LABOR AND SILK

GROWN OLD "IN THE SILK"

LABOR AND SILK

By

GRACE HUTCHINS

With Drawings by

ESTHER SHEMITZ

NEW YORK

INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHERS

LABOR AND INDUSTRY SERIES

LABOR AND SILK
By Grace Hutchins

LABOR AND AUTOMOBILES
By Robert W. Dunn

LABOR AND COAL
By Anna Rochester
(*In preparation*)

Other volumes are planned on Textiles, Steel, Lumber, Oil, Meat-packing, Transportation, Agriculture, etc.

Printed in the U. S. A.
This book is composed and printed by union labor.

CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

PREFACE TO LABOR AND INDUSTRY SERIES

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

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

The present series gives primary emphasis to the workers and their problems. What does the future hold for the workers in these industries under capitalism? What is the trend of production? What are the wages, hours, and conditions of employment, and how do these compare with those in other industries? What is the extent of unemployment and the job insecurity of the workers? What profits are the companies making? What mergers are being carried out? How are the corporations organized to protect their interests as opposed to those of labor? To what extent are the workers organized—in company unions, in real labor unions? How far has the "welfare" and "enlightened industrial relations" propaganda of the employers succeeded? What are the prospects of effective unionization? These are a few of the questions we shall attempt to answer in this series of labor studies.

Written from an avowedly labor point of view, these books will emphasize not only the specific grievances and hardships of the workers in a given industry. They will also attempt to make clear to the worker-reader the char-

acter of the forces operating in all American industry against the development of strong, militant unions and for the maintenance of the capitalist system.

It is hoped that these studies may serve as useful manuals for those who seek to put an end to the present conditions, and those who take seriously the frequently voiced phrase: Organize the Unorganized.

Besides presenting graphic pictures of the workers' lives and struggles in particular industries, these volumes will also suggest concrete programs of action to meet the offensives of the corporations.

To those workers who desire a brief and simple analysis of the complicated structure of American industry, who wish to know the conditions that must be overcome before workers in America can be organized into a powerful and victorious labor movement, these books are dedicated.

LABOR RESEARCH ASSOCIATION.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THIS book describes the silk industry, the capitalists who profit from it, and the workers who transform the delicate threads into fabrics. The silk industry made such an advance during the war and the years following that the value of products in 1925 was three times what it was in 1914. While cotton, wool and knit goods were losing ground or making only slight gains, silk manufacturing continued a steady rise.

The extraordinary growth of the rayon industry is one of the marvels of the twentieth century. Probably no other enterprise in recent industrial history has seen such rapid development in such a short time. Rayon now enters into almost every kind of cloth that is made.

Yet while the silk and rayon industry was reporting its success in millions and billions of dollars, silk workers were striking for an increase in pay of one cent a yard woven. Paterson, New Jersey, scene of historic strikes of silk workers, saw another strike during the latter half of 1928. Though the eight-hour day was supposedly won in this silk city ten years ago, a large number of mills had slipped over on to a longer day of nine, ten, eleven, twelve and even thirteen hours.

Although silk workers have struggled for better conditions ever since the industry began in the United States, ninety years ago, no book has ever been written to explain their situation and their demands. Many volumes have been published to set forth the problems of silk production, but none as yet on the industry from the viewpoint of the workers. That is the reason for the present book. Silk workers —and others—will find in it the story of a growing industry, changing technically and financially, the story of working conditions "in the silk" and of long struggles for better con-

ditions, of workers' demands, union programs and the prospects of organization.

Since the 1924 strike of silk workers in Paterson, the writer has been gathering the material for this volume. So many workers and other friends have helped in its preparation that it is not possible to mention them by name. A year's traveling in Japan, China, India, Western Europe and Soviet Russia, and visits to many foreign textile mills, made vivid certain aspects of the silk industry in the East and in the West. Conditions of work in capitalist countries and in the Soviet Republic could only be most briefly compared in a book of this size. The emphasis is on the silk industry in the United States, on conditions of silk workers here, and on the problems facing those workers.

