

sent for Mr. Wadia and expressed disapproval of his line of work. His Excellency thought that these activities would hamper war efforts and suggested the cessation of such activities. Mr. Wadia said that he could not discontinue them unless the suggestion came from the workers. He was then requested to see Mr. A. P. Symonds of Messrs. Binny & Co., which he did the following morning. On the 24th of May, Mr. Wadia wrote a letter to Mr. T. E. Moir, I. C. S., Private Secretary to H.E. the Governor, thanking His Excellency for bringing about a friendly relationship between himself and Mr. Symonds. He then made certain suggestions to Sir Clement Simpson, the head of Messrs. Binny & Co., in his letter dated 30th May 1918. Mr. Wadia concluded his letter by declaring his preparedness to discontinue the meetings of the Madras Labour Union. While Mr. Symonds and Sir Clement were considering his letter, he did so. "The labourers will not approve of this but I am eager to do all I can to meet your wishes." On 28th June, Mr. Wadia wrote to the Private Secretary in the following terms:

"Mr. Symonds has not replied to my letter and has not even shown the courtesy of acknowledging it. One full month has passed and my promise had been kept...no meetings have been held and the labourers have spent their Sunday afternoons at semi-religious Harikatha performances...I have not been helped in any way." On 30th June, Mr. Moir wrote a brief reply expressing pleasure at hearing that meetings have been suspended even temporarily. But there was no answer from Messrs. Binny & Co. A largely-signed petition from the workers suggesting a strike was received by Mr. Wadia. At a meeting on July 3rd, he observed: "If by going on strike, you were affecting the pockets of Messrs. Binny & Co., I would not mind, for they are making plenty of money; but by such a step, you will injure the cause of the Allies; our soldiers who have to be clothed will be put to inconvenience and we have no right to trouble those who are fighting our King's battles because a few Europeans connected with the mills and this Government are acting in a bad manner. Therefore we must have no strikes."

In October 1918 there was the first lock-out in the B. & C. Mills on account of the objection of the men to obey the rule of being present at the mills at 6 a.m. Mr. Wadia advised the workers to be present at whatever hour the management required of them. In his speech he said:

"If to-morrow Sir Clement Simpson or his Assistants give you an order that you shall be present at 5-30 a.m....for this lock-out the employers of the mills and they alone are responsible."

Following Mr. Wadia's advice, the workmen were at the gate at 6 a.m. The Union had by this time been definitely established and an office was opened in the Perambur Barracks for registering complaints. A store for the supply of cheap rice was also opened. Commenting on the lock-out, in its issue of 31st October, 'New India' had the following Editorial:

"Where is this to end?"

"Though the men were ready at the gates prior to 6 a.m.—many of them had to come from long distances drenched in rain—they could not all get in because of the narrowness of the entrance, and those who remained behind were kept out. Whose fault is it that the gate is too narrow for the men to enter in time? The trouble will be more serious in the noon because the people who could not enter this morning in the course of half an hour

have to go out, take their food, and enter again within the same period. Is that feat humanly possible...The Deputy Commissioner of Police was on the scene, an eye witness of the scandal."

On 9th November, the Union passed a resolution appealing to the Government to conserve the stock of food stuffs and take more effective steps for distribution of the same.

On the morning of the 27th November 1918, a second lock-out was ordered by Messrs. Binny & Co. 'New India' wrote on the causes of the lock out:—

"The B. & C. Mills have ordered a lock-out on the ground that the manager and the accountant of the first, and the weaving master of the second Mill were assaulted yesterday and on Monday last respectively. The identity of the person who took part in the mischief could not be made out in spite of the best efforts of the Jobbers and Maistries. We understand that a number of suspected persons were produced before the assaulted, without result. The assault took place at obscure places and seemed to have been the work of individuals."

Proceeding, the 'New India' asked whether it was fair to penalise the vast majority of workers for the guilt of a few. On 28th November, Mr. Wadia addressed a general gathering of 5000 workers and said..."my sympathy goes entirely with the mill authorities...we must help to find trace of the culprits and treat them according to the law of the land."

The following resolutions were passed:

1. "This meeting records with extreme regret the reported assaults on the European Officers of the Mills and appeals to all its members to put the principles of the Madras Labour Union into force by helping the police to trace the culprits."
2. "...regrets the action of the mill authorities in ordering a lock-out of the two mills and causing intense suffering to labourers in these hard times of economic distress and urges the Mill authorities to resume work."

The Union opened a relief fund on 4th December. On the 5th, a notice was put up by the authorities of the B. & C. Mills that the mills, with the exception of the Weaving Department, would run, but that the weaving shed would remain closed except to those who were willing to apologise for their recent misconduct.

On the 6th December, the Union passed the following resolution:

"This meeting...views with great regret the notice issued...as the plan suggested would tend to untie their unity and hereby appoints 18 men as a special committee to negotiate with the authorities and bring about an amicable settlement."

