the Sangh appeared in the court in the case of only 20 strikes. <sup>18</sup>

On the whole, one may conclude that the Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh has disowned the majority of strikes that have occurred in the Bombay cotton textile industry. This is partly inevitable, since the agreements arrived at between

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<sup>18</sup> From the records of the Labour Court. As regards the remaining 35 strikes, none appeared for the defence in 25 strikes, workers appeared in their individual capacity in 8 strikes and the Mumbai Girni Kamgar Union sponsored the defence in the case of 2 strikes.

the Sangh and the millowners regarding rationalization, bonus, etc. have led to quite a large number of strikes, which were directed as much against the Sangh itself as against the employers.

#### 4. Direct Intervention

In addition to legislation, the government has also acted through direct intervention to avoid or to settle many strikes. This direct intervention has been of two kinds : (a) ad hoc decisions under the provisions of labour laws, and (b) intervention in the absence or in circumvention of specific pieces of labour legislation.

As instances of intervention under the provisions of labour laws may be mentioned the Court of Inquiry of 1929 appointed under Trade Disputes Act, 1929,<sup>19</sup> prosecution of labour leaders in the general strike of 1934 under the Trade Disputes Act, 1929,<sup>20</sup> prosecution of labour leaders in the general strike of 1950 under the Industrial Disputes (Appellate Tribunal) Act, 1950,<sup>21</sup> and so on.

The Bonus Dispute Committee of 1924<sup>22</sup> and the Bombay Strike Enquiry Committee of 1928-29<sup>23</sup> are two of the many

19 LG, VIII, No.11, July 1929, pp. 1055-1057, and IX, No. 1. September 1929, pp. 51-61.

20 LG, XIV, No. 3, November 1934, pp. 189-192, and No.12, August 1935, p. 901.

21 LG, XXX, No. 3, November 1950, p. 258.

22 LG, III, No. 6, February 1924, p. 16, and No. 7, March 1924, pp. 15-17.

23 LG, VIII, No. 2, October 1928, p. 166, and No. 7, March 1929, pp. 681-688.

instances of intervention under the general powers of the government in the absence of the labour laws.

Although it is true that it involves an element of bias and arbitrariness because of its selective impact, intervention in the absence of labour laws or under the provisions of the laws is necessary and desirable, and may also be indispensable under certain circumstances. However, intervention in circumvention of the laws is not equally acceptable, for the important reason that it violates the purpose and the spirit of the laws thus circumvented.

Negotiations with the Mumbai Girni Kamgar Union on the issue of bonus in recent years are the most notable example of circumvention of the laws. This union has no locus standi under the provisions of the Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946. The Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh, which is the representative union under the Act, was so much enraged by these negotiations of the government in 1964 that it accused the government of behaving like a tom cat which is proverbially supposed to eat its own offspring.<sup>24</sup>

Such circumvention of the laws may apparently seem to be justified on the ground that it is sometimes indispensable in the interest of industrial peace. But the fact remains that the need for circumvention indicates a weakness in the laws and in the industrial disputes machinery. This

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<sup>24</sup> Kamgar, the official Marathi weekly of the Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh, Bombay, the issue of the 30th of October, 1964.

being so, the proper thing to do is to improve the disputes machinery so that the need to by-pass the laws is effectively removed. Circumvention of the laws may obtain industrial peace in the short run, but would ultimately tend to undermine long term stability and the creation of an efficient framework for the solution of all disputes.

#### 5. Concluding Remarks

The foregoing pages discussed the role of the government in relation to strikes in the Bombay cotton textile industry. Before concluding the discussion, it may be remarked that many other activities of the government may also have some significance to strikes and industrial relations in general. They include collection and publication of labour statistics, enforcement of various measures affecting the working of the industry, initiation of discussion on important issues relating to labour in the annual sessions of the Indian Labour Conference, guidance and help in implementation of the Code of Discipline and other Codes, and so on. With its numerous functions, the government has become an increasingly important factor in the sphere of industrial relations.



PART B

THE STRIKES

CHAPTER VTHE STRIKE STATISTICS USED IN THE STUDY

Before proceeding to a statistical examination of strikes in the Bombay cotton mills, it is necessary to explain the sources, the method of compilation, the nature, utility and limitations of the strike statistics. By "strike statistics" are meant the statistics of the number of strikes, workers involved and mandays lost in the course of strikes. The purpose of this chapter is to explain these statistics.

1. Sources

The Government of Bombay instituted the Labour Office in April 1921. Beginning with September 1921, the Labour Office started the publication of the Labour Gazette, "a journal for the use of all interested in obtaining prompt and accurate information on matters specially affecting labour."<sup>1</sup>

From the very first issue, the Labour Gazette (LG) for each month began to publish regularly, as a part of its statistics, a statement of strikes in progress in the previous month. Since June 1949, however, the statement pertains not to the month immediately preceding, but the month before that.

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1 LG, I, No. 1, September 1921, p. 4.

The statement then included strikes in the Bombay Presidency, and now includes strikes in the State of Maharashtra.<sup>2</sup> The strikes are most often grouped into three categories: (1) textiles, (2) engineering, and (3) miscellaneous. Two additional categories found in some LG volumes are, (1) transport and (2) metal trades.

In the beginning, the statements of strikes gave : (1) the name of the concern and locality, (2) approximate number of work-people involved, (3) dates when the strike began and ended, (4) cause, and (5) result. The number of work-people involved was divided into (a) the number involved "directly", and (b) the number involved "indirectly". Two more columns were added to the statements from the issue of August 1928, (1) number of working days lost during the month, and (2) total number of working days lost in the dispute on termination.

These statements of strikes in the LG volumes are the basic source from which a list of strikes in the Bombay cotton textile industry has been compiled.

## 2. Method of Compilation

As mentioned above, the statements of strikes give the name of the concern and the locality in which the concern

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<sup>2</sup> Although a continuous publication from the same agency, the coverage of the Labour Gazette has changed according to changes in the Constitution of the country and consequent changes of Presidencies into Provinces and still later into the present linguistic States.

is situated. Looking at the locality, it was fairly easy to identify the strikes in Bombay.

There was a problem, however, due to the changes in the area of the city. With the formation of Greater Bombay in April 1950 and additions of some more areas from the Thana District in February 1957, the old limits of the city confined to 26 square miles have been extended to cover 186 square miles at present.<sup>3</sup> The problem was solved by taking the present area of Greater Bombay as fixed and including for earlier years areas which were then in the Thana and Bombay Suburban Districts.

The category "textiles" in the statements of strikes contains not only the cotton textile units but also woollen and silk textile units and dye-works. Only in a few volumes of the LG are the cotton textile units distinguished from other textile units. Hence it was necessary to separate the strikes in cotton textile units from strikes in other textile units.

This was done with the help of the MOA's annual Mill Statements for the years 1922-1964. It may be remembered here that the Bombay cotton textile industry has been defined for the purposes of this study as constituted of all the units in Bombay which are mentioned in the Mill Statements.

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<sup>3</sup> The Times of India, Directory and Year Book, including Who's Who (Bombay: Bennett, Coleman & Co. Ltd., an annual publication), for 1954-55, p. 333; for 1958-59, p. 396; and for 1964-65, p. 554.

The list of strikes, compiled in the manner described above, forms the basis for statistical presentation and analysis. Table 5.1, prepared from this list, shows the number of strikes, workers involved and mandays lost in each year for the period 1921-1964. Figures for 1921 cover only five months in that year, from August to December.

### 3. Nature of the Statistics

The official sources of information at present about the occurrence of strikes are (1) the reports supplied<sup>ied</sup> by the District Magistrates, the Government Labour Officers and the Commissioner of Policy, Bombay,<sup>4</sup> and (2) the returns the affected concerns send to the Labour Office under Rule 72-A of the Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946.<sup>5</sup>

Although the facts supplied by these two sources are presumably checked against each other to some extent, the strike statistics mainly rely on the returns sent by the affected concerns. The returns contain detailed information regarding the causes, progress and termination of the strikes. The concern has to send the return within seven days of the occurrence and follow it up with weekly returns to be sent on every seventh day from the date of occurrence till the termination of the strike. If a concern fails to send the return, the Labour Office sends reminders and makes

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4 LG, XLIV, No. 3, November 1964, p. 261.

5 Government of Maharashtra, The Bombay Industrial Relations Rules, 1947 (Bombay: Directorate of Printing and Stationery, 1964), p. 15.

**Table 5.1 : The Number of Strikes, Workers Involved and Mandays Lost in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry, 1921-64**

Year (1)	No. of Strikes (2)	No. of workers involved (3)	Mandays Lost (4)
1921 @	27	54,695	601,300
1922	54	111,463	482,810
1923	52	45,844	459,603
1924	17	167,474	9,209,859
1925	16	155,921	11,250,492
1926	20	16,050	78,023
1927	18	20,156	277,987
1928	78	294,686	24,035,739
1929	25	155,560	8,114,372
1930	25	36,272	154,359
1931	14	25,328	514,306
1932	8	4,855	82,752
1933	35	41,470	735,785
1934	19	104,597	2,803,123
1935	8	8,320	57,773
1936	5	10,300	151,149
1937	24	42,164	234,125
1938	15	31,237	156,282
1939	15	16,805	48,386
1940	12	181,494	4,543,104
1941	17	42,926	190,292

(continued)

Table 5.1 : (Continued)

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1942	31	70,407	289,451
1943	21	44,332	240,043
1944	26	60,218	518,633
1945	51	59,207	197,820
1946	155	408,859	1,362,477
1947	127	418,018	2,211,483
1948	53	81,576	249,187
1949	50	96,949	239,974
1950	29	280,262	9,752,378
1951	33	79,138	481,432
1952	32	61,400	263,253
1953	30	46,450	326,474
1954	16	20,912	150,665
1955	23	36,998	137,120
1956	49	117,874	189,342
1957	27	55,944	154,474
1958	17	28,229	31,843
1959	25	62,698	74,426
1960	16	83,843	134,782
1961	5	11,483	16,295
1962	21	55,511	84,768
1963	24	82,169	173,657
1964	27	50,131	141,553

@ For five months, from August to December, only.

Sources:

(1) The information has been compiled from the LG volumes in the manner described earlier.

(Continued)



further queries with the concern in question.

Footnote of Table 5.1 continued:

(2) As mentioned before, the LG does not give mandays lost in strikes during the period August 1921 to July 1928. Mandays lost during this period have been calculated by a straight multiplication of the number of workers involved and the number of calendar days for which the strike lasted. No attempt has been made to correct the figures for holidays and variations in the number of workers involved from day to day during the course of strikes. This has led to some over-estimation of mandays lost during this period. But it is hoped that it does not greatly affect the statistical presentation since the trends remain unaffected.

(3) The figures include strikes as well as lockouts. The LG uses the term "industrial dispute" as synonymous with both strikes and lockouts. The superfluity and the difficulties of making a distinction between strikes and lockouts are described well in, International Labour Office, Studies and Reports: Series N (Statistics) No. 9, Methods of Compiling Statistics of Industrial Disputes (Geneva: International Labour Office, 1926), pp. 13-14 and 20-22. The lockouts, again, are few and far-between, as can be seen from the following figures, showing the years in which they occurred, the number of workers involved and the mandays lost in the lockouts:

Lockouts in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry:

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of Lockouts</u>	<u>Workers Involved</u>	<u>Mandays Lost</u>
1923	1	900	37,800
1951	2	7,570	245,230
1953	2	5,570	164,993
1954	1	2,508	125,780
1955	1	2,462	28,710
1956	4	12,288	51,663
1957	3	10,423	37,736
1960	2	4,360	57,063
1962	1	3,500	3,500

(4) The figures of the number of workers involved include the "directly involved" workers as well as the "indirectly involved" workers. The term "directly involved" includes workers making the demand on the employer and striking of their own will, or, in the case of lockouts, workers out of work because of the employer's attempt to enforce a demand on them. The term "indirectly involved" includes workers in the same establishment, rendered idle owing to stoppage of departments or shifts because of the

(continued)

As a result, it may be said that the coverage of the LG statements is quite comprehensive and no strikes escape attention.<sup>6</sup>

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Footnote of Table 5.1 continued:

strike. Thus, the number of "indirectly involved" workers depends largely on the nature of production and inter-dependence of departments in the establishment affected.

The two categories of workers have been combined together in the above table. The consequences of a strike depend to a large extent on the total number of workers affected by the strike and not merely on the number "directly involved". International Labour Office, Methods of Compiling Statistics . . . . ., pp. 36-37 discuss the treatment of the two categories and conclude that the two categories need not be shown separately, except on psychological grounds.

(5) Strikes have been counted at their commencement, that is, they have been included in the month and the year in which they began. As regards the number of workers involved and mandays lost, they also have been included in the month and the year of the commencement of the strikes. No attempt has been made to distribute the workers over the months in which they were actually involved, or to distribute mandays over the months in which they were actually lost.

This leads to large magnitudes of workers involved and mandays lost in the particular months in which strikes with a duration spread over two calendar months or more commenced. This, however, does not distort the statistics in the above table, since such long strikes have mostly occurred in the course of single calendar years. The point would become obvious, and has been taken into account, in the discussion of the seasonality of strikes, which is discussed in Chapter VI.

6 The records of cases of strikes brought to the Labour Court, kindly made available for reference by the officials of the Court, show that a few strikes do escape attention. Thus, according to the Court records, two strikes in 1960, two strikes in 1961, four strikes in 1962 and three strikes in 1963 were within the coverage of the present definition of strikes adopted by the LG, but went unrecorded in the statistics. An examination of the Court records for other years may reveal a similar failure in those years also.

#### 4. Value and Limitations of the Statistics

##### (a) Likelihood of under-statement

Generally it is believed that in the case of strikes employers tend to under-estimate, while the trade unions tend to over-estimate, the gravity of the situation.<sup>7</sup> The employers' tendency to under-estimate the gravity probably springs from the inherent reluctance to recognize the unpleasantness of the situation and the challenge implied to their authority.

The information supplied by employers, therefore, is likely to under-state the number of workers involved and the mandays lost in the course of strikes. This information, therefore, needs to be compared with, and examined against, information supplied by trade unions or collected by the Labour Office investigators.

The records of the Labour Office, however, suggest that the statistics rely very heavily on the information supplied by the concerns affected by strikes. This is likely to result in an under-estimation of the strike statistics. It is not possible to know, or even to hazard a guess, about the extent of such under-estimation.

##### (b) Changes in definition

The term "industrial dispute" is used by the LG as

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<sup>7</sup> International Labour Office, Methods of Compiling Statistics ....., p. 15, gives a striking example supporting this belief with the help of Norwegian statistics.

synonymous with both strikes and lockouts. The present definition of industrial disputes used by the LG since May 1953 runs as follows:

The word "dispute" in the official sense means an interruption of work and it is here used in that sense as virtually synonymous with "strike". In compiling statistics of industrial disputes, however, only those disputes in which 10 or more persons are involved are included. 8/

The definition used for strikes in the period January 1944 to May 1953 was slightly different:

The word "dispute" in the official sense means an interruption of work and it is here used in that sense as virtually synonymous with "strike". A dispute, as counted by the Labour Office, is an interruption of work, involving ten or more persons and of not less than twenty-four hours' duration, except when the number of working days lost is more than 100. 9/

Between July 1922 and January 1944, again, a slightly different definition was in use:

The word "dispute" in the official sense means an interruption of work, and it is here used in that sense as virtually synonymous with "strike". A dispute, as counted by the Labour Office, is an interruption of work involving ten or more persons and of not less than twenty-four hours' duration. 10/

As regards strikes in the initial period between August 1921 and July 1922, the definition used only stated:

The word "dispute" in the official sense means an interruption of work, and it is here used in that sense as virtually synonymous with "strike". 11/

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- 8 LG, XXXIII, No. 11, July 1953, p. 1171.  
 9 LG, XXIII, No. 6, February 1944, p. 363.  
 10 LG, I, No. 12, August 1922, p. 17.  
 11 LG, I, No. 1, September 1921, p. 14.

It is not possible to be exact about the number of strikes that are included or excluded by the adoption of one definition or the other. However, it may be said on the basis of general observation of the Bombay cotton textile industry that small strikes involving less than ten persons are quite rare in the industry.

Strikes of less than twenty-four hours' duration are more frequent. Between 1954 and 1964 the number of such strikes was 111, which comes to about 10 strikes every year. But it is generally agreed that such short strikes and token strikes are much more common only in recent years and that they were less frequent in the earlier years. The remarkable diminution over the years in the duration of strikes, which is discussed elsewhere in the study, also leads one to believe that short strikes are much more common at present than in the earlier years. So it cannot be said that about ten strikes are excluded every year, with the exclusion of strikes of less than twenty-four hours' duration. <sup>12</sup>

After all the concept of a strike can be stretched wide enough to include every act of insubordination of a few workers, which may involve a temporary stoppage of work. Such a wide concept, however, would be meaningless. Therefore it may be concluded that the changes in the definitions

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12 As for instance, there were only three such strikes in 1940. MOA, A Brief Review of Labour Situation in the Bombay Cotton Mill Industry in 1940 (Bombay: The Millowners' Association).



mentioned above do not materially affect the coverage of strike statistics.

More important than these definitions is the adoption by the LG since 1953 of the definition of industrial disputes according to the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, for preparation of statements of strikes. To put this in the words of the LG itself:

The statistics relate to industrial disputes (both strikes and lockouts) resulting in work-stoppages. Sympathetic strikes and certain other types of stoppages which do not strictly come within the definition of "industrial dispute" as contained in the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, are not included in the statistics. 13/

The adoption of this definition and the consequent exclusion of "hartals" or work-stoppages over non-industrial matters and political and sympathetic strikes is an important change in the strike statistics.

13 LG, XXXIII, No. 10, June 1954, p. 1078.

The definitions of the terms, "industrial dispute", "strike" and "lockout", as given in Government of Maharashtra, The Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, with the Industrial Disputes (Bombay) Rules, 1957, (Bombay: Director, Government Printing and Stationery, 1964), Sec.2, (k), (l) and (q), pp. 3-5, are reproduced below:

"Industrial dispute" means any dispute or difference between employers and employers, or between employers and workmen, or between workmen and workmen, which is connected with the employment or non-employment or the terms of employment or with conditions of labour, of any person.

"Lockout" means the closing of a place of employment, or the suspension of work, or the refusal by an employer to continue to employ any number of persons employed by him.

"Strike" means a cessation of work by a body of persons employed in any industry acting in combination, or a concerted refusal, or a refusal under a common understanding, of any number of persons who are or have been so employed to continue to work or to accept employment.

(c) Exclusion of hartals

The importance of exclusion of hartals may be judged from the fact that during the period between August 1921 and December 1952, the LG included 63 hartals in the strike statistics. It must also be pointed out that the hartals are not evenly spread out over the years. Of the 63 hartals, 24 occurred in 1946 and 15 in 1921.

But the number of hartals is larger than what the LG statistics lead one to believe. Even before their exclusion since 1953, only a few of all the hartals were included in the strike statistics. The number of hartals in recent years, compiled from the annual reviews of labour situation in the Bombay cotton mill industry published by the Mill-owners' Association, Bombay, is shown below in Table 5.2.

Hartals, being organized over non-industrial matters such as deaths of workers or mill officials and political protests, etc., cannot be considered as strikes proper, the latter term being used for industrial disputes only. Yet, it would have been desirable if the LG were to publish separately information about hartals also. The exclusion of hartals from strike statistics since 1953 is no doubt an improvement in the statistics. But the failure to mention hartals altogether is unfortunate.

5. The Unit of Strikes - Cause and the Establishment

It is necessary in strike statistics to specify the unit in which strikes are counted. Should one say there



**Table 5.2 : Hartals in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry**

Year	No. of Hartals	Workers Involved	Mandays Lost
1945	28	*	*
1946	85	*	*
1947	21	*	831,859
1948	15	*	243,383
1949	8	*	32,710
1958	32	*	319,983
1959	50	101,473	193,529
1960	26	42,933	42,088
1961	19	54,028	53,222
1962	17	39,365	40,310
1963	45	139,646	228,912
1964	65	347,211	381,337

\* Not known.

#### Sources:

The information in the table has been compiled from annual reviews of labour situation in the Bombay cotton textile industry published by the Millowners' Association, Bombay.

The reviews have been published for 1940, 1947, 1949, 1955, and for every year after 1957. They were kindly made available for reference by the Millowners' Association, Bombay. The review was allegedly published for 1952 also, but it was not available in the Association.

The reviews for 1940, 1955 and 1957 do not give any information about hartals. The reviews for 1949, 1955 and 1957 devote a few pages to cover the years 1948, 1953, 1954 and 1956. Even then no information about hartals is available for the years between 1949 and 1958.

A comparison of the number of workers involved and mandays lost, especially the fact that the latter was smaller than the former in two years, shows that the hartals generally are of very short duration.

are as many strikes as the number of establishments affected, or alternatively, it is a single strike if the cause of the strike be the same for all the establishments? The answer depends on the unit chosen to count the strikes--either the cause of the dispute or the establishment affected.

As regards strikes confined to single establishments, one gets the same number of strikes whether the cause or the establishment is taken as the unit of strikes. But in the case of strikes involving more than one establishment such as the general strikes,<sup>14</sup> the choice of the unit does cause a difference in the number of strikes counted.

Although the LG does not specify anywhere the unit it has chosen, its statistics suggest that it has adopted the cause as the unit of strikes. The LG, again, does not go merely by the apparent uniformity of the cause, but probes into the degree of cohesion underlying the strike due to the cause. The extent to which the simultaneous outbreak of strikes in more than one establishment over the same cause was under unified control and direction decides for the LG whether the outbreak should be treated as a single strike or as so many strikes as the number of establishments affected.

To give an example, the bonus strike which affected 14

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14 The term "general strike" has been used throughout the study to mean a strike affecting the whole of the cotton textile industry in the city, or at least more than a half of the total number of mills, on account of a dispute regarding any issue pertaining to the industry.

mills between the 12th and the 16th of December 1963 is counted as a single strike by the LG, whereas the bonus strike which affected 9 mills between the 22nd and the 24th of October 1962 is counted as 10 separate strikes.<sup>15</sup>

#### 6. Concluding Remarks

The nature and limitations of the strike statistics have been discussed in this chapter. This discussion will help to appreciate better the presentation and analysis of these statistics in the chapters that follow.

References to strikes in the Bombay cotton mills can be traced as far back as the 1870's. Mr. Morris believes that even general strikes had occurred as early as the 1890's.<sup>16</sup> There were a number of strikes in the period immediately following the end of the World War I, including two general strikes in 1919 and 1920.<sup>17</sup>

The restriction of this study to the years 1922-1964 should not, therefore, lead to the impression that strikes were of no significance in the earlier years. The restriction is chiefly dictated by availability of comprehensive statistics about strikes.

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15 One mill had a strike followed by a lockout. Hence 10 strikes in 9 mills, the term "strike" being used as inclusive of both strikes as well as lockouts.

16 Morris, The Emergence . . . . ., p. 178.

17 Morris, The Emergence . . . . ., pp. 179-182; and Saklatvale, History . . . . ., pp. 36-38.

CHAPTER VI  
ANNUAL AND SEASONAL FLUCTUATIONS

The nature and the method of compilation of the strike statistics about strikes, workers involved and the mandays lost were described in the previous chapter. In this chapter, it is proposed to examine the annual and seasonal fluctuations in these statistics and discover if there are any general trends in the strike movement. A composite presentation of the strike statistics has also been attempted.

1. The Number of Strikes

The number of strikes in each year during the period 1922-1964 are shown in Table 6.1, and are plotted graphically in Chart 6.1.

As compared to 1922, the frequency of strikes declined and was at a low level in the next five years. The sudden eruption in 1928 was due to wage reductions and the fear of unemployment because of introduction of new methods of work. Strikes declined again up to 1932. The next year saw a rise because of large-scale unemployment and a spate of wage-cuts. The incidence of strikes after 1934 was low at first, but showed a tendency to increase moderately. Neither the World War II nor the Quit India movement of 1942 had any significant reaction on the number of strikes. But in the year 1946 that followed the end of the war, there was a dramatic rise in the number, which went up to 155, the highest peak

**Table 6.1 : Strikes in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry  
1922-1964**

Year (1)	Number of strikes (2)	Five-Year moving Average (3)	Trend Value (4)	Deviation of Actual from Trend Value (5)
1922	54	-	31	+ 23
1923	52	-	31	+ 21
1924	17	32	32	- 15
1925	16	25	32	- 16
1926	20	30	32	- 12
1927	18	31	32	- 14
1928	78	33	32	+ 46
1929	25	32	32	- 7
1930	25	30	32	- 7
1931	14	21	32	- 18
1932	8	20	32	- 24
1933	35	17	32	+ 3
1934	19	15	32	- 13
1935	8	18	32	- 24
1936	5	14	32	- 27
1937	24	13	32	- 8
1938	15	14	32	- 17
1939	15	17	32	- 17
1940	12	18	32	- 20
1941	17	19	32	- 15
1942	31	21	32	- 1

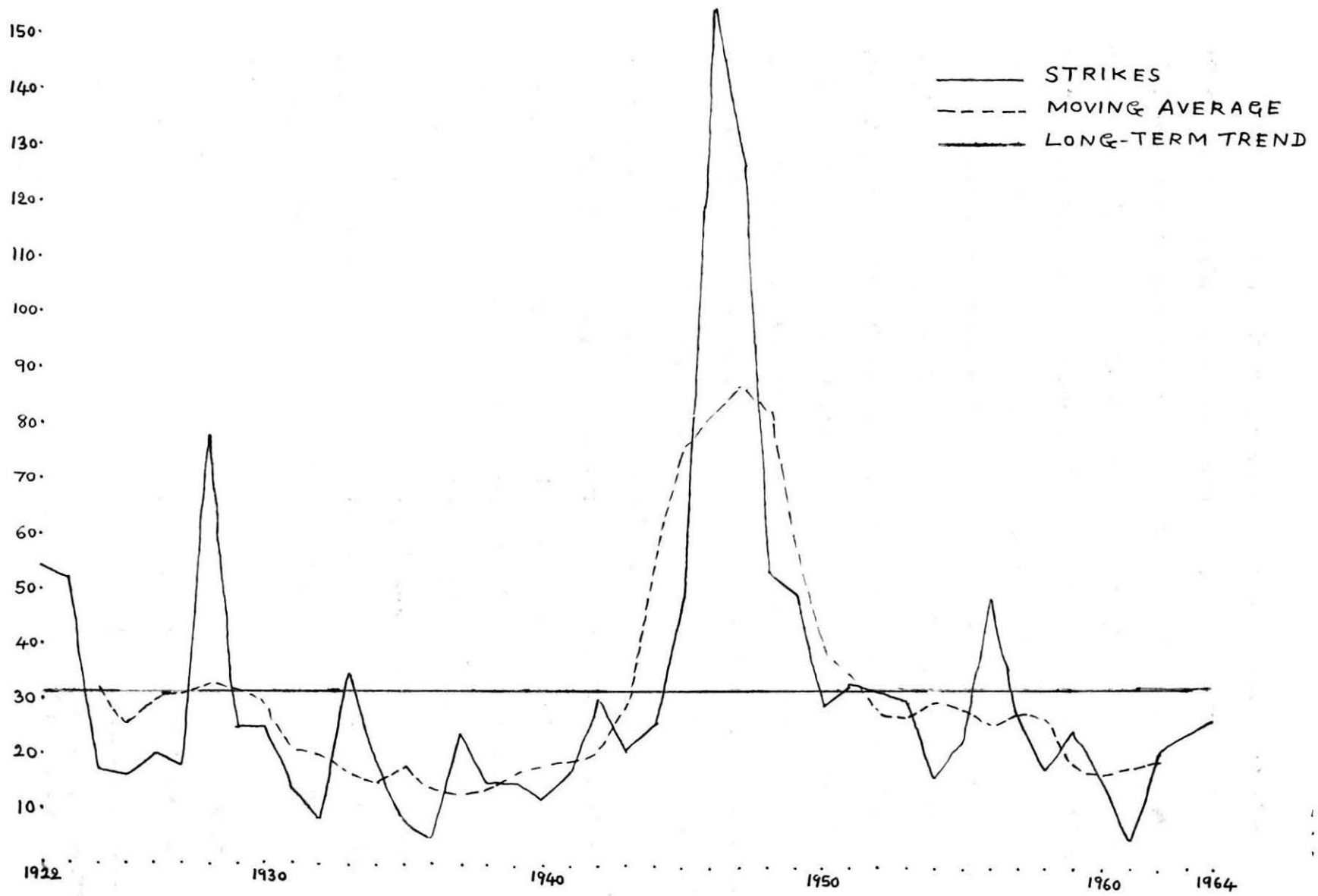
(continued)

Table 6.1 : (continued)

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1943	21	29	32	- 11
1944	26	57	32	- 6
1945	51	76	33	+ 18
1946	155	82	33	+122
1947	127	87	33	+ 94
1948	53	83	33	+ 20
1949	50	58	33	+ 17
1950	29	39	33	- 4
1951	33	35	33	0
1952	32	28	33	- 1
1953	30	27	33	- 3
1954	16	30	33	- 17
1955	23	29	33	- 10
1956	49	26	33	+ 16
1957	27	28	33	- 6
1958	17	27	33	- 16
1959	25	18	33	- 8
1960	16	17	33	- 17
1961	5	18	33	- 28
1962	21	19	33	- 12
1963	24	-	33	- 9
1964	27	-	33	- 6

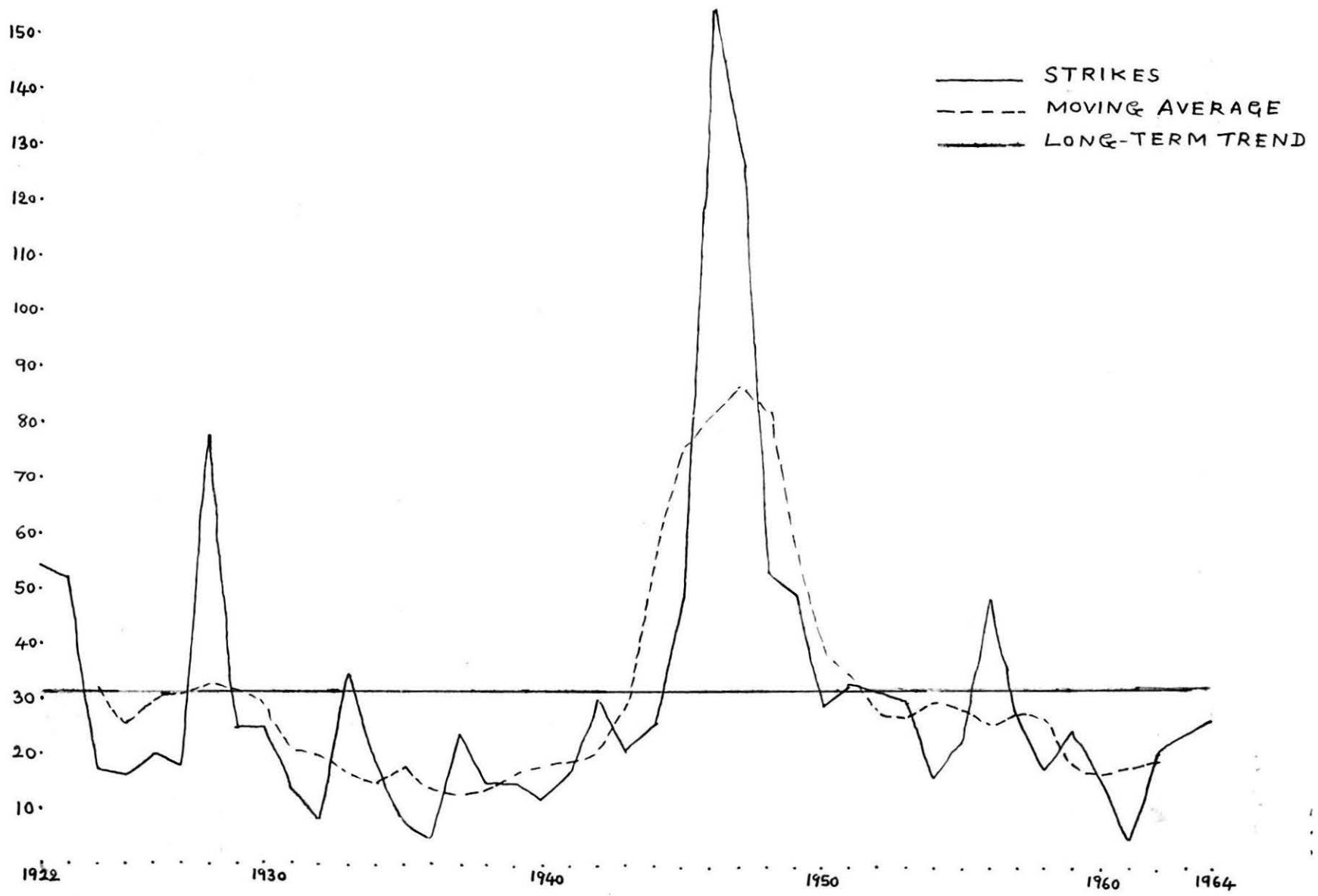
Source : Table 5.1.

160. CHART 6.1 : STRIKES IN THE BOMBAY COTTON TEXTILE INDUSTRY, 1922-1964.





160. CHART 6.1 : STRIKES IN THE BOMBAY COTTON TEXTILE INDUSTRY, 1922-1964 .



in strikes so far. Increase in the cost of living because of the war and the uncertain political atmosphere on the eve of Independence were the main causes of such a large number of strikes in 1946. Strikes declined only slightly in the next year, but the decline continued almost continuously up to 1954, in which year they numbered only 16. There was a small increase in 1955 and a larger one in 1956. More than half the number of strikes in 1956 were due to disputes regarding the payment of bonus. Barring the slight rise in 1959, the incidence of strikes declined again, and there were only five strikes in 1961. The number increased in each of the next three years. There were 27 strikes in 1964.

In order to discover the long-term trend in the number of strikes, a straight line trend has been fitted to these data (with 1943 = 0). The equation for the straight line is  $Y = 32.419 + 0.047x$ . Table 6.1 shows the computed trend values and the deviations of the actual from the trend values. The trend is represented graphically in Chart 6.1.

The trend reveals a very negligible tendency in the number of strikes to increase over the years. One may, in fact, conclude that the long-term movement is towards a constant number of strikes.<sup>1</sup>

An examination of the deviations of the actual from the trend values shows that roughly the years 1924-27 and

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1 The standard error of the regression coefficient being 0.366, the regression coefficient is not statistically significant.

1929-44 (except 1933) were years of low incidence of strikes. Ignoring 1956, the group of years 1952-64 is again a period of low incidence of strikes.

The five-year moving averages, given in Table 6.1 and represented graphically in Chart 6.1, show the trend in the shorter five-year periods. It is seen, for example, that there was an almost continuous fall in the short-term trend between 1928 and 1937. The rise that commenced in 1937 reached its peak in 1947. There is again a fall from 1947 to 1960, with a very slight rise in the next two years.

## 2. The Number of Workers Involved

Table 6.2 shows the number of workers involved in strikes each year during the period 1922-1964. The numbers are represented graphically in Chart 6.2.

The fluctuations in the number of workers involved do not coincide exactly with those in the number of strikes, because the former depend on the number of strikes as well as the magnitude of strikes. Thus, the fall in strikes in 1924 is matched by a considerable rise in the workers involved, largely because of the general strike in that year. A similar contradiction is found in the years 1934, 1940, 1947 and 1950 also on account of the general strikes in those years. While the highest peak for strikes comes in 1946, the highest peak for workers involved comes in 1947.