For descriptions in the chapters on working conditions the author is indebted to a great many members of the National Textile Workers' Union and the Associated Silk Workers of America, and to other rank and file workers not only in Paterson, but in Passaic, N. J., New Bedford, Mass., Easton, Allentown, Scranton and Wilkes-Barre, Pa. Among those who patiently answered questions and told of their experiences were Anna Burlak, Ellen Dawson, William De Mott, Tom and Anna Moore, Karl Mueller, and Martin Russak.

Esther Shemitz was able to draw the pictures of silk workers at the machines in a Paterson mill. She wishes to thank the workers of this mill who allowed her to watch them at the looms and frames.

The author wishes to thank all those who have painstakingly read the manuscript, offered suggestions and contributed most generously of their time, especially fellow members of the Labor Research Association.

To all these—silk workers and others—who have been collaborators, the writer extends deep appreciation. They have made this study possible.

GRACE HUTCHINS.

February, 1929.

CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNING OF SILK

THE "Silk Special" has right of way over all fast express trains across the American continent from Vancouver or Seattle to New York. Why? Because for the past ten years raw silk has been always either first or second in value among American imports and because a day's delay in delivery of a shipment may mean thousands of dollars' loss to the trade.

This rushing of raw silk across the Pacific by the fastest steamers from Japan and China and by the fastest express trains to New York marks the new day in this industry. For more than four thousand years silk stood for a luxury to be enjoyed only by the rich and powerful in every land. From the days of the Chinese Empress, Si Ling-Chi, who in 2602 B.C. learned how to reel silk thread and make garments, the emperors, kings, lords, princes, presidents, capitalists and their wives have expected to wear silk and use it for adornment.

So precious was the secret of silk culture that romantic stories were told from one generation to another to account for the knowledge passing from East to West. According to one legend, a princess coming from China to India, to be married, concealed the seeds of the mulberry and the eggs of silk worms in her headdress. Another story tells of two monks in the early Christian era who returned to the West carrying mulberry seeds and silkworm eggs in the hollow of their bamboo canes.[1]

Down through the centuries, kings and princes encouraged

[1] Encyclopedia Britannica, "Silk."

sericulture and the hand weaving of gorgeous silks and satins. With the industrial revolution of the late eighteenth century, came the steam power looms and the beginning of mass production, not only of cotton and woolen goods but of silk manufactures. Still for a hundred years more silk garments were counted as a luxury and worn only by the ruling class. In those days women saved for months to buy one black silk dress to be kept for state occasions and to last the better part of a lifetime.

Then suddenly came the cheapening of silk fabrics. Mass production spread. The use of a cotton warp with the silk weft or filling in mixed goods made a cheaper material. Then came rayon to be widely used, especially in mixed goods. A silk dress, perhaps half silk and half something else, costs less now than a good gingham cost some years ago. Every one is wearing "silk." Women's hosiery at one dollar a pair may last only through four washings, but it looks like silk. The hat band, half of cotton, may shrink when the hat gets wet, but at least it looks like silk. The striped necktie shines with a subdued luster, and the purchaser is just as well pleased as if it were all of silk. What part rayon plays in this new silk world is told in the chapter on *Rayon.*

This democratizing of silk has brought such increased demand for the real silk threads, whether to put with cotton or rayon thread, or to weave as real silk, that American consumption of raw silk has increased by leaps and bounds in the last few years. Since 1914, American demand for raw silk has increased by 200 per cent, from 24 million pounds yearly average (1910 to 1914) to 74 million pounds in the year 1926-27, valued at $412,465,683.

Even before the war Japan and China supplied more than half the raw silk in the world and nine-tenths of the raw silk used in the United States. Silk growers of Japan have kept pace with American demand. Attempts at silk culture in the United States were never a success. It was tried in

colonial times and again, after the Revolution of 1776, in the southern states. It is tried on a small scale now in southern California. But silk manufacturers find it cheaper to import raw silk. Japan is America's chief source of supply. The United States is Japan's chief market. American mills now consume about 75 per cent of the world's production of raw silk. From Japan they purchase 84 per cent of their supply, from China 15 per cent, and only 1 per cent from other countries.

