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REPORT OF THE STUDY GROUP ON COTTON TEXTILES CONSTITUTED  
BY THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

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## C O N T E N T S

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Page</u>
I INTRODUCTION	1
II GROWTH OF THE COTTON TEXTILE INDUSTRY	4
(i) The Early Years	
(ii) Post-Independence Period	
(iii) Handloom and Powerloom Industry	
III ORGANISATION OF THE COTTON TEXTILE INDUSTRY	12
(i) Present Position of the Textile Industry	
(ii) Management	
(iii) Employers' Organisations	
(iv) Workers' Organisations	
(v) Textile Commissioner's Office	
(vi) Textile Research Associations	
IV EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING	22
(i) Level of Employment	
(ii) Methods of Recruitment	
(iii) Badlis	
(iv) Decasualisation Scheme	
(v) Labour Turnover and Absenteeism	
(vi) Promotion Practices & Training	
V WAGES, INCENTIVES & PRODUCTIVITY	32
(i) Evolution of Basic Wages & Dearness Allowance	
(ii) Incentive Wages	
(iii) Annual Bonus	
(iv) Working Conditions & Productivity	
(v) Productivity	

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Page</u>
VI SOCIAL SECURITY AND WELFARE	42
(i) Legislation on Security and Welfare	
(ii) Non-Statutory benefits	
(iii) National and Festival Holidays	
(iv) Accidents	
VII INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS	48
(i) Growth of Trade Unions	
(ii) Methods of Settlement of Disputes	
(iii) Code of Discipline	
(iv) Works Committees, Joint Committees etc.,	
(v) Industrial Tribunals & Courts	
(vi) Multiple Shifts	
VIII PROBLEMS OF THE COTTON TEXTILE INDUSTRY	55
(i) Recession	
(ii) Mismanagement	
(iii) Closed Mills	
(iv) Cotton Shortage	
(v) Rehabilitation and Modernisation	
(vi) Machineries, Stores & Accessories	
(vii) Operation of Controls	
IX CONCLUSIONS	67
APPENDIX I - Tables	
APPENDIX II - Selected Bibliography	



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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Study Group on Cotton Textiles was constituted by the National Commission on Labour, Government of India with the following members.

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|--|-----------|
| 1. Shri K. Sreenivasan,<br>Director, SITRA, Coimbatore   | Chairman  |
| 2. Shri C.H. Desai,<br>The Arvind Mills, Ahmedabad   | Member    |
| 3. Shri S.P. Mandelia,<br>Century Rayons, Bombay   | Member    |
| 4. Shri T.N. Sharma,<br>Delhi Cloth & General<br>Mills Ltd., New Delhi                         | Member    |
| 5. Shri Arvind N. Buch,<br>Textile Labour Association,<br>Ahmedabad.                           | Member    |
| 6. Shri H.K. Sowani,<br>12/190, Adarsh Nagar,<br>Worli, Bombay-25                              | Member    |
| 7. Shri P.L. Subbian,<br>General Secretary,<br>National Textile Workers'<br>Union, Coimbatore. | Member    |
| 8. Shri A.V. Vyas,<br>Dy. Commissioner of Labour,<br>Gujarat State, Ahmedabad                  | Secretary |

Shri C.H. Desai submitted his resignation from the Group in his letter No.GD/RD dated August 2, 1967.

In his letter D.O. No.3/67-NCL(27) of the 23rd May 1967, inviting the members to serve on the Study Group, the Chairman of the National Commission on Labour, observed,

"In view of the comprehensive nature of the enquiry and the need for tapping the expertise available within the country on labour problems in different industries on the various aspects of the Commission's terms of reference the Commission has decided to set up a large number of expert study groups. A fair amount of information is available in the country on different industries. The study groups are expected to draw upon the relevant material on the whole area of the Commission's enquiry in the concerned industry and project their thinking on labour problems in the industry in the years to come..... The Group is free to evolve its own procedure for work and framework of its report. However, the emphasis will be on interpretation of existing data and not on collection of additional information. A copy of the questionnaire issued by the Commission is also enclosed."

With the experience and knowledge of the members and with the considerable amount of authoritative published material that is already available, it was possible for the members to discuss the problem of labour in relation to the cotton textile industry and come to certain broad conclusions. A list of selected bibliography of books and reports consulted is given in appendix II.



The Group met four times, three times in Bombay and once in Coimbatore. At the first meeting of the Group, a general discussion was held to decide on the procedural aspects. It was generally felt that the work of the Group should be to gather all relevant information as far as the cotton textile industry is concerned and to interpret this information. The question of drawing final conclusions and inferences should be left to the National Commission on Labour. The general framework of the report was also discussed at this meeting.

At the second meeting of the Group, the framework of the report was finalised and the various sources of information were also discussed. On the basis of these discussions the report was drafted and circulated to the members. At the third and fourth meetings of the Group, the report was discussed in detail and finalised for submission to the National Commission on Labour.

If, before the finalisation of the report by the National Commission on Labour, any major changes should take place in the Cotton Textile Industry, the Group may meet again and submit a supplementary report on the latest developments.

## CHAPTER II

### GROWTH OF THE COTTON TEXTILE INDUSTRY

#### The Early Years

India is the home of cotton textiles. Cotton was probably grown, spun and woven into cloth in our country before anywhere else in the world. Excavations at Mohenja-Daro have unearthed bits of cotton cloth and twine. In ancient times Indian cotton textiles were famous throughout the world for their beauty and fineness. From those early days, throughout her long history, India was an exporter of cotton textiles until the dawn of the industrial revolution in Europe.

The growth of industrial revolution in Europe and the application of power to what were once handi-crafts and cottage industries brought about a complete transformation in the economic and social spheres also. India was not only unable to export her textiles, but cheap machine-made goods from the factories in England almost completely destroyed the spinning and the handloom industry in India.

Towards the middle of the nineteenth century, railways were introduced in India. When once this was done, it was inevitable that industrial revolution should come to India also. The first textile mill was started in Bombay in 1854.



From then on, the textile industry grew slowly but steadily. It had to face heavy odds such as lack of capital resources, complete lack of technical knowledge, an unsympathetic government and severe foreign competition. But in spite of these handicaps, the industry grew. Table I in appendix I gives the gradual growth of the cotton textile industry from 1854 uptill 1947.

In the early stages, the industry was concentrated in Bombay. But soon it spread to Ahmedabad and then to other centres such as Kanpur, Calcutta and Coimbatore. However, upto the time of Independence, the industry was largely concentrated in these centres.

The factors that played a part in the expansion of the textile industry in the nineteenth century were, the extension of railways in India making for easy transport of machinery and goods from ports to other areas, the opening of the Suez Canal which reduced the cost of transporting machinery from Europe to India by nearly half and the adventurous spirit of the early pioneers who started these mills under very difficult and trying conditions. The growth of the industry in the twentieth century can be largely attributed to the growth of the national spirit and the desire for political independence and economic self-reliance and the consequent boycott of British goods. The national

movement no doubt placed emphasis on Khadi, nevertheless the Indian textile industry also benefited from it.

In spite of a fairly rapid growth, the second World War exposed some of the inherent weaknesses of the industry. Because of complete elimination of imports, no machinery or spare parts were available, since they were not made locally. Mills had to face increasing demands with inadequate resources of machinery and spares. For the same reason, the price of textiles shot up and the mills were more prosperous than they had ever been before. However, by the end of the War, because of lack of spare parts and equipment and because of running multiple shifts, the industry was in great need of rehabilitation.

Uptill the beginning of World War II, there were no controls on the textile industry. It was more or less completely exposed to the fluctuations of national and international commerce. However, the problems created by the War necessitated Government action, first, in order to ensure that prices did not increase unduly, secondly to assure equitable distribution of the cloth produced and thirdly, to procure textile supplies required for the War. In order to achieve these objectives, the post of the Textile Commissioner was created and the office of the Textile Commissioner established



in Bombay. Since then, the Textile Commissioner's office has continued to function as a wing of the Government responsible for implementing the policies of the Government of India as far as the textile industry is concerned.

### Post-Independence Period

In the immediate post-war period, the textile industry was highly prosperous. But it had to meet increasing demands from the public by running extra shifts. This imposed considerable strain on an industry which was already short of equipment and spare parts for many years. Rehabilitation and modernisation had assumed considerable importance and urgency. At the same time, there was need for expansion to meet the needs of an increasing population. But meanwhile, the cost of machinery had increased considerably and in spite of the prosperity, many mills found it difficult to find the necessary resources for modernisation and expansion. Since those years, the textile industry has been chronically short of capital. This is particularly so because, many other industries in the private sector have been financed out of the profits of the textile industry.

With the coming of Independence and the announcement of the industrial policy resolution of the Government of

India in 1948, planning, regulation, direction and control of industry in the private sector was placed more or less on a permanent basis. The enactment of the Industrial Development and Regulation Act ensured that no new industry could be started or any substantial expansion of an existing industry undertaken, without a licence from the Government of India. This policy has been adhered to with minor modifications upto the present. On the basis of such planning, the expansion of the textile industry during the past nineteen years is given in Table II, appendix I.