The long-term trend in the number of workers involved is shown by the straight line fitted to the data (with 1943 = 0). The equation for the straight line is

**Table 6.2 : Number of Workers Involved in Strikes in the  
Bombay Cotton Textile Industry 1922-1964**

Year (1)	Workers Involved (2)	Five-Year Moving Average (3)	Trend Value (4)	Deviation of Actual from Trend Value (5)
1922	111,463	-	96,795	+ 14,668
1923	45,844	-	96,427	- 50,583
1924	167,474	99,350	96,059	+ 71,415
1925	155,921	81,089	95,691	+ 60,230
1926	16,050	130,857	95,323	- 79,273
1927	20,156	128,475	94,954	- 74,798
1928	294,686	104,545	94,586	+ 200,100
1929	155,560	106,400	94,218	+ 61,342
1930	36,272	103,340	93,850	- 57,578
1931	25,328	52,697	93,482	- 68,154
1932	4,855	42,504	93,113	- 88,258
1933	41,470	36,914	92,745	- 51,275
1934	104,597	33,908	92,377	+ 12,220
1935	8,320	41,370	92,009	- 83,689
1936	10,300	39,324	91,641	- 81,341
1937	42,164	21,765	91,272	- 49,108
1938	31,237	56,400	90,904	- 59,667
1939	16,805	62,925	90,536	- 73,731
1940	181,494	68,574	90,168	+ 91,326
1941	42,926	71,193	89,800	- 46,874
1942	70,407	79,875	89,432	- 19,025

(continued)

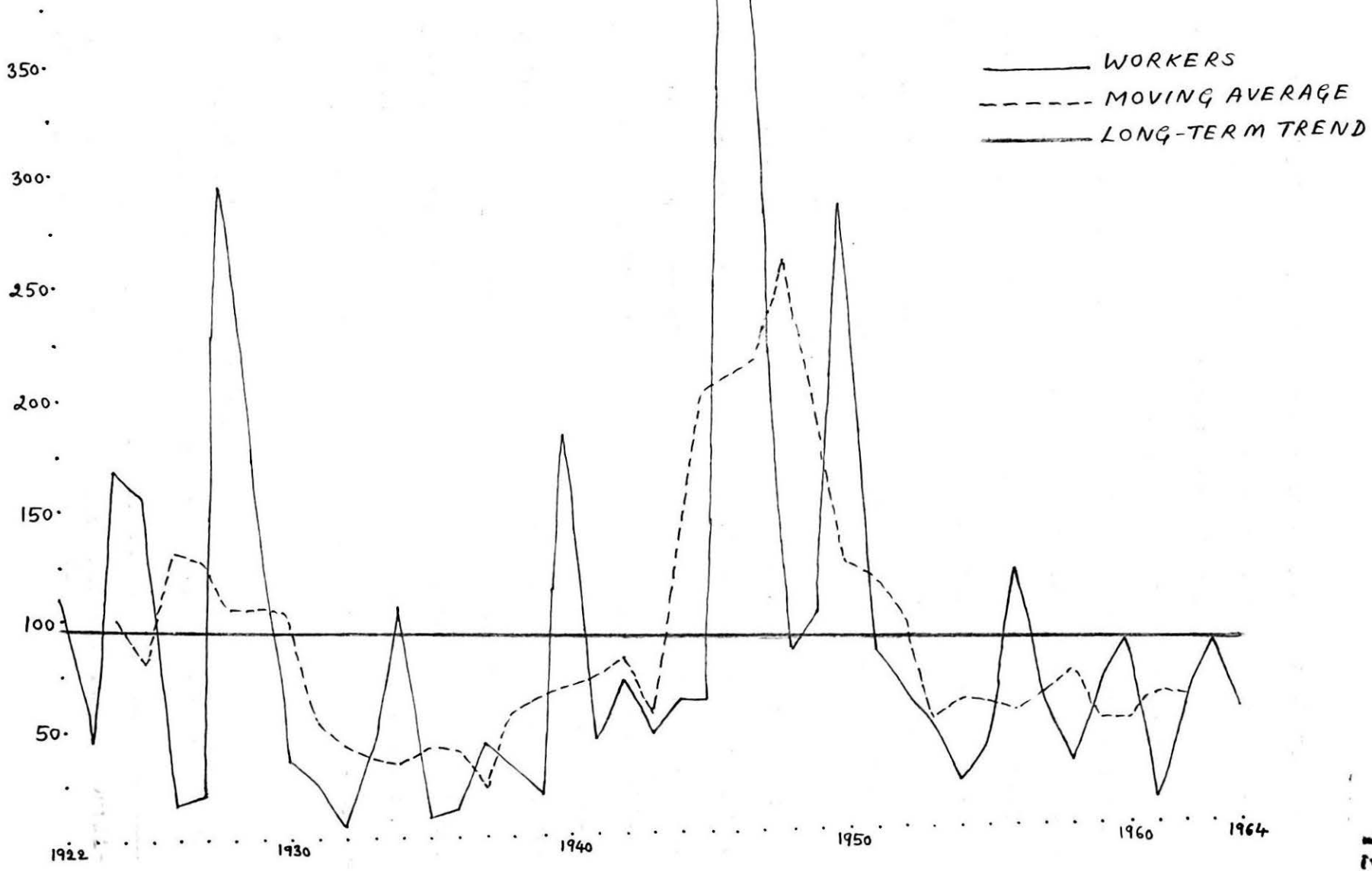
Table 6.2 : (continued)

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1943	44,332	55,418	89,063	- 44,731
1944	60,218	128,605	88,695	- 28,477
1945	59,207	198,127	88,327	- 29,120
1946	408,859	205,576	87,959	+ 320,900
1947	418,018	212,922	87,591	+ 330,427
1948	81,576	257,133	87,222	- 5,646
1949	96,949	191,189	86,854	+ 10,095
1950	280,262	119,865	86,486	+ 193,776
1951	79,138	112,840	86,118	- 6,980
1952	61,400	97,632	85,750	- 24,350
1953	46,450	48,980	85,381	- 38,931
1954	20,912	56,727	85,013	- 64,101
1955	36,998	55,636	84,645	- 47,647
1956	117,874	51,991	84,277	+ 33,597
1957	55,944	60,349	83,909	- 27,965
1958	28,229	69,718	83,540	- 55,311
1959	62,698	48,439	83,172	- 20,474
1960	83,843	48,353	82,804	+ 1,039
1961	11,483	59,141	82,436	- 70,953
1962	55,511	56,627	82,068	- 26,557
1963	82,169	-	81,700	+ 469
1964	50,131	-	81,331	- 31,200

Source : Table 5.1.

THOUSANDS

CHART 6.2: NUMBER OF WORKERS INVOLVED IN STRIKES IN THE BOMBAY COTTON TEXTILE INDUSTRY, 1922-1964.



$Y = 89,063.32 - 368.19x$ . The trend is shown in Chart 6.2, and the computed trend values and deviations of the actual from the trend values are given in Table 6.2.

The trend shows a slight decline over the years in the number of workers involved in strikes. This must be due to a diminution in the average size of strikes, since the long-term trend in the number of strikes is towards a constant incidence. The decline, however, is quite insignificant. It may be said, therefore, that the long-term trend indicates a movement towards a stable level of the number of workers involved in strikes annually.<sup>2</sup>

The deviations of the actual from the trend values show that the number of workers involved was at a low level in the groups of years 1930-45 excepting 1934 and 1940, and again in the years 1951-64 excepting 1956, 1960 and 1963.

The trend in the shorter five-year periods is shown by the five-year moving averages given in Table 6.2 and represented graphically in Chart 6.2. The short-term trend declines from 1926 to 1937 and rises between 1937 and 1948. It declines again up to 1953, and comes down to a level around which it shows minor fluctuations in the years afterwards.

### 3. The Number of Mandays Lost

Table 6.3 shows the number of mandays lost in strikes

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<sup>2</sup> Its standard error being 1.21, the regression coefficient is not statistically significant.



**Table 6.3 : Number of Mandays Lost in Strikes in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry 1922-1964**

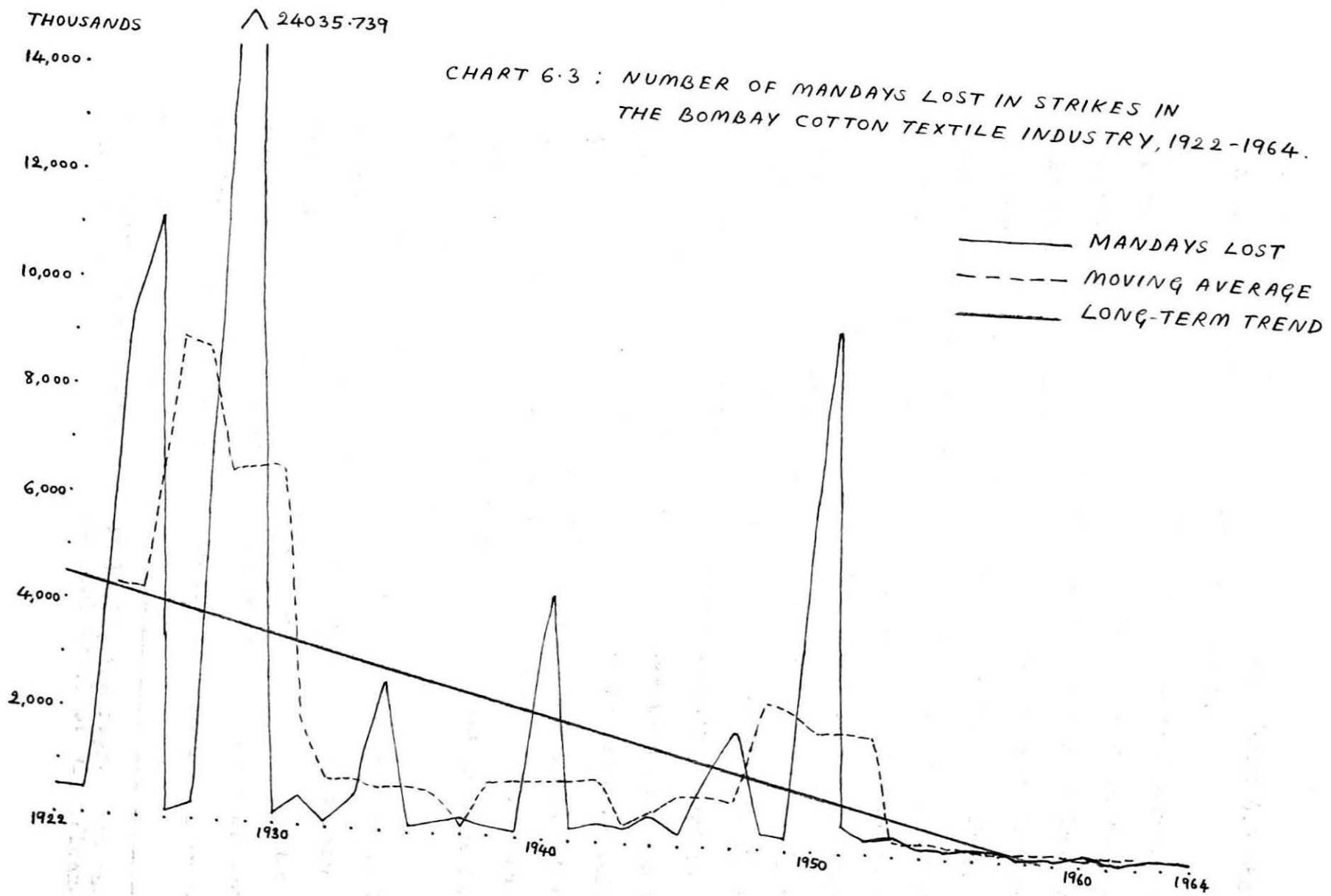
Year (1)	Mandays Lost (2)	Five-Year Moving Average (3)	Trend Value (4)	Deviation of Actual from Trend Value (5)
1922	482,810	-	4,490,534	- 4,007,724
1923	459,603	-	4,366,430	- 3,906,827
1924	9,209,859	4,296,157	4,242,327	+ 4,967,532
1925	11,250,492	4,255,193	4,118,224	+ 7,132,268
1926	78,023	8,970,420	3,994,120	- 3,916,097
1927	277,987	8,751,323	3,870,017	- 3,592,030
1928	24,035,739	6,532,096	3,745,914	+20,289,825
1929	8,114,372	6,619,353	3,621,811	+ 4,492,561
1930	154,359	6,580,306	3,497,707	- 3,343,348
1931	514,306	1,920,315	3,373,604	- 2,859,298
1932	82,752	858,065	3,249,501	- 3,166,749
1933	735,785	838,748	3,125,397	- 2,389,612
1934	2,803,123	766,116	3,001,294	- 198,171
1935	57,773	796,391	2,877,191	- 2,819,418
1936	151,149	680,490	2,753,087	- 2,601,938
1937	234,125	129,543	2,628,984	- 2,394,859
1938	156,282	1,026,609	2,504,881	- 2,348,599
1939	48,386	1,034,438	2,380,778	- 2,332,392
1940	4,543,104	1,045,503	2,256,674	+ 2,286,430
1941	190,292	1,062,255	2,132,571	- 1,942,279
1942	289,451	1,156,305	2,008,468	- 1,719,017

(continued)

Table 6.3 : (continued)

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1943	240,043	287,248	1,884,364	- 1,644,321
1944	518,633	521,685	1,760,261	- 1,241,628
1945	197,820	906,091	1,636,158	- 1,438,338
1946	1,362,477	907,920	1,512,054	- 149,577
1947	2,211,483	852,188	1,387,951	+ 823,532
1948	249,187	2,763,100	1,263,848	- 1,014,661
1949	239,974	2,586,891	1,139,745	- 899,771
1950	9,752,378	2,197,245	1,015,641	+ 8,736,737
1951	481,432	2,212,702	891,538	- 410,106
1952	263,253	2,194,840	767,435	- 504,182
1953	326,474	271,789	643,331	- 316,857
1954	150,665	213,371	519,228	- 368,563
1955	137,120	191,615	395,125	- 258,005
1956	189,342	132,689	271,021	- 81,679
1957	154,474	117,441	146,918	+ 7,556
1958	31,843	108,973	22,815	+ 9,028
1959	74,426	82,364	- 101,288	+ 175,714
1960	134,782	68,423	- 225,392	+ 360,174
1961	16,295	96,786	- 349,495	+ 365,790
1962	84,768	110,211	- 473,598	+ 558,366
1963	173,657	-	- 597,702	+ 771,359
1964	141,553	-	- 721,805	+ 863,358

Source : Table 5.1.



each year during the period 1922-1964. Chart 6.3 shows the same information in the form of a graph.

The number of mandays lost in any year depends on the number, size and duration of strikes in that year. Naturally, therefore, the peaks and troughs in the mandays lost would be somewhat different from those in the case of the number of strikes and the number of workers involved. Thus, while the highest peak comes in 1946 for the number of strikes and in 1947 for the workers involved, the highest peak in the mandays lost comes in 1928. Other peaks in the mandays lost come, in the order of magnitude, in 1925, 1950, 1940, 1934 and 1947. All these years as well as 1928 were years of general strikes in the Bombay cotton textile industry.

The long-term trend in the mandays lost is shown by the straight line which has been fitted to the data (with 1943 = 0). Chart 6.3 shows the straight line, and Table 6.3 gives the trend values and deviations of the actual from the trend values. The equation for the straight line is  $Y = 1,884,364.4 - 124,103.3x$ .

The long-term trend shows a noticeable decline in the number of mandays lost over the years.<sup>3</sup> As can be seen from the two foregoing sections, this decline is not due to any changes in the number of strikes or the number of workers involved. It must, therefore, be due to a reduction in the

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<sup>3</sup> With its standard error of 51.97, the regression coefficient is significant at 5 per cent level of significance.

duration of strikes. Changes in the average duration of strikes are discussed in a later chapter on the duration and results of strikes.

#### 4. Composite Presentation of the Strike Movement

The statistics of strikes, workers involved and the mandays lost were examined separately in the last three sections. The purpose of this section is to bring the three series together and attempt a composite presentation of the strike movement.

Mr. Knowles points out that the composite presentation hardly reveals anything more than what may be found out by an examination of the series separately. To put the case for such presentation in his own words, "If such a presentation is to be justified, it should use all information possible, break it up into components that make sense in other contexts, and reveal the relative importance of these components as contributing to the whole."<sup>4</sup>

The method of composite presentation adopted here is the same as that of Mr. Knowles.<sup>5</sup> According to this method,

4 K.G.J.C. Knowles, Strikes - A Study in Industrial Conflict (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1952), p. 152.

5 Knowles, Strikes . . . . ., pp. 152-153. As is pointed out by Mr. Knowles himself, the method was originally suggested by Mr. K. Forchheimer in his article, "Some International Aspects of the Strike Movement". The article appeared in three parts in the Bulletin of the Oxford University Institute of Statistics, Vol. 10, No. 1, January 1948, pp. 9-24; Vol. 10, No. 9, September 1948, pp. 294-304; and Vol. 11, No. 9, September 1949, pp. 279-286.

the mandays lost are to be seen as the product of three components: (1) the number of strikes, (2) the average size of strikes, and (3) the average duration of strikes per worker involved. Thus if L is the number of mandays lost, W the number of workers involved and S the number of strikes, then

$$L = S \times \frac{W}{S} \times \frac{L}{W}$$

Table 6.4 shows the values of the three components every year during the period 1922-1964. For purposes of graphical presentation, logarithms may be taken for these values so that the curves can be added up to show together the variations in the mandays lost in strikes. This has been done in Chart 6.4.

The relative thickness of a layer in the graph shows the importance of that particular component in the strike movement. It is interesting to note the movement of the components in opposite directions in many years, such as 1923-27, 1933-34, 1940-41, 1949-50, 1954-56, etc. The graph also shows what has already been pointed out earlier, that the downward trend in the mandays lost is largely due to a reduction in the duration of strikes.

##### 5. Seasonal Fluctuations in the Strike Movement

In addition to annual fluctuations, seasonal fluctuations also have been discussed by some authors.<sup>6</sup> Mr. Griffin

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<sup>6</sup> J.I. Griffin, Strikes: A Study in Quantitative Economics (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), pp. 51-56; Knowles, Strikes ..., pp.157-160, and M. K. Pendhe, Labour Organizations in Sholapur City (Doctoral thesis submitted to the University of Poona in 1960), pp. 316-324.

**Table 6.4:** Composite Presentation of the Strike Movement :  
the Number, Average Size and the Average Duration  
per Worker Involved, of Strikes in the Bombay  
Cotton Textile Industry, 1922-1964

Year (1)	Number of Strikes 3 (2)	Average Size of Strikes W/S (3)	Average Duration per Worker Involved L/W (4)
1922	54	2064	4.33
1923	52	882	10.03
1924	17	9851	54.99
1925	16	9366	75.07
1926	20	802	4.86
1927	18	1120	13.79
1928	78	3778	81.56
1929	25	6222	52.16
1930	25	1451	4.26
1931	14	1809	20.31
1932	8	607	17.04
1933	35	1185	17.74
1934	19	5139	28.71
1935	8	1040	6.94
1936	5	2060	14.67
1937	24	1757	5.55
1938	15	2082	5.00
1939	15	1120	2.88
1940	12	15124	25.03
1941	17	2525	4.43

(continued)



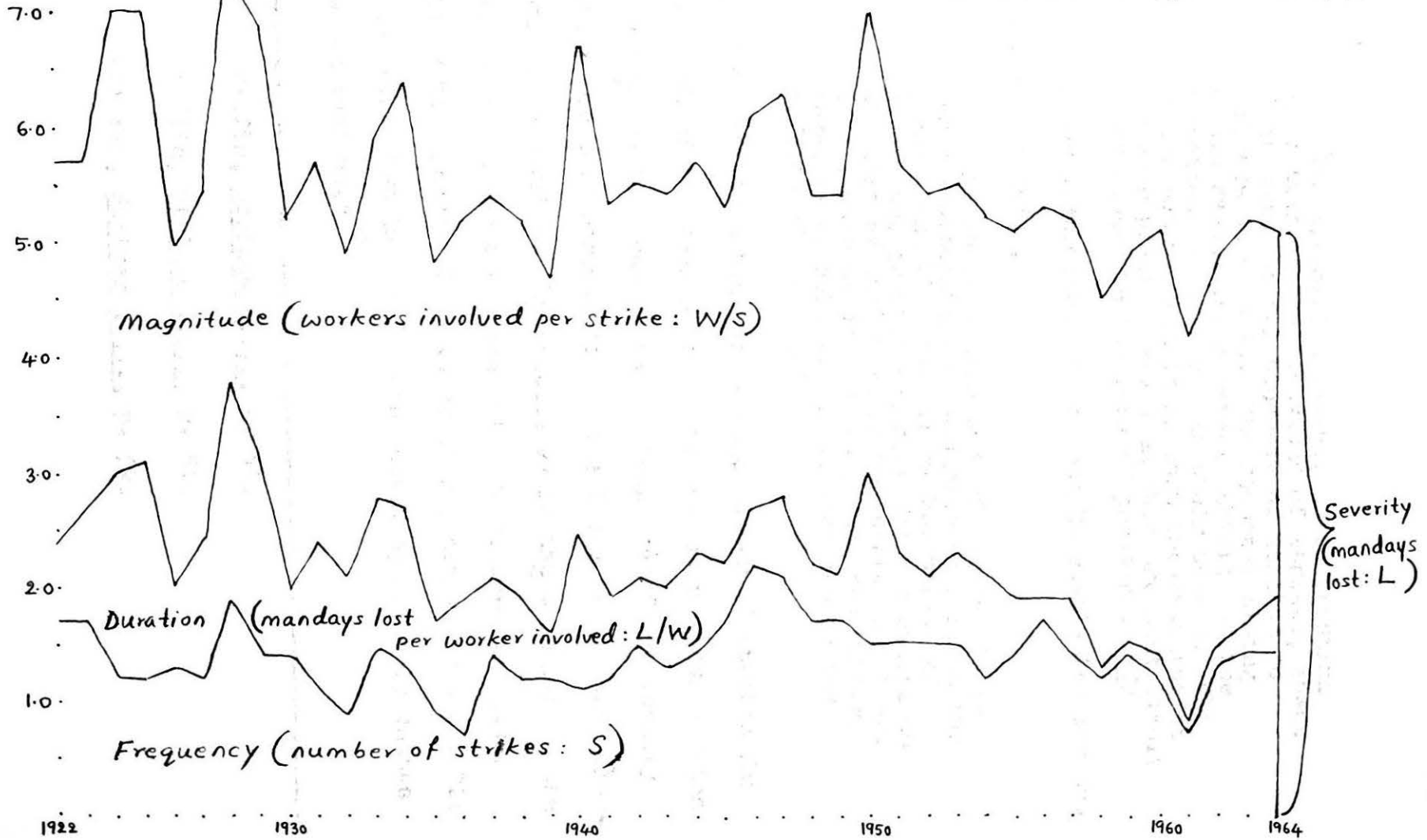
Table 6.4 : (continued)

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1942	31	2271	4.11
1943	21	2111	5.41
1944	26	2316	8.61
1945	51	1161	3.34
1946	155	2638	3.33
1947	127	3291	5.29
1948	53	1539	3.05
1949	50	1939	2.48
1950	29	9664	34.80
1951	33	2398	6.08
1952	32	1919	4.29
1953	30	1548	7.03
1954	16	1307	7.20
1955	23	1609	3.71
1956	49	2406	1.61
1957	27	2072	2.76
1958	17	1661	1.13
1959	25	2508	1.19
1960	16	5240	1.61
1961	5	2297	1.42
1962	21	2643	1.53
1963	24	3424	2.11
1964	27	1857	2.82

Source : Table 5.1.

Scale of  
logarithms

CHART 6.4 : COMPOSITE PRESENTATION OF THE STRIKE MOVEMENT  
IN THE BOMBAY COTTON TEXTILE INDUSTRY, 1922-1964.



writes,

The seasonal movement, an interesting indication of the behaviour of strikes, sheds light upon the relationship of strikes to business as a whole. The seasonal timing should reveal the strategic ability of the organized workers to make their demands felt at the moment when it is most inconvenient to the entrepreneurs and when they are most likely to acquiesce in the face of pressure. 7/

After an examination of the strike statistics for the U.S.A., he concludes,

The seasonal movement of strikes is in general determined by two elements, first the already existing pattern of business, and second the greater capacity for resistance on the part of employees in the early summer and late summer as opposed to spring and winter. Here, as elsewhere, the weather shapes the affairs of men. 8/

Mr. Griffin takes the average number of strikes for each month of the year over the period under consideration and expresses this number as a percentage of the monthly average for this period, to get the index of seasonal fluctuations in strikes. He calculates in the same manner the seasonal index for the number of workers involved also. This method ignores the secular trend, but as he says, "it is not felt that this refinement would appreciably change the conclusions." <sup>9</sup>

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7 Griffin, Strikes ....., p. 51.

8 Griffin, Strikes ....., p. 54.

9 Griffin, Strikes ....., p. 52.

The same method has been used in the calculation of seasonal indexes for the number of strikes, workers involved and mandays lost in the Bombay cotton textile industry. The indexes are given in Tables 6.5, 6.6 and 6.7.

The first column in each of these three tables gives the indexes calculated for the 43 years during the period 1922-1964. No regular pattern of seasonal variations is to be found in the indexes for strikes, workers or the mandays lost. It may be noticed, however, that the month of June has a very low index in all the three series. The reason for the high index of mandays lost in April and the very small values in the succeeding three months is the commencement of the general strikes of 1928, 1929 and 1934 in the month of April, and the method adopted of counting the mandays lost in the months in which the strikes commenced.

With a view to ascertain the existence of seasonality more closely, the period 1922-1964 may be divided into five parts on the basis of the years within each part being fairly similar and subject to the same set of economic and non-economic influences. Tables 6.5, 6.6 and 6.7 give the seasonal indexes calculated separately for each of these five parts. The first part 1922-29, contains the four general strikes of 1924, 1925, 1928 and 1929. The second, 1930-39, contains the years of depression, the general strike of 1934 and the years when the industry recovered from the depression and prosperity returned gradually. The third, 1940-45, includes the years of the World War II. The fourth, 1946-50,

**Table 6.5:** Indexes of Seasonal Variations in the Number of Strikes in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry

Month	Period					
	1922- 64 (1)	1922- 29 (2)	1930- 39 (3)	1940- 45 (4)	1946- 50 (5)	1951- 64 (6)
January	101	116	50	74	114	109
February	112	124	107	133	112	95
March	108	103	71	147	83	139
April	101	120	129	59	106	86
May	100	86	107	88	123	85
June	66	47	50	96	53	92
July	117	73	57	103	161	133
August	84	90	114	37	84	85
September	66	34	79	140	81	34
October	115	90	150	74	122	126
November	91	111	150	88	47	99
December	116	206	136	126	67	92

Source : Calculated from the LG.

**Table 6.6 : Indexes of Seasonal Variations in the Number of Workers Involved in Strikes in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry**

Month	Period					
	1922- 64 (1)	1922- 29 (2)	1930- 39 (3)	1940- 45 (4)	1946- 50 (5)	1951- 64 (6)
January	126	247	35	62	110	78
February	77	35	102	122	88	73
March	127	50	34	471	63	159
April	171	348	380	37	93	72
May	84	38	130	54	119	80
June	37	9	25	45	45	59
July	90	21	42	51	107	185
August	115	94	91	13	221	36
September	144	188	73	120	207	29
October	81	36	81	49	80	156
November	63	49	122	82	34	92
December	88	84	86	93	33	181

Source : Calculated from the LG.

**Table 6.7\***: Indexes of Seasonal Variations in the Number of Mandays Lost in Strikes in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry

Month	Period					
	1922- 64 (1)	1922- 29 (2)	1930- 39 (3)	1940- 45 (4)	1946- 50 (5)	1951- 64 (6)
January	153	217	24	23	23	66
February	23	13	45	23	35	145
March	91	26	12	919	19	74
April	480	644	676	23	34	85
May	26	17	36	32	52	48
June	6	1	6	10	10	80
July	13	3	29	24	25	123
August	151	8	41	1	829	52
September	193	243	128	32	122	27
October	21	13	29	10	22	223
November	16	6	65	16	23	105
December	25	9	112	88	6	167

Source: Calculated from the LG.

\* A Note on the Construction of Tables 6.5, 6.6 and 6.7

(1) The seasonal index is the percentage of the average for each month of the year over the period under consideration to the monthly average for this period.

(2) The strikes are counted in the months in which they commenced. As for the number of workers involved and the mandays lost, these also are counted in the months in which the strikes leading to the workers' involvement and the loss of mandays commenced. Thus, all the workers involved

(continued)



refers to the years of unrest during the period immediately preceding and following Independence in 1947 and the general strike of 1950. The fifth, 1951-64, contains the years of comparatively more peaceful and stable industrial relations.

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(Note from the previous page continued)

in a strike are counted in the month in which the strike began, whether the workers became involved in that month or later; and all the mandays lost in a strike are counted in the month in which the strike began, whether the mandays were lost in that month or later.

Such counting does not distribute the workers and the mandays over the months in which the workers were actually involved and the mandays were actually lost. In the case of strikes lasting beyond a calendar month, especially in the case of general strikes, this leads to excessively high indexes in the months in which the strikes commenced, and extremely low indexes in later months in which the strikes were in progress. The indexes for April and September in the years 1922-29, for April in the years 1930-39, for March in the years 1940-45, and for August in the years 1946-50 are examples.

(3) The indexes as constructed here show, therefore, the seasonal variations in the commencement of strikes, and in the number of workers involved and the mandays lost in strikes commencing in particular months.

(4) An alternative way of dealing with the statistics would have been to count, in each month, all the strikes whether commenced in that month or earlier, all the workers involved whether they were involved in strikes beginning in that month or earlier, and all the mandays lost whether the strikes leading to the loss commenced in that month or earlier.

Apart from the fact that this would have made the calculation of the monthly average for each group of years a more cumbersome task because of the effort in avoiding multiple counting of strikes and workers, this method is less justifiable than the one adopted, because in the case of strikes and workers seasonality is more important at the commencement than in the progress of strikes. As for mandays lost, however, this method would have been probably more useful, since seasonality operates in their case throughout the course of strikes.

None of the three series of indexes for the five groups of years suggests any seasonal pattern. The unduly high and low indexes in some months in the case of workers involved and mandays lost are due to the reason mentioned earlier, namely the general strikes and the counting of workers and mandays in the months of the commencement of strikes. The month of June, again, has a uniformly low index, if not the lowest for all years, in each of the three series.

The high incidence of absenteeism in the month of June may have something to do with the low seasonal indexes in that month. The strikes being fewer, smaller and shorter in June may be due to the employment of a large number of "badli" workers or substitutes who replace the absent permanent workers. The "badli" workers find it neither feasible nor profitable to go on strikes; nor do they have much of an occasion either, since they have much less at stake as compared to the permanent workers.

The absence of any notable seasonality is not surprising, because neither the existing pattern of business nor the workers' capacity to strike work are affected by seasonal influences in the case of the Bombay cotton textile industry. The capacity to strike is not related in any specific manner to the climate of Bombay. As for the pattern of business, Mr. Mehta and Mrs. Brahme find some seasonality

in retail sales of cloth.<sup>10</sup> Generally speaking, however, the selling arrangements of Bombay mills are such that the burden of carrying stocks falls largely on the selling agents and wholesale traders, and therefore, mill production is hardly affected by seasonal variations in retail sales.<sup>11</sup> As there are no seasonal influences acting either on the industry or on the workers, it is but natural

10 S. D. Mehta, The Indian Cotton Textile Industry : An Economic Analysis (Bombay : The Textile Association, 1953), p. 165; and, Mrs. Sulabha Brahme, Distribution and Consumption of Cloth in India, With Special Reference to Poona City (Doctoral thesis submitted to the University of Poona in 1957), pp. 169-171. The latter has been published in an abridged form by the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Poona, in 1962.

11 Morris, The Emergence ....., p. 100, however, believes that seasonal fluctuations in the retail trade do affect mill production, leading thereby to seasonal lay-offs of workers in the industry. This cannot be true, for two reasons:

(1) The seasonal slackness in the retail trade is not followed by any decline in the wholesale trade. Brahme, Distribution and Consumption of Cloth ....., pp. 146-147, and M. P. Kacker, Marketing of Cotton Piecegoods in India (Bombay : Vora and Co., Publishers Pvt. Limited, 1962), p. 100.

(2) The wholesale trade acts as a buffer between the retail trade and mill production. The seasonal fluctuations in retail trade are absorbed by the wholesale trade and do not affect mill production. Mehta, The Indian Cotton Textile Industry : An Economic Analysis ....., p. 163, and Kacker, Marketing of Cotton Piecegoods ....., pp. 84-85.

that strikes do not show any seasonal fluctuations.<sup>12</sup>

12 The workers' practice of going to their native villages usually during the months from March to June would appear to be a potentially favourable factor enhancing their capacity to strike work: they might as well as go on a strike before going home to their villages. The value of this factor was probably recognized occasionally, as shown by the general strikes of 1928, 1929 and 1934 all of which commenced in the month of April, and the general strike of 1940 which commenced in the month of March. If there were a more general recognition of this factor among the workers and the unions, it would have been seen in a greater incidence of strikes, especially longer strikes, in the months of March, April and May when the workers leave for their villages. The seasonal indexes for the number of strikes, given in Table 6.5, do not show any such increase in these months. Nor is there any increased incidence of longer strikes in these three months. The following figures show that during the period 1922-1964 there were 117 strikes with a duration of more than 15 days in each case, and that only 29 of them commenced in the months of March, April and May.

The Monthly Incidence of the Commencement of  
Strikes With a Duration of More than 15 Days,  
During the Period 1922-1964

<u>Month</u>	<u>Number of Strikes</u>
January	12
February	10
March	11
April	10
May	8
June	2
July	11
August	13
September	7
October	10
November	7
December	16
Total	<u>117</u>

One may conclude, therefore, that either the unions and workers are not generally aware of this favourable factor, or if they are, they are unable to exploit the advantage because of possible difficulties in the resumption of work after the settlement of strikes.

CHAPTER VII  
CAUSES OF STRIKES

The causes of strikes in the Bombay cotton textile industry are examined in this chapter. The causes are grouped into nine categories and the annual statistics of the number of strikes, workers involved and mandays lost are presented according to these categories for the period 1922-1964. The chapter then goes on to discuss the changes in the importance of different causes over these 43 years.

1. The Underlying and Immediate Causes

The causes of strikes are many and varied. Even the striking workers may not often be aware of all causes of their action. Mr. Knowles distinguishes in this context between the "underlying causes" and "immediate causes" of strikes.<sup>1</sup>

By underlying causes he means causes which do not become explicit and the operation of which has to be inferred. He discusses them under three general headings, (1) bad social conditions, (2) fatigue and frustration in industrial work, and (3) the inferiority of the worker's position. He considers wage questions also as a possible underlying cause, although of a "somewhat different category". "Since wages stand for more than can be bought with them, wage strikes tend to be symbolic of wider grievances."<sup>2</sup>

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1 Knowles, Strikes ....., pp. 209-219 and 228-237.