On the 7th and the 18th, the representatives of the Union went to see the authorities and put forward these requests:

- a. Pay for the days of the lock-out,

- b. The restoration of the gratuity fund to the weavers.
- c. The reinstatement of men who were suspected of complicity in the assault.

The authorities refused to accept the conditions laid down by the workers. Mr. C. F. Andrews arrived in Madras on the suggestion of Gandhiji to effect a settlement. The meeting passed a resolution appointing 18 members to meet the authorities of the Mills with Mr. C. F. Andrews to lead them, on the following terms:

1. An expression of regret for the recent assault on Europeans and a promise to do their utmost that this shall not happen again.
2. A promise on the part of the Manager to promote good feeling, and to deal strictly and impartially with any cases of harshness and ill-treatment brought to his notice.
3. Restoration of the quarter share of gratuity fund.
4. Mills to resume work, if possible, at 24 hours' notice being given of the acceptance of the terms of the deputation.
5. No victimisation.

The Union agreed not to claim pay for the days of the lock-out and the reinstatement of the dismissed men, and requested Mr. Andrews to intercede on their behalf after the opening of the Mills.

Sir C. Simpson would not accept the arbitration. In a statement in the Madras Mail on 10th December, Messrs. Binny & Co., narrated at length the circumstances under which the Madras Labour Union was started. Their main objection was against a politician being the chief man in the Trade Union. As they put it:

"The present one with representatives who know absolutely nothing of labour conditions in Madras or over the rest of India, whose primary interest is politics, can serve no useful purpose...and is causing untold mischief, misunderstanding and needless suffering."

Mr. Wadia replied to these charges by quoting examples from English Trade Union History.

He received at this time a signed petition from the workers in the following terms: "The European officers ill-treat us in every possible way. Whenever we ask for oil, etc., they say, 'Go to Wadia. He will give you oil and all other things you want.'" In the rainy season we go there completely wet and used to dry the wet clothes inside the Mills. Now, the Officers as soon they see the clothes they tear them to pieces."

An effort was made at this time to establish, under the auspices of the Union, an employment bureau for finding employment for those who had been turned out of employment for joining the Trade Unions in the City. As the lock-out was still continuing on 15th December, a public meeting was held at Gokhale Hall to discuss the situation, with Mrs. Beasant in the Chair,

Relief measures, including the sale of cheap rice at $3\frac{1}{4}$ measures per rupee, and a bank for the benefit of members who would get loans at a rate of interest not exceeding two pies per rupee per month were started.

After the lock-out was over, Mr. Wadia concentrated his attention on the stores and the bank. A Committee of 9 men was formed to give relief to the men who had suffered in the lock-out. On 14th April 1919, the Madras Union celebrated its Anniversary.

REVIEW OF THE WORK OF THE MADRAS LABOUR UNION

The activities of this Union raised both storms of protest and approbation from two quarters, the Loyalists and the Home Rulers respectively. What attracted the attention of the early trade unionists was not so much the economic conditions of the workers as the treatment meted out to them by the European Assistants of the mills.

As a sample of a type of attitude towards this Union, I quote two passages from Gilbert Slater's book, "Southern India" (Page 322).

"Mr. Wadia secured a somewhat reluctant permission from Mrs. Beasant to take up the work of organising the cotton operatives into a trade union... He gathered his members from B. & C. Mills alone leaving the Choolai Mills undisturbed... Accordingly Messrs. Binny & Co., took up a hostile attitude."

An able and just verdict is passed on the activities of the Union by Mr. B. Shiv Rao in his book 'The Industrial Worker in India' (Pages 15-16).

"Looking back after an interval of nearly 20 years, it seems somewhat strange (though it was inevitable at that time) that in the absence of precise knowledge of the general conditions of industrial labour in India, his (Mr. Wadia's) criticisms should have been directed against mills which, on standards commonly accepted in India, could show a good deal of which they had reason to be legitimately proud.

It was unfortunate that the beginnings of the workers' movement were thus wrapped in suspicion of a sinister design being at work underneath."

Nevertheless the Union lived and thrived.

To-day it is one of the strongest Unions of Textile Workers in the State. The relations between the Union and the Management, though not cordial, are not antagonistic. The present leadership of the Union is under Socialist domination and it functions as an auxiliary to the Hind Mazdoor Sabha.

TRADE UNIONISM IN COIMBATORE

The workers in this centre of the South Indian Textile Industry have now three trade unions run by the IITUC, Hind Mazdoor Sabha, and the Arruc—the Congress, Socialists and Communist dominated organizations. I collected the following information about trade unionism of this place from Messrs. Chinna Dorai and Vriddagiri—the local Trade Union leaders.

It was Mr. V. O. Chidambaram Pillai who first started the movement for a workers' organization in 1920's. About this period, the first South Indian Railway strike occurred and this gave a great encouragement to the Union spirit. Mr. N. S. Ramaswamy Iyengar who gave evidence before the Royal Commission on Labour was also one of the first Trade Unionists in the district. Mr. Basudeva, a local lawyer started a regular Union of workers in 1930. This first real Trade Union was called the Coimbatore Labour Union. This Union lived and grew till 1937 when the elections to the Legislative Assembly and Council took place.