It will be noticed from this table that there has been an increase of about 60% as far as spindles are concerned and only about 8% as far as looms are concerned. This is due to the policy of the Government of giving protection to the handloom industry. During the first Five Year Plan, the target for spindles was exceeded by about 1 million. In the second Five Year Year Plan, 2.1 million spindles were licensed against which a total of 1.72 million were installed. However, against a licensed capacity of 4 million spindles in the Third Plan, only about 2.3 million spindles have been added. This short-fall is mainly due to the non-availability of finance and the slump in the textile industry. A tentative figure of 3.08 million have been mentioned as the allotment for the Fourth Plan period.



Another development during the past twenty years has been the expansion of the cotton textile industry to geographical areas where it did not exist in the past. Because of the policy of de-centralisation and regional development followed by the Government, the expansion of the industry, particularly during the last ten years has been in States other than Maharashtra, Gujarat or Madras. States such as Andhra, Kerala, Bihar, Orissa and Rajasthan are now engaged in establishing new spinning mills.

During the past twenty years, a number of Committees appointed by the Government of India have reviewed the problems of the textile industry. The Working Party, which was appointed in 1950, remarked, "the industry is working with plant and machinery most of which is not only old but completely out-moded and renewal of machinery is an urgent problem of the industry". Commenting on this statement, the Working Group for the Cotton Textile Industry remarked in 1960, "the present position in the industry has worsened still further." Similar views on the need for modernisation, rehabilitation and rationalisation have been expressed by the Textile Enquiry Committees in 1954 and in 1958 and the first Central Wage Board for the Cotton Textile Industry. The handloom industry was the subject of a Working Group in 1959 and the Powerloom Enquiry Committee submitted its report in 1964.

### Handloom and Powerloom Industry

One of the economic results of the national movement in the twenties and thirties was the encouragement the handloom industry received from the public. People who could not buy Khadi bought handloom cloth as the next best. As a result, a fairly large handloom industry has been established in the country during the years immediately preceding the World War II, and this industry had to suffer considerable hardship during the War years because of shortage of yarn and high prices. In 1948, there were about two million handloom weavers in the country working on cotton yarn alone. This was a big source of employment and it was realised that any indiscriminate expansion of weaving in the mills would lead to serious economic and social problems among the large population of handloom weavers. Therefore, while spinning industry was allowed to expand, the expansion of looms was severely restricted. In order to help the handloom industry further, production of sarees and dhoties in mills was also restricted in the year 1950. Further, excise duty was levied on mill cloth and a rebate given to handloom co-operatives in order to encourage the consumption of handloom fabrics. All these measures have helped the handloom industry to survive and to provide employment to large number of people. The quality of some of the handloom fabrics has also been responsible for the popularity and survival.



However, one of the results of these measures has been an indirect encouragement to the installation of powerlooms as a cottage industry, since powerloom cloth was exempted from excise in the early stages and only a small excise was levied in later years. The powerlooms enjoyed certain advantage over the composite mills in terms of cost and over handlooms in terms of production efficiency. Therefore, a large number of powerlooms have come into existence during this period. The excise duty on sized beams introduced in 1967 Budget of the Government of India, may however have<sup>a</sup> discouraging effect on powerlooms in the future.

CHAPTER III

ORGANISATION OF THE COTTON TEXTILE INDUSTRY

Present Position of the Textile Industry

There are at present a total of 575<sup>\*</sup> cotton mills in India. Of these, 292 are composite and 283 are spinning mills, with a total of 16,118,329 spindles and 208,659 looms. Of the looms, 29,753 are automatic. These mills vary very considerably in size; the smallest units having about 6,000 spindles and the largest units having a spindleage of nearly 5,00,000. Similarly, there are composite mills having 100 looms or less while there are many loom-sheds of more than 3,000 looms. There is of course a corresponding variation in the paid-up capital of these mills. The productive efficiency of these mills also varies considerably. While the best mills in India compare not unfavourably with mills abroad, there are many inefficient units with the result that the average level of productivity for the industry as a whole is very low.

The industry consumes 58.6 lakh bales of cotton and 2.5 lakh bales of staple fibre. Of the cotton consumed,

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\* All these figures are for 1966



53 lakh bales are indigenous and 5.6 lakh bales are imported. Imports of cotton have been necessitated partly because of the shortage of indigenous production and partly because, very little cotton suitable for super-fine counts is being grown in India. When India became independent, while approximately 30% of the cotton growing areas went to Pakistan, almost all the textile mills were in India. Since those days, there has been a perennial shortage of cotton. A reference to Table III will show that while cotton production has increased, it has certainly not kept pace with the increase in demand. This shortage has been more acute during the past two years.

Table III in appendix I also gives the production of staple fibre. Most of this fibre has been used either by cotton mills or mills specially established for the spinning of staple fibre. It will be noticed that the consumption of staple fibre has increased steadily during the past thirteen years. At present, approximately 5% of the production in the cotton textile industry is accounted for by staple fibre. This figure can be expected to increase in future years partly as a result of increasing public demand and partly as a result of the shortage of cotton.

Production of yarn and cloth by the Cotton Textile Industry is presented in Table IV appendix I. From these figures it will be noticed that there has been an increase of

more than 200% in cloth production in the de-centralised sector, that is, through handlooms and powerlooms, but only about 14% in the composite mills during the period 1951 to 1966. It will also be noticed that while production in both sectors has been steadily increasing until 1964, there has been a drop in the mill sector after 1964. This again is indicative of the slump in the cotton textile industry. The per capita availability of cloth which was approximately 11 metres in 1951 went up to 15.2 metres in 1958 and was about 16.3 metres in 1965.

Table V gives the average number of workers on rolls as well as the number actually employed from 1956 to 1966. From this table it is obvious that the total number of workers has shown a slight reduction in the past ten years. While the number of men workers has shown a marginal increase, the number of women workers has registered a gradual decline. This is perhaps due to the fact that women are employed only in certain departments such as reeling and winding and during the past ten years there has been a decline in reeled yarn and introduction production/of high speed machines in the winding section. Further, since women cannot be employed during night time, there has been a tendency on the part of managements to recruit men workers and run these departments for two shifts instead of one.



From the number of persons employed in different shifts, it is also seen that while a majority of the mills work two shifts only a minority of the mills work the third shift. It is also observed that in spite of an increase in spindleage, the number of workers in the first shift has come down from 4,34,000 in 1956 to 4,04,000 in 1966. There is a similar drop in the second/also<sup>shift</sup>. This is probably due to the fact that there has been a certain amount of rationalisation of labour in many of the mills during this period. On the other hand, the number of workers in the third shift has increased from 96,000 to 1,30,000 indicating that a larger number of spindles and looms were running in the third shift in 1966 than in 1956.

### Management

Of the 575 mills in the country nearly 90% are corporate bodies and only a few small units are either personal or partnership enterprises. Of the corporate bodies, the majority are being managed by managing agency firms though of late, there has been a tendency to appoint managing directors or directors-in-charge. While about 10% of the managing agency firms manage more than one mill, the vast majority of managing agents run only a single mill. With the proposed abolition of the managing agency system in the textile industry

by 1970, it is most probable that in the course of the next two years most of the managing agency firms will disappear and will be replaced by other forms of management.

In recent years, considerable amount of interest has been evoked in the country in modern methods of management. Many managements in the cotton textile industry have introduced modern techniques of management in their respective organisations which has resulted in higher productivity, better quality of the product and better industrial relations.

Another form of management has come into vogue in recent years with the establishment of a large number of co-operative mills. The majority of the shareholders in these mills are handloom weavers whose major interest is in getting good yarn at reasonably low prices. These mills have also received substantial financial help from State governments and often the chief executive officer of these mills is loaned from the government. In view of the declared policy of the government to expand the co-operative sector, and in view of the large number of licences that have been given to co-operative organisations to start spinning mills, it may be expected that this form of management will become more important in the future. But in view of the fact that co-operative mills have been running only for a short period of time, it is not possible to make an assessment of the performance of these mills.



A few of the closed mills have been taken over by authorised controllers appointed by the government to run these mills. Here again, no general conclusions are possible since there is considerable variation in the circumstances in which these mills were re-opened and the duration for which they have been run by authorised controllers.

### Employers' Organisations

The Bombay Millowners' Association was the first among employers' organisations in the textile industry, and it was founded in 1875. In the early years of its formation it was merely concerned with representing the industry's problems to the Bombay as well as to the Central Governments with regard to tariffs, exports and imports etc. They have been largely responsible for collecting and maintaining extensive statistical data as far as the textile industry is concerned.

The Ahmedabad Millowners' Association was the next to be started and gradually as the cotton textile industry spread to other centres various regional millowners' associations came into being. While these regional associations were mainly concerned with local problems of their members, it had been felt for some time that there should be an authoritative body which can effectively represent the views and interests of the cotton textile industry to the Central

Government with regard to the formulation and implementation of policies of an all-India nature. The Indian Cotton Mills' Federation was constituted in 1958 as a Federation of the various millowners' associations and it has since become a member of the International Federation of Cotton and Allied Textile Industries.

### Workers' Organisations

In view of the fact that the cotton textile industry is one of the oldest in India, the Trade Unions in this industry have also been in existence for many years. It is one of the industries in which almost all workers are well organised into one union or another.