2 Knowles, Strikes ....., p. 219.

Bad social conditions by way of nutrition, housing, education and so on may lead to unrest by creating a sense of injustice and class hatred. The fatigue and frustrations inherent in industrial work may accumulate gradually and erupt in a wave of industrial conflict in the guise of seemingly unrelated demands such as for increased wages or special allowances. The inferiority of the worker's position, partly the result of his weak bargaining power, makes him feel powerless, and he may find some emotional compensation in striking work. As for wage strikes, they may derive from a host of other demands, the desire for social justice, a feeling that this is the compensation for the frustrations of industrial life, etc.

The underlying causes mentioned above operate more or less over the entire field of industrial conflict. As they are common to most of the disputes, the statistics of industrial disputes take into account only the proximate or immediate causes of disputes.

Many strikes have a multiplicity of immediate causes. There is no single immediate cause as such. More often, the so-called immediate cause is only a last straw. The causes, again, do not remain the same. The demands change considerably during the course of many strikes. Also, the demands attributed to a strike by the workers may differ from the demands attributed to it by the employers.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The records of the Labour Court provide some examples on this point. In one strike, for instance, while the



The present discussion about causes is based on the information as given in the Labour Gazette. The sources of information for the Labour Gazette have already been mentioned in the fifth chapter.

## 2. The Classification of Causes

In cases where a strike involved many demands, the Labour Gazette generally lists the important demands in the order of importance. To disentangle the complexity of these causes and to classify them into a few manageable and clear-cut categories is a difficult problem, involving, as it does, close judgement and discretion.

The problem is particularly rendered difficult because many demands are of such a nature that it is possible to classify them under more than one head. To give an example, a strike against reduction in the number of doffer boys in the spinning department of a mill may be classified either under the category "retrenchment" or under the category "workload". As a matter of fact, the reduction in the number of doffer boys involves both retrenchment and an increase in the workload of the remaining doffer boys.

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(Footnote 3 from last page continued)

management stated that the demand was for an increased quantum of the bonus, the union stated that the demand was for a change in the management. In another strike, the demand, according to the management, was for an enquiry into the alleged assault on a worker by the head jobber and the assistant spinning master, while the demand, according to the union, was for removal of the assistant spinning master. Applications under the Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946, Nos. 250 and 459 of 1964.



Questions of such ambiguity have to be settled by examining the context in which the strikes occurred and the nature of the related demands that were made during the strikes.

The following classification has been adopted after a careful consideration of the demands of strikes in the Bombay cotton mills. Every effort has been made to include each demand under its most appropriate category, depending on the nature of the demand and the context of the strike.

1. Wages :- This category includes all demands relating to wages and allowances, disputes about insufficient or inferior material which results in lower earnings, disputes about the "Pali system"<sup>4</sup> and regular work for substitutes, and questions of gratuity.

2. Bonus :- This covers all demands relating to the quantum, and the time and mode of payment, of the annual bonus.

3. Workload :- This covers all questions about increases in workloads, demands for more assistants such as doffer boys, assignment of particular looms, and demands relating to rationalization and efficiency measures.

4. Leave and Holidays:- This category includes demands

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4 The term "Pali system" refers to the practice of giving work by rotation to a number of workers, so that prolonged lay-offs and retrenchment are avoided when there is not enough work for continuous employment of all the workers. The practice was adopted for some time in the late 1940's and early 1950's. It was confined mainly to the winding and reeling departments of mills where women form the majority of workers, and the practice does not have any significance at present.

relating to all kinds of leave, and demands for holidays on Sundays or for festivals and such other occasions.

5. Hours of work :- This covers questions of changes in hours of work, increases in hours of work, change-over of shifts, staggering the hours of work, and the commencement or closure of an additional shift without affecting total employment.

6. Personnel :- This includes questions of disciplinary action, fines, discharges, dismissals, victimization, insubordination and disorderly behaviour, reinstatement of individual workers or officers, transfer of individual workers to another shift or department, complaints against officers or other workers, and in general matters covered by the Standing Orders.

7. Retrenchment :- This category covers demands arising out of retrenchment of workers, fears about retrenchment, introduction of automatic machinery with a view to reduce the present number of workers, and demands for retrenchment compensation or reinstatement of retrenched workers.

8. Others :- This category includes miscellaneous demands of all kinds, such as for removal of some poisonous gas from mill premises, for prohibiting the officials of the representative union from collecting union subscriptions on mill premises, etc.

9. Hartals :- This covers demands relating to non-industrial matters. The Labour Gazette statistics began to

exclude hartals officially only since 1953. Some hartals, therefore, are found included in the statistics for earlier years. They had many varied demands, such as for removal of Muslim workers in 1946, and for increased rations during the World War II. They were also organized as protests against arrests of co-workers and political leaders. Many of the hartals, however, demanded, as they demand even today, holidays for deaths of co-workers or mill officials.

The distinction between demands for holidays under the category (4) and under the category (9) consists in the nature of the occasions for which holidays are demanded. The demands are treated as hartals if the occasions are related only to individual mills or only to the cotton textile industry, while they are included under the category (4) if the occasions are of wider significance.

Tables 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3 give the annual statistics of the number of strikes, workers involved and the mandays lost during the period 1922-1964, according to the nine categories of causes mentioned above.

A general examination of the statistics shows that wages and personnel problems have been the most important causes of strikes in the industry. It is also seen that wage strikes have declined in importance after the Standardization Award in 1947, while strikes due to personnel reasons continue to be important as in earlier years. Strikes about workload and retrenchment are seen to have been more recurrent for many years after 1945. Another recurrent

**Table 7.1 : Classification by Causes of the Number of Strikes in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry, 1922-1964**

Year	Cause									Total
	Wages	Bonus	Work-load	Leave and Holidays	Hours of Work	Personnel	Retrenchment	Others	Hartals	
1922	35	1	-	2	5	8	-	2	1	54
1923	34	1	1	-	-	12	4	-	-	52
1924	8	1	1	-	1	6	-	-	-	17
1925	10	-	1	-	-	5	-	-	-	16
1926	11	-	-	-	-	7	1	1	-	20
1927	8	-	2	-	-	7	1	-	-	18
1928	51	-	6	-	4	11	6	-	-	78
1929	10	-	3	1	-	10	1	-	-	25
1930	16	1	-	-	-	3	3	1	1	25
1931	8	-	-	-	-	4	2	-	-	14
1932	6	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	8
1933	24	-	8	-	2	-	1	-	-	35
1934	11	-	1	-	-	6	1	-	-	19
1935	4	-	2	-	1	1	-	-	-	8
1936	3	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	5
1937	15	1	2	-	3	1	2	-	-	24
1938	5	-	1	-	1	2	6	-	-	15
1939	8	-	-	-	1	2	4	-	-	15
1940	12	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12
1941	9	-	1	-	2	5	-	-	-	17
1942	14	4	1	-	3	4	1	-	4	31
1943	6	-	-	-	2	6	-	1	6	21
1944	12	1	-	-	2	9	-	2	-	26
1945	13	3	5	5	3	19	-	2	1	51
1946	41	1	6	22	6	42	2	11	24	155
1947	47	1	6	17	14	31	6	-	5	127
1948	10	-	9	6	7	12	2	1	6	53
1949	3	2	5	5	17	10	8	-	-	50
1950	2	3	9	-	4	5	6	-	-	29
1951	9	-	4	2	2	9	7	-	-	33
1952	5	3	7	6	-	7	3	1	-	32
1953	7	1	7	-	-	11	2	2	-	30
1954	1	3	1	1	-	9	1	-	-	16
1955	8	-	3	-	-	8	2	2	-	23
1956	1	29	5	-	1	10	2	1	-	49
1957	4	5	1	1	-	8	6	2	-	27
1958	1	-	1	-	-	11	4	-	-	17
1959	2	6	7	-	-	9	1	-	-	25
1960	4	-	2	-	1	9	-	-	-	16
1961	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	5
1962	-	11	1	-	-	8	-	1	-	21
1963	3	3	4	1	1	9	2	1	-	24
1964	5	3	2	1	-	13	2	1	-	27

Source : Compiled from the Labour Gazette.

**Table 7.2 : Classification by Causes of the Number of Workers Involved in Strikes in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry, 1922-1964**

Year	Cause									
	Wages	Bonus	Work-load	Leave and Holidays	Hours of Work	Personnel	Retrenchment	Others	Hartals	Total
1922	28,534	2,577	-	62,036	13,250	2,286	-	380	2,400	111,463
1923	22,290	3,000	100	-	-	15,454	5,000	-	-	45,844
1924	4,001	162,355	100	-	300	718	-	-	-	167,474
1925	153,068	-	1,500	-	-	1,353	-	-	-	155,921
1926	8,068	-	-	-	-	5,431	2,406	145	-	16,050
1927	11,454	-	3,450	-	-	5,234	18	-	-	20,156
1928	93,273	-	30,958	-	575	11,530	158,350	-	-	294,686
1929	15,759	-	4,000	1,600	-	130,201	4,000	-	-	155,560
1930	18,052	2,300	-	-	-	1,733	9,010	2,807	2,370	36,272
1931	14,221	-	-	-	-	5,194	5,913	-	-	25,328
1932	4,530	-	-	-	-	325	-	-	-	4,855
1933	29,390	-	8,508	-	3,500	-	72	-	-	41,470
1934	101,814	-	1,273	-	-	1,410	100	-	-	104,597
1935	6,333	-	1,587	-	160	240	-	-	-	8,320
1936	3,390	-	6,560	-	-	350	-	-	-	10,300
1937	27,350	530	5,708	-	6,348	665	1,563	-	-	42,164
1938	15,422	-	972	-	216	4,912	9,715	-	-	31,237
1939	8,060	-	-	-	150	975	7,620	-	-	16,805
1940	181,494	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	181,494
1941	15,881	-	52	-	21,858	5,135	-	-	-	42,926
1942	26,236	11,275	2,125	-	11,782	6,035	1,821	-	11,133	70,407
1943	9,346	-	-	-	2,425	9,261	-	6,200	17,100	44,332
1944	37,694	90	-	-	4,600	11,286	-	6,548	-	60,218
1945	15,468	689	824	10,879	4,447	22,532	-	3,690	678	59,207
1946	67,918	243	10,318	118,252	13,722	98,087	2,568	40,565	57,186	408,859
1947	256,774	28	12,527	44,064	18,799	56,394	10,684	-	18,748	418,018
1948	15,753	-	11,197	17,281	5,739	20,255	94	58	11,199	81,576
1949	3,731	2,628	9,944	9,905	37,606	18,484	14,651	-	-	96,949
1950	22,892	208,571	26,407	-	8,563	1,976	11,853	-	-	280,262
1951	26,324	-	7,547	6,960	977	21,940	15,390	-	-	79,138
1952	21,692	2,940	13,580	6,356	-	12,029	1,957	2,846	-	61,400
1953	9,355	75	17,327	-	-	12,312	2,543	4,838	-	46,450
1954	800	8,652	2,508	1,100	-	7,838	14	-	-	20,912
1955	26,829	-	2,553	-	-	5,251	57	2,308	-	36,998
1956	111	91,323	7,673	-	100	16,345	105	2,217	-	117,874
1957	1,386	6,978	27	3,013	-	17,720	16,020	10,800	-	55,944
1958	200	-	28	-	-	19,551	8,450	-	-	28,229
1959	1,351	16,584	7,449	-	-	36,428	886	-	-	62,698
1960	7,821	-	60,829	-	2,295	12,898	-	-	-	83,843
1961	-	-	-	-	-	11,483	-	-	-	11,483
1962	-	38,674	6,072	-	-	9,342	-	1,423	-	55,511
1963	4,331	52,749	3,291	1,250	4,292	14,012	2,118	126	-	82,169
1964	6,213	4,755	354	1,837	-	30,631	5,182	1,159	-	50,131

Source : Compiled from the Labour Gazette.



Table 7.3 : Classification by Causes of the Number of Mandays Lost in Strikes in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry, 1922-1964

Year	Cause									Total
	Wages (1)	Bonus (2)	Workload (3)	Leave and Holidays (4)	Hours of Work (5)	Personnel (6)	Retrenchment (7)	Others (8)	Hartals (9)	
1922	236,026	5,154	-	124,072	73,700	20,898	-	2,160	20,800	482,810
1923	194,089	6,000	200	-	-	187,214	72,100	-	-	459,603
1924	40,592	9,165,967	400	-	900	2,000	-	-	-	9,209,859
1925	11,234,952	-	3,000	-	-	12,540	-	-	-	11,250,492
1926	42,081	-	-	-	-	25,593	9,624	725	-	78,023
1927	133,683	-	104,400	-	-	39,760	144	-	-	277,987
1928	575,763	-	1,012,085	-	1,140	84,328	22,362,423	-	-	24,035,739
1929	115,853	-	11,013	3,688	-	7,686,408	297,410	-	-	8,114,372
1930	110,036	12,650	-	-	-	2,107	22,019	2,807	4,740	154,359
1931	146,313	-	-	-	-	53,918	314,075	-	-	514,306
1932	82,367	-	-	-	-	385	-	-	-	82,752
1933	617,360	-	47,066	-	70,583	-	776	-	-	735,785
1934	2,798,379	-	1,836	-	-	2,203	705	-	-	2,803,123
1935	33,478	-	23,172	-	260	863	-	-	-	57,773
1936	111,269	-	39,360	-	-	520	-	-	-	151,149
1937	142,347	1,325	70,225	-	13,015	1,150	6,063	-	-	234,125
1938	47,791	-	972	-	272	29,893	77,354	-	-	156,282
1939	15,978	-	-	-	300	1,463	30,645	-	-	48,386
1940	4,543,104	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4,543,104
1941	120,679	-	89	-	60,512	9,012	-	-	-	190,292
1942	112,142	40,835	21,244	-	24,510	37,307	7,428	-	45,985	289,451
1943	48,904	-	-	-	18,752	69,310	-	31,000	72,077	240,043
1944	407,572	90	-	-	2,267	64,158	-	44,546	-	518,633
1945	28,096	1,682	1,893	10,728	11,150	103,005	-	40,588	678	197,820

(continued)

Table 7.3 : (continued)

Year	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
1946	448,530	3,645	147,047	113,635	25,877	444,786	4,591	86,052	88,314	1,362,477
1947	1,548,846	74	60,268	194,301	57,396	274,367	42,674	-	33,557	2,211,483
1948	35,857	-	124,854	17,281	15,764	25,135	148	44	30,104	249,187
1949	31,045	3,528	55,989	7,587	18,985	25,385	97,455	-	-	239,974
1950	20,052	9,422,423	263,609	-	13,713	935	31,646	-	-	9,752,378
1951	90,832	-	234,464	6,773	587	83,974	64,802	-	-	481,432
1952	165,419	1,134	54,697	4,839	-	16,079	14,294	6,791	-	263,253
1953	6,539	42	212,618	-	-	64,267	3,872	39,136	-	326,474
1954	1,424	14,488	125,780	550	-	8,422	1	-	-	150,665
1955	27,883	-	28,726	-	-	73,209	76	7,226	-	137,120
1956	111	152,272	16,768	-	100	15,979	30	4,082	-	189,342
1957	558	6,120	2	3,013	-	33,272	47,009	64,500	-	154,474
1958	50	-	25	-	-	16,987	14,781	-	-	31,843
1959	258	12,551	14,357	-	-	43,892	3,368	-	-	74,426
1960	6,044	-	60,801	-	40,543	27,394	-	-	-	134,782
1961	-	-	-	-	-	16,295	-	-	-	16,295
1962	-	62,692	6,389	-	-	14,264	-	1,423	-	84,768
1963	15,885	108,631	23,697	1,250	6,147	15,424	2,118	505	-	173,657
1964	40,466	2,350	265	1,837	-	88,560	6,442	1,633	-	141,553

Source : Compiled from the Labour Gazette.



cause of strikes in recent years has been the payment of the annual bonus.

### 3. Changes in the Importance of Different Causes

Over the years, there are naturally many changes in the problems facing the industry and the workers. The old problems are either settled or disappear under changed circumstances, and new ones emerge to take their place. These changes give rise to changes in the importance of different causes of strikes.

In considering the changes in these causes, the period 1922-1964 may be divided into groups of years such that the years within each group have broadly the same characteristics and show the operation of the same set of influences on the industry and the workers. Such division has already been made once before, in the study of seasonal fluctuations in strikes in the last chapter. The same groups are, therefore, adopted here to study the changes in the importance of the causes of strikes. Table 7.4 shows the share of each group in the total number of strikes, workers involved and the mandays lost during the 43 years of the period 1922-1964.

#### (a) Causes of strikes in the years 1922-29

With the end of the post-war boom, the trade turned bad at the close of 1922. The Bombay cotton textile industry sought to face the depression by cutting down wage costs

**Table 7.4 :** The Share of Each of the Five Groups of Years Within the Period 1922-1964 in the Total Number of Strikes, Workers Involved, and the Mandays Lost

Years	No. of Strikes	Percentage	No. of Workers Involved	Percentage	No. of Mandays Lost	Percentage
1922-29	280	20.51	967,154	25.28	53,908,885	66.55
1930-39	168	12.31	321,348	8.40	4,938,040	6.10
1940-45	158	11.58	458,584	11.99	5,979,343	7.38
1946-50	414	30.33	1,285,664	33.61	13,815,499	17.06
1951-64	345	25.27	792,780	20.72	2,360,084	2.91
Total	1,365	100.00	3,825,530	100.00	81,001,851	100.00

Source: Table 5.1.

and introduction of rationalized methods of work. The discontinuation of the payment of bonus led to a general strike in 1924, and the proposed reductions in the dearness allowance, which were averted ultimately by the abolition of the excise duty, caused another general strike in 1925. The attempts at rationalization in the use of labour engendered fears of unemployment among the workers and were the cause of the general strike in 1928. The general strike in 1929 was in a sense a continuation of the general strike in the previous year, the dispute being aggravated by the hostile attitude of the Bombay Girni Kamgar Union towards the millowners.

Table 7.5 below gives the statistics of strikes in the

eight years 1922-29 and shows the proportionate importance of different causes leading to these strikes.

**Table 7.5** : Importance of Different Causes in Strikes in the Years 1922-29

Cause	No. of Strikes	Percentage	No. of Workers Involved	Percentage	No. of Mandays Lost	Percentage
1. Wages	167	59.65	336,447	34.79	12,573,039	23.32
2. Bonus	3	1.07	167,932	17.36	9,177,121	17.02
3. Workload	14	5.00	40,108	4.15	1,131,098	2.10
4. Leave and Holidays	3	1.07	63,636	6.58	127,760	0.24
5. Hours of Work	10	3.57	14,125	1.46	75,740	0.14
6. Personnel	66	23.57	172,207	17.81	8,058,741	14.95
7. Retrenchment	13	4.64	169,774	17.55	22,741,701	42.18
8. Others	3	1.07	525	0.05	2,885	0.01
9. Hartals	1	0.36	2,400	0.25	20,800	0.04
<b>Total</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>967,154</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>53,908,885</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source : Tables 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3.

While the number of strikes shows the frequency of the recurrence, the number of workers involved may be said to indicate the extent, and the number of mandays lost, the severity, of each cause.<sup>5</sup> Table 7.5 shows that during the

<sup>5</sup> It is obvious that the number of strikes shows the recurrence of each cause. But the number of workers involved

(continued)

years 1922-29 wages were the most important cause according to the number of strikes and the workers involved. The number of mandays lost, however, show retrenchment as having been the most important cause of strikes. Whatever the order of importance, the three series of statistics together give wages, retrenchment, personnel problems and bonus as the prominent causes in these eight years. This is quite as expected, since it was these four causes that led to the four general strikes in this period.

(b) Causes of strikes in the years 1930-39

Beginning with 1930, the general depression in the economy added to the already existing difficulties of the Bombay cotton textile industry. A number of mills were forced to close down entirely and many others resorted to part-time working. Reductions in wages were considerable, particularly in 1933. The unrest due to the large-scale unemployment and the wage cuts culminated in the general strike of 1934. The years 1935-39 were none too prosperous, but all the same the industry could recover from the effects of the depression and resume normal working.

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(Footnote 5 from last page continued)

indicates the extent of the cause with some exaggeration, because the statistics of workers involved include both the "directly involved" and the "indirectly involved" workers, whereas, properly speaking, the cause extends only to the "directly involved" workers. It is for the same reason that the number of mandays lost exaggerates the severity of each cause, because the actual severity of the cause is represented by the number of mandays lost by the "directly involved" workers only.

Table 7.6 gives the statistics of strikes during the years 1930-39 and shows the proportionate importance of the causes of these strikes.

Table 7.6 : Importance of Different Causes in Strikes in the Years 1930-39

Cause	No. of Strikes	Percentage	No. of Workers Involved	Percentage	No. of Mandays Lost	Percentage
1. Wages	100	59.51	228,562	71.12	4,105,318	83.13
2. Bonus	2	1.19	2,830	0.88	13,975	0.28
3. Workload	15	8.93	24,608	7.66	182,631	3.70
4. Leave and Holidays	-	0.00	-	0.00	-	0.00
5. Hours of Work	8	4.76	10,374	3.23	84,430	1.71
6. Personnel	22	13.10	15,804	4.92	92,502	1.87
7. Retrenchment	19	11.31	33,993	10.58	451,637	9.15
8. Others	1	0.60	2,807	0.87	2,807	0.06
9. Hartals	1	0.60	2,370	0.74	4,740	0.10
<b>Total</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>321,348</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>4,938,040</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Tables 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3.

By all the three criteria, the number of strikes, workers involved and the mandays lost, wages are seen to be the most important cause of strikes in these years. This is so because

of the general strike of 1934 and the many smaller strikes against wage cuts during the years 1930-34. Retrenchment, workload and personnel questions are the other important causes but their importance is of a much lower order as compared to that of wages.

(c) Causes of strikes in the years 1940-45

The World War II commenced in September 1939. As the Communists were opposed to the war until Russia joined it in June 1941, the Bombay Girni Kamgar Union agitated against the war and the alleged increase in the cost of living. In pursuance of its demand for higher allowances, the union organized an unsuccessful general strike in 1940.

The cost of living, however, did really go up in the years that followed, and the workers went on strikes demanding better wages and allowances.

The war years brought remarkable prosperity to the Bombay mill industry. With the demand for the output running high, idle capacity disappeared rapidly and the mills resorted to working in two shifts. The average daily employment in Bombay mills increased from 140,093 in 1940 to 213,085 in 1945.<sup>6</sup> But the demand being far in excess of the production, the prices ruled high in spite of the attempts of the government at controlling the prices, and

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<sup>6</sup> The figures of employment are from the MOA's Mill Statements, as adjusted for night-shift employment and given in Morris, The Emergence . . . . ., p. 214. The figures are for years ending 31st August.

the industry made huge profits.

Table 7.7 gives the statistics of strikes in the years 1940-45 and shows the proportionate importance of different causes of strikes.

**Table 7.7 : Importance of Different Causes in Strikes in the Years 1940-45**

Cause	No. of Strikes	Percentage	No. of Workers Involved	Percentage	No. of Mandays Lost	Percentage
1. Wages	66	41.78	286,119	62.40	5,260,497	87.98
2. Bonus	8	5.06	12,054	2.63	42,607	0.71
3. Workload	7	4.43	3,001	0.65	23,226	0.39
4. Leave and Holidays	5	3.16	10,879	2.37	10,728	0.18
5. Hours of Work	12	7.59	45,112	9.84	117,191	1.96
6. Personnel	43	27.23	54,249	11.83	282,792	4.73
7. Retrenchment	1	0.63	1,821	0.40	7,428	0.12
8. Others	5	3.16	16,438	3.58	116,134	1.94
9. Hartals	11	6.96	28,911	6.30	118,740	1.99
Total	158	100.00	458,584	100.00	5,979,343	100.00

Source: Tables 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3.



Wages, again, are seen to be the most important cause according to all the three criteria, the recurrence, the extent and the severity. As compared to the previous period, personnel problems have become more important in these years, while retrenchment has lost its importance entirely. The hours of work also have assumed some more significance due to the general introduction of two-shift working. As regards the 11 hartals, nine of them were against inadequate supplies of grains at mill shops and the other two were against some arrests made by the police.

(d) Causes of strikes in the years 1946-50

The first two years in this period were years with the highest incidence of strikes, there being 155 strikes in 1946 and 127 strikes in 1947. The increased cost of living, the uncertain atmosphere on the eve of Independence and the growth of defiant indiscipline among the workers were responsible for such a large number of strikes. The standardization of wages in 1947 raised the average wage-level by nearly 28 per cent, but a section of the workers, the drawers-in, were dissatisfied with the rates fixed for them and went on a general strike demanding increased rates. Whatever the immediate dissatisfaction, the standardization was remarkably successful in reducing the importance of wage disputes in later years.

The political rivalries, which were keen for some time after Independence, were carried over into the field of unionism, and unions with different political colours

struggled against each other for the loyalties of workers. With a view to demonstrate its hold over the workers and to discredit the Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh, the Mill Mazdoor Sabha of the Socialists exploited the opportunity provided by the award of the Industrial Court regarding the payment of bonus for the year 1949. It organized a general strike against the amount of the bonus and the exemption of four mills from the liability to pay the bonus. The strike, however, was unsuccessful, and led to a serious weakening of the Mill Mazdoor Sabha, which lost almost all its influence over the Bombay cotton mill workers.

Table 7.8 gives the statistics of strikes in the years 1946-50, and shows the proportionate importance of different causes in these strikes.

Both the number of strikes and the workers involved show wages as the most important cause in these years. But bonus is seen to be the most important according to the number of mandays lost. This severity of bonus disputes is mainly due to the general strike in 1950. Other important causes are personnel questions, leave and holidays, workload and hours of work. The frequent recurrence of strikes over personnel questions is due to increased indiscipline among the workers, which is also seen in the large number of hartals in these years. It is partly the same indiscipline which is responsible for the many strikes over disputes regarding leave and holidays, hours of work and workload, although it is true that a genuine basis was

**Table 7.8 : Importance of Different Causes in Strikes in the Years 1946-50**

Cause	No. of Strikes	Percentage	No. of Workers Involved	Percentage	No. of Mandays Lost	Percentage
1. Wages	103	24.89	367,068	28.54	2,084,330	15.09
2. Bonus	7	1.69	211,470	16.45	9,429,670	68.25
3. Workload	35	8.45	70,393	5.48	651,767	4.72
4. Leave and Holidays	50	12.08	189,502	14.74	332,804	2.41
5. Hours of Work	48	11.59	84,429	6.57	131,735	0.95
6. Personnel	100	24.15	195,196	15.18	770,608	5.58
7. Retrenchment	24	5.80	39,850	3.10	176,514	1.28
8. Others	12	2.90	40,623	3.16	86,096	0.62
9. Hertzels	35	8.45	87,133	6.78	151,975	1.10
Total	414	100.00	1,285,664	100.00	13,815,499	100.00

Source : Tables 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3.

provided for some of the strikes by the passage of the Factories (Amendment) Act, 1945, which granted holidays with pay on certain conditions, and the staggering of working hours in 1949 because of the shortage of electric power after the cyclones at the end of 1948.

(e) Causes of strikes in the years 1951-64

There was a remarkable growth of stability in industrial

relations in these years. A part of the credit for this goes to the representative union under the law, the Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh. The Sangh believes in the value of mutual negotiations and peaceful and amicable settlement of all disputes. Among other reasons for the stability that may be mentioned here are the relatively reduced importance of union rivalries, the standardization of wages and the use of the legal machinery under the Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946, for arbitration and settlement of all important disputes. The fact that, excepting the depression in the years 1957-58, the Bombay mill industry has not had any serious difficulties during this period is another important reason for the more stable industrial relations.

Table 7.9 gives the statistics of strikes in the years 1951-64, and shows the proportionate importance of different causes leading to these strikes.

For the first time, wages are seen to have lost their significance as the most important cause of strikes. Instead, personnel problems have become the most important cause, according to the number of strikes and the workers involved. But on the basis of the severity of effects, workload has been the most important, as strikes over questions of workload involved the largest loss of mandays. Bonus and retrenchment are the other notable causes in these years, the disputes about bonus involving nearly as many workers as were involved in strikes over personnel problems.

**Table 7.9 : Importance of Different Causes in Strikes in the Years 1951-64**

Cause	No. of Strikes	Percentage	No. of Workers Involved	Percentage	No. of Mandays Lost	Percentage
1. Wages	50	14.49	106,413	13.42	355,469	15.06
2. Bonus	64	18.55	222,730	28.09	360,280	15.27
3. Workload	45	13.04	129,238	16.30	778,589	32.99
4. Leave and Holidays	12	3.48	20,516	2.59	18,262	0.77
5. Hours of Work	5	1.45	7,664	0.97	47,377	2.01
6. Personnel	126	36.52	227,780	28.74	518,018	21.95
7. Retrenchment	32	9.28	52,722	6.65	156,793	6.64
8. Others	11	3.19	25,717	3.24	125,296	5.31
9. Hartals	-	0.00	-	0.00	-	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>792,780</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>2,360,084</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source : Tables 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3.

With the decline in the importance of wage disputes because of the standardization of wages in 1947, it is but natural that personnel problems have become the most important cause according to the number of strikes and the workers involved. As compared to other causes, the category of personnel problems covers a wider range of disputes, and the disputes in this category are of a more continuous nature.

The significance of workload as a cause mainly derives from the attempts at rationalization of workloads in the years 1951-54, and the general strike for one day in 1960 to protest against rationalization. Retrenchment had assumed some importance particularly in the years 1951-53 and 1957-58.

As regards strikes over issues pertaining to bonus, it is seen that they have become more recurrent and have involved more workers than in the previous period. The number of mandays lost, however, was far greater in the previous period because of the general strike in 1950.

The increased incidence of bonus strikes is chiefly due to the amount of bonus paid being different in different mills according to the profits made by each mill. Such differences in the amounts of bonus are the result of the adoption since 1956 of the formula evolved by the Labour Appellate Tribunal in 1950 for the calculation of bonus.<sup>7</sup> Bonus has been paid according to this formula for 1953 and the later years, and almost invariably there have been strikes in many mills, which paid smaller amounts, whenever bonus has been declared in the Bombay mill industry.

#### 4. Concluding Remarks

The discussion in the foregoing pages has shown the changing importance of different causes of strikes over the years during the period 1922-1964.

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7 MOA, annual report for 1956, pp. 63-64 and 201-208.

The importance of wage disputes up to 1947 was but natural under the circumstances of diversity in the wage rates of different mills and recurrent attempts at reductions in wages. Also, a part of the importance may have been due to the fact mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, that wages tend to be symbolic of many wider grievances. The success of the standardization of wages in 1947<sup>in</sup> neutralizing this important source of conflict has been really remarkable.

Personnel problems have been an important cause over all these years. As stated earlier, their importance is due to the wide range and the continuous nature of the disputes that fall into the category of personnel problems. There may also be some truth in the general complaint about the increased prevalence of indiscipline and insubordination among the workers. The enforcement of Standing Orders, the provision of uniform and improved working conditions, and the setting up of an elaborate machinery under the law for solving all industrial disputes, none of these have had any noticeable effect in reducing the importance of disputes over personnel causes.

The practice of paying an annual bonus, which was adopted in 1919, was discontinued in 1924, and was revived again only after 1941. This is the reason why there were only two bonus strikes in the years 1925-41. It has been seen already that the increased incidence of bonus strikes in recent years is mainly due to the unequal distribution



of bonus among the workers in different mills.

The occasional prominence of other causes has been explained in the discussion pertaining to the relevant years.

It may be observed that political causes of strikes have been omitted in the discussion. There are three reasons for this omission. Firstly, as mentioned in the fifth chapter, the strike statistics since 1953, and to some extent even the statistics for the earlier years, exclude work stoppages over purely political issues. Secondly, political causes that may be implicit in many apparently economic strikes cannot be analysed satisfactorily without an elaborate examination of the relationships between trade unions and political parties, and obviously such an examination is beyond the scope of this study. Thirdly, political issues may reasonably be expected to have some relevance only in the case of strikes sponsored by trade unions. But the majority of strikes in the Bombay cotton mills, however, are spontaneous outbursts on the part of the workers themselves. Since the trade unions have hardly any voice in the commencement of these unplanned and spontaneous strikes, political causes are not likely to be of much significance in regard to these strikes.

Of course it is a fact that unions do interest themselves in such strikes once they commence and participate in their conduct and settlement, and it may be that some of these strikes would not have occurred if the workers were not confident of the unions coming to their help. One may

conclude, therefore, that political factors are not important in the occurrence of the majority of the strikes, but may have some influence on their conduct and their results.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SOME IMPORTANT INFLUENCES ON STRIKES

In the discussion of the causes of strikes in the last chapter, it was seen how there are many underlying causes that influence strike activity. In addition to these underlying causes, there are a number of other miscellaneous factors that affect strikes. Like the underlying causes, most of these factors are general in their operation and are not associated with any particular category of immediate causes. The influence of these factors may operate either by way of changing the capacity of workers to strike work and the employers' capacity to resist strikes, or by way of affecting the emergence and proliferation of immediate causes leading to strikes. Among such factors, this chapter studies the growth of employment and trade union membership, the occurrence of strikes in other industries in the city, the cost of living and the state of trade in the industry.

#### 1. Employment and Trade Union Membership

If a hundred workers have two cases of grievances, a thousand workers may reasonably be expected to have a few more. An increase in the cases of grievances, in turn, may be expected to result in an increase in the number of strikes.

Similarly, an increase in the number of strikes may be expected when there is an increase in the degree of unionization, since organized workers are supposed to have a greater

capacity to go on strikes than the unorganized workers.

In the case of the Bombay cotton textile industry, however, the expansion in employment and the growth of unionization have not been followed by any increase in the number of strikes. The statistics of employment, union membership and strikes are given in Table 8.1.

It has been seen in Chapter VI that the long-term trend in the number of strikes and workers involved is towards a constant level of strikes and strikers, while the long-term trend in the number of mandays lost is towards an unmistakable reduction in the mandays lost. Also, column (7) in Table 8.1 shows that there has been a considerable diminution over the years in the number of mandays lost per worker employed in the industry. Such a decline in strike activity has occurred in spite of sizable increases in employment and union membership.

As regards union membership, it may be mentioned here that in individual cases, such as the general strike of 1929, an increase in membership may have preceded the commencement of the strike. Apart from such isolated instances, which do not support any inference as to causality, union membership does not appear to have a noticeable relationship to strike activity.