In Oriental Silk Filatures

Hands of Japanese and Chinese girls and children have plunged silkworm cocoons in practically boiling water before unwinding the delicate threads. This process kills the moth which would otherwise escape by breaking through the cocoon fiber. The writer has seen an overseer standing over little children in a silk filature in China, to make them put their hands down into the steaming water with the valuable cocoons. Hands are cheap in the East.

Only workers who handle raw silk can appreciate the extreme fineness of the thread. One pound of medium-fine reeled silk (classified as 28-30 denier) is about 85 miles long. The finest grade (8-10 denier) is like a spider web and a single pound would stretch 280 miles. The writer saw the unpacking of a raw silk bale in an American mill and heard the foreman express his wonder how human hands could turn the fine threads into such even hanks.

A reeling girl in Japan earns from 22 to 35 cents a day. The big filatures provide company houses for living quarters where the girls are almost prisoners. Food is largely rice and barley boiled together, bean soup, and a very limited amount of vegetables, fish or meat for luncheon and supper. A Japanese silk authority confesses:[2]

[2] *Silk*, December, 1927. Article by Yoshio Kimura.

Other labor conditions are not very agreeable. At present the reeling girls work 11 hours net each day. They usually start work at 6 o'clock in the morning and finish at 6 o'clock in the evening, with an intermission of half an hour for luncheon and 15 minutes each in the morning and in the afternoon for recreation. They are kept busy all the time they are at work. Reeling girls at work appear like so many machines. Their eyes are riveted on the cocoons being unwound, and their nimble fingers are always attending to any mishap that may interfere with the production of even-sized, defect-free raw silk.

It takes a reeling girl 150 days to produce one bale (133⅓ pounds) of raw silk. A year's work of one girl produces at the most 2½ bales. All the work is done by hand. Labor is so cheap in the East that few companies have tried to put machinery in the filatures, though a machine has been invented to do what human hands now do in boiling water.

A strike of Japanese silk workers against intolerable conditions in a big filature started in the late summer of 1927. The girls struck for a wage of *30 cents a day,* better food, better sanitation, and freedom to join the union.

In Chinese filatures, the workers have longer hours and lower wages than in Japan. The up-to-date factories have a working day of 12 to 14 hours. More primitive mills have longer hours but their speed-up is not so intense. Night work is common in all Chinese mills, whether British, Japanese or Chinese owned.

The writer has been in Chinese filatures and remembers the heavy humid air. The visitor immediately has a frantic desire to get out of the unventilated rooms. The small dirty windows are all closed. Little children, looking not more than 6 years old, work near their mothers. All the women are white-faced and emaciated.

For organizing and protesting against these conditions, Chinese labor union members during these last two years have been burned and mutilated, shot down and beheaded by the police acting for and at the behest of foreign employers.

The heads of striking textile workers have been exhibited on poles outside the mills. During the summer of 1927, a strike of 55,000 silk workers in Shanghai was broken by the commander of the Chinese garrison who shot into the ranks of girl strikers. The Silk Spinners' Union had refused to appeal to the striking workers to return to work.[3]

Dealing in Raw Silk

Silk from Japan and China and rubber from Singapore make up the largest part of America's increasing import trade across the Pacific. Ships of the Dollar Line, owned by Robert Dollar, appropriately represent the United States in the East with a big white $ sign on their black funnels. Japanese steamship lines, the American Mail Line and the Canadian Pacific Railroad share with the Dollar Line the profits of carrying rubber and silk.

Between Japanese silk filatures and American throwing mills stand also great Japanese banking houses and the silk brokers, American and Japanese, with their new National Raw Silk Exchange.

Mitsui, the J. P. Morgan of Japan, owns banks, factories, shipping lines, mines and a vast raw silk importing and exporting business. Two families in Japan, Mitsui and Mitsubishi, are financial oligarchs comparable to the Morgan-Kuhn-Loeb-Rockefeller oligarchy in this country. Mitsui, Mitsubishi and their subsidiaries control more than 50 per cent of the empire's foreign trade. They have power to control cabinets and so the government itself.