The Textile Labour Association of Ahmedabad is the best organised Trade Union in the textile industry. It was started in 1917 and was guided by Mahatma Gandhi during the early years of its history. It has at present, a membership of about <sup>1,07,067</sup>~~80,000~~ workers and has a large full-time staff to process the large number of grievances and complaints received from individual workers. Apart from being a well-organised Trade Union, it also runs a number of co-operative societies, housing societies and co-operative banks for the benefit of the workers and attends to the social well-being of workers.



It would be pertinent to describe the organisation in his (Gandhiji's) own words. "As to labour, I am responsible for the organisation of Ahmedabad labour. I am of the opinion that it is a model for all-India to copy. Its basis is non-violence, pure and simple. It has never had a set-back in its career. It has gone on from strength to strength without fuss and without show. It has its hospital, its schools for the children of the mill hands, its classes for adults, its own printing press and Khadi depot and its own residential quarters..... Millowners and labour have governed their relations largely through voluntary arbitration. If I had my way, I would regulate all the labour organisations of India after the Ahmedabad model".<sup>1</sup>

There are a number of Trade Unions in every textile centre in India such as Bombay, Coimbatore, Kanpur, Madurai, Calcutta and so on. These Unions are affiliated to one or other of the Central Trade Union organisations such as the Indian National Trade Union Congress, Hind Mazdoor Sabha and All India Trade Union Congress.

### Textile Commissioner's Office

The Textile Commissioner's Office was established during the War to control and regulate the production and distribution of yarn and cloth. When planning and regulation

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1. Economic & Industrial Life & Relations Vol.III by M.K. Gandhi - pp. 88-89

became a permanent feature of Indian economy, the Textile Commissioner's Office became the means through which this was achieved as far as the textile industry was concerned. Regional offices of the Textile Commissioner are functioning in important textile centres. Today, the Textile Commissioner is responsible for the regulation of all branches of the textile industry. These include price control, distribution of cotton and other raw materials, textile machinery and accessories and spare parts, wool, silk and man-made fibres, regulation of imports and exports and so on. The office is also responsible for collection and publication of all statistics pertaining to the textile industry. The statistical information that they are able to collect and analyse and the close watch that the office keeps over the textile industry enables that office to advise Government on various measures of regulation, control and development. It should be the function of the Textile Commissioner's Office not only to keep an effective control over the textile industry but also watch its progress carefully and take remedial measures before the industry gets into difficulties.

There are a number of associated organisations attached to the Textile Commissioner's Office such as the All India Handloom Board, the Textiles Committee, Cotton Textiles Export Promotion Council etc., to look after some of the specific areas of activity.



Textile Research Associations

The textile industry was the first among the various industries in India to realise the importance of research in the progress and development of industry. Immediately after the Second World War, the Ahmedabad Textile Industry's Research Association was formed. The South India Textile Research Association and the Bombay Textile Research Association followed soon after. The objective of these organisations is to apply the knowledge of science to the problems of the textile industry so as to enable better textiles to be produced at lower cost and at the same time look after the welfare of those who are working in the textile industry. During the short period of their existence, these associations have been able to contribute significantly to an increase in productivity and an improvement in working conditions of their member mills. They are also contributing significantly to an understanding of some of the problems faced by the textile industry at present. The nature of their organisations is such that it enables them to be objective and at the same time be familiar with the industry's problems. Association of workers' representatives with the running of research organisations would bring about a better appreciation of research among the workers and quicker implementation of research results in industry.

CHAPTER IV

EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING

Level of Employment

A reference to Table 5 appendix I indicates that the number of workers in the cotton textile industry has remained more or less stationary during the past ten years. While there has been a slight increase among men workers, there has been a drop in the case of women workers. This has been so in spite of the fact that there has been a substantial increase in the number of spindles as well as the number of mills during this period. With the present position and future prospects of the cotton textile industry, it is doubtful if the employment potential can be expanded very greatly. In the first place there is need to increase productivity of the machines as well as the worker, since there is scope for improvement in both. Secondly, there does not seem to be any prospects of a big increase in the size of the industry, partly because of lack of finance and partly because of the level of consumption in the country. The utmost that can be expected is that the present level of employment should be maintained and at the same time a higher level of productivity should be achieved.



This situation in the cotton textile industry is similar to what is happening in all textile producing countries. In Japan, West Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States,

employment in the cotton textile industry has been shrinking while it has been increasing in other industries. However, the effect of such shrinkage has not been serious in those countries because of the greater potential for employment in other industries.

A reduction in the employment of women is due to a number of reasons. Traditionally women were employed only in some departments of the textile industry such as winding and reeling. During the past few years the proportion of cone-yarn to reeled yarn has been gradually increasing with the result that the number of women workers in reeling had tended to decrease. As far as composite mills are concerned, considerable amount of modernisation in winding has taken place resulting in a reduction in the number of women workers. Some of the factors that have mitigated against the employment of women workers are the need to provide separate canteens, rest-houses and creches where women are employed and the fact that they cannot be employed on multiple shifts involving in night work. Managements today want to make the maximum use of all their machine capacity by running them for the second and third shifts and the employment of women makes this extremely difficult. It should be noted that in the cotton textile industry

in other countries a majority of workers are women and they are permitted to work till about ten or eleven o'clock during night. An amendment to the Factories Act so as to enable women workers to work in the evenings and for shorter hours with a proportionate reduction in wages and dearness allowance would certainly increase the scope for employment for women.

### Methods of Recruitment

Before the Second World War, recruitment of workers was largely in the hands of maistries (First Line Supervisors) who had more or less unlimited freedom to hire and fire. Because of complaints about the misuse of the system, recruitment in most mills was transferred to the managerial staff. In most of the cases, workers who report at the mill gates are interviewed and selected by one of the officers. They are kept as temporary workers for a period of three to six months and then made permanent or included in the Badli list from which permanent workers are drawn. A few mills have introduced aptitude tests and medical examination as well as interviews for the selection of workers. Employment Exchanges do not as yet seem to play a major part in the supply of workers to textile mills.



### Badlis

In some textile centres such as Maharashtra, Gujarat and South India, a system of Badlis is in operation. Every mill keeps a separate register known as the Badli register in which the names of non-permanent workers are entered. The Badlis report to the mill gates every day and are employed in the place of permanent workers who are absent. Since the number of Badlis maintained is usually about the same as the average number of absentees, most of the Badlis manage to get work almost every day. They are entitled to many of the privileges of the permanent workers. When there is a vacancy among the permanent workers a Badli worker on the basis of seniority is invariably recruited for the job.

In view of the high level of absenteeism in the cotton textile industry and the need to maintain productivity and efficiency of machines, the system of Badlis has proved to be useful in ensuring that all available machines are kept running. It has also served as a training ground for new entrants before they are made permanent.

### Decasualisation Scheme

In the textile centres such as Bombay, Sholapur and Ahmedabad, a decasualisation scheme is in force. It is

operated voluntarily as agreed by the Millowners' Associations of Bombay and Ahmedabad.

The principal objects of the scheme are, i) to regulate recruitment of labour with a view to avoiding waste of manpower, ii) to increase efficiency and production by reducing labour turnover, iii) to reduce the waiting period of unemployed textile workers, iv) to eliminate bribery, corruption and favouritism in the recruitment of textile workers and v) to encourage the systematic training of textile workers with a view to ensuring steady supply of efficient workers.

The administrative control of the scheme is with the Employment Exchange organisation. A local advisory committee comprising of equal number of representatives of the employers and employees assists the working of the scheme. The functions of the advisory committee are to advise on all matters connected with the efficient introduction and administration of the scheme.

#### Labour turnover and absenteeism

The labour turnover in the cotton textile industry varies considerably from mill to mill and from centre to centre. Assuming an average working life of 30 years for each worker, the turnover should be about 3% for the whole industry. However, this depends on a number of factors such as age on recruitment, the average age of the workers in a



factory and so on. Another factor that seems to play a part in turnover is the cash benefit that a worker receives from provident fund and gratuity after about 15 or 20 years of service. Some workers seem to prefer to retire prematurely and collect the provident fund and gratuity and return to their villages or hope for a job in some other factory. Such early retirement has also enabled some mills to introduce rationalisation and modernisation schemes without much difficulty. In some centres these factors have had the effect of increasing the turnover to as high as 8 to 10%.

Table VI appendix I gives the figures of absenteeism in the cotton textile industry for the various centres in India for the years 1956 to 1966. Unfortunately, the figures for some years are missing for some centres. We also understand that these figures are based on a very small sample. But even so, one cannot help observing a tendency towards increased absenteeism over the past decade in almost every textile centre. One of the common reasons attributed to this is the fact that during this period Employees State Insurance Scheme has been introduced and this had the effect of increasing absenteeism. Another factor that emerges from this table is the variation in absenteeism that exists between one centre and another, say for example Ahmedabad and Sholapur. Absenteeism in Sholapur seems to be nearly twice that of Ahmedabad.

A study undertaken by SITRA\* on absenteeism in Coimbatore mills reveals the following to be the major factors for absenteeism.