1937 was a momentous year, when a general strike took place in Coimbatore Mills. The strike began first in Lakshmi Mills followed by strikes in Kaleeswar and Somasundara Mills. The exact reasons for this conflagration are not known and each side has its version of the happenings. As is the case with many of the strikes, the official reason is seldom the real cause, and it is only an accumulation of grievances that drive the workers to have recourse to this extreme measure. The dispute over the question of bonus was generally mentioned in this connection. After this, the Government appointed Mr. M. Venkataramiya as the Court of Enquiry to inquire into the labour conditions in Coimbatore Textile Mills. It was in these troublous times that the Coimbatore Mill Workers' Union was started. The political opinions of its leaders did not for some time hinder workers of other political faiths in participating in Trade Union activities. For the election to the State Legislature from the Textile Labour Constituency, the Communist Union members wanted Mr. Karupuswamy as a candidate but the others, the majority, were in favour of Mr. N. G. Ramaswamy. This labour leader is acclaimed as a selfless worker in the cause of Trade Unionism. He was a Congress Socialist and it will not be an exaggeration to say that but for him the Trade Unionism in the district would not be so powerful. It is generally rumoured that he had to face persecution at the hands of local mill owners for his faith and work.

The views of the majority prevailed, and Mr. Ramaswamy was elected unanimously, the other candidate withdrawing.

Immediately after the election, the membership of this Union became divided. Some of the anti-Communists and the Congress elements seceded from the Union, and started the Coimbatore District Textile Workers' Union in 1938 with Mr. Ramaswamy as the chief.

These two Unions were conducting themselves quite well till 1948, when the biggest strike in the Coimbatore Mills took place. This was due to the imposition of the final work loads recommended by the Standardisation Committee. After this strike was over, the Textile Workers' Union, which hitherto was led by Mr. Kuppaswamy, the Congress Labour M.L.A., had to face defections. There was a difference of opinion between the Socialist and Congress workers and this led to the Congressmen forming a splinter Union with the same name and register number. On receiving a complaint from the Congressmen that the Socialist had staged a *coup-d'état*, the Commissioner of Labour investigated the matter and declared that the elections conducted by the Socialists were democratic and warned the Congressmen not to make use of the same register number. Now this splinter Union styles itself, The Coimbatore District Textile Workers' Union (Congress).

This is a short account of Trade Unions in the district. All the labour leaders with whom I discussed the matter were unanimous in their opinion that the division in working class was unfortunate; but none of them was prepared for unity talks. The Communists blame the Congressmen and call them, 'goondas'; the Socialists call the Communists, 'misguided enthusiasts,' and the Congressmen as 'traitors.' The Congressmen, in their turn, blame the leftists as using the working class as a pawn in the political game.

About the strength of the respective Unions, it is difficult to say anything definite because we cannot be guided by the membership figures which represent only the subscription-paying members. From the information I could gather, it seems as though the Communists have a considerable amount of influence in the town mills. The Socialists have great influence in the other mills, and this they share with the Congress Union. It is difficult to assign shares for these two Unions. On the whole, the Socialists seem to have the maximum following.

None of these have the recognition of the mill owners. The relationship between the Unions and the Managements is not at all cordial. The management accuses the labour leaders as 'self-seekers' who have no interest in the industry. Some mill managers told me that unless the workers oust the outsiders nothing in the way of improving the labour-capital relationship would result. The Court of Enquiry in 1938 recommended that the mill owners should recognise the Unions which were duly registered, unconditionally. He also wrote:

"Supposing that a registered trade union is not recognised by the mills, the result that I can foresee will be the continuation of the present distrust of the employer which has deeply entered the mind of the worker...."

The mill owners have not heeded the words of the Court of Enquiry and, as forecast, mutual distrust is the order of the day. The Secretary of the Southern India Millowners Association, when I discussed this problem with him, vaguely suggested that the Association had recognised the Congress Union. But generally the managements do not seem to think that recognition would help matters very much.

Inter-party, and union rivalry is common, and the labour leaders seem to think that the best way to establish their genuineness is to outbid the opponent in making large promises to the workers. To give an example, the interim workload prescribed by the Standardisation Committee is now accepted by many as the proper work load in mills. The Socialist Union has accepted this but, to spite them, the Congress Unionists, I am told, have promised the workers that they would still further reduce the workload if only the workers supported them. Thus, there is a regular auction going on to win the support of the workers for their respective unions.

UNIONS IN THE MADURA AREA

The Madura Labour Union was started by Mr. S.R. Varadarajulu Naidu in the early 1930's. He was one of the witnesses who gave very valuable information about the labour conditions in the industry to the Royal Commission on Labour. In this connection, the relations between the Madurai Mills and their Union are worth special mention. The relationship between them is

very cordial and the co-operation is real and effective, and, the Union without being a Company Union, is trusted by the management and encouraged to carry on its activities with the object of improving the moral and material conditions of the workers. A unique feature is that when new recruits are required they are recruited through the Union although the final decision is in the hands of the management. In regard to dismissals also, although the Union is not allowed to interfere, they are given a chance to review the cases. In all its welfare activities, the Union is freely consulted and the opinions of the representatives respected.