This is so, because most of the strikes in the industry are spontaneous outbursts on the part of the workers, and they are commenced without consulting any union. However, the Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh, the Mumbai Girni Kamgar

**Table 8.1 : Average Daily Employment, Trade Union Membership, Number of Strikes, Workers Involved, Mandays Lost, and the Number of Mandays Lost per Worker Employed, in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry : 1922-1964**

Year (1)	Average Daily Employment (2)	Trade Union Membership (3)	No. of Strikes (4)	No. of Workers Involved (5)	No. of Mandays Lost (6)	No. of Mandays Lost per worker employed (7)
1922	149,224	-	54	111,463	482,810	3.24
1923	148,771	-	52	45,844	459,603	3.09
1924	148,414	-	17	167,474	9,209,859	62.06
1925	153,009	-	16	155,921	11,250,492	73.53
1926	149,099	8,741	20	16,050	78,023	0.52
1927	154,698	11,388	18	20,156	277,987	1.80
1928	129,275	9,895	78	294,686	24,035,739	185.93
1929	106,710	52,509	25	155,560	8,114,372	76.04
1930	136,774	5,006	25	36,272	154,359	1.13
1931	136,404	3,129	14	25,328	514,306	3.77
1932	143,120	5,466	8	4,855	82,752	0.58
1933	129,213	5,072	35	41,470	735,785	5.69
1934	105,271	7,804	19	104,597	2,803,123	26.63
1935	136,052	8,439	8	8,320	57,773	0.42
1936	137,326	9,859	5	10,300	151,149	1.10
1937	139,215	10,075	24	42,164	234,125	1.68
1938	168,130	17,653	15	31,237	156,282	0.93
1939	156,046	12,837	15	16,805	48,386	0.31
1940	140,093	19,703	12	181,494	4,543,104	32.43
1941	175,656	41,491	17	42,926	190,292	1.08
1942	192,430	25,749	31	70,407	289,451	1.50
1943	210,735	20,271	21	44,332	240,043	1.14
1944	212,471	19,839	26	60,218	518,633	2.44
1945	213,085	33,658	51	59,207	197,820	0.93
1946	190,795	34,072	155	408,859	1,362,477	7.14
1947	211,347	74,400	127	418,018	2,211,483	10.46
1948	201,083	66,745	53	81,576	249,187	1.24
1949	209,508	83,145	50	96,949	239,974	1.15
1950	200,135	92,538	29	280,262	9,752,378	48.73
1951	196,363	67,166	33	79,138	481,432	2.45
1952	197,900	54,167	32	61,400	263,253	1.33
1953	204,274	84,922	30	46,450	326,474	1.60
1954	207,179	76,695	16	20,912	150,665	0.73
1955	203,391	111,331	23	36,998	137,120	0.67
1956	212,762	84,107	49	117,874	189,342	0.89
1957	212,608	88,908	27	55,944	154,474	0.73
1958	200,446	83,488	17	28,229	31,843	0.16
1959	191,335	97,172	25	62,698	74,426	0.39
1960	194,398	172,193	16	83,843	134,782	0.69
1961	197,404	145,014	5	11,483	16,295	0.08
1962	197,922	86,705	21	55,511	84,768	0.43
1963	193,303	108,561	24	82,169	173,657	0.90
1964	197,269	138,772	27	50,131	141,553	0.72

**Sources :** (1) The employment figures in Column (2) are taken from the same sources as the employment figures in Table 3.1.

(2) The figures of trade union membership are from Table 3.1.

(3) The strike statistics in Columns (4), (5) and (6) are from Table 5.1.

(4) The number of mandays lost per worker employed have been obtained by dividing the figures in Column (6) by the figures in Column (2).

Union or any of the other unions in the industry do enter the picture after the commencement, and their entry influences the conduct, duration and settlement of strikes to some extent.

Another reason for the strike activity not being related to union membership is the fact pointed out in Chapter III, that membership is not always a guide to the influence of a union. As the workers join a union generally because of the propaganda made by the union or because of the immediate benefits it has to offer, membership of a union does not mean acceptance of its disciplinary authority.

A third reason may be that the bulk of the increased membership in recent years has been with the Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh, which is committed to discouragement of strikes and peaceful solution of all industrial disputes.

## 2. Strikes in Other Industries in the City

Much can be said in justification of the enquiry whether strikes in different industries move together over the years. The general political and economic changes affect all the industries in more or less similar ways. The unions in different industries may be affiliated to the same central organization and may formulate their policies after mutual consultation. The occurrence of strikes in one industry may create an atmosphere of strike-proneness which may influence workers in other industries.

Such correspondence between strikes in the Bombay

cotton textile industry and strikes in other industries in the city may be examined with the help of Table 8.2. The table gives the number of strikes in these two categories for the period 1922-1964.

It is seen that strikes in the two categories roughly moved together in the years 1940-47 and again in 1951-53. The rise in the years 1940-47 may be attributed to the increases in the cost of living during and after the World War II and the scarcity conditions created by the War. The low level of union activity may account for the decline in the years 1951-53.

Barring these few years, however, there is no correspondence between strikes in the cotton textile industry and strikes in other industries. As a matter of fact, the long-term trend in strikes in the cotton textiles is towards a constant level of incidence, while the strikes in other industries show a considerable increase over the years.

One of the probable reasons for the increase in the number of strikes in other industries is the remarkable growth in the size of these industries. Some idea of the growth may be had from the fact that in 1922 Bombay City and the Bombay Suburban District together had only 279 factories of all kinds employing 211,394 workers,<sup>1</sup> while in 1959 Greater

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1 Government of Bombay, Annual Factory Report of the Presidency of Bombay, 1922 (Poona: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery), pp. iv, viii, x and xii.



**Table 8.2 : The Number of Strikes in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry and the Number of All Other Strikes in the City : 1922-1964**

Year	Cotton Textile Strikes	All Other Strikes	Year	Cotton Textile Strikes	All Other Strikes
1922	54	17	1944	26	139
1923	52	16	1945	51	170
1924	17	8	1946	155	232
1925	16	6	1947	127	349
1926	20	5	1948	53	353
1927	18	3	1949	50	219
1928	78	9	1950	29	151
1929	25	9	1951	33	193
1930	25	19	1952	32	142
1931	14	6	1953	30	100
1932	8	19	1954	16	126
1933	35	9	1955	23	152
1934	19	15	1956	49	162
1935	8	15	1957	27	151
1936	5	10	1958	17	124
1937	24	23	1959	25	154
1938	15	52	1960	16	167
1939	15	50	1961	5	196
1940	12	49	1962	21	280
1941	17	63	1963	24	310
1942	31	89	1964	27	376
1943	21	115			

- Sources:** (1) The number of strikes in the cotton textile industry are from Table 5.1.
- (2) The number of strikes in other industries in Bombay City are compiled from the LG volumes. The area of Bombay City for all the years is taken to be the same as the area of the present Greater Bombay.

Bombay<sup>2</sup> had 3,861 factories employing 456,109 workers.<sup>3</sup> It need not be pointed out that the cotton textile industry had but a small share in this great expansion.

Whether the strike activity in the other industries has increased or decreased relative to the employment in those industries does not have much relevance here. What is relevant is the fact of the absolute increase in the occurrence of strikes, and, what is a possible consequence, the creation of an atmosphere of strike-proneness. The statistics, however, show that the strike activity in the cotton textile industry does not respond to strikes in other industries.

### 3. The Cost of Living

Although a slow and gradual increase in the cost of living may go unnoticed, large increases in a relatively short period may be expected to provoke a reaction, because of the noticeable reductions in real wages. One of the forms in which the unrest due to reduced real wages may be expected to manifest itself is a higher level of strike activity.

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2 It may be noted that in addition to the former Bombay City and the Bombay Suburban District, the area of Greater Bombay includes also about 75 sq.miles from the Thana District. The Times of India, Directory and Year Book . . . ., for 1958-59, p. 396.

3 Government of Maharashtra, Statistical Abstract of Maharashtra State, 1960-61 (Bombay: Bureau of Economics and Statistics, Government of Maharashtra), pp. 298-299.

It can be seen from Table 8.3 that the general pattern of changes in the cost of living for the working class in Bombay has been a decline in the years 1922-34 and a rise in the years 1935-64, the exceptions being 1924, 1929, 1945, 1954, and 1955. The notable changes are the decline in 1931 and the increases in 1942-43, 1946-48, 1953, 1958 and 1964.

Apart from the sizable reduction in 1934, the index of average money wages of the Bombay cotton mill workers shows an impressive rise over the years. The really rapid increases have been only after 1941, in which year the dearness allowance became linked to the cost of living index.<sup>4</sup> Also, the standardization of wages in 1947 involved a sudden increase in the average wage level by nearly 28 per cent.

Changes in the cost of living and the money wages are combined in the movement of the real value of money wages. The index of real wages has risen from 70 in 1922 to 130 in 1964, showing that the real wages have nearly doubled during the period. The notable changes are the increases in the

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<sup>4</sup> Government of India, Labour Investigation Committee, Report on Enquiry into Conditions of Labour in the Cotton Mill Industry in India, by Mr. S. K. Deshpande (Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1946), p. 12.

The importance of the dearness allowance in the total wages of the workers at present may be judged from the fact that in 1964 the average basic wages were Rs. 67.88 while the average dearness allowance per month amounted to Rs.114.79. MOA, Annual Review of the Labour Situation in the Bombay Cotton Mill Industry, review for the year 1964.

**Table 8.3 : Indexes Showing Changes in the Cost of Living, Wages and Strike Activity in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry: 1922-1964 (Base Year for all the Indexes, 1934 = 100)**

Year	Cost of Living Index	Index of Money Wages	Index of Real Value of Money Wages	Pertaining to All Strikes			Pertaining to Strikes Due to Wage Disputes Only		
				Index of Strikes	Index of Workers Involved	Index of Mandays Lost	Index of Strikes	Index of Workers Involved	Index of Mandays Lost
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
1922	166	116	70	284	107	17	318	28	8
1923	162	120	74	274	44	16	309	22	7
1924	173	120	70	89	160	329	73	4	1
1925	155	120	78	84	149	401	91	150	401
1926	155	127	82	105	15	3	100	8	2
1927	154	127	82	95	19	10	73	11	5
1928	147	127	86	411	282	857	464	92	21
1929	149	127	85	132	149	289	91	15	4
1930	137	127	93	132	35	6	145	18	4
1931	110	127	115	74	24	18	73	14	5
1932	109	127	116	42	5	3	55	4	3
1933	103	127	123	184	40	26	218	29	22
1934	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
1935	101	100	99	42	8	2	36	6	1
1936	101	100	99	26	10	5	27	3	4
1937	106	104	102	126	40	8	136	27	5
1938	106	118	111	79	30	6	45	15	2
1939	106	130	123	79	16	2	73	8	1
1940	112	130	116	63	174	162	109	178	162
1941	122	140	115	89	41	7	82	16	4
1942	157	160	102	163	67	10	127	26	4
1943	231	226	98	111	42	9	55	9	2
1944	237	234	99	137	58	18	109	37	15
1945	235	231	99	268	57	7	118	15	1
1946	259	256	99	816	391	49	373	67	16
1947	279	325	116	668	400	79	427	252	55
1948	303	345	114	279	78	9	91	15	1
1949	307	353	115	263	93	9	27	4	1
1950	313	357	114	153	268	348	18	22	1
1951	330	378	115	174	76	17	82	26	3
1952	337	390	116	168	59	9	45	21	6
1953	363	433	119	158	44	12	64	9	*
1954	359	439	122	84	20	5	9	1	*
1955	338	416	123	121	35	5	73	26	1
1956	353	435	123	258	113	7	9	*	*

(continued)

**Table 8.3 : (continued)**

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
1957	369	453	123	142	53	6	36	1	*
1958	395	483	122	89	27	1	9	*	*
1959	412	504	122	132	60	3	18	1	*
1960	420	546	130	84	80	5	36	8	*
1961	431	564	131	26	11	1	0	0	0
1962	444	597	134	111	53	3	0	0	0
1963	448	600	134	126	79	6	27	4	1
1964	516	670	130	142	48	5	45	6	1

\* Values less than 0.2.

**Sources: (1)** The indexes in Columns (2), (3) and (4) for the years 1922-1951 are from Kshitimohan Mukerji, "Trend in Real Wages in Cotton Textile Mills in Bombay City and Island, from 1900 to 1951," Artha Vijnana, Vol. 1, No. 1, March 1959, pp. 82-94.

The figures of cost of living index for the years 1952-64 are from the Labour Gazette. The large increase in 1964 is partly due to the calculation of the index since December 1963 according to the recommendations of the Committee appointed by the State Government under the Chairmanship of Prof. D. T. Lakdawala, LG, XLIII, No. 7, March 1964, p.836; and MOA, Annual Review of the Labour Situation ....., for 1964, pp. 12-14.

Indexes of money wages and real value of money wages for the years 1952-56 have been calculated from the figures of average money wages given in Gokhale, The Bombay Cotton Mill Worker ....., p. 43.

Indexes of money wages and real value of money wages for the years 1957-64 have been calculated from the figures of average money wages given in MOA, Annual Review of the Labour Situation ....., reviews for the relevant years.

(2) Indexes of strike statistics in Columns from (5) to (10) have been calculated from the relevant figures in Tables 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3.

years 1931-33 and 1947, and the decline in the years 1934-36 and 1940-46.

A general examination of the indexes of the number of strikes, workers involved and the mandays lost in strikes in the Bombay cotton textile industry does not show any close correspondence to changes in the cost of living or wages. It may be noted, however, that some of the years in which there was a decline in real wages are also the years with a high level of strike activity.

Since the cost of living has an immediate relevance to the real wages of workers, a closer correspondence may be expected between changes in the cost of living and strikes due to wage disputes. The strikes due to wage disputes are, therefore, separated from other strikes in the Bombay cotton textile industry, and Table 8.3 presents the indexes of the number of strikes, workers involved and the mandays lost in strikes in this particular category.

It is seen from these indexes pertaining to wage strikes as well as from the indexes pertaining to all the strikes that the influence of the cost of living is shown more clearly by the indexes of mandays lost than by the indexes of the number of strikes or the workers involved. However, the indexes of mandays lost in all the strikes show high values in some years, such as 1924, 1928-29 and 1950, mainly because of general strikes in those years over issues unrelated to cost of living. The absence of these high values help the indexes of mandays lost in wage strikes



to express more distinctly the relation of strike activity to changes in the cost of living.

There is, however, no discernible consistent relationship between the cost of living and the indexes of mandays lost in wage strikes. It appears that strike activity over wage disputes is, up to a certain level, continuous and unrelated to cost of living; and that, beyond this level, it responds sporadically to rapid changes in the cost of living. The best instance of such response is provided by the years 1940-46, during which period the increases in the cost of living led to a reduction in the real wages of workers.

The high values of the indexes of mandays lost in wage strikes in 1925, 1928, 1933 and 1934 are all due to either actual or threatened reductions in money wages. The high value in 1947 is not only due to the increased cost of living, but also due to the temporary dissatisfaction over the standardization of wages. The insignificantly low values after 1947 are in a large part the result of the wage increase involved in the standardization of wages, and adjustments in the dearness allowance, which is linked to the cost of living index since 1941.

One may conclude, therefore, that ordinarily changes in the cost of living do not influence strike activity, but that rapid increases of a magnitude which affects the real wages noticeably do often have a perceptible effect, as shown by the number of mandays lost in strikes.



#### 4. The State of Trade in the Industry

It is true in a very general sense that strike activity is influenced by the conditions prevailing in the industry in which it is organized. What needs to be examined, however, is the further elaboration of this statement, that the incidence and the duration of strikes tend to rise during periods of depressed trade and diminish during periods of brisk trade.

The influence of the state of trade on strike activity finds a casual mention in Mr. Mehta's history of the cotton textile industry. With regard to the general strike in 1919 in the Bombay cotton mills, he notes the influence of the post-war boom on the duration of the strike: "The employers, probably deeply concerned about the loss of profit due to the stoppage, readily complied with the demands....." <sup>5</sup>

The trade unions also are aware of this influence on strikes. One of the grounds on which the Bombay Textile Labour Union opposed the general strike of 1928 was that the strike had no chance of success under the then prevailing conditions of depressed trade. To give a more recent example, in the preface to one of the booklets published by his union, Mr. G. D. Ambekar of the Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh accuses the Communist Bombay Girni Kamgar Union of collusion with the millowners against the interests of workers, because the Girni Kamgar Union initiated strikes

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5 Mehta, The Cotton Mills ....., p. 135.

during the years of depression when they could not succeed, and suppressed strikes during the World War II when they could.<sup>6</sup>

To be sure, the millowners also realize the relation between strikes and the state of trade. In particular, they are quite frank about the benefits some of the strikes brought to them. Speaking at the annual general meeting of the Millowners' Association, Bombay, in 1929, the Chairman of the Association remarked as below regarding the general strike of 1928:

The demand for cloth (italics) during the year was seldom active; and stocks during the first 3 months of the year, preceding the strike, reached a very high and unprecedented level. The continuation of the strike, however, brought about a gradual though welcome reduction, resulting in a distinct improvement in the tone of the market during the last month of the year; and large sales were effected by most of the mills, in many cases at remunerative rates. 7/

Similar comments are found in the reports of the Association regarding the general strikes of 1925 and 1934 also.<sup>8</sup>

It is probably on the basis of such remarks of the millowners that an extreme view is sometimes advanced, that during periods of depressed trade, the employers try to

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6 "Oudyogik Hitasambandh Kayadyavishayi Amcha Drishtikon" a Marathi pamphlet about the Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946, published by the Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh, Bombay, probably in 1947.

7 MOA, annual report for 1928, p. ii.

8 MOA, annual report for 1925, pp. 3 and 129; and annual report for 1934, p. 3.

conspire with the labour leaders to bring about strikes, so that production may be stopped for a while and the accumulated stocks may be reduced.

Such a collusion of employers and labour leaders is highly improbable. The mere fact that employers benefited from some strikes is no proof of any collusion. Again, a strike is neither the best nor the only device to stop production and to reduce stocks. Once they commence, most strikes go beyond the control of their organizers, and it is anybody's guess how long the strikes would last, or how they would be finally settled and with what consequences. If the employers desired a reduction in stocks, the more sensible way for them would be to lay-off some workers, or to give the due notice of closure and close the mills for a stipulated period. It is true that the lay-offs and closures may lead to strikes as a protest. But these strikes certainly cannot be attributed to any conspiracy between the millowners and labour leaders.

It is more reasonable, therefore, to say that the measures adopted by employers during periods of bad trade, such as wage cuts, lay-offs, retrenchment, etc., may become additional grievances to workers, and thus lead to more than the usual level of strike activity, provided the workers have the necessary economic and organizational ability. Also, strikes may be longer when trade is depressed, either or both because the employers do not lose much through the stoppage in production, and because the

depression reduces the ability of employers to make concessions to the workers.

The statistics in Table 8.4, however, suggest that the relationship between the state of trade and strike activity has received much more attention than is warranted by facts. The incidence of strikes appears to be entirely unrelated to the state of trade as indicated by the unsold stocks of yarn and cloth with the mills. As regards the duration, it is seen that the average duration per worker involved in strikes as well as the unsold stocks of yarn and cloth were at a high level in 1924, 1925, 1928 and 1934. It is probable that the depressed trade in these years had some influence in lengthening the duration of strikes. Also, the long duration of strikes in 1940 and 1950 must have had some part in the reduction of stocks in the two years, which shows how the duration in turn influences the level of stocks.

The level of unsold stocks with the mills depends on many factors, such as the plans of production, the business practices of the mills, the sales effected, the value of stocks, the general economic climate, etc. As for strikes, the multiplicity of causes behind their occurrence does not need any elaboration. To conclude, therefore, one can only say that the state of trade, as shown by the level of unsold stocks, appears to have some influence on the duration, though not on the incidence, of strikes, which again in turn may influence the state of trade to some extent.

**Table 8.4 : Unsold Stocks of Yarn and Cloth with Mills, the Number of Strikes and the Average Duration per Worker Involved in Strikes, in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry : 1922-1964**

Year	(In thousands of bales)		No. of Strikes (3)	Average Duration per Worker Involved (4)
	Yarn (1)	Cloth (2)		
1922	20.8	84.0	54	4.3
1923	29.0	98.0	52	10.0
1924	41.0	115.0	17	55.0
1925	28.0	85.0	16	75.1
1926	17.0	58.0	20	4.9
1927	20.0	77.0	18	13.8
1928	20.0	91.0	78	81.6
1929	3.0	38.0	25	52.2
1930	13.0	74.0	25	4.3
1931	12.0	100.0	14	20.3
1932	6.0	75.0	8	17.0
1933	13.0	86.0	35	17.7
1934	10.0	63.0	19	28.7
1935	5.0	22.0	8	6.9
1936	13.0	31.0	5	14.7
1937	5.0	19.0	24	5.6
1938	4.0	9.0	15	5.0
1939	10.0	28.0	15	2.9
1940	9.0	29.0	12	25.0
1941	5.0	13.0	17	4.4
1942	5.0	19.0	31	4.1

(continued)

Table 8.4 : (continued)

Year	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1943	2.0	7.0	21	5.4
1944	2.0	5.0	26	8.6
1945	2.0	9.0	51	3.3
1946	5.0	9.0	155	3.3
1947	6.0	7.0	127	5.3
1948	8.0	26.0	53	3.1
1949	12.0	87.0	50	2.5
1950	4.0	31.0	29	34.8
1951	1.0	11.0	33	6.1
1952	5.0	60.0	32	4.3
1953	6.0	63.0	30	7.0
1954	4.0	60.0	16	7.2
1955	5.0	72.0	23	3.7
1956	3.0	35.0	49	1.6
1957	6.0	74.6	27	2.8
1958	11.0	95.8	17	1.1
1959	5.0	65.6	25	1.2
1960	3.0	24.2	16	1.6
1961	4.6	38.4	5	1.4
1962	3.6	33.5	21	1.5
1963	5.1	57.5	24	2.1
1964	2.9	25.8	27	2.8

**Sources:** (1) Figures of yarn and cloth stocks are from the annual reports of the Millowners' Association Bombay. The figures for 1922 and 1923 refer to stocks in the month of December in the two years. All the other figures refer to stocks in the month of January each year.

Since 1957, the reports state that the cloth bales are of 1500 yards each and the yarn bales are of 400 pounds each. There is no reason to believe that the units were different for the earlier years.

(2) Figures of the number of strikes are from Table 5.1.

(3) The average duration per worker involved in strikes has been obtained by dividing the number of mandays lost by the number of workers involved in Table 5.1.

## CHAPTER IX

### DURATION AND RESULTS OF STRIKES

The two parts of this chapter discuss two different aspects of strikes in the Bombay cotton textile industry. The first part deals with the duration of the strikes and changes in the duration. The second part deals with the results of the strikes. The duration and results have an interesting relation to each other as will be seen in the following pages of this chapter.

#### 1. The Duration

The duration of strikes has important implications for workers in terms of loss of wages and organizational ability in the conduct of strikes.<sup>1</sup> Beyond a certain extent, the duration becomes severely restricted by the

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1 Although the Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946, has no provision to that effect, it appears from the awards of industrial tribunals under the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, that in the case of justified and legal strikes the workers have the right to claim wages for the strike period. G. L. Kotheri, Labour: Law and Practice in India (Bombay: N.M. Tripathi Private Ltd., 1964), pp. 175-78.

However, an examination of the records of the Labour Court for the years 1960-63 showed that not a single strike was declared legal during these four years. Many of the strikes were declared illegal, and the other cases were either withdrawn or settled out of Court. Also, interviews with trade union officials and officials in the Office of the Labour Commissioner lead one to believe that no strike has been declared legal in the other years either. The question of wages, therefore, does not arise at all in the case of the Bombay cotton textile industry.



savings of the workers and the possibilities of finding alternative sources of employment and income. Also, the organizational ability becomes strained as the duration increases, since the strike may threaten to collapse or fizzle out due to the hardships and the workers drifting back to work.

For the employers also, the duration has important implications in terms of loss of production and profits, dislocation of production plans, the prospect of skilled workers leaving their firm, and bitter labour relations in the future.

It may, therefore, be expected that duration should have a considerable influence on the results of strikes. As a matter of fact, it does have a certain relation to the results, and it is examined in the second part of this chapter.

That duration of strikes has diminished over the years has already been pointed out in Chapter VI. The extent of the diminution was shown in Tables 6.4 and 8.4 by the statistics of the average duration per worker involved in strikes, and in Table 8.1 by the average duration per worker employed in the industry.

The above two averages, as also the average duration per strike if the latter were to be calculated, have only a limited significance, because, by their very nature, these averages conceal the large variations in the duration of different strikes. Only a small number of strikes have

their actual duration in the neighbourhood of such averages. In a study of duration, therefore, it is much more useful to group strikes according to their duration into a reasonable number of classes, care being taken to see that the class intervals bring out faithfully the variations in duration. This has been done in Table 9.1.

The table shows the duration in days of the strikes in the period 1922-1964. It is easily seen how longer strikes have become progressively fewer over the years. Although the percentages for some years do not signify much because of the very small number of strikes in those years, the percentages facilitate comparison and show the change more clearly. They show, for instance, that strikes with a duration of two days and less were only about a quarter of all the strikes in the 1920's, whereas they are much more than a half of all the strikes since 1952.

The explanation of the diminution in duration may be found in the remarkably improved communication between workers and employers, and the provision by law of new ways and means of settling industrial disputes. Until well into the 1930's, a strike meant a complete breakdown of all communication. Once the strike commenced, neither the workers nor the employers could establish any helpful contact with each other. The trade unions that existed were weak and ineffective as mediators, both because the employers were unwilling to negotiate with them, and because the workers, most of them not members of any union, accepted the

Table 9.1 : Duration of Strikes in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry : 1922-1964

Year	Duration of Strikes							Percentages						
	Two days and less	3 - 4 days	5 - 8 days	9 - 15 days	16 - 30 days	More than 30 days	Total No. of Strikes	Two days and less	3 - 4 days	5 - 8 days	9 - 15 days	16 - 30 days	More than 30 days	Total
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)
1922	23	5	12	12	2	0	54	42.6	9.3	22.2	22.2	3.7	-	100.0
1923	14	17	9	9	2	1	52	26.9	32.8	17.3	17.3	3.8	1.9	100.0
1924	4	7	4	1	0	1	17	23.5	41.2	23.5	5.9	-	5.9	100.0
1925	4	3	6	2	0	1	16	25.0	18.7	37.6	12.5	-	6.2	100.0
1926	5	5	8	2	0	0	20	25.0	25.0	40.0	10.0	-	-	100.0
1927	5	4	3	3	2	1	18	27.7	22.2	16.7	16.7	11.1	5.6	100.0
1928	16	19	23	8	8	4	78	20.5	24.4	29.4	10.3	10.3	5.1	100.0
1929	6	7	1	4	2	5	25	24.0	28.0	4.0	16.0	8.0	20.0	100.0
1930	4	8	7	3	3	0	25	16.0	32.0	28.0	12.0	12.0	-	100.0
1931	1	1	6	1	2	3	14	7.1	7.1	43.0	7.1	14.3	21.4	100.0
1932	3	0	3	0	0	2	8	37.5	-	37.5	-	-	25.0	100.0
1933	5	5	3	10	10	2	35	14.3	14.3	8.6	28.5	28.6	5.7	100.0
1934	8	3	1	4	1	2	19	42.0	15.8	5.3	21.1	5.3	10.5	100.0
1935	3	1	0	1	2	1	8	37.5	12.5	-	12.5	25.0	12.5	100.0
1936	1	1	1	1	0	1	5	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	-	20.0	100.0
1937	5	7	6	2	3	1	24	20.8	29.2	25.0	8.3	12.5	4.2	100.0
1938	7	1	4	2	0	1	15	46.6	6.7	26.7	13.3	-	6.7	100.0
1939	7	5	2	1	0	0	15	46.7	33.3	13.3	6.7	-	-	100.0
1940	8	3	0	0	0	1	12	66.7	25.0	-	-	-	8.3	100.0
1941	4	5	4	2	0	2	17	23.5	29.4	23.5	11.8	-	11.8	100.0
1942	12	4	7	6	2	0	31	38.6	12.9	22.6	19.4	6.5	-	100.0

(continued)

Table 9.1 : (continued)

Year	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)
1943	8	4	4	3	2	0	21	38.2	19.0	19.0	14.3	9.5	-	100.0
1944	12	5	5	1	2	1	26	46.1	19.3	19.3	3.8	7.7	3.8	100.0
1945	31	6	9	2	3	0	51	60.8	11.8	17.6	3.9	5.9	-	100.0
1946	88	33	18	7	3	6	155	56.8	21.3	11.6	4.5	1.9	3.9	100.0
1947	71	21	12	17	5	1	127	56.0	16.5	9.4	13.4	3.9	0.8	100.0
1948	29	10	10	2	0	2	53	54.6	18.9	18.9	3.8	-	3.8	100.0
1949	29	5	4	7	3	2	50	58.0	10.0	8.0	14.0	6.0	4.0	100.0
1950	14	1	5	5	1	3	29	48.5	3.4	17.2	17.2	3.4	10.3	100.0
1951	17	4	5	5	1	1	33	51.7	12.1	15.1	15.1	3.0	3.0	100.0
1952	19	4	5	2	2	0	32	59.5	12.5	15.6	6.2	6.2	-	100.0
1953	18	4	3	1	2	2	30	60.2	13.3	10.0	3.3	6.6	6.6	100.0
1954	12	3	0	0	1	0	16	75.1	18.7	-	-	6.2	-	100.0
1955	15	5	1	0	1	1	23	65.4	21.7	4.3	-	4.3	4.3	100.0
1956	37	6	4	2	0	0	49	75.5	12.2	8.2	4.1	-	-	100.0
1957	20	3	1	2	1	0	27	74.1	11.1	3.7	7.4	3.7	-	100.0
1958	16	0	0	0	0	1	17	94.1	-	-	-	-	5.9	100.0
1959	21	3	0	1	0	0	25	84.0	12.0	-	4.0	-	-	100.0
1960	13	1	1	0	1	0	16	81.4	6.2	6.2	-	6.2	-	100.0
1961	4	1	0	0	0	0	5	80.0	20.0	-	-	-	-	100.0
1962	19	1	0	0	0	1	21	90.4	4.8	-	-	-	4.8	100.0
1963	17	4	2	1	0	0	24	70.8	16.7	8.3	4.2	-	-	100.0
1964	22	2	0	3	0	0	27	81.5	7.4	-	11.1	-	-	100.0

Source : Calculated from the dates of the beginning and the end of the strikes given in the Labour Gazette.

leadership of the unions only in the matter of extracting concessions from the employers, and rebelled against the corresponding obligations. Although the government occasionally intervened in some strikes, there was no regular and permanent machinery to bring the two parties together in all the strikes.

The situation changed greatly with the passing of the Bombay Industrial Disputes Act, 1938, and more so with the passing of the Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946. The law enabled a speedier settlement of strikes by providing for a formal industrial disputes machinery and by imposition of various penalties for illegal strikes. In addition, by its institution of a representative union, the law sought to fix the responsibility for maintenance of industrial peace, and established a regular channel for bringing the workers and employers together in the case of all disputes. The diminution in the duration of strikes was a natural consequence of all these measures.

It will be seen in Chapter XI that during the progress of the general strikes in 1924, 1925, 1928 and 1929, thousands of workers had left the city and had gone back to their native villages. If this were to indicate a general tendency, that workers left the city when the strike was in progress for a few days and an early settlement seemed unlikely, then this was an additional difficulty in the way of negotiating a settlement, and was one of the reasons for the prolonged duration of some strikes in the earlier years.

However, it is obvious that such return to the villages could become important only after the strike had lasted for a fortnight or more.

Another reason for the change in the duration of strikes may be the fact that strikes are increasingly being used, not as an effective weapon in their own right, but as a demonstration of protest. Thus in recent years there is a large incidence of "token" strikes and short strikes, which are organized more for voicing a protest than for redressing the grievance, the redressal being left to arbitration and adjudication under the law.

A more general reason for the diminution in the duration is the absence of major grievances. With the standardization of wages and uniform conditions of work, with the provision of an elaborate legal machinery for effecting desired changes in the present set-up, and in the absence of any prolonged periods of depression in the industry, there are not many occasions that demand long and bitter strikes against the employers.

## 2. The Results

If the value of strikes is to be judged by their results, it becomes necessary to examine the success and the failure of strikes. Also, expectations as to the results and the record of the results of strikes in the past may be assumed to have some influence on the frequency with which workers resort to strikes in bargaining with the employers.



(a) Classification of results

The results of strikes are not confined to the immediate present. Even if a strike fails today in redressing a grievance, it may succeed in reducing occasions for similar grievances in the future. And a strike apparently successful today may mean unemployment and starvation in the future for all or some of the strikers.

But it is neither possible here, nor is it intended, to examine the long-term results of strikes. The term "results" has a limited connotation here, and refers only to the immediate results, whether the strikes ended in favour of the workers or in favour of the employers.

The Labour Gazette at present classifies results into four categories: (1) successful, (2) unsuccessful, (3) compromise, and (4) indefinite. A strike is successful when all or most of the demands are conceded by the employers, and ~~is~~<sup>is</sup> unsuccessful when none of the demands is conceded. The result is a compromise when the employers grant a part of the demands, and is indefinite when the strike leaves the situation unaltered in regard to the demands.

The terms used to designate the four categories have been in use only since the issue of April, 1962;<sup>2</sup> the Labour Gazette designated the categories differently in the earlier years. During the years 1926-62, for example, the Labour Gazette called an "unsuccessful" strike as a "strike ended

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2 LG, XLI, No. 8, April 1962, pp. 1159-65.



in favour of the employers." And still earlier, and unsuccessful strike was described variously as "work resumed unconditionally," "strikers dismissed," or "new hands engaged". However, these are merely the differences in nomenclature, and do not present any problem as regards classification.

The classification and the terms adopted here are the same as those used by the Labour Gazette at present.<sup>3</sup> It may be noted all the same that compromises and indefinite results are not much different from successful and unsuccessful results respectively. Since many a time the workers on strike inflate their demands unduly and do not seriously believe that they should press for all of them, a compromise which is a partial success may in fact be a complete success with regard to the essence of the inflated demands. Similarly, an indefinite result may often be the same as an unsuccessful result, since neither of them achieves anything immediately at the end of the strike, the difference between the two being merely that the indefinite result permits of a hope of success later.

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3 With regard to the statistics of the results in the pages that follow, it may be noted that the category "successful" includes unsuccessful lockouts, while the successful lockouts are classified under the category "unsuccessful". Such an apparently paradoxical treatment of lockouts was rendered necessary by the fact that "successful" results mean those that were in favour of the workers, and "unsuccessful" results mean those that were in favour of the employers. This point, however, is not of much significance, since the number of lockouts is quite negligible. The statistics of the incidence of lockouts are given in Chapter V.

(b) Results and causes of strikes

The result of a strike obviously depends to a great extent on the nature of the demands. Some demands are generally more likely to succeed than others. It all depends on the degree to which the demands interfere with the present set-up and affect the finances of the firm.

Table 9.2 presents the results of strikes according to the nine categories of causes used earlier in Chapter VII. The period 1922-64 has been divided into five groups of years as was done elsewhere in the earlier chapters, and the results have been shown separately for each of these groups.

The table, however, is not very helpful in knowing the relation between the results and the nature of the demands. Apart from the fact that strikes over bonus disputes are the least likely to succeed, it only shows that all the strikes are more likely to fail than succeed, whatever be the category of their causes.