1. Absenteeism was found to be partly person-centred; 7.26% of the workers contributed to about one fourth of the total absenteeism in the industry.
2. Money on hand was found to affect absenteeism. Absenteeism was found to be markedly higher for three days succeeding wage distribution (one third increase over normal rates) and for six days following bonus distribution (the increase being 55% over normal rates).
3. Absenteeism rate was found to be high on the day just succeeding a weekly holiday (31% increase over normal rates).
4. Night shift - in case of urban mills absenteeism rate was found to be 30% higher in night shift compared to day shift. On the other hand, in case of rural mills it was found to be less by 23%.
5. With the exception of reeling department absenteeism was found to be positively related to the size of the work group - more the number of workers in the department, higher was the rate of absenteeism.
6. Greater the number of earning members in the family, higher was the rate of absenteeism of the worker.
7. Because of the persistence of the 'holiday mood' workers who go away on a weekly holiday do not always return to work on the first day after the holiday is over.

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\*Source: 'A Study of Absenteeism in Textile Mills' - SITRA Research Reports Vol.II No.5 July 1957.  
'Identification of some traits in the 'Absent-prone' workers' - SITRA Research Reports Vol.III No.1 May 1958.



A nation-wide study of absenteeism would be of great help in unearthing its causes as well as in suggesting suitable remedies for minimising it.

### Promotion Practices & Training

The workers are generally recruited at the lowest levels viz., the unskilled worker and as and when vacancies arise they are promoted to semi-skilled and later to skilled occupations. Thus, the worker in the spinning department may start by sweeping the floor, then become a doffer, then a piecer and then an oiler and a jobber. The speed with which a worker gets promoted depends on the number of resignations or retirements at higher levels. In the case of a mill which is expanding or running more shifts promotions are more rapid since more semi-skilled and skilled workers are necessary to run new machines. But when there is no expansion it may be ten years before a doffer gets promoted as a piecer.

Apart from exceptions, the highest position to which a worker can rise is that of a head-jobber. Even this post is fast disappearing. This limitation has become necessary because of two factors. One is the lack of education among workers. Many of them cannot read and write and even those who can, have only a smattering of the local language.

It is therefore impossible for them to acquire the technical knowledge necessary to rise to higher positions, however skilled they may be otherwise. The second factor is the lack of training facilities which alone will enable a worker to aspire for higher positions. In textile centres, there are no technical schools with evening classes which workers can attend and acquire technical knowledge necessary for promotion to the supervisory levels. Managements, workers and government should provide such training facilities as a joint responsibility.

Even to the new entrant, there is no provision in a majority of the mills for any formulised training and induction. The new worker is more or less left to his own devices in picking up his job from other workers in the department. As a result, it takes him longer to learn his job and secondly he picks up some of the inefficient methods and operations which are inadvisable. Provision of proper training facilities within the mill before the worker is placed in a job will help to improve productivity in mills.

At present, all promotions at the worker level are on the basis of seniority within the departments. Though



efficiency is generally supposed to be taken into account, because of lack of objective standards of evaluation, it is rarely considered. Provision of good training facilities both inside the mills and outside, will enable improved standards of workmanship, promotions on more rational basis and promotions to higher levels to those workers who have ability and aspiration. Some managements have provided such training facilities to their workers with the result that productivity in such organisations is high.

Preparation and publication of training manuals, audio-visual aids and other training materials would be greatly helpful in enabling managements to introduce training schemes for their workers.

CHAPTER V

WAGES, INCENTIVES & PRODUCTIVITY

Evolution of Basic Wages & Dearness Allowance

The existing wage structure in the cotton textile industry has been evolved after the Second World War. Prior to 1940, wages were fixed by employers, in some cases, after negotiation with trade unions. In a few instances, Courts of Enquiry were appointed (after the Congress Governments took office in the various States) which were responsible for recommending wages for various grades of operatives. After 1940, the profits of the industry increased substantially and the cost of living also rose very steeply. There was a demand for increased wages and a dearness allowance was introduced by the employers. Ahmedabad was the first centre in India where dearness allowance was linked to cost of living index in 1939. However, there was considerable variation both in wages and in dearness allowance between different textile centres.

With the coming of democratic governments into power in the various States in 1946, and the dissatisfaction of labour with the then existing wages rates, Tribunals were appointed to enquire into wages and working conditions and make suitable recommendations. These Tribunals took into account such factors as minimum dietary requirement, the size



of the family, the conditions of work etc., in arriving at the quantum of basic wages, as they ought to have been in 1939. The year 1939 was taken as the base year because it was at a time when prices were stable before they began to rise as a result of the War. The Tribunals then fixed the dearness allowance on the basis of the cost of living index in that centre based on the 1939 figures. Thus, in Bombay region the Industrial Court fixed the basic wage for a month of 26 days at Rs.30/- in 1947 and a Tribunal in Madras State fixed Rs.26/- in the same year. In Ahmedabad an award was given fixing the basic wages at Rs.28/- in 1948.

There was however, considerable variation in dearness allowance between the various States because of variation in the cost of living index as well as in the degree of neutralisation of the increased cost.

With the constitution of the first Wage Board in the year 1957, an attempt was made to fix emoluments for textile workers on a national scale and to bring down the disparities between one region and another. According to the report made in 1959, the first Wage Board recommended a flat increase of Rs.8/- for 'A' category mills and Rs.6/- for 'B' category mills from 1st January 1960 and a further flat increase of Rs.2/- from 1st January 1962 respectively over the then existing basic wages. The dearness allowance was also increased in certain regions to ensure greater neutralisation of the cost of living. The Second Wage Board has been

constituted at the end of the year 1964 and it has not yet concluded its deliberations.

However, the total wages paid in centres other than Bombay, Gujarat and Madras States are still low. The following table gives the wages and dearness allowance paid in the different centres for the years 1961 to 1966.

D.A. paid to Textile Labour in important centres

(For a standard month of 26 working days)

Period	Bombay	Ahmedabad	Sholapur	Baroda	Indore
Minimum	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
Basic Wages	40.00	38.00	34.00	36.00	38.00
Monthly average					
1961	91.79	86.95	66.59	78.25	63.65
1962	93.40	88.52	73.02	78.99	65.67
1963	96.08	85.15	72.82	76.63	66.98
1964	114.79	103.44	92.23	92.30	76.45
1965	127.08	125.40	96.33	113.31	88.78
1966	148.62	138.80	113.82	124.92	101.35

Period	Nagpur	Madras	Kanpur	West Bengal
Minimum	32.00	40.00	38.00	36.17
Basic Wages				
Monthly average				
1961	64.01	75.85	59.94	35.79
1962	64.77	79.09	65.43	44.01
1963	67.36	83.05	66.69	50.53
1964	80.72	96.68	86.36	55.38
1965	101.65	115.14	101.92	60.81
1966	102.72	125.30	106.54	70.03

Source: Indian Cotton Textile Industry 1966 - Annual Statistical Bulletin issued by the Southern India Mill-owners' Association, Coimbatore.



### Incentive Wages

The question of incentive wages has always presented some difficulty in the textile industry mainly because the machines are more or less automatic and the workers' contribution is limited to replenishing the machines and mending breakages etc. Therefore, the emphasis has been on allocating the number of machines per worker rather than on improving the production of the machines through the worker. Because of this basic problem in the textile industry, it has its own limitations and it does not lend itself readily to incentive wage payment, as for example in the engineering occupations where production depends to a very large extent on the efforts and efficiency of the worker. Nevertheless, in those departments where it is easy to relate the effort of the worker to production, piece rates have already been introduced. Nearly 60% of the workers are at present on piece rates. Further, it so happens, that sometimes the worker is forced to be idle because of the balancing of machines or some other cause. Such enforced idleness is also responsible for piece rates not being successful.

Another difficulty in introducing incentive wages successfully in the cotton textile industry has been the disproportionately large dearness allowance which cannot be linked to any incentive scheme and is paid on a flat rate.

The basic wages form only a minor portion of the total wage and any incentive based on the basic wage alone has not sufficiently attracted the worker to make him exert himself on that account.

In some textile centres, in some of the departments such as spinning and weaving, a system of paying production bonus was in vogue. The standard production taking into account the various factors such as speed of the machines, the time required for cleaning, breakages etc., was calculated and fixed. If the worker gave more than the standard production, he got a bonus which was usually in proportion to the increased production he was able to achieve. This practice however is on the decline.

### Annual Bonus

Before the War, bonus was considered an ex-gratia payment voluntarily made by the employer at his discretion in order to reward workers for good work. During the last twenty years, however, the concept of bonus has changed considerably and today, it is considered a part of workers' wages and is a means of profit sharing. Since 1950, bonus in the textile industry was paid on the basis of the Labour Appellate Tribunal formula, which made provision for rehabilitation and modernisation and allotted a share of the



remaining profits as bonus. In Ahmedabad and Bombay, five year pacts were also entered into between managements and trade unions in order to avoid industrial unrest and uncertainties associated with bonus. In the year 1961, a Bonus Commission was appointed to study the problem of bonus and make suitable recommendations. It was hoped that the Bonus Commission's recommendations would simplify the procedure for arriving at the quantum of bonus. The ordinance issued by the Government of India on the basis of the Bonus Commission's recommendations and the consequent Act of Parliament have come into being. The effect of this can only be known after some time.