The other mills in the area do not have such a hearty co-operation with their respective trade unions and labour troubles are frequent in them.

In this connection of trade unions, and their recognition, we will have to consider the problem of 'outsiders.' Almost all the Unions have people who are not workers in key positions. The managements, all these 30 years, have taken serious objection to this and have, on occasions that suited them, used this presence of outsiders as an excuse for non-recognition. Even though the mill managers feel that, due to their ignorance, the mill workers need somebody with education and leisure to guide their union activities, they told me while I was discussing this problem with them, that they were against the present set of people who run the Coimbatore Unions.

As observed by the Royal Commission on Labour, if outsiders of an undesirable variety are at the helm of affairs, it will not be long before they are necked out by the workers. In most cases, the complaint against the outsiders is an excuse for the non-recognition of the Trade Unions.

The words of the Royal Commission on Labour, regarding labour-capital relations written nearly two decades ago are as true today as they were then. They wrote:

"We believe that an important factor at work in creating industrial unrest in India is the lack of contact which too often exists between the employers and the employed...In practically every industry, the lack of contact and understanding is evident."

WELFARE WORK AND GENERAL LABOUR-CAPITAL RELATIONS

The one thing that a mill manager would be very glad to inform the inquisitive researcher is about the welfare work in his mill. While it is true that some mills, like the B. & C. Mills and the Madura Mills, have done much to provide amenities for labour, for the most part, the other mills have failed to do this. Every year, the Factory Inspector's report gives a resume of the efforts in this connection in the various factories, but the work detailed here is very meagre and the efforts do not touch the fringe of the problem. I discussed this aspect of the problem with some mill managers and they also felt that what was being done was very little and there was much to be improved. Dispensaries exist in almost all mills but they, as one experienced mill manager told me, 'provide pretty little other than Aspro.' The Union leaders complain that the mill doctor is useful only for giving certificates of sickness and Workmen's Compensation. They say that the workers have no further use of him. T.B. is supposed to be an occupational disease, but till now no effort has been

made to start a hospital for the workers. As a mill manager suggested, the best thing to do in this respect is to pool the resources of all the mills and then start a first class hospital. This can be made to look after confinement cases also.

Tiffin sheds, cycle sheds, canteens, creches etc., are provided for by the Managements in many mills, and a manager, with 20 years' experience of the Coimbatore industry, jocularly told me that the managements were prepared to do what all the law prescribes and nothing more. He also said that the only way of getting the managing agents interested in these things is to make them into laws the infringement of which will be visited with prosecution. Whatever be the truth in it, things do not seem to be very different in many mills, to an outside observer.

It has already been pointed out that the managements have been adopting a very hostile attitude towards the Unions and their leaders. The following statement from a responsible mill owner will prove this:

"The Government do not seem to realise that, but for the industrialists who have built up cotton mills in India, the people would today practically go naked in spite of the Charka.

It is regrettable that Government should think of enhancing the punishment of the employers instead of protecting them from the attack and violence of *ungrateful labour misled by mischievous Communism*. Unless Communism of this type is suppressed, the industry will die and the country will soon become bankrupt."

On the other hand, the Union leaders accuse the managements of corruption and calculated neglect of labour welfare.

Between these two classes of opinion, the managers hold the middle way and act many times as the liaison. While they too do not seem to like the attitude of many labour leaders, along with their employers, they also do not seem to appreciate the stand taken by the mill owners. Some of the Managers are much interested in the welfare activities of their mills and would like to extend them if they were given a free hand. Perhaps it is not very proper to blame the managing agents even, as they are interested in just not one venture but a number of them. They seem to have their fingers in too many pies. So they are unable, even if they want, to be useful in this regard.

The past history of labour relations in the Coimbatore industry has so fouled the atmosphere that it may take a long time to establish cordial relations between the Unions and the managements. If the present attitude continues, it can definitely be said that such a thing as labour-capital co-operation will be a dream. While the workers are daily preached a hymn of hatred by interested parties, the managements are doing nothing to narrow the gulf between the workers and the managements. The workers in this centre have no provision of provident fund and other amenities. Until a few years ago, the wages were low and the life they were living was wretched. The standardisation of wages now done will help to ease the situation but the ever-increasing prices of necessities seem to outstrip the rises granted.

INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES IN COTTON MILLS

The preceding sections which were dealing with the problems of wages, trade unions and others would have given a general background for this section on strikes. The history of the earlier strikes was already described in the section on Trade Unions. The wages paid were low and the conditions of work needed much improvement. In these circumstances, it is not surprising that strikes in the industry were numerous. No systematic collection of information regarding the strikes was made, and so it is not possible to analyse them according to causes and results. Moreover, the official reason mentioned in the reports is seldom the 'real' cause of the conflagration and many times it is in the nature of the last straw. So I feel that a statistical analysis of the meagre data available will not be of great use. A brief history of the more important strikes in the industry would go a long way in explaining this problem.