The defect of the table lies in the fact that the categories of causes are too wide to be able to show the exact nature of the demands. As mentioned above, the result depends on the extent of the interference of the demands with the present arrangements and the financial implications for the firm. This can be seen only by examining the demands of each strike separately. For instance, among the eight successful strikes in the years 1951-64 in the category of wages, two strikes had demanded payment of arrears of wages and dearness allowance due to the workers, one strike had

**Table 9.2: Results According to Causes, for Strikes in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry: 1922-1964**

Cause	Successful	Unsuccessful	Com- pro- mise	Inde- finite	Total	Percentages				
						Succe- ssful	Unsuc- cessful	Com- pro- mise	Inde- finite	Total
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
<b>(a) Years 1922-29</b>										
Wages	19	126	22	-	167	11.4	75.4	13.2	-	100.0
Bonus	-	2	1	-	3	-	66.7	33.3	-	100.0
Workload	-	11	3	-	14	-	78.6	21.4	-	100.0
Leave and Holidays	-	3	-	-	3	-	100.0	-	-	100.0
Hours of Work	-	10	-	-	10	-	100.0	-	-	100.0
Personnel	5	55	6	-	66	7.6	83.3	9.1	-	100.0
Retrenchment	3	9	1	-	13	23.1	69.2	7.7	-	100.0
Others	-	3	-	-	3	-	100.0	-	-	100.0
Hartals	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	100.0	-	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>78.3</b>	<b>12.1</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>(b) Years 1930-39</b>										
Wages	18	56	20	6	100	18.0	56.0	20.0	6.0	100.0
Bonus	1	1	-	-	2	50.0	50.0	-	-	100.0
Workload	2	10	2	1	15	13.3	66.7	13.3	6.7	100.0
Leave and Holidays	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hours of Work	-	7	1	-	8	-	87.5	12.5	-	100.0
Personnel	4	15	3	-	22	18.2	68.2	13.6	-	100.0
Retrenchment	2	12	3	2	19	10.5	63.2	15.8	10.5	100.0
Others	1	-	-	-	1	100.0	-	-	-	100.0
Hartals	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	100.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>16.7</b>	<b>60.0</b>	<b>17.3</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>(c) Years 1940-45</b>										
Wages	2	53	9	2	66	3.0	80.4	13.6	3.0	100.0
Bonus	1	4	2	1	8	12.5	50.0	25.0	12.5	100.0
Workload	-	6	-	1	7	-	85.7	-	14.3	100.0
Leave and Holidays	-	1	4	-	5	-	20.0	80.0	-	100.0
Hours of Work	2	9	1	-	12	16.7	75.0	8.3	-	100.0
Personnel	2	38	1	2	43	4.7	88.3	2.3	4.7	100.0
Retrenchment	-	1	-	-	1	-	100.0	-	-	100.0
Others	-	5	-	-	5	-	100.0	-	-	100.0
Hartals	2	8	1	-	11	18.2	72.7	9.1	-	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>79.1</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>100.0</b>

(continued)

**Table 9.2 (continued)**

Cause	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
<b>(d) Years 1946-50</b>										
Wages	9	73	4	17	103	8.7	70.9	3.9	16.5	100.0
Bonus	-	4	2	1	7	-	57.1	28.6	14.3	100.0
Workload	2	29	-	4	35	5.7	82.9	-	11.4	100.0
Leave and Holidays	2	27	18	3	50	4.0	54.0	36.0	6.0	100.0
Hours of Work	7	37	2	2	48	14.6	77.0	4.2	4.2	100.0
Personnel	15	73	2	10	100	15.0	73.0	2.0	10.0	100.0
Retrenchment	3	17	3	1	24	12.5	70.8	12.5	4.2	100.0
Others	-	10	1	1	12	-	83.4	8.3	8.3	100.0
Hertels	6	19	9	1	35	17.1	54.3	25.7	2.9	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>10.6</b>	<b>69.8</b>	<b>9.9</b>	<b>9.7</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>(e) Years 1951-64</b>										
Wages	8	25	5	12	50	16.0	50.0	10.0	24.0	100.0
Bonus	2	54	-	8	64	3.1	84.4	-	12.5	100.0
Workload	7	30	5	3	45	15.6	66.6	11.1	6.7	100.0
Leave and Holidays	1	9	-	2	12	8.3	75.0	-	16.7	100.0
Hours of Work	-	4	-	1	5	-	80.0	-	20.0	100.0
Personnel	11	84	5	26	126	8.7	66.7	4.0	20.6	100.0
Retrenchment	2	24	4	2	32	6.2	75.1	12.5	6.2	100.0
Others	-	8	1	2	11	-	72.7	9.1	18.2	100.0
Hertels	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>69.0</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>16.2</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Calculated from the Labour Gazette.

demanded earlier payment of wages on account of a religious festival, one strike had demanded correction of the alleged reduction in wages, and the remaining four had demanded regular work so that the workers could earn normal wages. To give another example, of the two successful bonus strikes in the years 1951-64, one wanted a discussion on bonus with the managing director of the mill, and the other wanted a declaration of the date on which bonus would be paid. It is needless to point out that none of these successful strikes affected the present set-up or the finances of the mills to any noticeable extent.

(c) Results and duration of strikes

Apparently one may expect a longer strike to have a greater chance of success, on the assumption that the length of the duration shows the determination of the workers. But the statistics in Table 9.3, however, show that this is not the case, and that, if anything, it is the shorter strikes that have a greater chance of success.

Table 9.3 gives the results according to the duration of the strikes. As was done elsewhere in the earlier chapters and also in the examination of the relation of results to the causes of strikes, the period 1922-64 has been divided into five groups of years, and the statistics have been shown separately for each of the five groups.

With the exception of the years 1951-64, the table shows that the proportion of successful strikes is greater

**Table 9.3 : Results According to Duration, for Strikes in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry: 1922-1964**

Duration	Succe- ssful	Unsuc- cessful	Com- pro- mise	Inde- finite	Total	Percentages				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	Succe- ssful (6)	Unsuc- cessful (7)	Com- pro- mise (8)	Inde- finite (9)	Total (10)
<b>(a) Years 1922-29</b>										
2 days and less	7	59	11	-	77	9.1	76.6	14.3	-	100.0
3 - 4 days	5	55	7	-	67	7.5	82.1	10.4	-	100.0
5 - 8 days	10	48	8	-	66	15.2	72.7	12.1	-	100.0
9 - 15 days	3	34	4	-	41	7.3	82.9	9.8	-	100.0
16 - 30 days	1	13	2	-	16	6.2	81.3	12.5	-	100.0
More than 30 days	1	10	2	-	13	7.7	76.9	15.4	-	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>78.3</b>	<b>12.1</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>(b) Years 1930-39</b>										
2 days and less	8	25	9	2	44	18.2	56.8	20.5	4.5	100.0
3 - 4 days	7	15	7	3	32	21.9	46.8	21.9	9.4	100.0
5 - 8 days	5	25	3	-	33	15.2	75.7	9.1	-	100.0
9 - 15 days	3	19	2	1	25	12.0	76.0	8.0	4.0	100.0
16 - 30 days	4	11	4	2	21	19.0	52.5	19.0	9.5	100.0
More than 30 days	1	6	4	2	13	7.7	46.1	30.8	15.4	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>16.7</b>	<b>60.0</b>	<b>17.3</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>(c) Years 1940-45</b>										
2 days and less	4	52	14	5	75	5.3	69.3	18.7	6.7	100.0
3 - 4 days	2	23	1	1	27	7.4	85.2	3.7	3.7	100.0
5 - 8 days	3	26	-	-	29	10.3	89.7	-	-	100.0
9 - 15 days	-	13	1	-	14	-	92.9	7.1	-	100.0
16- 30 days	-	8	1	-	9	-	88.9	11.1	-	100.0
More than 30 days	-	3	1	-	4	-	75.0	25.0	-	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>79.1</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>100.0</b>

(continued)



**Table 9.3 : (continued)**

Duration	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
<b>(d) Years 1946-50</b>										
2 days and less	27	149	32	23	231	11.7	64.4	13.9	10.0	100.0
3 - 4 days	8	55	3	4	70	11.4	78.6	4.3	5.7	100.0
5 - 8 days	4	36	2	7	49	8.2	73.4	4.1	14.3	100.0
9 - 15 days	4	29	4	1	38	10.5	76.4	10.5	2.6	100.0
16 - 30 days	1	9	-	2	12	8.3	75.0	-	16.7	100.0
More than 30 days	-	11	-	3	14	-	78.6	-	21.4	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>10.6</b>	<b>69.8</b>	<b>9.9</b>	<b>9.7</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>(e) Years 1951-64</b>										
2 days and less	26	170	9	45	250	10.4	68.0	3.6	18.0	100.0
3 - 4 days	1	29	5	6	41	2.4	70.8	12.2	14.6	100.0
5 - 8 days	1	16	4	1	22	4.5	72.8	18.2	4.5	100.0
9 - 15 days	2	12	1	2	17	11.8	70.5	5.9	11.8	100.0
16 - 30 days	-	6	1	1	8	-	75.0	12.5	12.5	100.0
More than 30 days	1	5	-	1	7	14.3	71.4	-	14.3	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>69.0</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>16.2</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Calculated from the Labour Gazette.



among the strikes with a duration of eight days or less than among the strikes with a longer duration. Even the years 1951-64 are not a serious exception, since the proportion of successful strikes in the strikes with a duration of more than eight days becomes slightly larger due to the very small number of strikes with such duration. And again, when all the 32 strikes that lasted more than eight days are taken together, it is seen that the three strikes that succeeded amount to only 9.4 per cent of the total. The apparent exception may also be due to the fact mentioned in the first part of this chapter, that these years have had an increasing incidence of "token" strikes and short strikes, the purpose of which is more to voice a protest than to seek immediate redressal of grievances.

The reason for the smaller chance of success that the longer strikes have appears to be that it is mostly the strikes doomed to fail that last longer. If at all the employers are likely to concede the demands, more often than not they would concede them easily in the first few days of the strikes. It is because the employers are unwilling to concede the demands that a strike lasts longer, and it is seldom that the workers emerge victorious in any trial of strength and physical coercion against the employers. ✓

(d) Significance of results for strike activity

Table 9.4 shows the results of strikes each year during the period 1922-1964. It is striking to note the large number of unsuccessful strikes in almost all the years. Of the

**Table 9.4 : Results of Strikes in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry : 1922-1964**

Year	Succe- ssful	Unsuc- cessful	Com- pro- mise	Inde- finite	Total	Percentages				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	Succe- ssful	Unsuc- cessful	Com- pro- mise	Inde- finite	Total
1922	-	48	6	-	54	-	88.9	11.1	-	100.0
1923	1	45	6	-	52	1.9	86.6	11.5	-	100.0
1924	1	15	1	-	17	5.9	88.2	5.9	-	100.0
1925	1	14	1	-	16	6.2	87.6	6.2	-	100.0
1926	2	17	1	-	20	10.0	85.0	5.0	-	100.0
1927	-	14	4	-	18	-	77.8	22.2	-	100.0
1928	17	48	13	-	78	21.8	61.5	16.7	-	100.0
1929	5	18	2	-	25	20.0	72.0	8.0	-	100.0
1930	9	13	2	1	25	36.0	52.0	8.0	4.0	100.0
1931	5	6	2	1	14	35.7	42.9	14.3	7.1	100.0
1932	2	6	-	-	8	25.0	75.0	-	-	100.0
1933	3	26	2	4	35	8.6	74.3	5.7	11.4	100.0
1934	2	13	4	-	19	10.5	68.4	21.1	-	100.0
1935	2	6	-	-	8	25.0	75.0	-	-	100.0
1936	1	1	2	1	5	20.0	20.0	40.0	20.0	100.0
1937	3	13	8	-	24	12.5	54.2	33.3	-	100.0
1938	-	9	5	1	15	-	60.0	33.3	6.7	100.0
1939	1	8	4	2	15	6.7	53.3	26.7	13.3	100.0
1940	1	9	2	-	12	8.3	75.0	16.7	-	100.0
1941	1	14	2	-	17	5.9	82.3	11.8	-	100.0
1942	2	27	2	-	31	6.5	87.0	6.5	-	100.0
1943	3	13	5	-	21	14.3	61.9	23.8	-	100.0
1944	-	24	1	1	26	-	92.4	3.8	3.8	100.0
1945	2	38	6	5	51	3.9	74.5	11.8	9.8	100.0
1946	13	99	30	13	155	8.4	63.9	19.3	8.4	100.0
1947	14	90	5	18	127	11.0	70.9	3.9	14.2	100.0
1948	10	37	1	5	53	18.9	69.8	1.9	9.4	100.0
1949	3	43	-	4	50	6.0	86.0	-	8.0	100.0
1950	4	20	5	-	29	13.8	69.0	17.2	-	100.0
1951	5	21	5	2	33	15.2	63.5	15.2	6.1	100.0
1952	3	19	4	6	32	9.4	59.4	12.5	18.7	100.0
1953	2	23	4	1	30	6.7	76.7	13.3	3.3	100.0
1954	-	9	-	7	16	-	56.3	-	43.7	100.0
1955	1	18	-	4	23	4.3	78.3	-	17.4	100.0
1956	1	42	1	5	49	2.0	85.8	2.0	10.2	100.0
1957	2	19	-	6	27	7.4	70.4	-	22.2	100.0
1958	1	14	-	2	17	5.9	82.3	-	11.8	100.0
1959	1	23	1	-	25	4.0	92.0	4.0	-	100.0
1960	3	7	1	5	16	18.8	43.8	6.2	31.2	100.0
1961	1	3	-	1	5	20.0	60.0	-	20.0	100.0
1962	2	16	-	3	21	9.5	76.2	-	14.3	100.0
1963	5	8	2	9	24	20.8	33.3	8.3	37.6	100.0
1964	4	16	2	5	27	14.8	59.3	7.4	18.5	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>972</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>1,365</b>	<b>10.2</b>	<b>71.2</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Calculated from the Labour Gazette.

total 1,365 strikes in these 43 years, 972 were unsuccessful. As compared to this, successful strikes are a mere 139, or only a little more than 10 per cent. Even if the compromises are treated as successes, the proportion hardly comes to about 21 per cent.

It may seem strange that such a poor performance has not disheartened the workers and has not led to the abandonment of the strike as a useless weapon in collective bargaining. With the discouraging record of success it has had, the strike would surely appear to be a very inefficient device against the employers.

The continued resort to strikes suggests that immediate success may not be primarily important in the eyes of workers. Of course, there may always be the hope of a chance of success, but it means that a part of the motivation of strikes lies, not in the fulfilment of the demands, but elsewhere, perhaps in the exercise of the strike weapon itself. Many of the strikes in the Bombay cotton textile industry are essentially spontaneous outbursts against real or imagined provocations, and in the case of such strikes, the satisfaction the workers obtain from the defiant self-assertion is a reward by itself, irrespective of the success or the failure of those strikes.

One may conclude, therefore, that neither the record of the results of strikes in the past, nor the expectations as to results of the strikes that may be contemplated, appear to have any noticeable influence on the frequency with which

the workers go on strikes.<sup>4</sup> However, it is not possible to know how many strikes did not occur on account of anticipated failure, and it is only a speculation whether the influence of the expected results on the frequency of strikes could be shown by discussing the cases of strikes that failed to occur.

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<sup>4</sup> The anticipation of success or failure must obviously have some influence on the duration of strikes. But the extent of this influence depends on the individual circumstances of each strike, and is not amenable to any generalized analysis.

CHAPTER X  
THE COST OF STRIKES

The discussion may be begun with the examination of strikes in one of the mills visited in the course of this study. The attempt made in this examination at estimating the losses due to the strikes would be helpful in bringing out many of the implications involved in the concept of the cost of strikes.

1. An Examination of Strikes in a Bombay Cotton Mill

Between 1958 and 1963 there were three strikes in this mill.<sup>1</sup> In spite of the best co-operation offered by the mill officials, there were many difficulties in bringing together the records for even these six years. It was, therefore, not possible to extend the study to strikes in the earlier years.

(a) The first strike

This strike was against the increase in workload consequent upon the retrenchment of some workers in the Carding Department. The retrenchment had been permitted two months earlier by an award of the Industrial Court. The strike was unsuccessful.

Table 10.1 below shows the effects of this strike on the production of the Carding, Reeling and Weaving Departments.

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<sup>1</sup> Incidentally, it may be mentioned that the first strike is not recorded in the Labour Gazette.

Table 10.1: Loss of Production During the First Strike

Days	No. of cards worked <sup>2</sup>	Production of Reeling Department (in pounds)	Production of Weaving Department (in yards)
1	354	15,485	44,386
2	354	15,791	44,954
3	Holiday	Holiday	Holiday
4	354	15,461	43,673
5	195	15,640	45,249
6	-	12,347	10,340
7	236	-	-
8	344	15,265	21,243
9	354	15,345	44,807
10	354	15,473	44,635

The strike commenced in the Carding Department on the morning of the fifth day and ended at noon of the seventh day.

Although the Carding Department struck work on the fifth day, Reeling and Weaving continued with the yarn already spun before, and were affected by the strike only from the sixth day onwards. The cost of the strike was estimated in the following manner.

The average daily quantity of yarn reeled, on the basis of the first, the second, the fourth, the fifth, the

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2 A card is a machine which separates and straightens out cotton fibres and transforms raw cotton into a long and loose ribbon called a "sliver".

ninth and the tenth days, comes to 15,532 pounds. The average daily length of the cloth woven, calculated similarly, comes to 44,617 yards.

Thus, the production on the sixth, the seventh and the eighth days together should have been 46,596 pounds of yarn and 133,851 yards of cloth.

But as the production on these three days has been 27,612 pounds of yarn and 31,583 yards of cloth, the loss in production amounts to 18,984 pounds of yarn and 102,268 yards of cloth.

The average prices realized by the mill in the year of the strike were Rs.3.53 per pound of yarn and Rs. 1.20 per yard of cloth. The total loss in production in terms of money thus comes to Rs. 189,735.12.

The loss to the mill company, however, is equal to only the gross profits it would have made on the above quantity of production if the latter had been produced. As the gross profits formed 4.24 per cent of the total value of production in that year, the loss to the mill company because of the strike is equal to Rs. 8,044.77 only.

As regards the loss to workers, it is found that 66 workers were "directly involved" and 2,700 workers "indirectly involved" in the strike, and that 7,377 mandays were lost thereby. On the basis of Rs.5.32 per worker as the average daily wages in the month previous to that of the strike, the loss of wages in the strike amounts to Rs.39,245.64.



(b) The second strike

The award of the Industrial Court, referred to above in the case of the first strike, had permitted retrenchment in other departments also. The consequent increase in the workload led to another strike, involving this time the doffer boys in the Doubling Department. The strike was unsuccessful.

Table 10.2 below shows the effects of this strike on the production of the Ring Spinning, Doubling, Reeling and Weaving Departments. The Doubling doffer boys struck work in the afternoon of the sixth day and resumed work in the morning on the fifteenth day. Partly in support of this strike, and partly as a protest against the lay-off necessitated by the strike, some workers in the Ring Spinning Department also struck work on the eighth and the ninth days.

Since the Weaving Department used only a small part of the total quantity of doubled yarn, the effect of the strike on the production of cloth was quite marginal, and weaving continued with other varieties of cloth which did not require doubled yarn. The noticeable decline in cloth production on the ninth day was the result of the partial strike in the Ring Spinning Department.

As compared to weaving, reeling suffered greatly, because doubled yarn formed a very large part of the total quantity of yarn reeled. Reeling had stopped entirely on the eighth and the ninth days because of the strike in the Ring Spinning Department.

Table 10.2 : Loss of Production During the Second Strike

Days	Production of Ring Spinning Department (in pounds)	Production of Doubling Department (in pounds)	Production of Reeling Department (in pounds)	Production of Weaving Department (in yards)
1	28,918	13,695	14,891	44,886
2	28,572	13,449	14,738	44,269
3	Holiday	Holiday	Holiday	Holiday
4	28,376	13,332	15,076	42,559
5	28,883	12,554	14,573	45,792
6	29,023	3,248	14,955	45,017
7	20,199	-	6,047	45,286
8	1,717	-	-	43,769
9	2,667	-	-	33,603
10	Holiday	Holiday	Holiday	Holiday
11	16,144	-	2,023	43,748
12	17,245	-	1,846	42,630
13	17,786	-	2,473	43,339
14	19,162	-	2,355	42,690
15	27,586	11,376	3,923	43,629
16	29,425	15,121	13,952	46,990
17	Holiday	Holiday	Holiday	Holiday
18	27,825	16,135	14,741	45,074
19	29,209	16,651	14,416	47,337
20	28,506	17,415	14,273	46,186

The cost of the strike was estimated in the following manner.

The average daily quantity of yarn reeled, on the basis of the production on the first, the second, the fourth, the fifth, the sixteenth, the eighteenth, the nineteenth and the twentieth days, comes to 14,582 pounds. The average daily length of the cloth woven, calculated similarly, comes to 45,387 yards.

Thus the production on the nine working days from the sixth to the fifteenth days together should have been 131,238 pounds of yarn and 408,483 yards of cloth.

But as the production on these nine days has been 33,622 pounds of yarn and 383,711 yards of cloth, the loss in production amounts to 97,616 pounds of yarn and 24,772 yards of cloth.

The average prices realized by the mill in the year of the strike were Rs.3.53 per pound of yarn and Rs. 1.20 per yard of cloth. The total loss in production in terms of money thus comes to Rs.374,310.88.

As the gross profits formed 4.24 per cent of the total value of production in that year, the loss to the mill company because of the strike is equal to Rs.15,870.78.

As regards the loss to workers, it is found that the daily average for the period from the sixth to the fourteenth days gives 126 as the number of workers "directly involved" in the strike. Of the 126, the Doubling doffer boys numbered 72, the rest being workers from the Ring Spinning Department.

Also, the daily average, similarly calculated, gives 977 as the number of workers "indirectly involved" in the strike. The strike caused a total loss of 8,824 mandays. On the basis of Rs.5.40 per worker as the average daily wages in the month previous to that of the strike, the loss of wages in the strike amounts to Rs.47,649.60.

(c) The third strike

This strike was a protest against the inadequate quantum of bonus that was declared as payable by the mill. The strike was unsuccessful.

Table 10.3 below shows the effects of this strike on the production of the Reeling and Weaving Departments. The

Table 10.3 : Loss of Production During the Third Strike

Days	Production of Reeling Department (in pounds)	Production of Weaving Department (in yards)
1	15,846	44,912
2	15,734	45,236
3	15,852	45,112
4	Holiday	Holiday
5	15,678	44,896
6	-	-
7	-	-
8	15,712	44,955
9	15,822	45,283
10	15,785	45,094

strike commenced in the morning of the sixth day and work was resumed on the morning of the eighth day. All the workers in all the departments were "directly involved" in the strike, and there was a complete stoppage of all production on the sixth and the seventh days.

The cost of the strike was calculated in the following manner.

The average daily quantity of yarn reeled, on the basis of the production on the first, the second, the third, the fifth, the eighth, the ninth and the tenth days, comes to 15,776 pounds. The average daily length of the cloth woven, calculated similarly, comes to 45,070 yards.

Thus, the production on the sixth and the seventh days together should have been 31,552 pounds of yarn and 90,140 yards of cloth. The loss in production is also of the same magnitude, since there was no production at all on the two days.

The average prices realized by the mill in the year of the strike were Rs.4.48 per pound of yarn and Rs. 1.54 per yard of cloth. The total loss in production in terms of money thus comes to Rs.280,168.56.

As the gross profits formed 12.22 per cent of the total value of production in that year, the loss to the mill company because of the strike comes to Rs.34,236.60.

The average daily attendance, on the basis of the first, the second, the third, the fifth, the eighth, the ninth and the tenth days, comes to 4,254 workers for the

whole mill. As there was no attendance at all on the sixth and the seventh days, all the workers being "directly involved" in the strike, the mendays lost in the strike amount to 8,508. On the basis of Rs.6.43 per worker as the average daily wages in the month previous to that of the strike, the loss of wages in the strike amounts to Rs.54,706.44.

## 2. Observations on the Three Strikes

The remarks that follow are by way of explanation, and also as the result, of the examination of the three strikes above.

(1) The term "the cost of strikes" has three distinct connotations. To the workers it means the loss of wages, to the employers it means the loss of profits, and to the total economy it means the loss in production.

(2) There are of course marginal variations every day in the production of all the departments. But the decline from day to day in the production of doubled yarn from the first to the fifth days in the case of the second strike is not an accident. The mill records show that for nearly two weeks before striking work on the sixth day, the Doubling doffer boys had adopted go-slow tactics. That neither reeling nor weaving suffered noticeably in these days was due to the fact that the difference in the production of doubled yarn was made up with the help of doubled yarn already in stock.

But such go-slow tactics are the exception rather than

the rule in the cotton textile industry. For the majority of workers in cotton mills, the pace of work is set by the speed of machines and does not vary at the will of the workers. Even with regard to the workers in whose case the pace of work can vary due to deliberate go-slow tactics or otherwise, the decline in production becomes conspicuous because of the customary standards of output, and is liable to be followed by disciplinary action on the workers concerned who can be identified quite easily.

(3) In the case of the first strike, it is seen that although the strike ended at noon on the seventh day, the production of the Weaving Department came back to normal only from the ninth day onwards.

The delayed recovery of the production of the Weaving Department was the result of the fact that the department had to wait for a sufficient supply of yarn, having exhausted all the ready yarn by working on the fifth and the sixth days when the strike was in progress in the Carding Department. The delay would not have occurred if weaving also had stopped as soon as the workers had struck work in the Carding Department.

The cotton mills generally recover the normal level of production quite quickly at the end of most strikes. The explanation of the quick recovery lies in the fact that the time required for the entire process of manufacturing raw cotton into cloth is only a little more than 24 hours. The recovery is of course subject to the attendance of the



workers. But, except in the case of unusually long strikes, almost all the workers report for work immediately at the end of strikes.

(4) The cost of a strike depends not only on the duration and the number of workers involved, but also on the departments and the specific processes affected by the strike, and the prices, wage rates and the profitability during the period in which the strike occurs.

(5) The most important fact brought out by the above attempt at estimating the cost of strikes is the general unsatisfactory nature of such estimates. Besides the time required for collecting the data and the elaborate calculations involved and the obvious impossibility of making similar estimates for all the strikes in the industry, the estimates have to be necessarily based on a number of inexact averages, such as the average production, the average wages, the average profits and so on.

It is possible to reduce the margin of error by taking into account all the different varieties of yarn and cloth, all the different wage rates for the workers involved, and all the different prices prevailing at the time of the strike. Apart from the stupendous labour of such an attempt, even this estimate would be only doubtfully exact, because it is not possible to know precisely what quantity of production was lost solely because of the strike.

Under its powers for collection of information about certain industrial matters specified in the Bombay Industrial

Relations Act, 1946, the Labour Office can require employers to submit information not only regarding the occurrence and the magnitude of strikes, but also regarding the cost of the strikes.<sup>3</sup> The Labour Office accordingly insists on information about the occurrence and the magnitude of strikes, as prescribed in Form I under Rule 72-A of the Bombay Industrial Relations Rules, 1947.<sup>4</sup> But as regards the cost of strikes, the queries of the Labour Office about the losses in production and wages elicit information only in a small number of cases, and being conscious of the limited validity of the estimates and the effort involved in making them, the Labour Office understandably does not insist on the information.

(6) If the estimates as described above are to be abandoned, then the number of mandays lost remain as the only index of the cost of strikes. Depending upon the context, the mandays may be used to indicate any one or all the three of the losses, the loss of wages, the loss of production and the loss of profits.

As an index of the cost of strikes, the mandays lost are even more defective than the estimates attempted above. For instance, the same number of mandays lost in two different strikes may not mean an even approximately similar

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3 Government of Maharashtra, The Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946 (Bombay: Director, Government Printing and Stationery, 1965), p. 2408G, Sec. 111.

4 Government of Maharashtra, The Bombay Industrial Relations Rules, 1947 (Bombay: Directorate of Printing and Stationery, 1964), pp. 15, 28 and 29.

loss of production in the two strikes. A hundred mandays may be lost either because a hundred workers struck work for a day or because ten workers struck work for ten days. The cost is bound to be quite different in the two cases.

Whatever their limitations, the number of mandays lost are the only generally available measure of the cost of strikes.

### 3. Extensions of the Concept of the Cost of Strikes

The cost was considered above only in relation to the establishment in which the strike occurred. It is, however, possible to enlarge the concept to include also the effects of a strike on other establishments, other industries and the trade. A strike in one establishment may benefit other establishments in the same industry, because it enables them to encroach upon the market of the establishment affected by the strike. But the effects on firms in other industries are likely to be adverse, because the firms may be faced with either a shortage of raw materials or a reduction in the demand for their products. The trade also may suffer because of the reduced capacity of the strikers to make their usual purchases.

The concept of the cost can also be enlarged to include the consequences at the end of strikes. But in regard to consequences, what one party considers as a gain may be considered a loss by the other parties. For instance, an increase in wage rates as the result of a strike would be a

gain to workers, but the employers would consider it a loss. If the employers consequently increase the prices of the products, the gain to employers would become a loss to the consumers in general.

However, in the absence of the necessary data, such extensions of the concept of the cost cannot be attempted for strikes in the Bombay cotton textile industry.

#### 4. The Cost of Strikes in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry

As mentioned before, the number of mandays lost are the only available measure of the cost of strikes.

It has already been seen in the course of this study, particularly in Chapter VI, that there has been a considerable reduction in the number of mandays lost in strikes over the years 1922-1964. The reduction was also shown by the statistics of the average duration per worker involved in strikes in Tables 6.4 and 8.4, and the average duration per worker employed in the industry in Table 8.1.

It is generally believed that the loss in production due to absenteeism is much greater than that due to strikes.<sup>5</sup> Interviews with mill officials lead one to believe that this may be true of the Bombay cotton textile industry also. However, it is not possible to confirm this with the help of

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<sup>5</sup> Knowles, Strikes . . . . ., pp. 279-282; and Kshitimohan Mukerji, "Factual Basis of Labour Policy in India," Artha Vijnana, Vol. 8, No.1, March 1966, pp. 93-104. The article being in Bengali, a typed copy of the English translation was kindly supplied by its author.

the statistics of absenteeism.

Apart from the defects in calculation, the statistics of absenteeism cannot be used because absenteeism in the Bombay mills does not mean an equivalent loss of mandays for the mills. According to the official definition, the absence of a regular worker has to be treated as an absence even if a substitute is employed in his place. The absence of a worker, therefore, does not necessarily mean the loss of a manday. It follows that the number of mandays lost due to absenteeism depend on the willingness of the management to employ substitutes in place of the absent workers and the availability of suitable substitutes. This being so, the statistics of absenteeism are no guide to the cost of absenteeism.

It is thus clear that the losses in production and profits because of absenteeism can be avoided partly, if not entirely, by means of employment of substitutes. For the workers as a class, the loss in wages is avoided to the extent of the employment of substitutes, although for individual workers absence for a day means a complete loss of wages for that day.

Table 8.1 shows that for each year during the period 1954-64, the number of mandays lost in strikes are considerably smaller than the average daily number of workers employed in the industry. This means that in each of these years the cost of a single holiday has been greater than

than the cost of strikes in that year.<sup>6</sup> Table 10.4 below shows the number of holidays given annually in the Bombay mills during the years 1954-64.

Table 10.4 : Number of Holidays in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry, 1954-64 7/

Year	No. of Holidays	Year	No. of Holidays
1954	56	1960	57
1955	57	1961	57
1956	59	1962	56
1957	56	1963	56
1958	57	1964	57
1959	57		

It is possible that a strike causes a larger dislocation in production than a holiday, and therefore, mandays

6 It is needless to point out that a holiday means a total closure of the mills and does not involve employment of substitutes in place of the regular workers.

7 The source is the relevant annual reports of the Millowners' Association, Bombay. The figures refer to the holidays recommended by the Millowners' Association before the commencement of each year. Changes, if any, made during the course of each year because of unforeseen circumstances have not been taken into account.

Since 1956, four holidays each year have been specified by the Industrial Court as paid festival holidays, and subject to some conditions, workers get their wages for these four days. MOA, Handbook of Service Conditions of Operatives, Nurses, Clerks and Technical & Supervisory Staff in Bombay Cotton Textile Industry (Bombay: The Millowners' Association, 1964), p. 98.

lost in strikes may involve a greater cost than is involved in an equivalent number of mandays lost through holidays. Even then one finds that the cost of strikes has been quite negligible, particularly in recent years in which the number of mandays lost in strikes annually has been much less than what would have been lost through an additional holiday for the industry.

#### 5. The Significance of Cost to Strike Activity

The cost of strikes apparently seems to be of much interest to everybody except the workers who go on strikes. The workers are often exhorted to abstain from strikes, and the consequent loss in production forms an important argument in such exhortations. That the actual loss in production is not considerable is another matter.

The workers and the unions are seldom known to have devoted any serious attention to estimating the costs of their action either before or after the strikes. The only occasions when the unions refer to the costs are when they want an additional reason to criticize the strikes they do not support.

Such indifference to the cost of strikes on the part of workers and unions is quite natural because of the very nature of strikes. In the case of strikes meant as a demonstration of protest, the question of costs does not have much significance, since the primary aim of the striking workers is the satisfaction of having asserted themselves



against the authority of their employers. Even in the other strikes, the initial aim of seeking a concession that might be thought of as the compensation for a vaguely conceived loss of wages, often becomes transformed into an aim of extracting the concession at any cost. Strikes being essentially a struggle and a trial of strength, decisions about them are hardly ever taken with reference to the costs involved.

CHAPTER XISOME IMPORTANT STRIKES

This chapter selects for description eight important general strikes falling in the period 1922-1964. As far as possible, the description of each strike follows a uniform pattern, taking into account the events preceding the strike, formulation of demands, attitudes of unions, workers and employers, commencement of the strike, organization and conduct of the strike, the settlement and consequences of the strike, and the aftermath. But the availability of data and authentic information varies widely over the years, and therefore an identical pattern cannot be followed in all the cases.

The strikes selected here have been over important issues affecting most, if not all, of the mills in the industry. Also, they are significant because of the large number of workers they involved and the number of mandays lost in them. The following figures show their share in the total strike activity in the industry during the years 1922-1964.

Before proceeding to describe the general strikes, it should be pointed out that they are not representative of the nature of the usual strike activity in the industry. Among themselves, they do have certain common characteristics which, however, are not shared by most of the other

strikes. It may, therefore, be suggested that the general strikes form a separate category in the total strike activity.

Table 11.1 : Share of the Selected Strikes in the Total Strike Activity in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry During the Period 1922-64

	No. of Strikes	Workers Involved	Mandays Lost
All Strikes	1,365	3,825,530	81,001,851
The Selected Strikes*	8	1,204,736	57,923,482
Percentage of the Selected to All Strikes	0.59	31.49	71.51

\* The strike in the two mills at Kurla from the 14th and the 17th of May 1928 to the 6th of October 1928 is included here as a part of the general strike of 1928. The Labour Gazette, however, counts it as a separate strike.

The specific character of the general strikes, particularly of those of 1928 and after, may be attributed, firstly to the role played in them by the trade unions, and secondly to the large magnitude of the strikes. What may be called the gestation period in which the grievances spread and increase in intensity, the relatively better formulation of demands, and the organizational ability exhibited in the conduct and the settlement of the strikes, all are due in a large measure to the important role the unions had in the general strikes. In fact the general strikes are the most important of the few strikes in which

the unions are prominent throughout the course of the strikes, including their commencement.

The significant role of the unions in the general strikes after 1928 may suggest that the strikes would not have occurred in the absence of the unions. This, however, is a moot point. It is true that general strikes may occur even in the absence of trade unions, as they did in the years before 1925. But it is also equally true that the active propagation of the grievances among workers and the organizational ability provided by the unions may have been indispensable to the occurrence of some, if not all, of the general strikes. However, this much is certain that the participation of unions exercised a radical influence on the character of the strikes.

The general strikes evoked a great deal of concern not only from the employers, but also from the government and many public bodies. In addition to this, the varied attempts to settle the strikes, the relief measures for the strikers, and the continuous tension in the city during the course of the strikes are all clearly attributable to the large magnitude of the strikes.

As mentioned above, the characteristics of general strikes are not shared by most of the other strikes in the industry. These other strikes are largely spontaneous outbursts on the part of the workers, and unions do not have much voice in their commencement. Even when the unions come in later in the conduct and the settlement of these

strikes, their role is considerably less significant than in the general strikes.

With these remarks, the eight selected strikes may now be taken up for description in the following pages.<sup>1</sup>

### 1. The General Strike of 1924

The years of the World War I, particularly after 1917, were remarkably prosperous for the Bombay cotton textile industry. The prosperity continued even after the end of the war right up to 1922.