### Working Conditions & Productivity

In the cotton textile industry there is a very close and intimate relationship between working conditions and productivity. Working conditions here refer not only to the environment in which the worker has to operate but also to the conditions in which cotton is processed. Most textile machines do their work more or less automatically and the workers' job is confined to replenishing the machines with material and doffing machines periodically. He is also responsible for repairing any breakages in the material that may occur. Therefore, the productivity of the worker depends

on a number of factors. For example, the larger the size of the packages the less frequently he has to replace them and consequently he can attend to more machine units. Similarly, the better the quality of the cotton in relation to the count of yarns produced, the less the number of breakages and therefore the more the number of machine units that he can attend. Further, cotton is a hygroscopic material which absorbs moisture in a humid atmosphere and releases moisture in a dry atmosphere. Presence of moisture affects the processing of cotton and the maintenance of appropriate humidities in the different departments would also help to improve workers' productivity. Productivity also depends upon such factors as good lay-out of machines, mechanical transport for handling material and so on. Other factors such as machine speeds and machine maintenance will also affect the productivity of the worker.

In recent years there has been considerable discussion of machine allocation to workers in various departments. In the past, this was done on an adhoc basis for all mills in a particular centre by agreement or by tradition. This was not fair either to the workers or to the managements because in those mills where the working conditions were good the workers were under-loaded while in those mills where the working conditions were not good the workers might be over-loaded. In recent years, however, there has been a change



and both managements as well as trade unions have shown a willingness to determine work allocation on the basis of working conditions existing in individual mills. Working conditions are also responsible for the quality of the products. The inculcation of quality consciousness in the entire industry would improve working conditions as well as productivity.

### Productivity

When compared with other textile producing countries, the productivity of the Indian cotton textile industry is very low. The number of workers employed for 1000 spindles upto spindle point varies from about 4 to 10 in India while in Japan it varies from about 1.5 to 4.5. Not only is the basic productivity low but the rate of increase in productivity in other countries is much faster than in India. Comparing ourselves with Japan, it is found that productivity in Japanese textile industry increased by 32.5% during the years 1960/64 i.e., an average increase of 6.5% per annum. During the same period, among the member mills of the South India Textile Research Association (for which accurate and continuous figures are available), the increase in productivity has been of the order of 5% per annum.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, it is obvious that instead of bridging

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1. A Visit to Japan's Cotton Textile Industry -  
report of the Indian Cotton Mills' Federation's  
Delegation - 1965

the gap in productivity between India and other countries, the gap is actually widening.

The causes of low productivity in India can be summed up as follows:

The cotton textile industry has always been considered a labour intensive industry and a means of employing large number of people. While this was so many years ago, technological developments in the past decade have made it a capital intensive industry. This change, however, has not yet taken place in India. The machinery and equipment used in India are still of the conventional type and their speeds and productions are 30 to 40% lower than in other textile producing countries. The standards of maintenance and working conditions in some of the mills are such that a large increase in productivity would be difficult without an improvement in these areas. Frequent changes in the pattern of production brought about as a result of controls and excise rates also contribute to a lowering of efficiency. The difficulty of getting cotton in sufficient quantities has been another factor that has affected productivity in recent years. In some of the older mills, the buildings as well as the lay-out of machines are such that easy movement of material is not possible and the mechanical transport cannot be used for that purpose. Further, while schemes of



rationalisation have been introduced successfully in some mills, it has not been possible in others in spite of good working conditions because of opposition from certain sections of labour and the fear of unemployment.

But if there is to be a rapid increase in productivity, a significant improvement in all these areas is essential.

CHAPTER VI

SOCIAL SECURITY AND WELFARE

Legislation on Security and Welfare

The cotton textile industry in India is one of the oldest as well as well organised industries and consequently all the beneficial labour legislation enacted by the Central and State Governments have been made applicable to the workers employed therein. Textiles was one of the six industries which was brought within the purview of the Employees Provident Fund Act in the year 1952 when the statute was enacted. Subsequently, with effect from 1963, the rate of contribution which was  $6\frac{1}{4}\%$  of the basic wages and dearness allowance was increased to 8%.

In several regions of the country, a gratuity scheme has been introduced for textile workers. Some regions, like Bengal, Kerala, Rajasthan etc., do not have any Gratuity scheme. The Bombay, Ahmedabad and Madras regions had the Gratuity scheme implemented even in the 1950s. Gratuity is paid on the basic wages earned by an employee, the actual quantum depending on the length of service. For service over 15 years, a month's basic wage is paid for each year of service. However, the rate of gratuity is not uniform



second  
and the Textile Wage Board has been asked to consider the introduction of a Gratuity Scheme on an all-India basis. Consequent on the introduction of Gratuity Schemes, the age of retirement has been fixed either by mutual agreement or by an amendment to the standing orders. It is generally found to range between 58 and 62.

The Employees State Insurance Act has been extended in India not on the basis of industries, but on the basis of regions where there was a concentration of industrial workers and corresponding facilities were available with the State Government. The Government of India has been progressively extending the provisions of the Employees State Insurance scheme to all the regions and to-day, a major portion of the country is having the benefits of the Employees State Insurance scheme. Almost all textile centres are covered. When the scheme was introduced, it was envisaged that big hospitals with adequate facilities would be built in all the regions where the Employees State Insurance scheme has been extended. Due to a variety of reasons this has not come to pass, though efforts are being made at government level for the construction of hospitals in several regions in the country. A few up-to-date hospitals have already come into being. The trade unions are of the view that adequate medical facilities have not been made available to the workers in places where the scheme has been extended. That there is paucity of

Doctors in the country is well known. Yet another handicap is that the administrative side of the Employees State Insurance scheme is looked after by the ESI Corporation set up by the Government of India, while the medical side is under the supervision and control of the States. This dual authority is to some extent responsible for the unsatisfactory progress noted in the implementation of the ESI scheme. Elimination of this dual system and decentralisation of authority, it is felt, would contribute to a more efficient functioning of the scheme.

On the other hand the employers have been complaining that the ESI has become nothing but a leave granting machinery and that it is more abused than used by the workers. They also complain that the absenteeism has increased with the advent of the ESI. A recent Committee which went into the question connected with the working of the ESI scheme, did not find any material for the charge that absenteeism has increased due to ESI scheme. Nevertheless, a little amount of malingering may be there, but this evil can be prevented only by an enlightened approach by the parties themselves.

There is little doubt that as and when the ESI scheme is implemented in the manner contemplated by the ESI Act, the worker will have satisfactory and adequate medical facilities for himself and his family. In several centres



in the country the medical benefits under the ESI scheme have already been extended to the families of workers and the governments concerned are quite anxious to proceed apace with the extension of such facilities to the families of workers. The limitations are mainly due to the non-availability of Doctors in large numbers.

### Non-Statutory benefits

Textile industry can claim the credit for having the maximum number of co-operative stores for the benefit of their workmen. The Government of India has been attaching great importance to the starting of co-operative stores/fair price shops in industrial establishments employing more than 300 persons. The question has been mooted at various Tripartite Conferences and the Government have tried all their powers of persuasion to induce industrial establishments to have co-operative stores for the benefit of the workmen. While the All-India picture is rather bleak, the textile industry in some parts of the country shows up to advantage in this matter. It is more pronounced in Southern India where a very large percentage of establishments employing over 300 workers have co-operative stores which have taken roots and are functioning satisfactorily. Cooperative credit societies have also played a good part in helping workers in some areas.

In respect of housing however, the picture is not very rosy. Several incentives like subsidy, loan etc., were offered by the Government of India to induce the employers to construct housing accommodation for their workers. Available evidence indicates that with notable exceptions, the employers have not taken advantage of these facilities to provide housing for their workers. A small number of houses have been built by housing units set up by the State governments as well as by workers' co-operative societies. A number of factors such as the availability of suitable sites, finance, etc., have been responsible for the slow progress in this direction. While this is the general picture, there are some individual mills who have provided housing for a good portion of their employees.

#### National and Festival Holidays

The legislation in respect of this item has been resorted to at State level and consequently there is no uniformity in the matter. The Southern States generally provide for seven or eight paid festival holidays which includes the Independence Day, the Republic Day and the Gandhi Jayanthi Day (holiday on May 1st being optional at the instance of the employees). The Northern States are reported to give four to six paid holidays on this account. The need for



uniformity on this score is being increasingly demanded and felt.

### Accidents

The textile industry is comparatively a safe industry and is free from a large incidence of major accidents. However, several minor accidents are reported to the Factory Inspectorate every year. The Government of India have been laying considerable emphasis on the question of safety in the industries in the past few years and a sustained programme is being carried on to reduce the accidents in industries and to improve the safety factor. The position can be improved only by co-operation between the parties and not through official action. There are however indications that the position is improving alround, especially in the textile industry.

While there are many mills which have good and adequate facilities for canteens, rest rooms, urinals etc. there are other mills where standards of these facilities leave much to be desired.

CHAPTER VII

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Growth of Trade Unions

Since the cotton textile industry is one of the oldest in India, Trade Unionism has made substantial progress in this industry. Further, the cotton textile industry is concentrated in certain specific centres such as Bombay, Ahmedabad, Kanpur, Coimbatore etc. Such concentration has also been helpful in the formation of strong unions. However, the Unions are not factory-wise, that is one union for each mill, but registered unions having on their rolls, workers from many textile mills with representation for the workers of individual mills on the committee of the union. This form of union organisation has also been instrumental in bringing about certain uniform conditions of work, wages, etc., in a particular region.

But the existence of multiple unions has been a major factor in the industrial relations in the cotton textile industry. While the Indian National Trade Union Congress has more or less complete sway in Ahmedabad, in the other centres there are a number of unions oriented towards various political parties.