In 1921, there was a widespread strike in the B. & C. mills. This resulted in a lock-out which lasted for a few months. This industrial dispute, as time passed, became a riot leading to a disturbance of law and order. Police force had to be used to restore conditions of normality.

The next wave of strikes was in 1937. This was concentrated in the Coimbatore district. Of this, the Court of Enquiry, Coimbatore (1938) wrote:

"The unrest among the workers in Coimbatore area which was till then smouldering, took a serious turn resulting in a number of strikes. At first, the labourers in the Lakshmi Mills struck work. It was followed by strikes in the Kaleeswar, Somasundara and Coimbatore Spinning & Weaving Mills. Various are the causes given by the striking parties...Refusal or apprehended refusal of Deepavali bonus, apprehended reduction of bonus, one sider being asked to look after two sides of the ring frame, have been some of the causes mentioned."

This led to the Government appointing a Court of Enquiry under Sec. 3 of the Trade Disputes Act, to investigate and give findings on the points of dispute.

The Court of Enquiry conducted a detailed examination into the problems facing the industry and recommended a wage rise. This has already been mentioned in the section on Wages. He also suggested certain other changes in conditions of work, etc.

It was represented on behalf of the mill owners that the coming of Congress into power had created extravagant hopes in the minds of the workers. The failure to realise them had led to a deep feeling of frustration manifesting itself in the form of strikes. This argument, however, was discarded by the Court of Enquiry. Even though there is an element of truth in what the mill owners said, it must be remembered that the most important reason for this wave of unrest is the unbearable living conditions of workers in these mills. It was natural that workers rushed to the Government (popular) for aid, in their efforts to better their living conditions,

The year 1942 which was a momentous year in the history of India, when the Quit India movement was launched, was one in which some strikes took place. Concerted action was not possible as this move was opposed by the Communists and, moreover, this was a purely political upheaval. The Quit India movement failed to achieve independence and the strikes in the industry likewise fizzled out.

The number of strikes during the war years were not many. The few that took place were due to individual grievances. This might have been due to the possibility of alternative employment in the army.

Again, in 1946, another wave of unrest began. Strikes and lock-outs became general. An added feature of the strikes in this period was the inter-union rivalry. While discussing with the important trade unions in Coimbatore, I gathered much information about the history of the strikes in this period. But these statements contain many half-truths. Retailing it here will serve no purpose. The Communist unions accused the other unions of sabotaging the workers' cause. There was a police firing in the Coimbatore Spinning & Weaving Mills in this connection. The reasons for these strikes were many and, sometimes, even frivolous. The mill managers complained that discipline and order were non-existent in the mills. They also accused the labour leaders for encouraging industrial unrest. In this period, an Industrial Tribunal (Textiles) 1947 was appointed. About the conditions then existing, the Tribunal reported:

"I may not be wrong if I say that in the strikes which took place within the last one year, not one in the Textile Industry has been treated as justifiable."

"The real cause of grievance is said to be that the labour has not been treated justly and squarely after the war."

The strikes were not confined to any one centre of the industry but were general and widespread.

Even at the risk of being repetitive, I would like to state that the real cause of the strike is many times not the official cause. The attitude of the employer, the general living conditions and, to some extent, the encouragement given by the labour leaders might have led to this series of strikes. The fact that the Tribunal recommended a 100% rise in the wages proves the fact that the wages were very low in 1946.

The recommendations of the Tribunal led to the appointment of a standardisation committee. This body fixed the minimum workloads for the various grades of labour. These recommendations led to another series of strikes in the industry. Details about the workloads and the schemes of rationalisation will be dealt with in the next section.

The 108 days' strike, a result of the misunderstandings in the implementation of the final recommendations of the standardisation committee, was a subject of many negotiations. The acceptance of the interim workload has not solved the problem, and many strikes which occurred in the industry recently were due to this.

Whether the individual strikes were justified or not, every 'general' strike has led to the betterment of the conditions of the workers. However much we may regret the flimsy reasons given for the launching of a strike, it must not be forgotten that the ultimate aim of all strikes is the obtaining of better living conditions for the workers. What is more, all the improvements that took place in recent years have been the result of Government intervention.

WORK LOADS AND RATIONALISATION IN THE INDUSTRY

This problem has been agitating the minds of all concerned in the industry from the time the Standardisation Committee published its report. This Committee was appointed on the recommendations of the Industrial Tribunal (Textiles) 1947 which raised the wages of all categories of workers to Rs. 26 per month. The mill owners protested that the sudden rise in the wages had upset the conditions inside the Mills. They complained that the workers were slackening work and wanted that the workloads should be prescribed in the mills. The Union people also supported this as the mills, consequent on the rise in the wage bill, began an orgy of dismissals and closures. This was prevented by the Government, who also appointed a Committee to go into the question of workloads. This Committee deliberated for some weeks and brought out a report with final and interim workloads. I learn that the introduction of the interim workloads was not favoured by some people on the Committee. The Unions alleged that the unholy hurry with which this work load fixation was done, was due to the Government's desire to placate the mill owners. However, this is only a statement by an interested party. But one responsible Government servant, who at that time was in the know of things, told me that the time at the disposal of the Committee was short.