The New York branch of Mitsui and Company, importers of raw silk, has its own cable quotations from Japan. This firm can afford to hold aloof from the new Raw Silk Exchange which started business in September, 1928. But 116

[3] For a fuller account of the labor struggles during this period see *Whither China?* by Scott Nearing.

other silk companies, concerned in prices of raw silk, each paid $2,500 for a seat in the new exchange. Before it began to function, one of the seats had already been sold again for $5,500, netting its original holder, P. P. Belford, $3,000. Other seats have sold for as high as $7,000.

This independent move of silk companies annoyed members of the Cotton Exchange. The older Exchange, on an understanding with Charles Cheney and some other leading silk manufacturers, had sent a man to Japan to report on prospects for *their* dealing in silk futures. While he was gone, other silk companies got busy and formed their own exchange. The Cotton Exchange is interested in raw silk, because the cotton industry is using much silk. The silk industry is using much cotton. Both are using much rayon. But the old fences still supposedly enclose the preserves of each.

Prices of raw silk vary so much that speculation can run fast and free. Brokers can buy when prices are low, hold the bales and sell when prices go up. Raw silk that soared to $9.60 a pound in 1919 was only $5 a pound in December, 1927. Daily quotations of Japanese raw silk prices are given in the textile trade paper, *Daily News Record.*

Larger silk companies do their own importing and pay through the foreign branch of a banking house. Four days are allowed for the transaction by cable. Smaller concerns are in every way at a disadvantage in this game of raw silk buying. They cannot afford the expensive overhead required to do their own importing and must depend on the middlemen, who of course make a profit between Japanese producing and American consuming mills. There is often uncertainty about the exact weight of the silk, amount of moisture content, etc. The manufacturer is usually paying for at least 2 per cent more in weight of silk than he actually receives. All these uncertainties increase the chances for speculation.

Banking houses in Japan and America, steamship companies, railroads, brokers, and silk companies in America all profit by the low pay and miserable condition of girl slaves in Japanese and Chinese silk filatures.

CHAPTER II

THE SILK INDUSTRY

Over 1,100,000 wage-earners are employed in American textile mills—more than in any other manufacturing industry. Of all important manufacturing industries except tobacco products, textile mills pay the lowest wages. The average yearly earnings of textile workers, computed from the latest government figures, are only $960.42. This means a weekly average of only $18.46 for every week in the year.

Textile mill products are worth $5,342,617,000.[1] Only four of the 16 groups of manufacturing industries exceed textile mills in the value of their products: the food group, iron and steel industries, the chemicals group, and transportation equipment.

One in every eight of the 1,110,209 textile workers is "in the silk." These 132,509 men, women and children are silk workers. This means that they are employed by silk manufacturers classified by the census as

> (1) Those engaged primarily in the manufacture of silk fabrics and other finished silk products, not including knit fabrics, hosiery and other knit goods made of silk; (2) those engaged primarily in the manufacture of silk yarn.[2]

Besides these 132,509 who are called silk workers, an uncounted number of the 468,352 workers in cotton manufactures are winding and weaving silk and rayon mixtures. Many of the 186,668 hosiery and other knit goods workers

[1] U. S. Bureau of the Census. Census of Manufactures, 1925, p. 213.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 303.

are using silk yarns thrown in American silk mills and rayon yarns made in rayon plants. Of the 70,749 workers who are "dyeing and finishing textiles," a large number are dyeing silk yarn or dyeing and finishing silk fabrics in the piece. Some twenty-six thousand rayon workers are making rayon yarn.

Silk Weighting

All that shimmers is not silk. The increased use of rayon yarn by itself and in combination with silk and cotton warps, is described in this chapter and in later sections of the book. How one large company advertised as real silk what was not silk and yet escaped the regulation of the Federal Trade Commission is told in the chapter on profits of silk companies.

Another method of deceiving the purchaser as to the amount and weight of real silk used in the material is called weighting. Methods of weighting silk to make it heavier are widely used. One of these processes of weighting silk in a solution of tin or other mineral substance is sometimes called "dynamiting." When tin is used to excess the silk soon crumbles and cracks at the edges and the folds. The purchaser wonders why the silk dress does not last. Often from a fourth to a third of the weight of the silk consists of lead, tin or zinc, which considerably shortens the life and durability of the goods.