An attempt has been made for recognition of one union in the cotton textile industry in the States, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh under the Industrial Relations Acts. Recognition of one union for one industry in these States has enabled collective bargaining to take place in a proper atmosphere and has contributed considerably to the maintenance of industrial peace. While everybody is agreed that multiple unions are not desirable either from the point of view of the workers or the managements or the nation, nevertheless the move to establish a single union for an industry or for an industrial unit has so far met with little success in those areas where such an Act does not exist.

But in spite of these factors, trade unionism in the textile industry has made good progress and has been able to safeguard the legitimate interests of the workers. It has also shown a maturity in that, a number of agreements such as bonus pacts, rationalisation agreements etc., between managements and unions have been arrived at through direct negotiations to the mutual benefit of both parties.

The white collar workers in the cotton textile industry have also formed unions of their own in some textile centres.

## Methods of Settlement of Disputes

Minor disputes in the textile industry involving a single worker or small group of workers in a particular department are usually discussed between the workers concerned and the departmental officers. Occasionally a representative of the union who happens to be a worker in that mill may discuss the matter on behalf of his colleagues. During such discussion, the dispute is not reduced to writing and if the dispute is solved then it goes un-recorded. If however, the dispute is not solved then the registered union to which the workers belong takes up the matter with the management through a letter, and the dispute then becomes legal. When such dispute is not settled even after correspondence and negotiations, it may be referred to the conciliation officer who will bring the parties together and effect a settlement. Only rarely do minor disputes go beyond this point.

Major disputes involving a large number of workers are usually taken up by the unions with the management. If no solution is arrived at, it may go to the conciliation officer and may even be taken up before an Industrial Tribunal under the Industrial Disputes Act or the corresponding act in some States.



Industry-wide disputes involving the entire industry in a particular region, such as wages, bonus workloads and working conditions etc., are usually discussed between the Millowners' Association of that region and the Unions. By virtue of the fact that in most regions there are a number of unions such negotiations often tend to be prolonged and may occasionally result in minor stoppages of work. Here again, unresolved disputes will go before an Industrial Tribunal for settlement. Further, in view of the rather long delay involved in referring the matter to an Industrial Tribunal and possible appeals against the Tribunal's decision, there has been a welcome tendency in recent years for such disputes to be settled through mutual negotiations or private arbitration.

### Code of Discipline

The Code of Discipline formulated by the Tripartite Labour Conference in the year 1958 has been accepted by the managements and trade unions in the cotton textile industry. According to an estimate of the Government of India, the Code of Discipline has helped in the preservation of industrial peace to a considerable extent and there has been a reduction in the number of man-days lost due to strikes, lock-outs etc. However, in view of the fluid and occasionally

unpredictable nature of industrial relations, an objective evaluation of its role is difficult. Further, the recession in the cotton textile industry, coupled with the problem of closed mills has also made the situation more difficult. The uncertainties associated with loss making mills, the unemployment of workers in the closed mills have both created a situation which is not conducive to good industrial relations and to the proper observance of the Code of Discipline. Nevertheless, it can be stated that the observance of the Code of Discipline by all parties in the spirit in which it has been framed would go a long way towards eliminating strikes and disputes in the industry.

Works Committees, Joint Committees etc.

Works Committees are functioning in most of the cotton textile mills in the country. But the effectiveness with which they function depends to a very large extent on the atmosphere of industrial relations that prevails in the individual unit and in that locality. Where good industrial relations exist the committees are superfluous and where the relations are bad, the committees do not function at all.

Labour participation in managements has not been tried in many textile mills. Therefore it is rather difficult to comment on the manner in which they have been



functioning. However, it can generally be stated where good industrial relations exist such committees are a useful means of communication, discussion and decision-making. Where the basis of good industrial relations is absent, these committees do not function effectively or usefully.

### Industrial Tribunals & Courts

There has been a school of thought which has advocated direct negotiations between management and labour and has deprecated the existence of Tribunals and Industrial Courts. It is their contention that the existence of these Tribunals has brought about a highly legalistic mentality both among trade unions and among employers and consequently no genuine discussions and agreements are possible. It is also their contention that where there are multiple unions a single union does not want to take the responsibility of signing an agreement and then expose itself to a charge by other unions of not having safeguarded the rights of the workers. Therefore, every dispute goes to an industrial tribunal and becomes legal issue rather than a domestic quarrel.

The best form of industrial relations is of course when two parties can get together, discuss the problems and come to an agreement without external interference. These

discussions are also highly valuable for their educational aspects since they enable the two parties to understand each other's point of view and bring about a process of mutual adjustment. However, in the present industrial and sociological circumstances existing in India, it is not always possible to arrive at such agreements and therefore it is necessary that there should be some provision and some machinery which can step in and settle a dispute in an objective manner. Therefore Industrial Tribunals and Courts have become necessary and have contributed towards the maintenance of industrial peace. However, there have been occasions when the inordinate delay in the settlement of a dispute has resulted in frustration and indifference on the part of the parties to the dispute. A speeding up of the entire procedure so that disputes can be settled within a reasonably short time would go a long way towards eliminating such dissatisfaction.

### Multiple Shifts

There is a practice in some mill of running multiple and inter-locking shifts in order to run the machinery continuously. Such shifts involve<sup>a</sup>/long spread-over of work for the workers. The worker do not work on the same machines every day and supervision and maintenance are difficult. Hence, such a practice should be discouraged.



CHAPTER VIII

PROBLEMS OF THE COTTON TEXTILE INDUSTRY

The cotton textile industry is a major industry in the country supplying one of the basic requirements of the people. In spite of the rapid growth of other industries, the cotton textile industry still continues to be one of the important industries in the country from the point of view of the capital employed, turnover and the number of people employed. However, this industry is today facing a number of serious problems. These problems have been caused by many factors which have been in existence in our economy for some years. But during the last two years, the effect of these factors have been intensified because of the general economic situation in the country. Each one of these problems is important in itself, but the cumulative effect of all of them has been most unfortunate. This situation has resulted in unemployment for workers in the cotton textile industry. It has also affected job security and employment potential from a long term point of view. In view of this situation, these problems are discussed briefly in this chapter.

## Recession

Since 1965 there has been a slump in the cotton textile industry. During the last two and half years, the spindle activity has come down very considerably (from 82.8% to 73.1%).<sup>1</sup> Consequently, production has not increased in spite of an increase in spindleage to the extent of 10%.<sup>1</sup> The profitability of the mills has been drastically reduced with many of the mills making losses and a few of them forced to close down. The efforts of the various state governments and the centre to re-open and run these mills have not been very successful. The Central Government are contemplating the establishment of a corporation to take over and run the closed mills or mills which are on the verge of closure. The details of the scheme however, are not available.

One of the major causes of the recession seems to be the lowering of the purchasing power of the average man consequent on the steep increase in food prices. Textiles is a postponable item of purchase and in a slump, the textile industry is the first to be affected in a marginal economy such as ours.

On the other hand, while the purchasing power of the people has gone down, the cost of production of textiles has increased. Every item that goes into the cost of

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1. Indian Textile Bulletin issued by the Textile Commissioner, Government of India, Ministry of Commerce - April 1967



manufacture has gone up. Cotton, stores, electricity have all risen steeply. Because of the linking of dearness allowance to the cost of living index, the wage cost has increased very considerably during the last two and half years. All these factors have resulted in a big increase in the overall cost of production and consequently the price of cotton textiles to the consumer.

The third factor that has been responsible for the recession in the cotton textile industry is the pattern of consumption. The present pattern of production is not in tune with the pattern of consumption that has developed in the country. Over the past few years, there has been an increasing demand for cosmopolitan as distinct from traditional garments, for better finished cloth or cloth from blended or man-made fibres. This can be easily seen from the fact that mills having good finishing equipment have not been affected by the recession to any considerable extent while mills which produce grey cloth or supply yarn to handlooms and powerlooms are the worst hit. The production of a substantial portion of the industry viz., the handloom sector is not catering to the present demand because the handloom industry has no finishing plant and does not use man-made fibres to any extent. If this trend continues, the spinning mills which supply yarn to the handlooms would be affected even more in the future than they are today.

Therefore the increase in the cost of production, the lowering of purchasing power and the present pattern of production have all been responsible for the recession. Factors such as the credit squeeze have also contributed to this difficult situation.

### Mismanagement

While there are many mills in the country which are very efficiently managed, there are some units in which the standards of management leave much to be desired. Investigations done by various agencies such as the Textile Commissioner's organisation have revealed inefficient management in some sections of the industry. While this inefficiency has been due in some cases to a lack of understanding of the problems of management in a competitive and developing economy, in a few other cases it has been due to deliberate mismanagement. If the industry is to be placed on a sound and self-reliant basis, the standards of management in inefficient units must be improved considerably.

### Closed Mills

A combination of a slump in the industry during the past two years and inefficient management has resulted in a number of mills being closed. In the past, it has been



the policy of the government to appoint authorised controllers to run these mills. It is now proposed to set up a corporation to take over and run these closed mills. Many of these mills have been neglected for a long time and have been incurring losses and in many cases their liabilities are more than their assets. Therefore, in reopening closed mills the following criteria should be applied.