With the publication of the recommendations, the mill owners tried to implement the final workloads. The Unions felt that the final workloads prescribed by the Committee were too high and staged the biggest single strike in the mills all over the district. This was in 1948. After a long period of negotiations and consultations between the State, the workers and the managements, a settlement was arrived at to work only the interim workload for the time being. A truce was called and the work in the cotton mills was resumed. But it did not stop with this. Even as recently as two months back, there was a strike in a mill in Coimbatore due to the mill owners trying to implement the final workloads. While it was generally accepted that the mills should work only the interim loads, there were some mills which worked higher loads than the minimum. This was due to a variety of reasons, the Unions declaring that it was due to the mill owners forcing labour to work these higher workloads in times of distress. The workers had just then emerged from 108 days' strike. It was not the fairness of the load but the threats of the managements which made it possible. This statement may be taken for whatever it is worth. So the position of the industry today is that in some mills the workers are made to do less work while in some others they are attending to a larger volume of work. The unions in mills where higher workloads are worked, naturally, encourage the workers to go slow and this has resulted in numerous disputes.

Workloads should depend on the number of breakages in each mill, and the smaller the number of breakages, the higher should be the workload. But

there has not been agreement on the number of breakages in the Coimbatore mills. Some say that they are to the tune of 600 to 700 and some others rate them at not more than 300. The union leaders told me that they were prepared to do more work if only the conditions of work improved in the mills. It is expected that the tripartite conference of the workers, the managements and the State will solve the problem to the satisfaction of all.

There is another aspect of the problem. The worker is interested in the workloads not only because they concern the amount of work done by him but also as this would affect the general employment in the industry. The threat of retrenchment is another reason why the unions oppose the working of the final workloads. The mill owners argue that it is in the best interests of the country that they would like to rationalise the industry. No one can have any objection to the rationalisation of industry, but if no effort is made to absorb the surplus labour in the mills sent out in this connection, it would be a net loss in human terms to the country. This problem cannot be viewed in isolation. This must form a part of the general planning for the future. Rationalisation can be useful only if it does not create widespread unemployment in the country.

Without a real co-operation between the employers and the employees, the industry will be a hot-bed of discontent. The only way to achieve this is to create an atmosphere in which problems that face the industry could be jointly discussed with goodwill. The managements should realise that workers' help and goodwill is needed to run the industry. The workers should realise that continued hostility to the mill interests would get them nowhere. These things are easier said than done. What the industry needs is a set of persons at the helm of affairs in both ranks who have the good of the nation at heart in the most comprehensive sense of the term and also have the tact and patience to work out the details of plans laid out in tripartite conferences.

APPENDIX

TABLES SHOWING WAGES AND EARNINGS OF COTTON MILL
WORKERS IN SELECTED OCCUPATIONS IN CERTAIN
MILLS AND AREAS

TABLE I—B. & C. MILLS, MADRAS, 1944

Occupation	Avg. daily basic wages			Avg. daily net earnings		
	Rs. A. P.			Rs. A. P.		
Drawing tenter	...	1	3 1	2	0 6	
Slubbing tenter	...	1	8 8	2	6 4	
Intermediate	...	1	7 5	2	5 8	
Roving tenter (single)	...	1	1 11	1	15 2	
" (double)	...	1	10 8	2	9 2	
Ring piecer (siders)	...	0	12 6	1	9 11	
Roving doffer	...	0	11 11	1	10 0	
Frame doffer	...	0	9 11	1	7 9	
Ring doffer	...	0	10 9	1	7 11	
Grey winder	...	1	1 8	2	0 3	
Cone winder	...	1	0 11	1	15 4	
Pirn winder	...	1	5 8	2	4 4	
Reeler	...	1	5 11	2	2 4	
One loom weaver	...	1	4 9	2	5 2	
Two loom weaver	...	1	5 11	2	5 2	
12 loom weaver	...	2	3 0	3	7 4	
Cooly	...	0	12 9	1	10 8	

SOURCE : Report of the Labour Investigation Committee, p. 43.

TABLE II—MADURA MILLS, 1944

Occupation	Avg. basic wages			Net earnings		
	Rs. A. P.			Rs. A. P.		
Drawing tenter	...	0	10 0	1	10 3	
Slubbing tenter	...	0	11 8	1	12 0	
Inter tenter	...	0	11 2	1	11 5	
Roving tenter	...	0	11 1	1	11 5	
Roving doffer	...	0	8 8	1	7 11	
Ring doffer	...	0	7 9	1	6 9	
"	...	0	7 9	1	7 7	
Spinner	...	0	7 9	1	8 4	✓
Lessona winder	...	0	8 4	1	8 8	
Winder	...	0	8 4	1	8 7	✓
"	...	0	8 4	1	8 0	
Cooly	...	0	10 10	1	4 9	

SOURCE : Report of the Labour Investigation Committee p. 150.