Overweighting of silk is condemned by the Federal Trade Commission and by the United States Bureau of Standards. In spite of efforts to regulate and limit the amount of weighting to a certain percentage, the practice of excess weighting continues and usually only the smaller silk companies are fined in the cases that come before the commission.

Overdevelopment

American mills are using three times as much raw silk as they were using in 1914. It is not surprising, therefore, that

silk mills reported in 1925 an installed horsepower nearly twice that of 1914. Other textiles had expanded also, but neither cotton goods mills nor knitting mills showed anything like so great a percentage of increase in equipment.

	Percentage Increase from 1914 to 1925	
	In Wage-Earners	*In Horse Power*
Silk Mills	22.5	90.8
Cotton Mills	17.3	43.0
Knitting Mills	24.0	43.7

From 1923 to 1925, cotton goods and knit goods had fallen behind in number of wage-earners and in value of output. But silk mills were still gaining.

	Percentage Increase or Decrease from 1923 to 1925		
	In Wage-Earners	*In Horse Power*	*In Value of Product*
Silk Mills	5.8	3.2	6.3
Cotton Mills	—5.6	3.9	—9.8
Knitting Mills	—3.9	—3.8	—4.5

To-day leading silk capitalists are talking about excess capacity and overproduction. Charles M. Schwab, chairman of the Bethlehem Steel Corporation, made a statement recently on the situation in the steel industry. Paolino Gerli, raw silk merchant and president of the National Raw Silk Exchange, quotes Charles Schwab's statement but substitutes the word "silk" for the word "steel." He says:

Silk manufacturers have only themselves to blame for the low prices prevailing. In the first place they have been putting millions of dollars into new construction and equipment for the past 10 years: much of this new capacity is not needed, for to-day the capacity of the silk industry is at least 25 per cent in excess of average annual consumption requirements. Producers

undercut each other to keep their plants going and their costs down; there doesn't seem to be any coöperation in the matter of prices.

Silk workers know only too well that many frames and looms are idle. The Silk Association figures published by the U. S. Department of Commerce show the following percentages of active silk machinery in relation to total equipment:

SILK MACHINERY ACTIVITY

	Per cent of active hours to full time total		
	Broad Looms	*Narrow Looms*	*Spinning Spindles*
1925	88.7	59.5	97.9
1926	84.8	62.3	88.5
1927	86.5	56.0	89.6

Apart from narrow looms for ribbons, no longer so much in style, silk machinery is averaging 88 per cent of capacity.

Excess capacity is also commonly given by comparing idle machines with active machines. Such a comparison can be made from these same Silk Association figures. On this other basis, in 1927 the excess capacity was over 15 per cent for broad looms and over 11 per cent for spinning spindles. But all these figures are based on reports from only half the industry. The small mills which do not report to the Silk Association would show much greater idleness and irregularity.

Irregularity

Textile manufacturers themselves come out periodically with statements on overproduction. Such a statement made in March, 1928, by B. Edmund David, large manufacturer, depicts the situation in the silk:

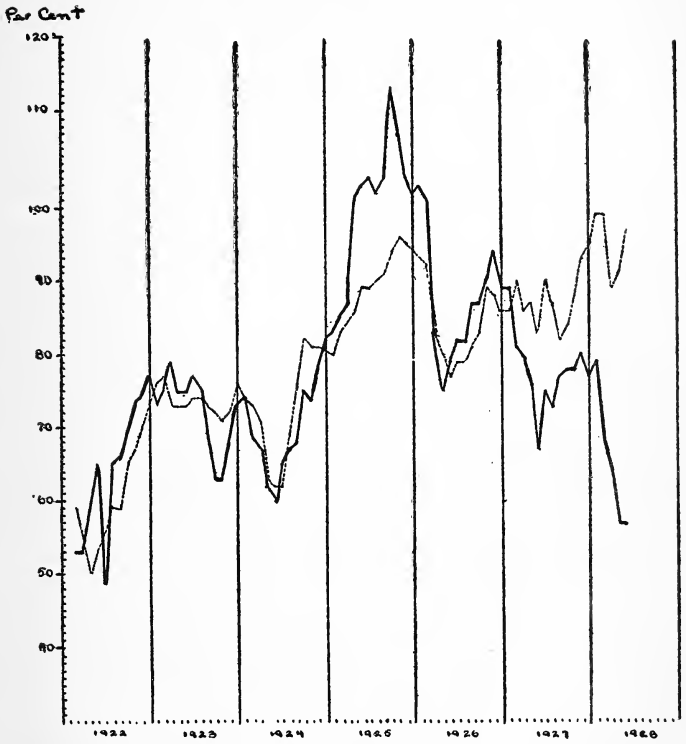
Consumption has been enormous. Stimulated by low prices and by the big values which were offered, the public responded liberally. . . . The vogue for 54-inch goods caused an addition of several thousand looms to the manufacturing facilities of the country. . . . Many manufacturers adopted the two-shift system, running their looms day and night, in an effort to reduce overhead and thereby satisfy the pressure for always lower prices. When that was done—when production was increased within a short time nearly 50 per cent—we crossed the line and began to stock the market with indigestible quantities which have caused many a nightmare to those engaged in our industry since.

In the city of Paterson, there are to-day hundreds of small mills running from 10 to 150 looms each, probably a total of 15,000 looms. There was a lull there during the fall of 1927. Disaster overtook many of them. The market was supplied to the saturation point and mills simply could not continue at the same rate of production. To-day after a few months, all that seems to be forgotten. There is a mad rush to grind out as much merchandise as possible. Looms are run 24 hours a day on two or three shifts. Some mills, running one shift only, work 12 to 14 hours a day.

But Paterson is not the only sinner. In Pennsylvania, New England, the South, looms which were forced into idleness last year are starting up. Production at the present moment is probably the largest the silk industry has ever seen. . . .

Statements and charts on machinery activity reveal the irregularity of production in silk mills not only from year to year but within the year. The chart on page 23 shows the little seasonal peaks in the line of activity.

Frames and looms standing idle at any time mean jobless workers. Of the workers employed in the silk in the busiest month of 1921, 39,730 or three in every ten had been laid off in the slowest month. In the good year, 1925, over 15,000 or one in every nine had been laid off in the dullest month. Such irregularity of production is one of the basic evils in the textile industries and in all industries under capitalism. The "business cycle" of capitalist society with its ups and downs of speed-up and overproduction followed by depres-



MONTHLY VARIATIONS IN SILK MACHINERY ACTIVITY

The dotted line shows changing percentages of active hours to full time total for broad silk looms. The solid line shows the percentages for silk spinning spindles. These are based on Silk Association figures.

sion and unemployment is acknowledged by a liberal economist, Harold G. Moulton, to be largely due to the profit-making motive. Here is his conclusion on the subject:

> The forces which are at work in producing this ebb and flow of business activity are embodied in the very warp and woof of the modern industrial and financial structure. It may be concluded therefore that the ebb and flow of business prosperity will continue so long as the present industrial and financial structure of society, with its profit-making motivation, is maintained . . . undoubtedly business fluctuations are most pronounced under the conditions that prevail in a profit-making and credit society.

"Cockroaches" and Price-Cutting

"There's looms here."

A visiting weaver from Passaic, who knows all too well the thunder of looms, passes a house in Paterson with no outward sign of factory work. The tell-tale noise of a loom marks the house as one of these little family units where father, mother and children work together on a frame or two and a loom or two. They buy a second-hand loom for $250, on time payments, and perhaps lose it in the end for failure to meet the payments. They work all hours, defying union rules on hours and overtime, and state laws on sanitation. They sell the goods at any price to pay for the raw materials and a meager living. They know nothing of cost accounting, overhead charges, depreciation, or anything but a hand-to-mouth buying and selling of what the family can weave. These and other shops only a little larger are the "cockroaches" of Paterson.