1. Mills in which the machinery, buildings etc., are old and out-dated and are impossible of economic running even after modernisation, should be scrapped. If necessary, new mills may be set up in their place in order to provide employment to the workers.
2. Mills which are capable of being modernised should be modernised immediately so that they may start working successfully as early as possible.
3. Losing a job is a major disaster to a worker and therefore, a suitable scheme at national level should be evolved in order to avoid the misery of unemployment for workers of the mills to be scrapped.

### Cotton Shortage

When India became Independent in 1947, approximately 30% of the cotton growing area went to Pakistan while almost all the textile mills were in India. Since then, there has been a chronic cotton shortage. While cotton production has increased both in acreage as well as in yield per acre, the increase has not been commensurate with the country's requirements.

This cotton shortage has been made up through imports. A reference to Table III appendix I gives an idea of the consumption of Indian and foreign cotton as well as the staple fibre during the past sixteen years. From this table, it will be noticed that imports of foreign cotton during the past fifteen years has varied between 5,00,000 and one million bales depending mainly upon local crop prospects. A certain portion of this viz., long staple cotton from Egypt and other countries would necessarily have to be imported because, cottons with such long staple length are not grown in India at present to any extent. During the last two years however, a combination of poor monsoons and an acute foreign exchange crisis have resulted in a curtailment of imports and consequently a shortage of cotton. This has had the effect of pushing cotton prices beyond ceilings (removed from 1-9-1967) fixed by the government for various varieties and consequently increasing the prices of textiles. The situation with regard to cotton has been so serious that in December 1966 the Government of India by an ordinance, ordered the mills to close down compulsorily for one day every week in order to conserve cotton stocks. The ordinance has been lifted as from September 1967, because of better crop prospects during the coming season.



While the use of viscose staple fibre has been increasing for the past ten years, its use as a substitute for cotton is limited. The quantity of polyester fibre available in India is still very small. Further, its cost is very high and it cannot be used except for very high qualities of textiles.

Therefore, if the cotton textile industry is to be placed on a firm and stable footing it should be supplied with adequate quantities of cotton of various qualities, at prices which are on a par with world prices. Since cotton cost comes to about 45% of the total cost of a fabric, any increase in cotton prices would naturally affect the price of cloth. Such cotton supplies are essential to ensure reasonable prices for the internal consumer, for maintenance of our exports and for improving the employment potential and job security for the workers.

#### Rehabilitation and Modernisation

It has already been mentioned in Chapter I that the cotton textile industry is in great need of rehabilitation and modernisation. This has been pointed out by a number of Committees during the past two decades. But many factors have resulted in keeping the industry technologically backward and inefficient.

During the past twenty years, greater emphasis has been placed on expansion rather than on modernisation. Thus, we find that the number of spindles has increased from 10.07 million in 1948 to 16.12 million in 1966 (Table II). The cotton textile industry is one of the oldest in India and the profits from this industry have been helpful in starting many other industries in the private sector. Consequently, no adequate finance has been available in the cotton textile industry itself for modernisation. Further, the difficulties of getting imported machinery has also been an inhibiting factor as far as the modernisation is concerned. The existence of a sellers' market in the post-war years had lulled some managements into a false sense of security about the future. The difficulty of retrenching workers consequent to modernisation in some places where industrial relations have not been good has also been an inhibiting factor. Thus, while many managements have kept pace with modern trends in machinery and equipment and have consistently ploughed back their profits, others have failed to do so.

As a result of all these factors, the cotton textile industry today is in great need of modernisation. It is also in great need of funds for modernisation. In many of the mills, as a result of the recession and the consequent loss, their reserves and working capital have been wiped out and their borrowing capacity has been considerably impaired.



Consequently, unless finance from external sources such as banks and other financial institutions are forthcoming, it will not be possible to undertake such modernisation.

There is a feeling in India today that because the textile industry is an old established industry, it should not need any financial assistance. This is not so. Even in advanced countries considerable amounts have been invested by financial institutions in the modernisation of the textile industry. Thus, we find the total investment in the textile industry <sup>1</sup> for a five year period i.e., 1959-63 is Rs,20,000 millions in U.S.A., Rs.8,200 millions in Japan, Rs.4,220 millions in France and Rs.5,600 millions in U.K. (only for four years from 1959-62). In West Germany the total investment for the period 1961-65 is Rs.9,000 <sup>2</sup> millions. The cotton textile industry pays about Rs.125 crores by way of excise duty. Therefore the Government has a responsibility to take the initiative in modernisation.

Recent developments in cotton textile technology have resulted in the design of high speed machines which give considerably more production than conventional machines. Spindle speeds in India today are about 10,000 rpm while in almost all the advanced countries it is about 14,000 rpm without an increase in the incidence of end breaks. What is true of spinning is also true to a large extent as far as weaving is concerned. Therefore, in the near future there should

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1. Modern Cotton Industry OCDE 1965

2. A Visit to the Federal Republic of Germany & Switzerland - 1966

be greater concentration on modernisation of the cotton textile industry than on expansion. Such modernisation would result in a strong, self-reliant industry producing the needs of the nation at reasonable prices. Modernisation would also mean that the increase in production would be of better quality and the investment would be more economical than the starting of new mills. In view of the trends in public taste, better finishing of cloth should also be encouraged. Modernisation, therefore should be given a very high priority and special financial arrangements made for that purpose.

Regional committees of experts should also be set up to advise individual mills on the problems of modernisation.

### Machineries, Stores & Accessories

In order to encourage the indigenous production of textile machinery, stores and other accessories and in order to save foreign exchange, import of these items have been progressively banned in India. This is a good thing from the point of view of developing the national economy. However, it has been the experience of mills that indigenously manufactured items do not always come up to imported items in terms of quality. From the point of view of



productivity, quality and the price of textiles, it is essential that the supply of machinery, stores and accessories should be of high quality. Methods of quality control and standardisation should be introduced and implemented in these auxillary industries in order to ensure such quality. Research should also be undertaken in these areas in order to devise the latest designs and specifications in comparison with what is produced in other countries.

### Operation of Controls

In order to prevent excessive increase in the price of textiles, price controls have been in existence on certain varieties of cloth generally consumed by the common man. While this is necessary in the larger interests of the country, it has nevertheless been instrumental in some of the difficulties faced by the mills. While cloth prices have been controlled, it has been impossible for mills to obtain cotton at the ceiling rates fixed by the government because of shortages. This has resulted in losses to those mills who are producing a higher percentage of controlled varieties while those who have been producing a very small percentage of controlled varieties have not been similarly affected.

Similarly, frequent changes in the quantum of excise duties as well as the ranges of cloth over which they

are applicable have had the effect of changes in the production pattern which has not been desirable either from the point of view of the consumer or from the point of view of the worker.



CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSIONS.

1. The number of workers in the cotton textile industry has remained more or less stationary during the past ten years. While there has been a slight increase among men workers, there has been a drop in the case of women workers.
2. With the present position and future prospects of the cotton textile industry, it is doubtful if the employment potential can be expanded very greatly.
3. The utmost that can be expected is that the present level of employment should be maintained and at the same time a higher level of productivity should be achieved.
4. An amendment to the Factories Act so as to enable women workers to work in the evenings and for shorter hours with a proportionate reduction in wages and dearness allowance would certainly increase the scope of employment for women.
5. In view of the high level of absenteeism in the cotton textile industry and the need to maintain productivity and efficiency of machines, the system of Badlis has proved to be useful in ensuring that all available machines are kept running. It has also served as a training ground for new entrants before they are made permanent.

6. A nation-wide study of absenteeism would be of great help in unearthing its causes as well as in suggesting suitable remedies for minimising it.

7. In textile centres, there are no technical schools with evening classes which workers can attend and acquire technical knowledge necessary for promotion to the supervisory levels. Managements, workers and government should provide such training facilities as a joint responsibility.

8. Provision of proper training facilities within the mill before the worker is placed in a job will help to improve productivity in mills.

9. With the coming of democratic governments into power in the various States in 1946, and the dissatisfaction of labour with the then existing wages rates, Tribunals were appointed to enquire into wages and working conditions and make suitable recommendations.

10. There was however, considerable variation in dearness allowance between the various States because of variation in the cost of living index as well as in the degree of neutralisation of the increased cost.

11. The Second Wage Board has been constituted at the end of the year 1964 and it has not yet concluded its deliberations.

12. Nearly 60% of the workers are at present on piece rates.



13. The ordinance issued by the Government of India on the basis of the Bonus Commission's recommendations and the consequent Act of Parliament have come into being. The effect of this can only be known after some time.

14. In the cotton textile industry there is a very close and intimate relationship between working conditions and productivity. Working conditions here refer not only to the environment in which the worker has to operate but also to the conditions in which cotton is processed.

15. In the past, this was done on an adhoc basis for all mills in a particular centre by agreement or by tradition.

16. In recent years, however, there has been a change and both managements as well as trade unions have shown a willingness to determine work allocation on the basis of working conditions existing in individual mills.

17. When compared with other textile producing countries, the productivity of the Indian cotton textile industry is very low.

18. The cotton textile industry in India is one of the oldest as well as well organised industries and consequently all the beneficial labour legislation enacted by the Central and State Government have been made applicable to the workers employed therein.