TABLE III—IN MADURA AREA, 1944

Occupation	Avg. basic wages			Net earnings		
	Rs. A. P.			Rs. A. P.		
Drawing tenter	...	0	9 3	1	7 6	
Slubbing tenter	...	0	10 10	1	9 2	
Inter tenter	...	0	10 3	1	9 9	
Roving tenter	...	0	10 7	1	9 3	
Ring doffer	...	0	7 5	1	6 6	
Roving doffer	...	0	7 8	1	5 3	✓
Spinning full siders	...	0	11 5	1	9 9	
Reeler	...	0	7 3	1	6 1	
Single loom weaver	...	0	11 11	1	7 4	✓
Double loom weaver	...	0	13 2	1	8 7	✓
Winder	...	0	7 6	1	6 7	✓
Cone winder	...	0	7 11	1	7 9	✓
Pirn winder	...	0	6 4	1	2 2	
Lessona winder	...	0	8 4	1	8 8	
Cooly	...	0	9 2	1	4 4	

SOURCE : Report of the Labour Investigation Committee p. 151

TABLE IV—IN COIMBATORE MILLS, 1944

Occupation	Avg. basic wages			Net earnings		
	Rs. A. P.			Rs. A. P.		
Drawing Tenter	...	0	8 6	0	15 8	
Slubbing Tenter	...	0	10 3	1	2 10	
Inter Tenter	...	0	10 11	1	4 1	
Roving Tenter	...	0	10 4	1	2 8	
Tarawalla	...	0	10 10	1	4 9	
Frame Doffer	...	0	6 2	0	12 6	
Spinning Doffer	...	0	4 9	0	8 0	
Roving Doffer	...	0	6 3	0	11 5	
Double Sider	...	0	13 7	1	7 8	
Single Sider	...	0	9 7	1	1 8	
Half Sider	...	0	5 6	0	10 1	
3/4 Sider	...	0	6 8	0	12 6	
Winder	...	0	6 3	0	12 8	
Colour Winder	...	0	7 8	0	13 7	
Grey Winder	...	0	6 10	0	11 10	
Universal Winder	...	0	4 11	0	9 10	
Cone Winder	...	0	5 0	0	8 10	
Pirn Winder	...	0	5 1	0	9 2	
Cheese Winder	...	0	5 10	0	10 5	
Single loom weaver	...	0	10 6	1	2 8	
Double loom weaver	...	0	15 1	1	10 0	
Reeler	...	0	6 1	0	10 6	
Cooly	...	0	7 6	0	13 11	

SOURCE : Report of the Labour Investigation Committee pp. 58, 59.

NOTES AND REFERENCES FOR PART—III

CHAPTER I

This chapter is based on the data I have gathered from the records with the Madras Agricultural Department. Mr. M. Jeevan Rao was very helpful in this regard.

CHAPTER II

Most of the information in this chapter is gathered from the following:

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Royal Commission on Labour—Evidence Volumes pertaining to Madras.

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Report of the Court of Enquiry (1938).

Report of the Enquiry into the Conditions of Labour in Cotton Mills—S. R. Deshpande—1944. This is referred to in the thesis sometimes as "The Report of the Labour Investigation Committee."

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Labour in Madras—B. P. Wadia.

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The "statement of a prominent millowner" referred to in the thesis is that of Mr. Karimuthu Thiyagaraja Chettiar, in the Indian Textile Journal—1948.