Price-cutting is such a recognized evil in Paterson that all silk technical authorities take a hand in suggesting remedies. One suggests as a solution mergers of the larger silk plants. But another answers:

This would undoubtedly mean a source of great economy to the chosen few, but such a step would have little effect, if any, in stemming the tide of overproduced haphazard fabrics poured into the market by the thousand outside mills. It would not check the ruthless practice of price-cutting by the innumerable short-sighted and smaller units, which weave at random with no definite estimation of market requirements or regard for true values.

The same writer thinks a Paterson Silk Exchange could control buying and selling enough to bring the "cockroaches" into line or freeze them out.

A writer in the *American Bankers' Association Journal* blames not only the little family units but all weakly capitalized manufacturers for bringing down prices of silk goods. Since these small concerns do not have to pay the raw silk brokers for 60 days (90 days are still allowed by some brokers) they buy more than they could otherwise afford. The small firms sell their manufactured silk at any price to get ready funds and thus underbid the larger firms who want to stabilize prices. Then comes a break in prices which upsets the calculations of other manufacturers.

The official census does not show the exact number of small silk shops in Paterson, for those with a yearly product valued at less than $5,000 are not recorded. However, there were, according to the census of 1925, 691 silk establishments in Paterson producing at least $5,000 worth a year. The number of Paterson establishments *increased* 13 per cent between 1923 and 1925 although the number of silk workers in Paterson *decreased* 3 per cent during the same period.

Increasing Concentration

Paterson is still "the silk city" among industrial cities in the United States. But Paterson now employs only 16,368

in the silk, or one-eighth of those classified as strictly silk workers. It produces only about 14 per cent of the total value of silk products although it has 42 per cent of all the silk shops in the country.

But New Jersey has long since yielded to Pennsylvania as the leading silk state. Already in 1919 the value added by manufacture in Pennsylvania silk mills was 35 per cent of the total in American silk mills while New Jersey's share was 30 per cent. In 1925, Pennsylvania's share had risen to 41 per cent while New Jersey's share had fallen to 24 per cent. These figures do not tell the whole story of the importance of Pennsylvania silk, for the "value added" in other states included millions of dollars paid for contract work. Pennsylvania throwing mills handled 77 per cent of the 26,402,000 pounds of raw silk thrown under contract.

This steady shift to Pennsylvania centers has accompanied an increasing concentration in large plants. The 713 small shops (mostly in Paterson) which employ on the average less than 25 wage-earners, turned out in 1925 less than four per cent of the silk mill products of the country. From big enterprises, each producing $1,000,000 worth or more a year, came nearly two-thirds of the total. In the four years from 1921 to 1925 these big enterprises increased their strength while smaller enterprises declined.[3]

SILK INDUSTRY

1921

Big enterprises.	126 out of 1,565	*i.e.*, 8%
Employing	55,403 workers out of 121,378	*i.e.*, 46%
Producing	$318,103,000 out of $583,419,000	*i.e.*, 54%

1925

Big enterprises.	179 out of 1,659	*i.e.*, 10.7%
Employing	65,931 workers out of 132,509	*i.e.*, 49.7%
Producing	$505,677,000 out of $808,979,000	*i.e.*, 62.5%

[3] Based on U. S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Manufactures, 1925.

These larger concerns turning out five-eighths of all the production of all the silk enterprises, employ half the silk workers in the United States.

A similar tendency shows up in the cotton goods industry where, as we have noted, much silk is used in fine goods mixtures.

Cotton Goods Industry

1921

Big enterprises.	344 out of 1,527	*i.e.*, 22.5%
Employing	285,079 workers out of 425,817	*i.e.*, 66.9%
Producing	$922,111,000 out of $1,330,263,000	*i.e.*, 69.3%

1925

Big enterprises.	498 out of 1,366	*i.e.*, 36.4%
Employing	347,684 workers out of 445,184	*i.e.*, 78.9%
Producing	$1,352,971,000 out of $1,714,388,000	*i.e.*, 78.9%

More than three-fourths of all the production of all the cotton enterprises is carried on by about one-third of those enterprises. These larger cotton companies employ more than three-fourths of all the cotton workers in the United States.

The same tendency is, of course, noticeable in all American industry. In manufacturing as a whole, big enterprises, producing $1,000,000 or more, now produce two-thirds of all the manufactured products in the United States.