19. Trade Unionism in the textile industry has made good progress and has been able to safeguard the legitimate

interests of the workers. It has also shown a maturity in that, a number of agreements such as bonus pacts, rationalisation agreements etc., between managements and unions have been arrived at through direct negotiations to the mutual benefit of both parties.

20. The increase in the cost of production, the lowering of purchasing power and the present pattern of production have all been responsible for the recession. Factors such as the credit squeeze have also contributed to this difficult situation.

21. Mills in which the machinery, buildings etc., are old and out-dated and are impossible of economic running even after modernisation, should be scrapped. If necessary, new mills may be set up in their place in order to provide employment to the workers.

22. Mills which are capable of being modernised should be modernised immediately so that they may start working successfully as early as possible.

23. Losing a job is a major disaster to a worker and therefore a suitable scheme at national level should be evolved in order to avoid the misery of unemployment for workers of the mills to be scrapped.

24. If the cotton textile industry is to be placed on a firm and stable footing it should be supplied with adequate quantities of cotton of various qualities, at prices which are on a par with world prices.



25. The cotton textile industry today is in great need of modernisation. It is also in great need of funds for modernisation.

26. Modernisation, therefore should be given a very high priority and special financial arrangements made for that purpose.

27. From the point of view of productivity, quality and the price of textiles, it is essential that the supply of machinery, stores and accessories should be of high quality.

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Sd/- K. Sreenivasan (Chairman)

Sd/- T.N. Sharma (Member)

Sd/- A.N. Buch (Member)

Sd/- H.K. Sowani (Member)

Sd/- P.L. Subbian (Member)

Sd/- S.P. Mandelia (Member)

Sd/- A.V. Vyas (Secretary)

Bombay,

18th December 1967

APPENDIX .I

Table I  
Growth of the Textile Industry

Year	Mills	Spindles	Looms
1854	1	30,000	Nil
1855	2	47,000	Nil
1856	3	64,000	Nil
1858	4	1,08,000	300
1869	17	3,93,000	4,600
1880	58	14,71,000	13,000
1889	108	26,67,000	22,000
1901	190	49,33,000	41,000
1913	259	65,97,000	94,000
1923	292	77,32,000	1,43,000
1933	344	95,80,000	1,89,000
1943	398	1,02,00,000	1,98,000
1947	423	1,03,53,973	2,02,662

Source: The Cotton Mills of India 1854 to 1954,  
By S.D.Mehta, The Textile Association  
(India), Bombay-12.

Indian cotton Mill Industry, By Ramnath A.Podar,  
National Premier Enterprise, Bombay.



Table II

## Expansion of the Textile Industry

As on 1st January of each year	Spinning Mills		Composite Mills			Total	
	No. of mills	Spindles (Ring & Mules in- stalled)	No. of mills	Spindles (Ring & Mules) installed	Looms instal- led	No. of mills col.2 + col.4	Spindles in- stalled (Rings and Mules) Co.3 + Col. 5 (8)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
1948	88	1,566,398	268	8,502,276	192,764	356	10,068,674
1949	95	1,776,835	267	8,589,402	192,357	362	10,366,237
1950	94	1,859,814	268	8,694,641	191,495	362	10,554,455
1951	103	1,843,041	275	9,156,184	194,567	378	10,999,225
1952	107	1,910,848	276	9,341,595	195,983	383	11,252,443
1953	113	1,946,603	282	9,476,260	197,711	395	11,422,863
1954	114	2,097,423	286	9,553,714	201,718	400	11,651,137
1955	116	1,768,097	292	10,189,540	202,714	408	11,957,637
1956	121	1,857,440	291	10,193,769	202,901	412	12,051,209
1957	144	2,194,732	292	10,297,042	200,983	436	12,491,774
1958	175	2,556,638	295	10,497,460	201,280	470	13,054,098
1959	188	2,807,666	294	10,598,800	201,063	482	13,406,466
1960	186	2,930,738	293	10,618,798	200,272	479	13,549,536
1961	192	3,056,482	287	10,606,882	198,785	479	13,663,364
1962	196	3,188,110	285	10,645,374	199,427	481	13,833,484
1963	211	3,393,983	287	10,723,283	199,896	498	14,117,266
1964	223	3,549,962	291	11,111,175	202,747	514	14,661,137
1965	253	3,940,805	290	11,492,681	206,480	543	15,433,486
1966	283*	4,362,322	292	11,756,007	208,659	575	16,118,329

Note. Figures in column 6 upto 1958 include tape looms.

\*includes 45 waste spg. units with a total installed capacity of 39,207 spindles.

Source: Indian Textile Bulletin issued by Textile Commissioner,  
Government of India, Ministry of Commerce, Bombay, April 1960 & April 1967

Table III

Consumption of Cotton & Production  
of Staple Fibre

Period	Raw Cotton Consumption (1000 bales)			Staple Fibre (1000 kilograms)	
	Indian	Foreign	Total	Viscose	Polystre
1951	2,740	1,106	3,846	-	-
1952	3,234	1,024	4,258	-	-
1953	3,694	788	4,482	-	-
1954	3,854	723	4,577	4,224	-
1955	4,304	580	4,884	5,705	-
1956	4,372	619	4,991	7,903	-
1957	4,695	567	5,262	8,007	-
1958	4,440	524	4,964	14,004	-
1959	4,639	457	5,096	20,345	-
1960	4,112	985	5,097	21,779	-
1961	4,516	1,046	5,562	26,061	-
1962	4,638	987	5,625	32,382	-
1963	5,124	710	5,834	32,146	-
1964	5,599	638	6,237	36,819	-
1965	5,363	749	6,112	37,151	1,385
1966	5,301	564	5,865	42,769	2,547

Source: Indian Textile Bulletin issued by Textile  
Commissioner,  
Govt. of India, Ministry of Commerce, Bombay -  
Vol. XIII No. 1 - April 1967.



Table IV

Yarn and Cloth Production

Period	Yarn Production (in million kgs.)		Cloth production (in million metres)		Estimated cloth prodn. Handloom/power loom (in million metres)
	Cotton	Staple fibre	Cotton	Staple fibre	
1948	657	-	3950	-	-
1949	616	-	3570	-	-
1950	533	-	3351	-	-
1951	591	11	3727	13.0	1,013
1952	657	9	4205	14.7	1,313
1953	683	9	4461	8.2	1,410
1954	708	13	4570	5.7	1,512
1955	740	13	4658	5.2	1,620
1956	758	20	4852	6.2	1,663
1957	807	19	4862	4.2	1,811
1958	764	17	4505	4.3	1,968
1959	781	18	4504	3.3	2,075
1960	788	20	4616	2.8	2,013
1961	862	22	4701	2.1	2,372
1962	860	28	4560	2.5	2,412
1963	893	29	4423	3.2	2,876
1964	965	34	4654	2.7	3,066
1965	939	41	4587	3.8	3,056
1966	901	46	4239	12.6	3,097

Source: Indian Textile Bulletin, issued by Textile Commissioner,  
Govt. of India, Ministry of Commerce, Bombay -  
April 1960 and April 1967.

Table V

Average Number of Workers on Rolls as Well as  
Actual Number Employed from 1956 to 1966

(Thousands)

Period	Average number of persons on the books of the mills including general staff and badlis			Average number of workers actually employed in			
	Men	Women	Total	I shift	II shift	III shift	Total
1956	866	67	933	434	277	96	807
1957	876	67	943	439	278	96	813
1958	837	63	900	422	262	83	767
1959	826	59	885	417	261	85	763
1960	838	57	895	416	263	93	772
1961	862	56	918	417	266	110	793
1962	874	55	929	417	265	116	798
1963	885	53	938	418	263	123	804
1964	917	53	970	422	271	138	831
1965	916	51	967	418	267	137	822
1966	884	47	931	404	254	130	788

Source: Indian Textile Bulletin, issued by Textile Commissioner, Govt. of India, Ministry of Commerce, Bombay - Vol. XIII. No. 1 - April 1967



Table VI

## ABSENTEEISM IN COTTON TEXTILE INDUSTRY

(Percentage of Man-Shifts Lost to Man-Shifts Scheduled to Work)

Year/Monthly average Centre or State	COTTON MILL INDUSTRY								
	Madras	Madurai	Coimbatore	Mysore	Bombay	Ahmedabad	Sholapur	Kanpur	West Bengal
1956	6.2	13.0	11.4	..	8.3	6.5	18.4	11.1	..
1957	7.0	13.2	11.3	..	7.1	6.8	16.0	13.0	..
1958	7.4	18.5	12.3	..	7.0	7.1	13.6	13.1	..
1959	7.7	13.4	11.1	..	7.3	6.6	13.4	10.7	..
1960	8.2	13.0	11.9	..	10.5	7.3	16.9	14.2	..
1961	7.7	13.5	12.0	..	11.9	16.0	14.7	15.1	..
1962	7.8	13.8	12.8	..	11.3	8.3	15.3	27.4	..
1963	7.8	13.5	13.1	..	11.8	8.0	18.3	15.3	..
1964	8.1	12.2	12.8	..	11.6	7.9	16.7	12.5	..
1965	10.2	14.4	13.3	18.4	18.4	..	15.3	12.5	12.0
1966	10.3	19.0	13.2	19.2	19.5	..	27.5	12.6	12.4

.. Not available

Source: Indian Labour Journal

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