But depressed conditions set in towards the end of 1922. Stocks accumulated and idle capacity increased. In April 1923, the Millowners' Association (MOA) considered a reduction in wages, but decided not to resort to it. However, the discontinuance of the annual bonus had been under consideration from January 1923 itself, and finally in July 1923 the MOA advised its members that no bonus would be paid for the year 1923.<sup>2</sup> The mills immediately put up notices informing the workers of the non-payment of bonus.

This naturally caused some dissatisfaction. The workers had been regularly paid a bonus during the last five years. They had come to expect it as a matter of right, and regarded it as a kind of deferred wages. The labour leaders

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1 Except where otherwise mentioned, the rest of this chapter depends for its factual information on the relevant volumes of the Labour Gazette.

2 MOA, annual report for 1923, p. ix.

and the Kamgar Hitwardhak Sabha called upon the millowners to reconsider their decision. There was talk of a general strike in November 1923 and uncertainty prevailed during the succeeding days. But the labour leaders like N.M.Joshi and Joseph Baptista urged the workers not to go on strike, and the strike seemed to have been averted.

The bad trade and the high prices of cotton forced a number of mills to close down. Early in January 1924, the MOA discussed and decided against an immediate wage-cut and short-time working, with the proviso that the latter may be considered again after two months.

Since for the last three years the bonus had been paid in the month of January, the workers had not still given up hoping entirely. On 17th January 1924, after receiving wages for the previous month, workers in one mill struck work demanding bonus for the year 1923. Four days later another mill joined in the strike. After 25th January the strike spread quickly to all the mills. By the 1st of February, only two mills, situated in the Colaba area, could continue working. Even these two mills were struck from 15th February. In addition, the strike involved two woollen mills, two silk mills and two dye works. The industry was brought to a complete standstill.

At a large meeting of the strikers on 31st January, a Strike Settlement Committee was constituted under the chairmanship of Joseph Baptista. Mr. Baptista offered to

end the strike if the government appointed a board of arbitration. But the MOA refused arbitration on the bonus issue. A reduction in wages was considered again on 11th February and the proposal was rejected. To dispel the suspicions of workers the mills put up notices on 12th and 17th February to the effect that no wage-cuts were intended. The notice of 17th February also announced the willingness of millowners to submit the bonus issue to a Committee of Enquiry if its terms of reference were acceptable to the MOA. The Governor of Bombay intervened in the disputes, and on 21st February declared that he had decided to appoint a Committee of Enquiry.

The Committee made its report on 11th March 1924, stating that workers had no customary, legal or equitable claim to an annual bonus, and that the profits in 1923 were such that the millowners were justified in not paying a bonus.

The strike continued. Many workers had already left for their villages. An attempt was made to secure financial assistance to the strikers, but the assistance received is not known. The Girni Kamgar Mahamandal, which came into being shortly after the commencement of the strike, requested the Governor on 11th March to help in the repatriation of workers to their villages, and in the provision of food to those left in Bombay.

The mills agreed to the demand for the payment of wages for the days worked in January. These wages were paid



between 17th and 20th March. Work was resumed partially in four mills on 17th March itself, and as each day passed a larger and larger number of workers drifted back to the mills. By 25th March almost all the mills were working again, although with only one-third of the normal labour force in the industry. Thus the strike may be said to have ended on 25th March, 1924. It was an unconditional surrender.

The Labour Gazette calls this dispute as a general strike subsequently turned into a lock-out. In a sense this was true. Soon after the strike started, the affected mills put up notices stating that the mills would be closed upto February 4th, and if work was not resumed that day, then they would remain closed upto February 18th. This is but another illustration of the general observation that the distinction between strikes and lock-outs is of an ambiguous nature.

The general strikes in the early days seem to have frequently endangered the peace and health of the city. The notices put up by the mills on 7th March 1924 stated that the mills were ready to re-open the next day. The suggestion that workers would surrender unconditionally so inflamed the workers that they tore down the notices and indulged in violence and rioting, which resulted in some loss of life and much damage to property.

The danger to public health finds a mention in the speech of the Deputy Chairman of the MOA. Referring to the

Times of India of 26th February, 1924, which drew attention to this fact, he remembered that this was so in the general strike of 1919 also and said the municipal authorities must remedy this alarming state of affairs. "The strike will have produced some good result if it serves to bring about better sanitary provisions for the working class dwellings in the near future." <sup>3</sup>

Affecting 75 cotton mills, 2 silk mills, 2 woollen mills and 2 dye-works, this strike involved 163,680 workers, of which 1,325 were from the dye-works.<sup>4</sup> On the basis of the duration of the strike for groups of mills as given in the Labour Gazette, the mandays lost, excluding those in the dye-works, amounted to 9,165,967.

## 2. The General Strike of 1925

The year 1925, like the previous one, was a year of depressed trade. In addition to the high cost of cotton and a general increase in other costs, the growing Japanese competition made the situation more difficult. The mill-owners agitated for reduced taxation on the industry and increase in import duties on yarn and cloth. In particular, they resented the excise duty of 3.5 per cent, which had been the object of their attack ever since it was imposed

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3 MOA, Annual report for 1923, p. x.

4 The Labour Gazette does not give figures for the woollen and silk mills separately. LG III, No. 8, April 1924, p. 45.

for the first time in 1896. Unable to get the excise duty abolished, they resorted to what appeared to them as the only alternative, a wage-cut. In June 1925, the mills put up notices to the effect that unless trade improved, they will be forced to reduce wages and/or work short-time. In the next month the MOA decided to reduce the dearness allowance, which stood at 70 per cent and 80 per cent of wages of time-rate and piece-rate workers respectively, to 50 per cent and 60 per cent respectively. This meant a wage-cut of 11.5 per cent in general. The wage-cut was to take effect on 1st September.

At meetings of workers, labour leaders protested against the proposed wage-cut and suggested increased holidays and shorter working hours as an alternative. The Girni Kamgar Mahemandal condemned the wage-cut and demanded that the government appoint a committee to investigate the necessity of the reduction. Deputations on behalf of workers as well as millowners waited upon the Governor and urged their points of view. The Governor said he had brought the question of the excise duty to the attention of the Government of India. To the labour leaders he pointed out what the employers had told him, that the wage cut of 11.5 per cent was preferable to an increase in the number of holidays, as working one day less in a week meant a reduction of 16.67 per cent in monthly earnings. He also told them that the millowners had assured him that the wage-cut would be restored when the position of the industry improved.

A strike was feared. But there seemed to be no way to avert it. As late as at the end of August, the Viceroy told a deputation of millowners that the question of the excise duty could not be considered until the next budget.

The strike started with 33,249 workers in 15 mills on 15th September, and quickly spread to all the mills in the city. The two mills in Kurla joined the strike on 6th October. In addition to all the cotton mills, the strike involved 2 silk mills and 2 dye-works also. Out of all the textile mills, only 2 woollen mills continued to work. At many mills a few workers attended everyday and were given odd jobs. But engines could not be started with such small numbers and there was a complete cessation of production.

Shortly after the notices of wage-cut were put up in July, the labour leaders had constituted a committee called "The Bombay Textile Workers' Deputation". On the outbreak of the strike this committee renamed itself as "The Committee of Assistance to the Textile Workers", with N. M. Joshi as its Chairman and R. R. Bakhale as the Secretary. The Committee collected subscriptions for a Relief Fund to assist the strikers. The total aid received during the strike was Rs. 42,582. Most of this came from the International Federation of Trade Unions, Amsterdam, the British Trade Union Congress and the International Federation of Textile Workers' Associations, London. Many local bodies also contributed to the Fund. With this money the Committee opened 18 Relief Centres where doles of rice and bajri were

given to the strikers. The Committee also paid the fares for some 700 workers who left for their villages.

By November, N. M. Joshi estimated that about 90,000 workers had left Bombay. According to him, one reason why workers could hold out so long was that they could get employment in the villages as they had gone there at the harvest time. Towards the end of November the Municipal Corporation authorized an expenditure of Rs.100,000 on relief works to employ the cotton mill workers on strike. These works, however, did not need more than Rs.5,000, as they were closed soon after the excise duty was suspended and mills resumed work in the first week of December.

The Government of Bombay was seriously concerned with the situation throughout the strike. But, as the Governor pointed out to the delegation of labour leaders on October 12th, the government had no statutory powers to intervene directly in the dispute. To the suggestion that a committee be appointed to examine the position of the industry, the Governor replied that he did not want to set up such a committee, since the MOA did not agree to its appointment and the committee could do little in the absence of co-operation from the MOA. The Governor again advised the labour leaders to end the strike and hoped that with the resumption of work the dispute would solve itself, when better times came for the industry.

A temporary suspension, if not complete abolition, of the excise duty was the only solution. The labour leaders

stood firm on their demand that the wage cut be withdrawn, and the millowners declared it could be withdrawn only if the excise duty was suspended.

By an Ordinance published on 1st December, 1925, the Viceroy suspended the collection of the excise duty for three months, as a prelude to its abolition in March 1926. According to the promise repeatedly made by the millowners, the wage cut was withdrawn immediately. On 3rd December, mills put up notices that they would re-open as soon as workers presented themselves for work. Thus the strike virtually ended on this date.

But out of the normal number 150,000, only 10,737 were at work on 3rd December. By 15th December the number of workers rose to 88,388. By 31st December the number was 107,069. The attendance rose to 135,938 on 4th January 1926 and as the Labour Gazette says, "the strike may be considered to have terminated finally on this date".<sup>5</sup>

Affecting 76 cotton mills, 2 silk mills and 2 dye-works, the general strike involved 151,986 workers. The mandays lost amounted to 1,797,856.<sup>6</sup>

The conduct of this strike brought home to the workers the necessity of having a powerful organization of their own. The successful termination of the strike prepared the ground for such an attempt. Largely due to the efforts of Mr.R.R.

5 LG, V, No. 5, January 1926, p. 423.

6 LG, V, No. 5, January 1926, p. 420.

Bakhele, nine existing unions<sup>7</sup> amalgamated at the end of 1925 and a new union named the Bombay Textile Labour Union came into being on 1st January 1926. As the union's first annual report admitted, "The Bombay Textile Labour Union owes its birth to the General Strike of 1925."<sup>8</sup>

### 3. The General Strike of 1928

"Introduction of new systems of work in accordance with the recommendations of the Textile Tariff Board and alleged reductions in rates of wages."<sup>9</sup> This was how the Labour Gazette described the cause of the general strike of 1928. Before the strike commenced suddenly in the month of April, the main grievances of workers related to: (1) direct cuts in wages, (2) reduction in wages due to introduction of new varieties of cloth at unfavourable rates, reduced piece-rates, introduction of inferior raw material and other factors, (3) new methods of work, which involved a reduction in the number of workers employed, and the fear of unemployment, (4) increase in the hours of work of mechanics from 8 1/2 hours to 10 hours, and the proposed

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7 They were small unions confined to a few mill localities. The Bombay Textile Labour Union : First Annual Report (From 1st January 1926 to 31st December 1926), (Bombay: The Bombay Textile Labour Union, 1927), p.2, gives the names of all the nine unions.

8 The Bombay Textile Labour Union : First Annual Report....., p. 1.

9 LG, VII, No. 9, May 1928, p. 807.



enforcement of a 10-hour day for all workers in all mills.<sup>10</sup> In addition to these grievances, there were several minor ones about fines, dismissals, the practice of giving spoiled cloth to weavers in lieu of wages, etc. But the one basic cause of the strike, according to the Fawcett Committee, was the fear of unemployment: "There were no doubt various contributory causes, but in our opinion it can be safely said that the chief reason for its commencement and continuation for a period of nearly six months was the fear of unemployment created by the new methods of work introduced by Messrs. E. D. Sassoon and Company in their mills."<sup>11</sup>

During the nine months from August 1927 to the commencement of the general strike in April 1928, there were 26 strikes in individual mills and in groups of mills. Of the 26, eleven strikes related to reductions in wages in one form or another. Twenty-four strikes were unsuccessful and two ended in a compromise. The system of three looms per weaver instead of two was introduced in August 1927 in two mills in the Sassoon group after an unsuccessful strike lasting about a month in each case.

In fact, the recommendations of the Tariff Board only

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<sup>10</sup> Government of Bombay, Report of the Bombay Strike Enquiry Committee, 1928-29, Volume I, Report (Bombay : Superintendent of Government Printing and Stationery, 1929), p. 6. The Committee is sometimes called the Fawcett Committee, after the name of its Chairman Sir Charles Fawcett.

<sup>11</sup> Government of Bombay, Report of the Bombay Strike Enquiry Committee, 1928-29, Volume I, Report, pp. 6-7.

hastened a process which had started earlier. Rationalization of the use of labour was the natural sequel to attempts in 1924 and 1925 at reducing the wage bill directly. Such rationalization had been considered as early as 1923.<sup>12</sup> The "efficiency" system came to be introduced at various times in 1926, 1927 and 1928 in many of the Bombay mills. The Tariff Board issued their report in January 1927 and encouraged the innovation.

The proposed introduction of new methods of work led to a strike in the Sassoon group of mills in January 1927. It was during this strike, which lasted for nearly two months, that a general strike was suggested. But the Bombay Textile Labour Union (BTLU) was against a general strike, as it believed that it was doomed to fail. The Girni Kamgar Mahamandal (GKM) also was against a general strike, but it supported a proposal to boycott only those mills which intended to adopt the new methods of work.

However, in March 1928, Mr. S. H. Jhabvals who was one of the vice-presidents of BTLU, started a new union under the name, the Bombay Mill Workers Union (BMWU). He said the new union was necessary as the other two unions did not function in the interest of workers. Associated with him in BMWU was the Workers and Peasants Party, a communist organization which had not previously been prominent

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12 Government of Bombay, Report of the Bombay Strike Enquiry Committee, 1928-29, Volume I, Report, p. 154

in the textile labour movement in Bombay.<sup>13</sup> Mr. A.A. Alve, President of the GKM, was soon persuaded to join hands with these two bodies, and together they succeeded in bringing about the general strike in the month of April, 1928.

As a part of the preparation for the general strike, the BMWU, the Workers and Peasants Party and Alve organized a huge procession of workers on 15th April. The next day a group of workers from two mills which were already struck went round the other mills and succeeded in bringing out workers from other mills, so that by evening ten mills in the Currimbhoy group had to be closed down. Speaking to the workers on 16th April, Jhabvala and other Communist labour leaders said the BTLU had made a mistake in not calling for a general strike in January during the strike in the Sassoon group of mills. They asked the workers to join the general strike against the new methods of work, retrenchment, reductions in wages and such other grievances.

Thus the strike began on 16th April, 1928, in ten mills, and the next day eight more mills closed down. The BTLU called a meeting to persuade the workers against the general strike. But the strikers decided to disperse this meeting and sent a batch of men for the purpose. A compromise was, however, reached between the BTLU and the strikers. It was decided that a Strike Committee of the three unions should be formed to redress the grievances.

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<sup>13</sup> Saklatvala, History . . . . ., pp. 78-79, says that Mr. Jhabvala was himself a member of the Workers and Peasants Party.

But the agitation for the general strike continued and by 26th April all mills in the city except the two at Colaba were compelled to close down. The disagreement over the formation of a Joint Strike Committee led to BTLU's forming its own Strike Committee, while the others formed another Strike Committee to conduct the strike.

On 27th April the Governor returned to Bombay and called the MOA, the BTLU and the GKM now headed by Mr. D.R. Mayekar. The MOA, who had hitherto not recognized any union, assured him that they were ready to negotiate with the unions registered under the Indian Trade Unions Act, 1926. "This was the first instance in the Bombay Presidency where the special status of a Trade Union as the result of registration was publicly recognized." <sup>14</sup>

But this meant that the MOA wanted to negotiate with the BTLU alone, as the BTLU was the only registered union at that time. Probably it was this reason that prompted the extremist leaders in the other Strike Committee to join hands with the BTLU. An agreement was reached to constitute a Joint Strike Committee (JSC), representing each group of leaders. On 3rd May the JSC submitted a list of 17 demands to the MOA. The demands related to reductions in wages, hours of work, conditions of work, rationalization, standardization of conditions of employment, work and wages, and such other matters.

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14 LG, VIII, No. 2, October 1928, p. 148.

The MOA replied by a statement in the Press on 12th May. They rejected most of the demands and refused to deal with the JSC, saying they would deal with the BTLU as it was the only registered union. The JSC naturally refused to allow the BTLU to talk to the MOA over their heads.

When Mr. Alve joined the extremist leaders, Mr. D. R. Mayekar, the Secretary of the GKM, called a meeting of his followers on 11th May, elected a new president for the GKM and got the union registered on 21st May. Mr. Alve thereupon formed a new union with the help of his extremist friends and his own union was registered on 23rd May, as the Bombay Girni Kamgar Union (BGKU). Mr. Jhabvala got his BMWU registered on 1st June. Thus everybody on the JSC came to belong to one or the other of the registered unions, and the way was cleared for negotiations between the JSC and the MOA.

As a result of the agitation of the JSC, the two mills at Kurla also had to close down from 14th and 17th May. For efficient conduct of the general strike, the JSC constituted various sub-committees, including a Defence Committee to defend its volunteers who picketed the mills vigorously. It also formed a Strikers' Exodus Committee to arrange the strikers' return to their villages.<sup>15</sup> Meetings

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<sup>15</sup> Government of Bombay, Report of the Court of Inquiry, 1929, (Bombay: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, 1929), p. 34, states that about 40,000 workers returned to their villages during the period of this strike.

were held everyday where the strikers were advised to remain firm until all their demands were granted.

On 16th May the MOA published the terms on which the mills were ready to re-open. They offered standardized wages and muster rolls, revised work rules, a uniform system of calculating wages, etc. The JSC rejected these terms and insisted on its original demands being granted. The MOA made another attempt to end the strike in August by re-opening some mills on the basis of standardized musters and standard rates prepared by them. But nobody came to work and the strike continued.

All through the strike, the Government of Bombay, the Bombay Municipal Corporation and many public bodies in the city were actively concerned with the situation. But their efforts at bringing the two parties together to settle the strike were unsuccessful. The MOA and JSC came together on many occasions and had long discussions, but the differences were too great to allow of any compromise. At last in September the MOA decided to request the government to intervene and end the strike. The JSC also sought government intervention in the strike. The General Member of the Government of Bombay called a conference of the two parties on 4th October. Here a settlement was reached on the basis of the appointment of a Committee of Inquiry to inquire into and report on the two standardization schemes prepared by the MOA and the JSC, the standard work rules and the 17 demands of the JSC. It was also agreed that work should be

resumed on 6th October.

The resumption of work was more of a truce than a settlement of the strike. Speaking to the workers, their leaders deprecated the proposed Committee of Inquiry and talked of compelling the employers, by another long strike if necessary, to improve the wages and conditions of work.

Only 17,000 workers came to work when the mills reopened on 6th October. For the next few days mills in the Sassoon group and some others were boycotted by the workers in order to force them to give up the new methods of work. But better counsels prevailed, and workers began to attend all the mills from 11th October, on which date attendance was over 75,000, or about 50 per cent of the number originally involved in the strike. The strike in the two mills at Kurla ended on 6th October and the workers resumed duties on the terms of the settlement of the general strike.

Affecting 68 cotton mills, 2 silk mills and one bleaching mill, the general strike involved 147,644 workers and cost 21,691,503 mandays. If the 5,512 workers and 656,117 mandays lost due to the strike in Kurla are added, the total loss of the general strike comes to 22,347,620 mandays and the number of workers involved comes to 153,156.

The long strike necessitated relief work on an extensive scale. The Strikers' Relief Fund of the JSC received £1500 from the International Conference of Textile Workers at Ghent and the International Federation at Amsterdam.



Mr. N. M. Joshi gave Rs.1,000 collected during a previous strike in some railway workshops. About Rs.21,000 were received from one M. Veronoff from Moscow.<sup>16</sup> Appeals were made to other unions and public organizations and the people to assist the strikers.<sup>17</sup> With these funds the JSC opened 12 relief centres and distributed rations of food-grains to the strikers.

In addition to the relief work of the JSC, there was the Mayor's Fund which collected nearly Rs. 49,000 for the relief of the strikers' children. The bulk of this fund came from individual millowners. Two or three mills distributed food rations to their strikers and one of them also gave milk to the children. Then, there was the Citizens' Textile Workers' Relief Committee which also exerted itself in the relief work. Moreover, the strikers had received the wages for March in the middle of April, and the wages for April were given in the middle of May; and thus the need for outside relief was reduced to that extent.

The Committee of Enquiry was appointed on 13th October, 1928, with Sir Charles Fawcett as the chairman. The Committee,

16 Kanji Dwarkadas, Forty-Five Years ....., p. 47, says this was the third time money came from Moscow, the first time having been about two and a half years before.

17 "Lal Bawatyachi Mohim", a Marathi pamphlet published by the Kamgar Vangmaya Fraserak Mandal, Bombay, in April 1934, says that the Textile Labour Association of Ahmedabad (TLA) was approached for assistance, which the TLA refused on the ground that the strike was unjustified and that the Bombay workers had not adopted peaceful means to settle the dispute.

the report of which was published on 26th March, 1929, found that the MOA schemes of standardization of wages, duties and numbers of operatives, and the Standing Orders were in the main fair and reasonable. Twelve of the 17 demands were held to be fair and reasonable, and 10 of them were conceded by the millowners. Two demands were held to be unfair and unreasonable, and the remaining three were held to be partly fair and partly not.<sup>18</sup> Regarding the 7 1/2 per cent cut in the weavers' wages, which had been the cause of serious disagreement, the Committee found that the cut was justified, but suggested that the cut should be dropped, provided labour leaders in their turn undertook to give real co-operation in making the standardization scheme work properly. The MOA voluntarily postponed the wage cut

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18 The demands conceded by the MOA were mainly covered by the new Standing Orders and the standardization schemes. The demands held to be fair by the Fawcett Committee, but not granted by the MOA, were that the high prices allowance should be consolidated with the original wages and that the contract of service should be terminable by a month's notice by either side. Demands that hours of work should not be raised without the workers' consent, and if raised, the workers should be given overtime rates, that the three-loom and double-side working should not be adopted without the workers' consent, and that reduction in wages should cease and conditions of 1925 should be restored, were held to be partly fair and reasonable and partly not. The demands held as not fair and not reasonable were that the system of presenting tickets of attendance and cleaning machinery be discontinued, and that wages of less than Rs.30/- per month should be raised substantially. Government of Bombay, Report of the Bombay Strike Enquiry Committee, 1928-29, Volume I, Report, discusses all the 17 demands in Chapter III (pp. 59-85).

to October 1929. But the cost was in fact dropped entirely, because the standardization scheme involving it was never brought into force.<sup>19</sup>

#### 4. The General Strike of 1929

As mentioned before, the general strike of 1929 ended with a truce or a temporary compromise. The Bombay Girni Kamagar Union (BGKU) continued its offensive propaganda against the employers. It also tried hard to increase the membership and to prepare the workers for the contemplated strike, which it wanted to bring about in the next six months. The membership of BGKU rose from 324 during the quarter ending 30th September 1928, to 54,000 during the quarter ending 31st December 1928. The membership continued at the same high level in the next quarter.<sup>20</sup>

The BGKU constituted a mill committee in each of the mills. In the name of the BGKU, these mill committees were free to do whatever they pleased, without any prior consultation with the union. They also tried to interfere with the management of the mills, and as a result there were many lightning strikes involving violence and disorderly behaviour. The arrests of Dange, Nimbkar, Joglekar and other

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19 Labour Office, Government of Bombay, Wages and Unemployment in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry : Report of the Departmental Enquiry, (Bombay: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, 1934), p. 6.

20 Government of Bombay, Report of the Court of Inquiry, 1929, p. 11.

Communist leaders of the BGKU on 20th March, 1929, in connection with the famous Meerut Conspiracy Case, did not cause any change in the policies of the union. New officers were appointed to the places of those arrested, and the union continued its agitation against the employers and propoganda for another general strike.

Early in March 1929 there were strikes in the Spring, Textile and Century mills in the Wadia group over the issue of reinstatement of a few workers who had been dismissed for unauthorized absence and overstay of leave. All the three mills re-opened on 8th April. By 24th April they had about 10,000 workers, of whom about 6,500 were fresh hands employed in place of the strikers. This replacement was interpreted by the BGKU as victimization of workers for their union activities. At the meeting of the MOA and the Joint Strike Committee on 24th April, held for the purpose of considering the recommendations of the Fewcett Committee (the Bombay Strike Enquiry Committee, 1928-29), the BGKU threatened to withdraw from the meeting if the MOA failed to prevent victimization of unionists. The MOA was ready to inquire into cases of victimization, but there was disagreement over the method of investigation. The BGKU demanded reinstatement of all the old hands in the Wadia group of mills, and the MOA did not agree to dismiss the new hands who had replaced the strikers. The BGKU decided to call a general strike from 26th April. Accordingly,

74,675 workers in 41 mills struck work at 12.00 Noon on 26th April.

The strike soon spread to other mills. By the end of April, 62 mills were affected. Two more mills joined the strike on 1st May. In addition the strikes continued in the Spring, Textile and Century mills. A strike commenced in Morarji Goculdas mills on 18th April, on the issue of proposed retrenchment of workers.

The BTLU and the Girni Kamgar Mahamandal were opposed to the strike. The BTLU rejected the invitation of the BGKU to join in the conduct of the strike, and condemned the strike as unjustified and against the interests of the workers. But by aggressive propaganda, intimidation and acts of violence the BGKU succeeded in bringing out the workers and the strike persisted.

Victimization of unionists was the main grievance. Others were obstacles to union activities by management and objections to collecting subscriptions inside the mills. The BGKU stood firm on its demand of reinstatement of the strikers in the Wadia group of mills. The efforts of the Governor and the General Member of the Government of Bombay in the first week of May did not succeed in bringing about a settlement.

The BGKU continued its propaganda vigorously. It exhorted workers to go back to their villages and assisted them in doing so. It picketed the mills daily and in its meetings urged the workers to remain firm and make the

strike a success. The Marathi paper 'Krantī', controlled by the officials in the BGKU, carried on a virulent agitation in support of the strike. By way of strike relief the BGKU formed a Relief Committee and gave some food rations to the strikers.

As against this the meetings held under the auspices of the BTLU and the Girni Kamgar Mahamandal urged the strikers to resume work. The MOA also made vigorous propaganda and arranged for picketing at the mills as counter moves to the activities of BGKU.<sup>21</sup> There was again another body called the Blue Flag Union which also opposed the strike and countered the propaganda of the BGKU.<sup>22</sup>

Mr. Mehta states that during this strike Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the leader of the depressed classes, undertook to supply several mills with their requirements of labour exclusively from the classes he represented.<sup>23</sup> Mr. Dhananjay Keer says that Dr. Ambedkar had actively opposed the general strike of 1923 and that during this strike also he campaigned amongst his low-caste workers for resumption of work.<sup>24</sup>

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21 "A feature of this dispute has been active counter-picketing and counter-propaganda by the Millowners' Association," LG, VIII, No. 9, May 1929, p. 841.

22 Government of Bombay, Report of the Court of Inquiry, p.35. Probably this was the group organized by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar.

23 S. D. Mehta, The Cotton Mills of India: 1854 to 1954 (Bombay: The Textile Association (India), 1954), p. 121.

24 Dhananjay Keer, Dr. Ambedkar : Life and Mission, (2nd ed., Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1962), pp.118-119 and 128-129.



On June 21st the Governor announced that a Court of Inquiry under the Trade Disputes Act, 1929, would be set up immediately to examine the dispute and the difficulties in the way of its settlement. The Court of Inquiry was appointed on 3rd July under the chairmanship of Mr. Justice H. G. Pearson. Published on 18th September, the report of the Inquiry held the BCKU as being mainly responsible for the initiation and prolongation of the strike.

Dated 2nd September 1929, the report said, "Strictly speaking the general strike does not now exist in fact."<sup>25</sup> It found that employment in the mills was low at first when the strike began, but that the numbers employed grew as the days passed. At the end of May the attendance at mills was about 90,000; in June it was between 65,000 and 85,000; in July it varied from 85,000 to 95,000; and at the time of writing the report it stood near 105,000.<sup>26</sup> In fact, but for a few exceptions, all the mills worked more or less continuously throughout the period of the strike. The strike had commenced at a time which corresponded with the period when many workers normally went to their villages, and the report estimated that between 15,000 and 30,000 workers were out of Bombay.

On 18th September, when the report of the Inquiry was

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<sup>25</sup> Government of Bombay, Report of the Court of Inquiry, 1929, p. 34.

<sup>26</sup> Government of Bombay, Report of the Court of Inquiry, 1929, p. 34.



published, the attendance at the mills was 87,662 as against the normal complement of 109,232 in the 64 mills affected by the strike. That evening the BGKU decided to withdraw the pickets from the mills. Thus the strike was called off and may be said to have ended on 18th September. The strikes in Spring, Century and Morarji mills ended slightly later. The strike in the Textile mill had ended much earlier, on 14th June.

The BGKU came out badly mauled out of this general strike. Pearson's report charged it with taking advantage of the situation of discontent and the fear of unemployment, and deliberately inciting the workers against the employers. The report also found the union responsible for intimidation and violence. Giving due recognition to the fact that there was an undercurrent of discontent among the workers due to the fear of unemployment and the proposed cut in the wages of weavers,<sup>27</sup> the report stated:

It is difficult to say that the dispute or disputes, if any, which resulted in the general strike, existed between the workers themselves and the Millowners. The dispute during this period was between the officials of the Girni Kamgar Union on the one hand and the Millowners on the other, resulting from the policy and activities of the officials of the Union and the Mill Committees. In the struggle between the parties, the Millowners were largely on the defensive. It is highly probable that in certain instances the Millowners and their

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<sup>27</sup> This was the cut proposed in the standardization scheme, which was to come into effect in October 1929. It was never enforced. Labour Office, Government of Bombay, Wages and Unemployment . . . . ., p. 6.

officers did not act with the same circumspection as they might have done in a more favourable atmosphere. But we think 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 resulting in the general strike. 28/

In addition to these charges of the Court of Inquiry, the two police reports and the report of the Percival Committee charged the leaders of the BGKU with encouraging communal hatred and active association with the communal riots in Bombay during the months of February, April and May, 1929. <sup>29</sup>

The failure of the strike dealt a severe blow to the strength of the BGKU. The membership of the union declined to 800 in the first quarter of 1930. <sup>30</sup> Strongly enough, the membership of the Bombay Textile Labour Union also fell

28 Government of Bombay, Report of the Court of Inquiry, 1929, p. 34.

29 Government of Bombay, The Police Report on the Bombay Riots of February 1929, (Bombay: Superintendent of Government Printing and Stationery, 1929);

Government of Bombay, The Police Report on the Bombay Riots of April-May 1929, (Bombay: Superintendent of Government Printing and Stationery, 1929);

Government of Bombay, Report of the Bombay Riots Inquiry Committee, 1929, (Bombay: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, 1929).

Mr. P. E. Percival was the chairman of the Bombay Riots Inquiry Committee.

30 LG, IX, No. 9, May 1930, p. 929.

from 5,959 in March 1929 to 704 in the first quarter of 1930.<sup>31</sup>

This general strike affected 64 mills and involved 109,232 workers. The mandays lost in the strike amounted to 6,736,192.

The MOA had so far recognized every union registered under the Indian Trade Unions Act, 1926. Mainly as the result of this strike and the aggressive activities of the union, the MOA withdrew their recognition from the BGKU in November 1929.<sup>32</sup> The Labour Gazette adds that about the same time there were two factions in the BGKU, and that they were fighting each other for the control of the union.<sup>33</sup>

##### 5. The General Strike of 1934

The depression of the 1930's forced many hardships on the mill industry.<sup>34</sup> In an effort to economize on costs many mills resorted to wage-cuts. Wages were reduced by 21 per cent as between July 1926 and April 1934. The workload increased due to rationalization. About 28,000 workers were rendered unemployed by total and partial closure of

31 LG, IX, No. 9, May 1930, p. 928. The membership in March 1929 is from the Annual Report on the Working of the Indian Trade Unions Act ....., for 1928-29.

32 MOA, annual report for 1929, p. 58.

33 LG, IX, No. 7, March 1930, p. 701.

34 Mehta, The Cotton Mills ....., pp. 172-184, gives a description of the effects of the depression on the cotton textile industry.

many mills during the period 1926 to 1933.<sup>35</sup> The number of working mills came down from 78 in 1926 to 66 in 1933. In March 1934 only 55 mills were working with 95,637 hands as against 105,000 hands in 1933.<sup>36</sup>

Between May and December 1933, there were 17 strikes in the mills covered by the Labour Office enquiry, against reduction in wages and allowances.<sup>37</sup> Mr. Renadive's Lal Bawta Girni Kamgar Union (LBGKU) talked of a general strike as early as the beginning of 1933.<sup>38</sup>

On the initiative of the Bombay Girni Kamgar Union (BGKU), an All-India Textile Workers' Conference was held in Bombay in January 1934. The Conference decided to declare a general strike on 23rd April 1934, as a protest against wage-cuts and rationalization, and appointed a Council of Action for the purpose. A Joint Strike Committee was constituted, consisting of representatives of the BGKU, the LBGKU and some members of the Council of Action. As a result of the intense propaganda carried on by the Joint

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35 Labour Office, Government of Bombay, Wages and Unemployment ....., pp. 111-113.

36 Labour Office, Government of Bombay, Wages and Unemployment ....., p. 9.

37 Labour Office, Government of Bombay, Wages and Unemployment ....., p. 28. The enquiry covered 49 mills.

38 "Lal Bawatyachi Mohim", a Marathi pamphlet published by the Kamgar Vangmaya Prasarak Mandal, Bombay, in April 1934.

Strike Committee (JSC) and the two unions, the general strike commenced, as scheduled, on 23rd April.<sup>39</sup>

Four mills were struck on 23rd April and the next day 15 mills closed down and 13 worked partially. At the close of the month, of the 53 mills reported as working, 45 mills employing about 82,000 workers were affected by the strike. The other mills also worked only partially, and the night shift working was suspended entirely.

The demands of the JSC related to restoration of wage-cuts, unemployment allowance, an 8-hour day, a minimum wage of Rs.45/- per month, etc. To counter the propaganda of the JSC, the MOA distributed handbills - from an aeroplane on one occasion at least - advising workers to resume work. There were some assaults and clashes between groups of workers. For fear of the strikers, four mills housed and fed their workers on the mill premises.

Four more mills came to be affected by the strike in the month of May, bringing the total to 49. The MOA and the JSC continued their propaganda. Mr. N. M. Joshi and some other leaders met the Governor to discuss the situation. The strike leaders criticised their action and said they had

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39 Mr. Morris says that to start with the Bombay Textile Labour Union was in control of the situation. Morris, The Emergence . . . . ., p. 185 : "The strike movement had initially been in the hands of the moderate leadership of the old Bombay Textile Labour Union. As in 1928 and 1929, however, it quickly fell into the hands of the Communists." It has not been possible to find a confirmation of this statement.

no right to negotiate anything with regard to the strike without consulting the JSC first.

In addition to picketing at the mills, the JSC formed a "war picketing committee" to carry on picketing at the chawls of the workers. A Strike Relief Fund was started, but it could collect only less than a thousand rupees. The one new feature during this strike was the advice to the strikers not to leave Bombay. The leaders urged them to remain in the city, as their return to villages would weaken the strike.

The MOA made unsuccessful attempts to re-open the mills on 2nd and 10th May. Three mills declared a lockout on 29th May. The position on 31st May was that 28 mills remained closed, but the others could resume work, although only partially.