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INDEX

- | | |
|---|---|
| Aaron Spg. & Wvg. Mills Ltd.
65, 104, 171, 174 | Duval M. 6, 7, |
| Asher Textile Mills Ltd. 66, 104, 167,
171, 174 | Gnanambikai Mills, Ltd. 66, 167, 174 |
| B. & C. Mills Ltd. 10, 11, 25, 65, 77,
104, 110, 167, 171, 174, 227, 231,
232 | Godavary Cotton Mills Co. Ltd.
8, 29 |
| Bangalore Woollen, Cotton & Silk Mills
Ltd. 171, 174 | Gopal M.H. 90, 99 |
| Bellary Spg. & Wvg. Co. Ltd. 11 | Gordon R.A. 175 |
| Berle & Means 175 | Guha Thakurtha J. 119 |
| Bose, S. R. 119 | Handloom Industry |
| Bronfenbrenner M. 141 | Early history of 19-20 |
| Cambodia Mills Ltd. 66, 104, 110,
167, 174 | and Tariff policy, 61-62 |
| Cannanore Spg. & Wvg. Mills Ltd. 171,
174 | and yarn consumption 45, 70 |
| Chinnadorai P.S. 251 | Jain P.C. 90 |
| Cloth production 20, 31, 32, 44, 55,
71, 76 | Janardhana Mills Ltd. 66, 104, 110,
167, 174 |
| Coimbatore Cotton Mills Ltd. 66, 104,
110, 167, 172, 174 | Jawahar Mills Ltd. 174 |
| Coimbatore Kamala Mills Ltd. 66, 104,
167, 174 | Kaleeswarar Mills Ltd. 15, 65, 104,
110, 167, 174 |
| Coimbatore Murugan Mills Ltd. 66,
104, 167, 174 | Kandan Textiles Ltd. 173, 174 |
| Coimbatore Pioneer Mills Ltd. 66, 104,
167, 172, 174 | Karantha K.R. 86 |
| Coimbatore Spg. & Wvg. Mills Ltd. 11,
65, 104, 110, 167, 174 | Kasthuri Mills Ltd. 66, 171, 174 |
| Cotton Mill: Size | Kothari Mills Ltd. 66, 104, 167, 173,
174 |
| and cost of production 165 | Krishnamurthy G.V. 155 |
| and efficiency 163 | Kumaran Mills Ltd. 172, 174 |
| and profits 165 | Labour and Employment trends 226-
229 |
| Cotton prices 3, 211, 219 | and housing 233, 238 |
| Damodaran G.R. 86, 157 | and industrial disputes 256-258 |
| Decentralised industrialism 84-86 | and maternity benefits 231 |
| Dhanalakshmi Mills Ltd. 65, 66, 104,
167, 174 | and rationalisation 258-259 |
| Douglas P.H. 132, 133, 141 | and Trade Unionism 247-254 |
| | and wages 240, 247 |
| | and welfare work 254-255 |
| | Lakshmi Mills Ltd. 15, 66, 104, 110,
167, 172, 174 |
| | Lotus Mills Ltd. 66, 104, 167, 173, 174 |
| | Loyal Mills Ltd. 65, 174 |
| | Madras Chamber of Commerce 8 |
| | Madras United Spg. & Wvg. Co., Ltd.
9, 10, 65, 104 |

DEVELOPMENT OF THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY IN MADRAS *

Madura Mills Ltd. 11, 13, 29, 66, 104, 110, 150, 167, 173, 174, 227, 229, 231	Saroja Mills Ltd. 67, 167, 172, 174
Mahalakshmi Mills Ltd. 28, 66, 173, 174	Sastry N. S. R. 155
Malabar Mills Ltd. 11, 66, 104, 110, 167, 174	Seasonal variations in cotton production & trade 124
Meenakshi Mills Ltd. 28, 172, 174	Seasonal variations in yarn production & trade 125
Mehta, M. M. 155	Shiva Rao, B. 251
Mendershausen, H. 140, 141	Sinha, H. 119
Mettur Mills Ltd. 65, 77, 110, 174, 174	Slater, G. 251
Munshi, M. C. 90	Sree Rajendra Mills Ltd. 67, 104, 167, 172, 174
Murugananda Mills Ltd. 174	Sri Balasubramania Mills Ltd. 67, 104, 110, 167, 171, 172, 174
Napier, Lord 3, 4, 5	Sri Palamalai Ranganathar Mills Ltd. 67, 104, 167, 174
Palaniandavar Mills Ltd. 66, 104, 167, 174	Sri Ramalinga Choodambikai Mills Ltd. 67, 104, 150, 167, 174
Pankaja Mills Ltd. 66, 104, 110, 167, 171, 174	Sri Ranga Vilas Mills Ltd. 29, 67, 104, 110, 167, 172, 174
Prakasam, T. 78	Sri Sarada Mills Ltd. 65, 104, 167, 174
Production of cotton 196, 197-199, 205	Sri Venkateswara Mills Ltd. 67, 104, 174
Profits of cotton mills 35, 46, 60, 73, 77, 89-103	Textile industry & control 76, 79-81
Pudukottai Mills Ltd. 174	Tirumagal Mills Ltd. 67, 167, 174
Radhakrishna Mills Ltd. 29, 66, 104, 110, 167, 174	Tirumurti Mills Ltd. 67, 167, 174
Rajalakshmi Mills Ltd. 66, 104, 110, 167, 172, 174	Tintner, G. 133
Rajapalayam Mills Ltd. 66, 104, 150, 167, 173, 174	Trade in cotton 21, 57-61, 71-73
Ramaswamy N. G. 252	Trichinopoly Mills Ltd. 67, 104, 110, 167, 174
Rayalaseema Mills Ltd. 173, 174	Varadarajulu Naidu, S. R. 253
Reder, M. 143	Vasanta Mills 65, 104, 110, 167, 174
Replacement of cotton by other crops, 201	Vijayalakshmi Mills Ltd. 171, 174
Research in cotton 221-225	Vriddagiri 251
Robinson, B. A. G. 155	Wadia, B.P. 24, 247
Sargent Florence P. 175	Yarn control 76-77, 79-81
	Yarn production 25, 31-32, 44, 53, 68, 76
	Yarn trade 34, 55, 69-70

8818

8818