Despite the propoganda of the JSC, the strikers began to drift back to work in the second week of June. There was a split in the JSC; the representatives of the BGKU withdrew from it owing to the expulsion of Mr. Kandelker and Mr. Alve from the JSC as a result of differences on the issue of inclusion of Mr. N. M. Joshi and Mr. Bakhale in the Committee.

The Bombay Provincial Congress Committee made an unsuccessful effort to convene a conference of the JSC and the MOA to settle the dispute. The MOA did not agree to participate in the conference. On June 14th the BGKU met

Mahatma Gandhi who was in Bombay at that time. The Mahatma sympathised with the workers, but doubted his success in mediation suggested by the union, in view of the unfavourable reply the Congress Committee had received from the MOA.

The strike began to fizzle out. The attendance at mills rose from 30,000 at the beginning of June to 84,000 on June 19th. On 20th June the strike practically terminated, the attendance on that day being nearly 85,000 or about 80 per cent of the normal complement before the strike.

The strike covered 47 cotton mills, one silk mill and one woollen mill. The number of workers involved amounted to 90,684, and the mandays lost came to 2,663,651.

One of the important reasons for the failure of the strike was the adamant resistance of the millowners. Many of the strike leaders were arrested during the strike and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment.<sup>40</sup> The Lal Bawta Girni Kargar Union of Mr. Ranadive, which had taken a prominent part in bringing about the strike was declared an unlawful association by the government, in the fourth quarter of 1934. Even before this, in July 1934, the Communist Party of India, with which the BGKU had close associations, had been declared illegal by the Government of India.

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<sup>40</sup> But in a prosecution after the strike, initiated by the government under the Indian Trade Disputes Act, 1929, all the 8 labour leaders involved were acquitted. LG, XIV, No. 12, August 1935, p. 901.



## 6. The General Strike of 1940

The general strike of 1940, which commenced on March 3rd of that year, had the demand for a dearness allowance as the proximate cause. To understand the nature of this strike, it is necessary to go back in time and trace the events that preceded the strike and had an important bearing on its occurrence.

The BGKU, which came out of the general strike of 1934 in a very poor condition, began to re-establish its hold over the workers by the end of 1937. It opposed vigorously the passing of Bombay Industrial Disputes Act, 1938, and brought about a one-day strike on November 7th, 1938, as a protest against the Act. It was also active in many other strikes, the more important of them being the strikes in the Phoenix and Simplex Mills in 1939.<sup>41</sup>

The World War II began in September 1939. As the Communists were opposed to the war until Russia came to be involved in it in June 1941, the BGKU made much propaganda against the war and organized a one-day strike on October 2nd, 1939, as an anti-war gesture.

As soon as the war commenced, the BGKU complained of

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<sup>41</sup> It was during the dispute in the Phoenix Mills that a "stay-in" strike was staged for the first time in Bombay on an important scale. The illegal nature of "stay-in" strikes was pointed out by the government in a Press Note issued in May 1939. LG, XVIII, No. 9, May 1939, p. 650.

the rising cost of living. The Bombay Provincial Trade Union Congress, at the suggestion of the BGKU, held a 'Mahagai Conference'<sup>42</sup> on January 1st, 1940. The Conference raised the demand for an increase of 40 per cent in wages to compensate for the high cost of living. Between August and December, 1939, the official cost of living index had moved by only 8 points, from 105 to 113, and there seemed to be no genuine economic basis for demanding a 40 per cent increase in wages. In fact, the demand was reduced from 40 per cent to 25 per cent, and at last it went down to 15 per cent, during the proceedings of the Board of Conciliation appointed by the government.

Appointed on February 4th, 1940, the Board published its report on 26th of the same month, stating that its efforts at conciliation had failed.<sup>43</sup> The workers' representatives had insisted on an allowance of three annas per day,<sup>44</sup> but the millowners had refused to give anything more than two annas per day. The Board, however, suggested that an allowance of two annas per day be paid to all the workers, with retrospective effect from the 1st December 1939, and

42 "Mahagai" in Marathi means high cost of living.

43 LG, XIX, No. 6, February 1940, pp. 487-491 give a summary of the report.

44 This amounted to an increase of 15 per cent in wages. The Employers' Federation of India, The General Strike in the Bombay Cotton Mill Industry : its Lessons for Indian Industries (Bombay : The Employers' Federation of India, 1940).

that cost price grain shops be established by the mills to supply foodgrains at cheaper prices. The millowners implemented both these suggestions.

When conciliation failed, the Council of Action of the Bombay Provincial Trade Union Congress instructed the BGKU to declare a general strike over the issue from March 4th. In fact the threat of the strike had been held out in the Mahagai Conference itself.<sup>45</sup> The efforts made by the Adviser to the Governor could not avert the strike and the strike seemed certain.

Originally scheduled on March 4th, the strike started a day earlier in about 14 mills. Forty-six mills joined the strike on the 4th. Daily meetings, vigorous propaganda and picketing at the mills were organized as usual. But one prominent feature of this strike was the active participation of women, who picketed the mills successfully.

The BGKU leaders, Dange, Ranadive and Mirajkar, were arrested under the Defence of India Rules on 11th March. Some more leaders who had taken an important part in the strike were arrested in the next few days. The police tried to maintain law and order, but assaults and intimidation were reported almost every day.

Attendance at the mills was very low for the first few days after the commencement of the strike. Thereafter

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<sup>45</sup> The Employers' Federation of India, The General Strike in the Bombay Cotton Mill Industry .....

from March 19th until the end of the month, it varied between 12,000 and 25,800. The wages for February were paid on March 19th. The BGKU had agreed to workers accepting the wages, but it asked them not to accept the dearness allowance as offered by the millowners. A majority of the workers, however, ignored the advice of the union and accepted the dearness allowance.

After the Mayor of Bombay had tried unsuccessfully to settle the dispute, the BGKU sought the intervention of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee. The latter replied that it would intervene only if the union agreed to submit the dispute unconditionally to the arbitrator chosen by the Congress. At last in the first week of April the BGKU agreed to accept the arbitration of the Congress. But when the Congress Committee approached the MOA, the MOA replied on the 11th April stating that there was no case for arbitration and that the acceptance of the suggestions of the Board of Conciliation represented its final word in the matter. The MOA also warned the strikers that they would lose their jobs if work was not resumed before 25th April.

The attendance at the mills improved from about 19,000 on April 1st to about 46,000 on the 12th. On the latter date the BGKU resolved to call off the strike the next day. Thus the strike ended on the 13th April, and about 75,000 workers attended the mills that day.

The strike affected 63 mills and involved 156,598 workers. The mandays lost in the strike amounted to 4,510,768.

Incidentally, it may be mentioned that 5,525 workers in 13 silk mills, and 935 workers in a woollen mill, struck work for about 10 days in March, to show their sympathy to the general strike in the cotton mills.<sup>46</sup>

One of the two booklets published by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India on this general strike blamed the failure of the strike on the lack of proper organization. Criticizing the planning and the conduct of the strike, the booklet said, "Strike preparation meant in practice strike agitation and nothing more."<sup>47</sup>

#### 7. The General Strike of 1947

The general strike of the drawers-in, reachers and warpers in the cotton mills of Bombay in September and October, 1947, was the sequel to the award of the Industrial Court relating to standardization of wages.

It had always been considered desirable, and occasional attempts had been made by the MOA ever since 1891, to bring about some uniformity in the rates of wages paid by different mills. Early in April 1946 the Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh raised the question once again and the

<sup>46</sup> Also, a cotton mill in Amalner came to be affected when its 2,750 workers went on a 12-day strike in March to show their sympathy to the general strike in Bombay. LG, XIX, No. 8, April 1940, p. 727.

<sup>47</sup> MOA, A Brief Review of the Labour Situation in the Bombay Cotton Mill Industry in 1940 (Bombay: The Millowners' Association). The review gives excerpts from the booklet mentioned above.

government referred the matter to the arbitration of the Industrial Court. The Bombay Girni Kamgar Union joined the issue shortly afterwards. The government then issued another two notifications on 16th August, 1946, in supersession of the earlier one on the subject, and referred the dispute again to the Industrial Court for arbitration. The MOA did not object to the standardization of wages as such, but contended that standardization should not mean an increase in the wage level.

The Industrial Court gave its award on the 31st of May, 1947.<sup>48</sup> The award laid down a detailed scheme of standardized wages, and made the scheme effective as from January 1st, 1947. The wage increase involved amounted to nearly 28 per cent above the pre-award level. The scheme laid down detailed rates for almost all important time-rated occupations. For piece-rate wages, it specified levels of monthly earnings which must be attained, leaving the fixation of piece-rates to individual mills; the only exceptions were reelers and weavers for whom detailed piece-rates were laid down.

Towards the middle of July many mills complained that some of their workers on piece-rates, particularly the

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<sup>48</sup> The Industrial Court Reporter : 1946-47. (Bombay: Office of the Deputy Commissioner of Labour (Information), Government of Bombay, 1951), pp. 386-422, give the award of the Industrial Court.

drawers-in and warpers, had resorted to go-slow tactics.<sup>49</sup> The drawers-in, whose average production per day was generally over 10,000 ends, were reported to have deliberately reduced their production to about 6,000 ends per day. It was thought that the workers had adopted this go-slow under the impression that by reducing production they would get smaller earnings than those stipulated in the award, and thus their piece-rates would have to be fixed at a higher level. The government issued a press note on the 7th of August, warning the workers against these go-slow tactics and advising them to seek redress of their grievances through the Ad Hoc Committee appointed by the Industrial Court on the same date.<sup>50</sup> The Committee was appointed to deal with all questions arising out of the interpretation and implementation of the standardization award.

On the basis of the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee, the Industrial Court fixed detailed piece-rates for drawers-in in its order of the 16th September. The rates varied from 46 pies to 67 pies per 1000 ends for the more usual varieties of cloth.<sup>51</sup> However, these rates did not satisfy the workers, although they yielded higher average

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49 MOA, Annual Review of the Labour Situation in the Bombay Cotton Mill Industry: 1947 (Bombay : The Millowners' Association).

50 The press note is reproduced in full in MOA, annual report for 1947, p. 45.

51 MOA, annual report for 1947, p. 46.



earnings per month than those stipulated in the original award of May.<sup>52</sup>

In December 1946 the BGKU had published a booklet on wages, and therein had demanded standardized wages with a minimum wage of Rs.35 and an average wage of Rs.55.<sup>53</sup> Soon after the award of the Industrial Court in the month of May 1947, the BGKU had begun an agitation against the award. Also, it had actively supported the Committee of Drawers-in in their demand for higher piece-rates. Together the two bodies had called upon the drawers-in in all the mills to go on a general strike against the low rates fixed for them.<sup>54</sup> At a meeting of the workers on the 8th September, it had been decided that the drawers-in should go on a general strike if the minimum piece-rate was not fixed at 48 pies per 1000 ends.<sup>55</sup> However, as mentioned above, on the 16th September the minimum piece-rate was fixed at 46 pies by the Industrial Court, and this did not satisfy the workers.

52 MOA, Annual Review of the Labour Situation In the Bombay Cotton Mill Industry : 1947.

53 "Girni Kamgarenche Pagar", a Marathi booklet published by the Peoples Publishing House, Bombay, in December 1946, on behalf of the BGKU. The award of the Industrial Court fixed the minimum wage at Rs.30 and the average wage rose to Rs.44 after the award. The minimum basic wage before the award was about Rs.22 and the average wage was Rs.34.50. MOA, Annual Review of the Labour Situation in the Bombay Cotton Mill Industry: 1947, and The Industrial Court Reporter:1946-47, p.400.

54 MOA, Annual Review of the Labour Situation in the Bombay Cotton Mill Industry: 1947.

55 MOA, annual report for 1947, p. 46.

The discontent which had led to go-slow tactics since the middle of July finally erupted into a general strike in the last week of September. While the Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh was doing what it could to popularize the standardization award, the BGKU had carried on its agitation to sabotage its implementation. It was in response to the call of the BGKU that drawers-in and reachers in many mills struck work from the 23rd of September. The warpers also were asked to go on a one-day strike on that date to show their sympathy to the demands of the drawers-in.

The government acted quickly and issued a press note on the same day. Warning the strikers that the strike was illegal, it said, " .... it is sacred duty of Government to counteract attempts to ruin the prestige of an award or to overthrow the authority of the Industrial Court. This duty will be done."<sup>56</sup> But the warning proved ineffective and the strike continued.

On the 24th September the MOA approached the Industrial Court to get the strike declared illegal according to the Bombay Industrial Disputes Act, 1938. Summarily dismissing the arguments of the BGKU, the Court declared the strike illegal in its order of 4th October.<sup>57</sup>

The strike affected 56 mills and involved 3,466 drawers-in and reachers directly. The process of drawing-in being

56 MOA, annual report for 1947, pp. 47-48, give the full text of the press note.

57 The Industrial Court Reporter : 1946-47, pp. 272-277.

an indispensable preliminary to weaving, the industry came to a standstill from the 25th September. Thus 173,349 workers came to be involved in the strike indirectly.

It was clear even before its commencement that the strike could have no chance of success. So it was not surprising when it fizzled out within ten days. The warpers had gone on a sympathetic strike only for one day, on the 23rd September, and had resumed work the next day. The strike of the drawers-in and reachers lasted for about a week, but thereafter it threatened to collapse. The strike was officially called off from the morning of the 3rd October.

The strike cost 1,284,294 mandays, and even afterwards there were complaints for some time that warpers had continued their go-slow tactics.<sup>58</sup> But this strike marked the end of an era in industrial relations. From this time on wages ceased to be a major grievance in the Bombay cotton textile industry. Minor disputes may have continued to occur, but the standardization of wages effectively removed one important source of industrial conflict and brought to the industry a measure of stability unusual before.<sup>59</sup>

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58 MOA, Annual Review of the Labour Situation in the Bombay Cotton Mill Industry : 1947.

59 Surprising as it may seem, the narrowing down in wage differentials in real terms between skilled and unskilled workers has not caused much discontent among the workers. The point may be illustrated by the following example.

The standardization award of 1947 fixed the wages of a beam carrier in the Sizing Department at Rs.38.19 per month and the wages of a front sizer in the same department at Rs.91.00 per month. Both the workers got a dearness allowance of Rs.42.69 each in June 1947.

### 8. The General Strike of 1950

The payment of bonus became a subject of compulsory arbitration of the Industrial Court for the first time during the dispute regarding the bonus for the year 1946.

Initially paid during the period 1919 to 1923, the annual payment of bonus was revived again in 1941, at the instance of the government.<sup>60</sup> The millowners considered bonus as an ex gratia payment, although it was often argued on behalf of the workers that bonus was in fact equivalent to a deferred wage which the workers could claim as a matter of right to fill the gap between their actual earnings and the living wage. In the award regarding the bonus for 1946, the Industrial Court declared that, ".... the workers may

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(Footnote 59 from last page continued)

On the basis of the recommendations of the Central Wage Board for the Cotton Textile Industry, all the workers got a flat wage increase of Rs.8.00 per month in 1960 and Rs.2.00 per month in 1962. Thus in 1964 the wages of a beam carrier stood at Rs.48.19 and those of a front sizer stood at Rs.101.00. The dearness allowance for each of them was Rs.114.90 in June 1964. Since 1960, Rs.62.66 in the dearness allowance paid each month are treated as merged with the basic wages, as per the recommendations of the Central Wage Board.

Although the difference between the two wages has remained the same in money terms at Rs.52.81, the front sizer has suffered relatively, since his monthly earnings have risen only by 161 per cent, from Rs.133.69 in 1947 to Rs.215.90 in 1964, whereas the earnings of the beam carrier have risen by 202 per cent, from Rs.80.88 in 1947 to Rs.163.09 in 1964. But this failure to recognize the difference in skills has not been the specific cause of much labour unrest so far.

60 MOA, annual report for 1941, pp. 41-42.

reasonably ask for a bonus when there are enhanced profits, when dividends are paid out after providing for taxation and depreciation - especially when their wages are below the living wage standard."<sup>61</sup> The Industrial Court has been the arbitrator on the bonus issue ever since.<sup>62</sup>

In July 1950 the Industrial Court awarded one-sixth of basic wages in 1949 as the bonus for the year 1949. The bonus was to be paid in two instalments, one on the 14th of August and the other on the 14th of September respectively. Also, the Court exempted four mills from the liability to pay bonus, as the mills had pleaded that they had made losses or had made no profits in the year 1949.<sup>63</sup>

Here was an opportunity for the Mill Mazdoor Sabha, which it did not miss. The Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh (RMMS), together with its sister organization, the Kurla Girni Kamgar Sangh, commanded a membership of 52,800 in March 1950. The Communist BGKU, with a membership of only 15,662 had temporarily receded into the background. The Socialist Mill Mazdoor Sabha had 23,819 members, had also the moral support of another Socialist-inspired union, the

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61 The Industrial Court Reporter : 1946-47, p. 391.

62 In some years the Court was not actively concerned with the final settlement, and was only asked to ratify agreements arrived at by the parties independently of the Court, and the Court issued awards in terms of those agreements. e.g. - The five-year bonus agreement for the years 1953-57, described in MOA, annual report for 1956, pp.63-64 and 200-208.

63 The award is reproduced in full in MOA, annual report for 1950, pp. 198-205.

Bombay Textile and Technical Supervisory Staff Union, and was at that time considered to be a formidable rival to the RIMS.<sup>64</sup> Immediately after the award of the Industrial Court was published, the Mill Mazdoor Sabha started an agitation, demanding a bonus equivalent to one-fourth of basic wages in 1949 and payment of bonus by all the mills, including the four exempted by the Industrial Court.

The Sabha exhorted the workers not to accept bonus until the quantum of bonus was raised as demanded and until all the mills were required to pay it. At a meeting of workers on 16th July, the Sabha threatened that there would be a general strike from the 14th of August if the demands were not granted. On 25th July the Sabha renewed its threat of a general strike, and the final decision to go on strike was taken on the 30th of July.<sup>65</sup>

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64 All the figures of membership are from the Annual Report on the Working of the Indian Trade Unions Act, 1926, for the year 1949-50. It may also be mentioned that the Sabha had made an unsuccessful attempt in 1949 to oust the RIMS from its representative status under the Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946.

65 In this context it would be of some interest to know the quantum of bonus in previous years. The bonus for 1941 was equal to one-eighth of basic earnings in that year. From 1942 to 1945 the bonus was equal to one-sixth of annual basic earnings. For 1946 it was equal to one-fifth and for 1947, one-sixth of basic earnings in those years. For 1948 the bonus was equal to three-eighth of basic earnings. In addition, the millowners gave a Victory Bonus in 1945 and an Independence Bonus in 1947, equivalent to one month's basic wages in each case. R. G. Gokhale, The Bombay Cotton Mill Worker (Bombay : Millowners' Association, 1957), p. 44; and MOA, annual report for 1950, pp. 207-208.



If the Sabha was dissatisfied with the award, the MOA and the RMMS were not satisfied with it either. Pending the setting up of the Labour Appellate Tribunal on 8th August, the MOA applied to the Industrial Court for an extension of the dates for payment of the instalments of bonus. The Industrial Court rejected the application on the 4th August. On 9th August the MOA appealed to the Labour Appellate Tribunal (LAT) against the bonus award. The MOA argued that the quantum of bonus was excessive and that the Industrial Court had deviated from the principles hitherto followed in the calculation of net profits.

Subsequently the RMMS also appealed to the LAT against the bonus award. The RMMS asked for a bonus equivalent to one-fourth of basic earnings in 1949 and desired that three of the four mills exempted should be asked to pay the bonus.<sup>66</sup>

While the RMMS was busy seeking legal remedies, the Mill Mazdoor Sabha and the BCKU had joined hands in their agitation for an enhanced quantum of the bonus and for its payment by all the mills. When the final decision to go on strike from the 14th of August was taken on the 30th July, the government issued a press note the next day and warned that the proposed strike was illegal and that workers would be liable to lose leave with pay and other privileges. Also, the press note warned millowners that non-payment of the

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66 The fourth mill had been burnt down in a fire in August 1948, and had not worked throughout 1949. MOA, annual report for 1950, p. 203.



first instalment of bonus on 14th August would be illegal in the absence of a stay-order.

The MOA applied to the LAT for a stay-order against the award of the Industrial Court. But afterwards the MOA came to an agreement with the RMMS and asked the LAT to grant a stay-order on "consent" terms. According to the latter, the mills liable to pay bonus under the award of the Industrial Court were to pay instead a sum equivalent to the first instalment on the 14th of August. If the quantum of bonus was altered by the LAT in favour of the MOA, the payment was to be recovered in three equal instalments. In other words, the mills were to pay one month's wages as an advance against future wages. The LAT granted a stay-order in these terms.

But this arrangement did not have the intended effect, and the general strike commenced as scheduled on the 14th of August. The strike affected all the cotton mills, as well as four dyeing and bleaching concerns and three woollen mills. The Mill Mazdoor Sabha and the BGKU made vigorous propaganda to bring about a one-day strike on August 31st in all the industries in Bombay, as a sympathetic gesture in support of the cotton textile strike.<sup>67</sup> The government issued leaflets and posters against the proposed city-wide strike, pointing out the heavy loss of production it involved

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67 Kanji Dwarkadas, Forty-Five Years . . . . ., p. 241, says the Communist BGKU withdrew from the strike soon after its commencement, on the ground that they had contemplated only a token strike.

and its ill-advised and illegal nature. The strike was only partially successful. Hardly 75,000 out of over 300,000 workers in industries other than cotton textiles responded to the strike-call on the 31st August. The general strike of cotton textile workers, however, continued.

In spite of much agitation and propoganda by the Mill Mazdoor Sabha, the workers began to dribble back to the mills by the first week of September. Attendance at the mills was of course erratic and fitful, but the signs were unmistakable that sooner or later the strike would peter out without success. The number of strikers at the end of September was about 178,000 as against 203,000 at the end of August. The number of mills entirely closed gradually declined from 57 on 28th August to 36 at the end of September, when four mills were working with almost normal complements and twenty more worked partially.

The Labour Appellate Tribunal issued its award on the 9th October, upholding the award of the Industrial Court with only slight changes in the conditions for the payment of bonus. Thereafter, attendance at the mills rose up rapidly, and all the mills were working with almost full complements by the 16th October, on which date the Mill Mazdoor Sabhe finally called off the strike unconditionally.

The government was actively concerned with the strike throughout its duration. Besides appeals to the strikers to resume work and the usual precautions for maintenance of law and order, the government prosecuted important leaders of

the Mill Mazdoor Sabha under the Industrial Disputes (Appellate Tribunal) Act, 1950, and had each of them sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for six months along with a fine of Rs.1,000.

As mentioned before, the strike covered all the cotton mills in the city and some seven more textile concerns. The total number of workers involved was 203,910. The mandays lost amounted to 94,17,134.

This long strike of 63 days was a complete failure in every sense. Even as a demonstration of the hold the Mill Mazdoor Sabha had over the workers, the strike was hardly a success. Compared to the bonus for 1948 which was equal to three-eighth of basic earnings in that year, the bonus for 1949 was much smaller. The bonus issue had been decided before the month of April in previous years, and only in this case the decision had been delayed till the month of July.<sup>68</sup> Added to the delay was the grievance that four mills were exempted from the payment. With the necessary propaganda and agitation any union could have succeeded in bringing out the workers on a general strike under these circumstances. If it were to be claimed that the strike exposed the weakness of the RMMS, it may be pointed out that the RMMS has never been able to face such crises with much command over its membership, and at the same time has never

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68 Kanji Dwarkadas, Forty-Five Years ....., pp. 239-240.

been seriously weakened by such attacks for any long time.<sup>69</sup>

On the contrary it was the Mill Mazdoor Sabha and the BGKU who were seriously weakened by the strike. The membership of the Sabha during the months following the strike is not known, but there is no doubt that it must have fallen considerably. The BGKU claimed a membership of 25,992 in March 1951, as against 15,662 in March 1950. This increase appears improbable, especially when it is known that the BGKU joined the militant faction of the Mill Mazdoor Sabha to form the Mill Mazdoor Union in August 1951, and the new union reported that only 11,195 members joined it during the period April 1951 to March 1952.<sup>70</sup>

As mentioned above, the militant faction in the Mill Mazdoor Sabha joined hands with the BGKU to form the Mill Mazdoor Union. As a result of this split, the Sabha lost whatever hold it had over the cotton textile workers. In August 1952 the Sabha separated its following in the cotton textiles into a new union, the Cotton Mill Mazdoor Sabha, and concentrated its activities in the silk textile and textile processing industries, where it had already attained the status of a representative union under the Bombay

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69 As may be expected of every union, the RMMS has of course claimed that it could control its membership even during the crises. But these claims may be ignored, since the union has never produced any plausible proof to support them.

70 The RMMS had 41,158 members in March, 1951. All the membership figures are from the relevant Annual Reports on the Working of the Indian Trade Unions Act, 1926.

Industrial Relations Act, 1946. The Cotton Mill Mazdoor Sabha has never had any significant influence over industrial relations in the Bombay cotton textile industry.

Another sequel to the strike deserves notice. In the fortnight following the resumption of work on October 16th, two of the four mills exempted from the payment of bonus were coerced by two short strikes into making a compromise with their workers, and had to pay some money in lieu of bonus. The MOA asked these two mills to resign from the Association. One of them became a member of the MOA again in 1953, and the other one became a member in 1958.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> The relevant annual reports of the MOA and interviews with the MOA officials.

CHAPTER XIISALIENT FEATURES OF THE STUDY

While valid in regard to strikes in the Bombay cotton textile industry to which the study was confined, the findings in the foregoing chapters are not necessarily true of strikes in other industries in Bombay, or of strikes in other centres in the country. The industries and the centres present many differences in specific trends in the strike movement and in the patterns of industrial relations. It is found, for instance, that the long-term trend of strikes in the cotton mills of Bombay has been towards an almost constant number of strikes, while there has been a very large increase during the same period in the annual total number of strikes in other industries in the city. As regards differences in the patterns of industrial relations in Bombay, it may be noted that only the cotton textiles and eight other industries are governed by the provisions of the Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946, while all other industries are governed by the provisions of the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, of the Government of India.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to the cotton textile industry, the other eight industries covered by the Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946, are: (1) silk textiles, (2) woollen textiles, (3) hosiery, (4) textile processing, (5) public passenger transport by omnibus or tram, (6) supply of electrical energy, (7) banking which has its activities confined within the State of Maharashtra, and (8) manufacture of sugar and its by-products. Of these, the last mentioned is not to be found in Bombay, and the other seven industries together give

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Under these circumstances, therefore, the findings of this study cannot be readily generalized, although they may have considerable significance to the examination of strikes in other industries and centres.

Before proceeding to consider the milieu within which the strikes have occurred and by which they have been influenced noticeably, it is in order that the main findings about the strike activity be reviewed briefly. The details about the findings may well be avoided here, as they have all been presented in the relevant chapters.

The first notable feature about the strikes is that in spite of large variations in the annual number of strikes, the long-term trend during the period 1922-1964 has remained at an almost constant level, without any rise or decline over the years. Similarly, the long-term trend in the annual number of workers involved in strikes has remained at about the same level. The only marked change is in the

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(Footnote 1 continued)

a total employment which forms only a small proportion of the employment in the cotton textile industry, and is but a fraction of the aggregate industrial employment in Bombay. For confirmation and details, the following sources may be referred to:

(a) Notifications issued by government from time to time regarding application of Bombay Industrial Relations Act to various industries, given in, Government of Maharashtra, The Bombay Industrial Relations Rules, 1947 (Bombay: Directorate of Printing and Stationery, 1964), pp. 35-45;

(b) Government of Maharashtra, The Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946 (Bombay: Director, Government Printing and Stationery, 1965), p. 2362, Sec. 2.

(c) Records relating to statistics of employment by industries, in the Office of the Commissioner of Labour, Bombay.



annual number of mandays lost in strikes, which have gone down considerably. The change has been the result of the diminution in the annual average duration of strikes.

As regards the causes of strikes it is found that the underlying causes, such as bad social conditions and the inferior position of workers, are general in their influence and are common to most strikes. The proximate causes, however, show some changes in their relative importance over the years. During the years 1951-1964 personnel disputes have been the most important cause of strikes. Chiefly because of the standardization of wages in 1947, and because of the proper linking of dearness allowance to the cost of living index, these years have seen a reduction in the importance of wage disputes. Bonus, workload and retrenchment have been other significant causes of strikes in these years.

It is generally believed that strike activity is responsive to many socio-economic influences. But the examination of the strikes with reference to four such influences, employment and union membership, strikes in other industries in Bombay, cost of living, and the state of trade in the cotton textile industry, showed no significant relationship of the strike activity to any of them. However, the depressed state of trade in some years appears to have had some effect in prolonging the duration of strikes.

As regards the results of strikes it is found that in

almost all the years an overwhelming majority of the strikes have been unsuccessful. The continued resort to strikes, in spite of this discouraging record in the past, suggests that success in getting the demands is not the only aim of the striking workers.

These findings about the strikes are best understood in their milieu. Some salient features of the milieu, therefore, may now be recapitulated here.

To take the workers first, one may begin by pointing out the existence of the common bonds of the place of origin, language and caste, which have served to unite large groups of workers. These common bonds have made the workers capable of collective action without any help from the trade unions. But the long years of customary chaos in industrial relations, lack of education and the consequent shortsightedness of the workers have prevented them from realizing the need to act through trade unions and the benefits of seeking redress of grievances through the channels provided by the disputes machinery of the government.

But the maintenance of industrial peace and the establishment of stable industrial relations clearly pointed to the need to make the workers act through trade unions and to make them accept the unions as their representatives in all dealings with the employers. And when it was found that the unions could not fulfil this task single-handed, the government stepped in to ensure its fulfilment.

In fact, the government has been the chief architect

of the pattern of industrial relations in the Bombay cotton textile industry. It has not only provided a formal framework for the industrial relations, but has also influenced in many ways the unions and the employers who are expected to utilize the framework.

The permanent arrangements for conciliation under the Bombay Trade Disputes Conciliation Act, 1934, were the first step towards the provision of this framework. They were an improvement over the ad hoc conciliation bodies of the Trade Disputes Act, 1929, of the Government of India. The framework has expanded considerably over the years. The Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946, at present provides elaborate arrangements for conciliation and arbitration through the Conciliators, the Labour Court, the Industrial Court and the Wage Board.

As regards the influence of the government upon the employers, the government has played an important part in bringing about uniform conditions of work and standard rates of wages. The uniformity has helped to reduce the significance of many sources of recurrent conflict. Also the government has guided the employers towards the use of the framework of the disputes machinery, and has impressed upon them the need to accept trade unions as representatives of the workers.

The unions, however, presented a very different problem. They were many, small and weak, without much hold over the workers whom they were supposed to lead. The role

of the government towards unionism has, therefore, been directed, firstly, at choosing a single union to represent the workers, and secondly, at strengthening this chosen union with exclusive rights and privileges. Accordingly, the Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh has been the "representative union" since May 1949.

The measures taken by the government reveal a pattern in which it is possible to discern a theory of industrial peace which the government probably had in mind. This theory appears to have been based on the belief that industrial conflict was mainly due to individualistic behaviour of both the employers and the workers, and the absence of formalized channels for industrial relations. The solution provided by the theory was creation of a formal machinery for handling disputes, and imposition of a certain degree of discipline and coercion upon the employers and the workers to make them utilize the machinery effectively.

The results of the measures taken by the government cannot be isolated with much precision from the general course of events. An evaluation of the success of the government's implicit theory about industrial peace, therefore, is bound to be somewhat arbitrary.

To be sure, the theory appears to have had some notable success. In spite of large increases in employment and union membership, the number of strikes and the number of workers involved have not shown any rising trend over the years. The solution of many important issues through

the formal framework for industrial relations has helped to reduce the annual average duration of strikes to a remarkable degree. As a result, there has been a conspicuous decline in the number of mandays lost in strikes.

But the continued occurrence of strikes and the character of the present strikes suggest some inadequacy in the measures taken by the government. Even to this day, most of the strikes continue to be spontaneous outbursts on the part of the workers. Neither the representative union nor the other unions have much voice in their commencement, although they do come in later in the conduct and the settlement of many strikes. The strikes are rarely, if ever, preceded by attempts to redress the grievances through the disputes machinery or otherwise. Partly because of the requirement that the disputes machinery be used fully before resorting to strikes, and partly because of the very much involved legal position, there has not been a single lawful strike in recent years. But the illegality does not appear to have been any hindrance to the occurrence of strikes.

From the discussion in the foregoing chapters, it is possible to know some of the reasons for this failure of the measures of the government to bring about industrial peace. An enquiry into the reasons would show that the failure was essentially due to, firstly an insufficient understanding of the basis of strikes, and secondly the half-hearted manner in which the measures have been implemented.

As regards the basis of strikes, it is found that the measures of the government have all been directed at the economic basis of strikes, and that the non-economic basis of strikes has been neglected almost entirely. While it is true that the proximate causes of most strikes appear to be related to economic issues, the underlying causes can often be traced to social and political factors. The control of strikes would be possible only when the basis of strikes is understood in all its aspects.

The half-hearted manner in which the government has implemented its measures is another reason for their failure. The provision of the disputes machinery has not been followed up with efforts to make the machinery work efficiently and to close extra-legal channels for solution of disputes. On the contrary, the government itself has occasionally by-passed the disputes machinery in the interest of quicker solutions. Secondly, while legislation provides for penalties and allows disciplinary action against illegal strikes, no attempt has been made to see that the provisions are enforced properly. The employers at present are discouraged from taking disciplinary action because of the difficulty of establishing the offence when challenged in the Labour Court. Thirdly, it was expected that the institution of the representative union would lead to the exclusion of other unions from all participation in matters pertaining to industrial relations. However, union rivalries continue to dominate the field even to this day, and as a result the representative union has been

seriously inhibited from discharging its obligations satisfactorily. Also, this has proved inimical to the growth of commitment of loyalties of workers to any single union.

The present strike activity is a matter for concern, not because of the economic loss or the production lost thereby, but because it indicates a basic failure in the existing pattern of industrial relations. Except in the few years of the long general strikes, the annual economic loss due to strikes has always been quite negligible. However, the character of strikes, particularly the fact that strikes continue to be spontaneous outbursts on the part of workers and not a consciously wielded weapon in collective bargaining, shows that in spite of the formal framework developed over the years, the workers have not yet been made a party to the establishment of a stable pattern of industrial relations.



APPENDIX

APPENDIXTHE INCIDENCE OF STRIKES IN DIFFERENT DEPARTMENTS  
OF MILLS IN THE BOMBAY COTTON TEXTILE INDUSTRY

In the four and a half years from the beginning of 1960 to the end of June 1964, mills in the Bombay cotton textile industry made a total of 80 applications to the Labour Court in order to get 55 strikes declared illegal. Table A.1 below gives the break-down of these strikes according to the departments in which they commenced.

Table A.1 : Classification of 55 Strikes According to Departments of Their Commencement

Department	No. of Strikes	Percentage
Blow Room	1	1.8
Card Room	4	7.3
Frames	2	3.6
Ring Spinning	4	7.3
Winding	2	3.6
Sizing	1	1.8
Drawing-in	1	1.8
Weaving	18	32.8
Folding	2	3.6
Electric	1	1.8
All Departments	19	34.6
Total	55	100.0

The table shows that 19 of the 55 strikes commenced in all the departments simultaneously. Among the other strikes, the table shows a large incidence of strikes in the weaving department. It may, therefore, be suggested that weaving department is apparently more strike-prone than others.

However, such a break-down of strikes cannot be understood properly without some idea of the relative numbers of workers employed in the different departments of mills. Table A.2 below gives the average daily number of workers employed in the various departments and processes in one of the mills visited.

The figures in the table refer to the average daily employment in the month of December 1963. Doubling and winding employ a somewhat larger number than the usual, because this mill makes sewing thread also as one of its products. However, for the purpose of knowing roughly the relative size of employment in different departments, these figures may be taken as fairly representative of the pattern of employment in the Bombay cotton mills.

When the incidence of strikes is examined in the light of these employment figures, the large volume of employment in the weaving department may be suggested as a tentative explanation of the relatively heavier incidence of strikes in that department. Since employment in the weaving department is larger than in others, it would appear but natural

**Table A.2: Average Daily Employment in the Various Departments and Processes in One of the Mills in Bombay**

Department/Process	No. of Shifts	No. of Workers (All Shifts)	Percentage to Total Employment
Boiler	3	13	0.16
Engine	3	62	0.76
Mechanic	2	167	2.04
Electric	3	76	0.93
Watch & Ward	3	79	0.96
Godown	1	16	0.20
Mixing	2	28	0.34
Blow Room	3	97	1.18
Cerd Room	3	324	3.96
Combing	3	140	1.71
Frames	3	721	8.81
Ring Spinning	3	1,628	19.88
Doubling	3	445	5.44
Reeling	3	246	3.00
Bundling	1	19	0.23
Yarn Baling	1	5	0.06
Winding	3	903	11.03
Warping	3	71	0.87
Gassing	3	27	0.33
Sizing	3	128	1.56
Drawing-in	3	107	1.31
Weaving	3	1,698	20.74
Bleaching	3	249	3.04
Dyeing	3	271	3.31
Calendering	1	14	0.17
Printing	2	35	0.43
Folding	3	266	3.25
Cloth Baling	2	8	0.10
Packing	1	47	0.57
Waste	1	49	0.60
Miscellaneous	3	248	3.03
Total	-	8,187	100.00

that the weaving department should have a larger share of the grievances and disputes in the industry.

But employment alone is not an adequate explanation of the incidence of strikes, because ring spinning, which employs nearly as many workers as in weaving, is seen to be comparatively free from strikes. The incidence of strikes in the weaving department should, therefore, be explained with reference to some other factors, and not employment alone.

It is sometimes suggested that trade unions make it a part of their strategy of strikes to organize strikes in the "key" departments, and that the unions hope thereby to succeed in exerting more effective coercion upon the employers. Assuming this to be true, is it possible that the strikes in weaving are the result of such a conscious strategy?

Such a strategy is unlikely, if not for anything, because there is no reason why the weaving department should be singled out as a "key" department. In the long chain of manufacturing processes in cotton mills, it is much easier to point out a department or two which are not so crucial to production, than to point out what can be properly called the "key" departments. It is true that in the case of strikes lasting less than one or two days, the total number of workers "indirectly involved" does depend largely on the nature of the specific departments of the striking workers. But in the case of strikes lasting longer, the departments

of the strikers do not have much significance, because all the workers employed come to be "indirectly involved" in the strikes irrespective of what departments strike first.

If the strikes were organized in particular departments as the result of a deliberate strategy of trade unions, it is more reasonable to assume that the unions would have chosen any one of the departments and processes that employ relatively a small number of workers; it is much easier to control a small number of workers, and the strikes would be equally effective in closing down the entire mills.

The explanation of the large incidence of strikes in the weaving department may probably be found in the socio-economic background of the weavers. As compared to workers in other departments, weavers are paid much higher wages, and weaving involves both more strain and better skills.

The incidence of strikes in the different departments of mills does not appear to be the result of any conscious strategy. This is but natural, in view of the fact repeatedly pointed out earlier in this study, that most of the strikes in the industry are unpremeditated and spontaneous outbursts on the part of workers.

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A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON STRIKES  
AND THE PLAN OF THE PRESENT STUDY

"It is in strikes that the proletariat asserts its existence." - Sorel<sup>1</sup>

The basic theme of this study is that strikes are environment-bound and, therefore, the nature of strikes is best understood only when examined with reference to the environment in which they occur. This proposition is a natural corollary of the fact that strikes are an integral part of industrial relations, which are a product of the interaction of many factors in the entire socio-political milieu in addition to the implicit economic employer-employee relationship involved.

"Strikes in the broad sense-collective stoppages of work undertaken in order to bring pressure to bear on those who depend on the sale or use of the products of that work - are almost as old as work itself."<sup>2</sup> But strikes are not of the same character at all times. It was the emergence of the factory system of production that gave rise to conditions for the occurrence of strikes of the character generally associated with them today. Even under the factory system the nature of strikes has changed over the years. Mr. Knowles observes

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<sup>1</sup> Georges Sorel, Reflections on Violence, translated by T.E. Hulme (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1925), Appendix, p. 297.

<sup>2</sup> K.G.J.C. Knowles, Strikes - A Study in Industrial Conflict (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1952), p. 1.



that "strikes today are very different from what they were twenty-five years ago. Yesterday they were battles; today, few of them are more than protest demonstrations."<sup>3</sup>

Without prejudice to the original contention that strikes are environment-bound, a brief review of the presently available literature on certain aspects of strikes in general is attempted here. Such a review is both possible and fruitful, because the logic of the productive process under the factory-system is to some extent similar everywhere, whatever the differences in other circumstances relevant to strikes.

There is a vast literature on strikes, industrial disputes and unionism in general. The subject has received considerable attention from not only economists, but sociologists, psychologists and other social scientists as well. The review attempted here is not meant to be an exhaustive coverage of all the prominent studies in this field. The aim of this review is to bring together some of the important hypotheses and general theories about strikes put forth by different authors from time to time. These hypotheses would later be examined in the context of the Bombay cotton textile industry, and would be helpful in the formulation of other hypotheses about strikes in that industry.

The studies of Mr. Knowles and Mr. Griffin are two well known examples of quantitative analysis of

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<sup>3</sup> Knowles, Strikes, p. 4.

strikes.<sup>4</sup> The work of Mr. Knowles is with special reference to the strike statistics of the United Kingdom for the period 1911-1947, and that of Mr. Griffin pertains to the strike statistics of the United States for the period 1980-1937.

Both of these authors analyse the causes, the frequency, the magnitude, the duration and the results of the strikes, and explain their findings with reference to relevant socio-economic factors. Their examination of the seasonal and annual fluctuations in strike activity, regional variations, and the influence on strikes of unionisation, character of particular industries, the state of the economy, etc., brings out the fact how closely strikes are moulded by their environment. Some of their main findings may be summarised in their own words as below:

- (1) Over the last 58 years for which statistics have been worked up, there stands one dominant fact. This is that there is no dominant trend, there is no basis for forecasting, even though it is at the same time clearly evident that there is no justification, in the data at least, for the expectation that the number of strikes will tend to decline. Judged by their numbers, severity and duration, strikes have continued to oscillate in accordance with two factors and to be shaped by them. The relative importance of these factors varies from time to time. The first is the business cycle which, whether measured by prices or wages, has been reflected in the

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<sup>4</sup> Knowles, Strikes . . . , and, John Ignatius Griffin, Strikes: A Study in Quantitative Economics (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939).

rise and fall of strikes. While bearing in mind the great exception of the decade from the World War to the "New Deal", one might generalise and say that as prices rise, strikes increase; as prices fall, strikes decrease. The second factor is the political climate, a quantitative imponderable, unless it be judged by the state of the budget. The two great peaks in the history of industrial disputes in America were marked by noteworthy interest in the labor movement on the part of the government, an interest motivated in the one case by military necessity and in the other by political expediency.<sup>5</sup>

- (2) The relationship between unions and strikes has been such that an increasing proportion of all strikes has been carried on under the direction of unions and has involved union members.<sup>6</sup>
- (3) Industries that have had a long experience with unionism are in general also characterised by a continuing high level of strikes. Indeed the majority of all strikes are found in a few unionised industries. . . . This conclusion is limited, however, to aggregate figures only and the experience of individual industries varies so widely that the results of unionisation in specific industries may be vastly different.<sup>7</sup>
- (4) . . . economic conditions influence the incidence of strikes to some extent, although their size and length are probably more dependent on other things. In considering the way in which this influence is exerted, however, we find that it is sometimes more-or-less direct (e.g. through the effects of unemployment) and sometimes indirect (e.g. through the fluctuations of Trade Union membership, through the momentum of strike movements, and even, possibly, through weather conditions).<sup>8</sup>
- (5) Although no precise balance-sheet can be

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5 Griffin, Strikes . . . . , p. 204.

6 Griffin, Strikes . . . . , p. 205.

7 Griffin, Strikes . . . . , p. 205-206.

8 Knowles, Strikes . . . . , p. 160

drawn up, the direct effect of strikes in pushing up wages or arresting their fall does not seem to have been very great, and the direct loss to production has usually been very small by any criterion; although a few very big strikes have caused exceptional losses, the losses have usually been made up very quickly. The effect of the loss due to strikes, however, depends on the country's general economic position, and it is natural that since the second world war even small strikes have had big effects.<sup>9</sup>

- (6) Although the proportion of long strikes was diminishing over the period and the proportion of employers' victories was increasing, employers tended to win strikes which, although absolutely shorter than those which they won in earlier years, were still relatively longer than the strikes won by the workers or compromised.<sup>10</sup>

Strikes are an overt manifestation of industrial conflict inherent in the relationship between employers and workers. The relationship is well described by the sociological phrase "antagonistic cooperation." It is maintained by a mutually accepted resolution of the conflict of interests. This resolution of conflict has to be attempted anew every time the situation changes in favour of or against either the workers or the employers. Strikes are one of the devices used by workers to force their employers to come to such a resolution.

What are the causes of strikes? That strikes occur because of conflicting interests is obvious, but

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<sup>9</sup> Knowles, Strikes . . . ., p. 272.

<sup>10</sup> Knowles, Strikes . . . ., p. 257

the conflict is often expressed in other forms as well. Mr. G.D.H. Cole says that, "Workers are required to resort to strike because without a strike they cannot secure a rectification of the terms of employment imposed upon them because basically there is no equality between them and their employers."<sup>11</sup> However, strikes are not the only means of seeking a "rectification", even if they might have been so at some time in the past. Also, in addition to rectification, it is reasonable to assume that workers may sometimes strike in order to secure further "improvement" in the terms of employment, or to secure such terms that are more in consonance with their socio-economic power relationship to the employers at any particular time.

A useful summary of three different points of view about the causes of strikes is available in the article of Mr. Ross and Mr. Irwin on the strike experience in five countries.<sup>12</sup> After concluding that "strike activity would decline if unionism were 'fully accepted' by employers, if there were a united labor movement, if duplicating jurisdictional claims were eliminated, if union membership were compulsory, if union political machines

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<sup>11</sup> G.D.H. Cole (Ed.), British Trade Unionism Today (London: Collanz, 1939), p. 86.

<sup>12</sup> Arthur M. Ross and Donald Irwin, "Strike Experience in Five Countries, 1927-1947: An Interpretation", Industrial and Labor Relations Review, Vol. 4, No. 3, April 1951, pp. 323-342.

were <sup>well</sup> entrenched, if the collective bargaining structure were more tightly cartelized, and if a labor party were established,"<sup>13</sup> they go on to ask, "Is there any valid theory of strikes explaining their underlying causes?" To this they provide the following answer:

Economics, psychology and sociology - each has its own explanation for strikes and its own favorite set of remedies. The pure economic theory assumes that the workers and the employer calculate the desirability of a strike solely in terms of financial gains and losses and holds that, if each side knows accurately the other's willingness to fight, a peaceful settlement will be made; from which it follows that (with minor exceptions) strikes can be the result only of ignorance, miscalculation, or faulty bargaining. Accordingly, the appropriate remedies are more and better negotiation and more effective mediation. Psychologists insist that any form of behaviour must be analysed in terms of individual needs, attitudes, and emotions, and see the strike as a reaction against tensions and frustrations on or off the job - either a rational and constructive means of satisfying the initial want or a blind impulsive aggression against the nearest feasible object. Their remedies include interviewing and counseling, attitude and morale surveys, better selection and training of foremen, and more concern for "human relations" in scheduling lay-offs, introducing technical changes, etc. Sociologists (or at least the group influenced by Elton Mayo) regard the strike as a form of obsessive behaviour on the part of uprooted individuals without feeling of status or function, in a society robbed of unity and stability and broken down into warring factions. Their recipe is to reintegrate the worker into the employing enterprise by various forms of verbal magic. Although all three sets of remedies have been applied, and others as well, strikes persist in being called.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ross and Irwin, "Strike Experience in Five Countries . . .," p. 340

<sup>14</sup> Ross and Irwin, "Strike Experience in Five Countries . . .," pp. 341-342. Footnotes accompanying these lines have been omitted.



The limitations of these theories are also noted immediately thereafter:

The difficulty with these formal theories is that they fail to consider the institutional context in which strikes are conducted. The economic theory describes the circumstances under which workers and employers might consider it profitable to strike, if they were given to intricate calculations. The parties who conduct a strike, however, are not the worker and the employer but the union and the employer; for the union is more than a neutral mechanism transmitting the workers' demands and accumulating their strength. The psychological and sociological theories explain why workers become discontented. But discontent is the normal conditions of mankind and is only the raw material out of which strikes are fashioned. Workers who strike are probably no more discontented, on the whole, than those who stay at work. No theory of strikes can be successful, until it encompasses struggles for power as well as for money and describes the motives of employers and union leaders as well as of workers; for all three have a part to play, and all three must give their consent before the strike can proceed.<sup>15</sup>

Are some groups of workers more strike-prone than others? If so, what are the probable explanations? Some tentative hypotheses on this point may be gleaned from the international comparison of inter-industry propensity to strike made by Mr. Kerr and Mr. Siegel.<sup>16</sup> The first two hypotheses are about the

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<sup>15</sup> Ross and Irwin, "Strike Experience in Five Countries . . .," p. 342.

<sup>16</sup> Clark Kerr and Abraham Siegel, "The Interindustry Propensity to Strike - An International Comparison", from Arthur Kornhauser, Robert Dubin and Arthur M. Ross (Eds.), Industrial Conflict (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1954), pp. 189-212.



industrial environment and relate to the location of the worker in society and the character of the job and the worker. Industries are found to be highly strike-prone when the workers form a relatively homogeneous group which is isolated from the general community and is capable of cohesion. Secondly, jobs that are physically difficult and unpleasant - and being so, generally draw tough and combative workers - are found to be more strike-prone than others. Other hypotheses examined and found inadequate relate to the elasticity of demand and supply in the product - and labour-markets, the degree of security enjoyed by trade unions, the state of human relations, the trend of historical developments, the influence of dominant personalities, adherence to particular ideologies, the bargaining techniques selected for use, and the nature of the bargains, that is, whether the latter are "key" or "satellite" bargains.

As regards the cost of strikes, manedays lost in strikes have been generally taken as an index of the magnitude of the economic loss involved. In relation to the total labour force, this loss can be seen to have been quite negligible.<sup>17</sup> However, many strikes do affect other industries as well, and may have wider social and political repercussions,

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<sup>17</sup> See the statistics given in Ross and Irwin, "Strike Experience in Five Countries . . .", pp. 330-331.

apart from the "shock effects" resulting from the sudden dislocation caused by the strikes. A brief discussion of these effects is found in the work of Mr. Knowles.<sup>18</sup> The effects are studied at length by Mr. Chamberlain in his two books, the first showing how public antipathy to a strike is closely related to the real costs imposed on the public and devising a measure of the real costs of strikes, and the second being an application of that measure to strikes in three major industries, coal-mining, railways and the steel industry.<sup>19</sup>

What is the role of strikes in relation to the mechanism of collective bargaining? The general thinking on the subject has been that for collective bargaining to become a reality the weapon of the strike, or rather the threat of its use, is indispensable.<sup>20</sup> In the absence of such economic sanctions, it is believed, that collective bargaining may become incon-

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<sup>18</sup> Knowles, Strikes . . . , pp. 262-296.

<sup>19</sup> Neil W. Chamberlain, Social Responsibility and Strikes (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953), and,

<sup>20</sup> Neil W. Chamberlain and Jane Metzger Schilling, The Impact of Strikes: Their Social and Economic Costs (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954).

<sup>20</sup> Van Dusen Kennedy, Unions, Employers and Government: Essays on Indian Labour Questions (Bombay: Manaktalas, 1966), pp. 114-118.

clusive and incapable of arriving by itself at mutually accepted settlements. However, as this study of strikes in the Bombay cotton textile industry will show, many of the strikes may be quite unrelated to collective bargaining as such, and may be unilateral outbursts on the part of the workers without the employer being a direct party - by way of his deliberate action or inaction on issues affecting workers - to the occurrence of those strikes.

Strikes are generally considered to be a weapon of unionised labour. But strikes can occur in the absence of unions as well. Unions did not invent strikes, but only used them for their purposes.<sup>21</sup> In advanced countries like the United States and England unions have now achieved a virtual monopoly of the use of strikes. In India, however, it may be assumed that the unions are as yet far from establishing such exclusive control over strikes. But even if such a hypothesis is confirmed by facts, the Indian experience would be nothing unusual. Mr. Ross writes:

There is evidence that the virtually exclusive proprietorship over the strike which trade-unions presently exercise in

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<sup>21</sup> Arthur M. Ross, "The Natural History of the Strike", from Arthur Kornhauser, Robert Dubin and Arthur M. Ross (Eds.), Industrial Conflict (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1954), pp. 23-24.

the United States was not achieved until after World War I and that more than one-third of all strikes were "unorganized" as late as the turn of the century. During many of the years between 1880 and 1900, the number of workers involved in strikes was greater than the number of union members. A report issued by the Commissioner of Labor in 1907 showed that from 38 to 48 per cent of all strikes were "not ordered by labor organizations" during each of the 5 - year periods between 1880 and 1900.<sup>22</sup>

Before acquiring complete control over strikes, the unions may be expected to begin with attempts at controlling the conduct of strikes once they have commenced. As this study of strikes in the Bombay cotton textiles will show, unions in that industry are associated more with the conduct and the settlement than with the commencement of strikes, although in the case of some strikes they may have had the initiative in their commencement as well.

Once the unions come to control strikes, they may sometimes seek to use them for purposes which are not strictly confined to the economic welfare of their members, which is the formal function of the union as an institution. Mr. Ross writes:

As an institution expands in strength and status, it grows its formal purpose. It experiences its own needs, develops its own ambitions, and faces its own problems. These become differentiated from the needs, ambitions, and problems of its rank and file. The trade union is no exception.

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<sup>22</sup> Ross, "The Natural History of the Strike", . . . pp. 24-25.

It is the beginning of wisdom in the study of industrial relations to understand that the union, as an organization, is not identical with its members, as individuals. This becomes more true as the union becomes better established and more "responsible".<sup>23</sup>

Mr. Ross proceeds from this position to analyze the wage policies followed by unions under collective bargaining, and shows how the policies are influenced by the institutional needs of unions for survival and growth.

The distinction between workers as individuals and their unions as institutions is important for another reason, that social and political ideologies reach and influence more readily the organized groups of workers rather than the unorganized. Unions have often been powerful instruments for transmission of outside influences to the working class.

Syndicalism and Marxism are two instances of revolutionary ideologies in which strikes have had a prominent role to play. Whereas syndicalism was important only in the 1890's and the early years of this century and was mostly confined to France, Marxism has had its adherents in a number of countries all over the world and remains a powerful philosophy

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<sup>23</sup> Arthur M. Ross, Trade Union Wage Policy (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1950), p. 23.

inspiring many radical groups even to this day. Both the ideologies look upon trade unions as schools and centres of Revolution and regard strikes as a means of preparation for the violent overthrow of capitalism. While Marxism sees strikes mainly as a device to intensify the class conflict, syndicalism went further and glorified strikes - the general strikes in particular - as sufficient in themselves to bring about the Revolution.<sup>24</sup> Sorel, the syndicalist philosopher, wrote, "Strikes have engendered in the proletariat the noblest, deepest, and most moving sentiments that they possess; the general strike groups them all in a coordinated picture, and, by bring<sup>ing</sup> them together, gives to each one of them its maximum of intensity . . . ." <sup>25</sup>

Mr. Philip Taft, however, argues that labour ideologies are an insignificant factor in industrial disputes, and that "a militant employer antiunion ideology can have a much more severe effect upon labor strife than can a revolutionary ideology espoused by radical groups."<sup>26</sup> This may indeed be so, because the

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<sup>24</sup> Arthur M. Ross, "The Natural History of the Strike", and Philip Taft, "Ideologies and Industrial Conflict", from Arthur Kornhauser, Robert Dubin and Arthur M. Ross (Eds.), Industrial Conflict, pp. 27-29 and 257-265.

<sup>25</sup> Sorel, Reflections on Violence, p. 137.

<sup>26</sup> Philip Taft, "Ideologies and Industrial Conflict" . . . , p. 264.

labour ideologies have generally to act indirectly through association with genuinely felt economic grievances of workers, while the employer ideologies directly impinge upon industrial relations.

Has the Marxist ideology had any influence on the Indian labour movement? As for Bombay cotton textiles, this study will show that Marxism was a significant force in some of the big strikes in that industry, particularly in the period between the 1920's and 1940's. An admirable account of how the ideology influenced unionism and labour strife is available in the work of Overstreet and Windmiller on Communism in India.<sup>27</sup>

Another ideology that deserves to be mentioned for the unusual nature of its significance to Indian industrial relations is the Gandhian ideology of the "righteous struggle" and "just demands". This importation of moral values in industrial relations has had some success only in the Ahmedabad textile industry, where the labour was led for some years by Mahatma Gandhi himself personally. In a limited sense, Gandhism may be said to have had some influence on the policies of the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC),

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<sup>27</sup> Gene D. Overstreet and Marshall Windmiller, Communism in India (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1959).



which believes in peaceful solutions to all disputes and deprecates resort to strikes.<sup>28</sup>

Government policy towards industrial relations is also believed to have been influenced to some extent by Gandhian teachings.<sup>29</sup> Mr. Van Dusen Kennedy writes that government policy as a whole, including its labour policy, is coloured by "tendermindedness", describes tendermindedness as "high mindedness insufficiently disciplined by intellect", and argues that Gandhism is one of the sources of this type of mentality.<sup>30</sup> Also, he says, Gandhism influenced the labour policy of the government more directly as well, because the policy in the years after Independence has been shaped by persons some of whom were ardent believers of this ideology.<sup>31</sup>

As regards the role of the government in industrial disputes, the history and the present practices differ from country to country. The government has been an important party in many matters of indus-

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<sup>28</sup> A good account of Mahatma Gandhi's ideas on industrial relations, and of INTUC policies is found in R.J. Soman, Peaceful Industrial Relations: Their Science and Technique (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1957).

<sup>29</sup> Kennedy, Unions, Employers and Government . . . . , p. 63.

<sup>30</sup> Kennedy, Unions, Employers and Government . . . . , pp.9-24.

<sup>31</sup> Kennedy, Unions, Employers and Government . . . . , p.66

trial relations in India. Although there have often been attempts at a unified labour policy for the entire country, there are many differences between one state and another, and some states have enacted their own legislative measures on the subject, in addition to Central legislation.<sup>32</sup>

One thing that stands out in the Indian labour policy is its exaggerated anxiety about strikes and work-stoppages.<sup>33</sup> This attitude among the British rulers of pre-Independence days could reasonably be attributed to the possible fear that strikes were a sign of political unrest and that strikes might lead to the emergence of organised groups ready to wield their power against the government. In view of the unwillingness of the British to encourage industrial

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<sup>32</sup> There are many good books on the role of the government in industrial relations in India. Hoping that it would not be an invidious selection, the following may be referred to on this subject:  
Kennedy, Unions Employers and Government . . .,  
S.D. Punekar, Trade Unionism in India (Bombay: New Book Co. Ltd., 1948),  
V.V. Giri, Labour Problems in Indian Industry (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, Second Edition, 1959),  
N.F. Dufty, Industrial Relations in India (Bombay: Allied Publishers Private Ltd., 1964),  
and, Charles A. Myers, Industrial Relations in India (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1958).

<sup>33</sup> Kshitimohan Mukerji, "Factual Basis of Labour Policy in India", Artha Vinana (Poona, India), Vol. 8, No. 1, March 1966, pp. 93-104. The article being in Bengali, a typed copy of the English translation was kindly supplied by its author.

growth in India, loss of production does not appear to have been<sup>a</sup> significant cause of the anxiety about strikes. However, continuance of apparently the same attitude all these years after Independence is indeed a curious anomaly. Mr. Kennedy's explanation on this point may be summariz<sup>z</sup>ed in his own words as below:

. . . prevention of strikes was the basic theme of British labour policy in India, was taken over unchanged by the Congress government and has been the keystone of its labour relations policy ever since. The opposition to work stoppages is buttressed by ideological objections to conflict as such and the conviction that industrial peace is vital to economic progress. The adjudication system is viewed as the chief bulwark against the outbreak of a much larger, disastrous volume of conflict. Undergirding all is the belief that the economic costs of work stoppages are accurately measured by the man-days of work lost in them and that these costs are very serious. These ideas clearly colour and guide Indian labour relations policy with powerful effect and the policy can change only if these conceptions of conflict change.<sup>34</sup>

Analytical studies of strikes in India have so far been conspicuously absent in the growing labour literature in this country. The bulk of the Indian labour literature is descriptive and historical in character, and deals with the growth and development of the trade union movement, and employment and living conditions of industrial workers. Industrial relations in general, and strikes in particular, have not yet

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<sup>34</sup> Kennedy, Unions, Employers and Government . . . , pp. 114-115.

received much attention. To be sure, statistics of strikes and a few conventional generalizations about industrial conflict are to be found in many books on unionism and other related subjects, but the fact remains that there is little attempt to go further towards careful analysis of the statistics or examination of the generalizations in the light of all the relevant facts.

However, by way of being exceptions, the two studies of strikes by Mr. Mukhtar and Dr. Punekar are notable for their intelligent discussion of strikes in India.<sup>35</sup> Although it has become somewhat out of date now, Mr. Mukhtar's study is yet useful for its analysis of the then available statistics of strikes, for its examination of strikes in relation to trade unionism and the role of the government, and for its description of some of the important strikes in the 1920's and the early 1930's. Dr. Punekar devotes himself to the analysis of the causes and conditions

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<sup>35</sup> Ahmad Mukhtar, Trade Unionism and Labour Disputes in India (Bombay: Longmans, Green & Co. Ltd., 1935), and, S.D. Punekar, Industrial Peace in India: The Problem and Its Solution (Bombay: Vora & Co., Publishers Ltd., 1952).

Also, another notable exception is M.K. Pandhe, Labour Organizations in Sholapur City (Unpublished doctoral thesis, submitted to the University of Poona in 1960). Mr. Pandhe attempts a quantitative analysis of strikes in Sholapur on lines similar to those of Mr. Knowles in his study mentioned earlier.

of the industrial unrest in the years of the Second World War and immediately thereafter. Although the period covered is thus confined to the years 1939-1950 only, Dr. Punekar views industrial unrest in a much wider perspective, and discusses the short-term and long-term aspects of such unrest, the necessary background for industrial peace, the roles of the various parties involved, and methods of encouraging industrial peace.

The present study of strikes in the Bombay cotton textile industry seeks to be a modest contribution to the literature on strikes in India. It is chiefly concerned with strikes in the years 1922-1964, although developments in the earlier years have been mentioned wherever necessary.

The study is divided into two parts: (A) the Milieu, and (B) the Strikes. The first part consists of four chapters, and the second of seven. The twelfth chapter which follows concludes the study by summing up the findings.

A brief account of the growth of the Bombay cotton textile industry and salient features of the employers' policies towards workers are given in the first chapter. The second chapter deals with the employment and the composition of workers in the industry, and also with labour turnover and absenteeism among the workers. A history of trade unions in the

industry and an assessment of the present position of unionism form the subject of the third chapter. The fourth chapter discusses the role of the government in relation to the strikes and the working of the industrial disputes machinery provided by the government. Here ends the first part of the study, the Milieu.

The second part of the study begins with the fifth chapter which describes the nature, value and limitations of the statistics of strikes used. The sixth chapter examines the annual and seasonal fluctuations in the strike activity. The seventh chapter deals with causes of the strikes and importance of the different causes. The influence exercised on the strikes by employment and union membership, strikes in other industries in the city, the cost of living and the state of trade is examined in the eighth chapter. The duration and results of the strikes are discussed in the ninth chapter. The tenth chapter examines the calculation, the magnitude and the significance of the cost of the strikes. The eleventh chapter, which concludes the second part of the study, describes eight important strikes in the industry. The findings of the two parts are brought together in the twelfth chapter and are viewed in the total perspective of the study.

The scope and the framework of this study have been determined by the basic proposition mentioned earlier, that strikes are environment-bound and should be studied with reference to the environment in which they occur. The various factors selected here from the environment for their relevance to strikes cannot be considered satisfactorily on an all-India basis within the scope of a single study. They vary in important respects as between different industrial centres in the country. They also vary from industry to industry, as well as within the same industry in different industrial centres, because of differences in the conditions of employment, the methods of solving industrial disputes and the historical background of the relationships between employers, workers and trade unions. In order to grasp the true nature and significance of strikes, a study of strikes, therefore, needs to confine itself, firstly, to a single industrial centre, and secondly, to a single industry within that centre. The study is enabled thereby to examine strikes in the perspective of a homogeneous background of inter-related circumstances. This, in brief, is the rationale of the restriction of the present study to strikes in the Bombay cotton textile industry.

The attempt made in the foregoing pages at a



review of the literature on strikes has been very helpful in the formulation of specific questions and tentative hypotheses in regard to the subject of this study. For convenience of presentation, these questions and hypotheses are shown together as below, according to the chapters in which they are considered:

PART A: THE MILIEU

Chapter I: The Industry and the Employers.

The hypothesis in this chapter is that the fortunes of the industry and the traditions developed over the years have an important influence over the relations between employers and workers that characterise a particular industry. The state of the industry is a significant factor in the emergence of particular conditions and causes of disputes as well as in the determination of the success and failure of the parties to those disputes. The traditions developed over the years are important for the same reasons as above, and also because they help to explain the attitudes and policies of the present employers towards their workers and trade unions.

Chapter II: The Workers

The hypothesis here is that, although the labour force in the Bombay cotton textile industry has never been entirely homogeneous, yet there have always

been important common bonds - such as the caste, the language and the place of origin - for sizable groups of workers. These common bonds have led to an early growth of collective consciousness among the workers and have enabled the workers to stage mass agitations and strikes, even in the absence of specific formal organisation and trade unions.

Administration of labour and conditions of work are also examined in this chapter on the hypothesis that they explain the way labour is utilised and the sources of industrial conflict.

Another hypothesis examined here is that, in spite of the probable seasonal nature of absenteeism, labour turnover and absenteeism are not a serious problem in the industry.

### Chapter: III: The Trade Unions

The hypotheses examined in this chapter may be summarised as below:

(i) Whether powerful or weak, unions can at the least <sup>act</sup> as the catalyst, if not as the initiator and the sole determinant, of a particular course of action in industrial disputes.

(ii) Multiplicity of unions in this industry is more apparent than real. Unionism in the industry is characterised, not by multiplicity and fragmentation,

but by the constant rivalry between the two largest unions in the field.

(iii) Although not always so, the size of the membership serves as a good index of the strength of a union.

(iv) The union rivalries in the present situation have benefited the workers in some ways, but they have had seriously adverse repercussions on the development of an orderly pattern of industrial relations.

(v) One of the underlying causes of the dominant position of a union in any period was that that particular union was the best suited to the then prevalent circumstances.

(vi) Much of the strike activity in the industry occurs independently of the trade unions.

#### Chapter IV: The Government

The hypothesis for this chapter is that the aim of the government has throughout been regulation and control of strikes, but because of various circumstances the government has failed to achieve it. The law about strikes and provision of the industrial disputes machinery have not had any noticeable effect on strikes. Although immediately successful in the short run, direct intervention of the government in industrial disputes is likely to undermine long-term stability and the creation of an efficient institutional framework for the solution of disputes. The only success the

government appears to have had in this regard is quite limited and indirect, and that is the reduction in the significance of certain recurrent issues of conflict, as a consequence of the legislative measures for the betterment of the terms and conditions of employment of workers.

## PART B: THE STRIKES.

### Chapter V: The Strike Statistics Used in the Study

The hypothesis adopted for this chapter is that, in spite of some slight changes in definitions over the years and a few minor omissions, the official strike statistics available are comparable over time and reliable for purposes of this study.

### Chapter VI: Annual and Seasonal Fluctuations

Annual and seasonal fluctuations in strike statistics are examined here on the hypothesis that there are discernible fluctuations in strike activity, that the fluctuations follow a regular pattern and that they can be explained with reference to the relevant conditions and causes of strike activity.

### Chapter VII: Causes of Strikes

The hypotheses of this chapter may be summarized as below:

(i) There are certain underlying causes for industrial conflict, and these causes are more or less uniformly operative over the entire range of conflict.

(ii) There is a multiplicity of immediate causes, and yet the immediate causes are likely to follow certain general trends capable of rational explanation.

(iii) The importance of different causes of strikes varies over the years in accordance with changes in the terms and conditions of employment, the state of the industry and the general economy, trade union policies, and such other socio-economic factors.

#### Chapter VIII: Some Important Influences on Strikes

The hypotheses examined here may be summarised<sup>z</sup> as below:

(i) Increases in the size of employment in the industry and in unionisation<sup>z</sup> are associated with a corresponding increase in strike activity.

(ii) In view of many common socio-economic factors relevant to strikes, strike activity in the cotton textile industry responds to the strike activity in other industries in the city.

(iii) Because of their effect on the real wages of workers, changes in the cost of living lead to corresponding changes in strike activity.

(iv) The incidence and the duration of strikes tend to rise during periods of depressed trade and diminish during periods of brisk trade.

### Chapter IX: Duration and Results of Strikes

The hypotheses in this chapter may be summarized as below:

(i) There has been a progressive diminution in the duration of strikes during the period 1922-1964.

(ii) Results of strikes depend on the nature of the demands made. Demands which interfere less with the present set-up and do not seriously affect the finances of the firm are more likely to succeed than others that have such effects.

(iii) Is it likely that longer strikes have a greater chance of success, on the assumption that the longer duration shows the determination of the striking workers?

(iv) In view of the continued resort to strikes in spite of the fact that only a small proportion of the total number of strikes in the past have succeeded in getting their demands, it may be suggested that the expected results do not have much significance for strike activity.

### Chapter X: The Cost of Strikes

The hypotheses examined here may be summarized as below:

(i) With all their limitations, the number of man-days lost are the only generally available measure of the cost of strikes.

(ii) The cost of strikes is negligible. Absenteeism and holidays account for a much greater loss in production than that caused by strikes.

(iii) The loss of wages and production is not of any significance to strike activity.

#### Chapter XI: Some Important Strikes

This chapter describes eight important strikes which affected most, if not all, of the mills in the industry, and which involved major issues common to workers in the industry as a whole. The hypothesis suggested for these and other strikes of the same nature - usually termed as "general strikes" - is that such strikes form a separate category in the total strike activity in the industry.

#### Chapter XII: Salient Features of the Study

This chapter brings together all the important findings of the study and reiterates the basic proposition that strikes are environment-bound and should be studied in their proper perspective. It concludes that strikes in the Bombay cotton textile industry are a matter for concern, not because of the economic loss or the production lost thereby, but because they indicate a basic failure in the existing pattern of industrial relations.

V. P. Joshi.