All Manufacturing

1921

Big enterprises.	7,284 out of 249,486	*i.e.*, 3.7%
Employing	3,375,916 workers out of 6,978,585	*i.e.*, 48.7%
Producing	$25,718,962,114 out of $43,563,957,189	*i.e.*, 59.2%

1925

Big enterprises.	10,583 out of 187,390	*i.e.*, 5.6%
Employing	4,760,229 out of 8,384,261	*i.e.*, 56.8%
Producing	$42,366,941,140 out of $62,713,713,730	*i.e.*, 67.6%

Two-thirds of all the production of all manufacturing enterprises is thus carried on by one-twentieth of those enterprises, employing more than half of all the workers in manufacturing industries.

In the textile industries the stage of monopoly is drawing closer. It is already marked out in rayon. Details of the international rayon cartel are in another chapter. The American Woolen Co. comes close to a monopoly in wool. Other textile industries show only gradual progress toward concentration and a resulting monopoly control. Workers watching this development from year to year will see the small concerns go under and the larger ones survive, stronger and more profitable than ever. In spite of this, all but the largest silk manufacturers seem to believe that the silk industry is still in the stage of free competition. They are very busy fighting among themselves for their small share of the market. Also these smaller firms carry on only some one branch of silk manufacturing. For example, most of the silk that comes to Paterson mills has first traveled by auto truck from New York to Pennsylvania for throwing and spinning. Then it comes back to Paterson for winding and weaving. After being woven in a small Paterson shop it must go on to a separate dyeing and finishing plant and thence to the New York jobber. This round of extra handling is eliminated in the larger concerns.

The much greater output per wage-earner in the larger establishments stands out to the detriment of the small firm in its competition with the larger company in the following table:

Establishments Producing Annually	*Average Value of Product Per Silk Worker*
Under $100,000	$2,334
$100,000 to $500,000	4,320
$500,000 to $1,000,000	6,019
$1,000,000 and over	7,660

To a certain extent the larger textile companies are "combines" characteristic of capitalism in its highest stages of development. They combine in a single enterprise the different processes otherwise carried on by numerous small intermediary concerns. They are able to cut out competition and install speed-up systems to get the greatest amount of production per worker.

As in other industries, so in the silk, there are vertical combinations and horizontal combinations. The vertical unit in its maximum development seeks control of everything from raw material to the distribution of the product to the consumer. The horizontal combination involves the merging of groups of mills making similar classes of goods, with the idea of cutting overhead and reducing other costs. "An ideal organization of this kind should dominate its field and thus result in increased profits," explains the *Textile World*. The merger of four large Paterson dyeing companies which we shall describe later is an example of horizontal combination. The General Silk Corporation (Klots Throwing Company), the story of which appears in the chapter on profits, is an example of vertical combination. Cheney Brothers of Connecticut is another example of vertical combination.

The results of such combines are explained by Rudolph Hilferding, in his work *Finanzkapital:*

> Combination levels out the fluctuations of trade and assures the combined enterprise of a more stable rate of profit. In the second place, it does away with trading. Thirdly, it gives opportunity for technical improvements, and consequently for

new profits, which other enterprises have not got. Finally, it strengthens the productive power of the combined enterprise compared with that of others, and increases its capacity for competition in periods of depression when the fall in prices of raw materials does not keep pace with the fall in prices of manufactured articles.

Silk and Rayon in Cotton Mills

At least one-tenth of the real silk used in American weaverooms goes into mixed fabrics produced by cotton mills. In 1927 cotton mills purchased 20 per cent while silk mills purchased 13 per cent of the rayon yarn produced in this country by Viscose and DuPont. The division between the silk industry and the cotton industry is being dissolved. Since 1919 and 1921 cotton mills have jumped ahead of silk mills in the making of mixed goods. This fact is clearly shown in the following figures which, moreover, do not include the eighty-odd million yards of silk-striped and rayon-striped cotton shirtings turned out by cotton mills.

PRODUCTION OF MIXED WOVEN GOODS
(In Square Yards)

	Silk Mills	*Cotton Mills*
1919	64,271,000	51,405,000
1921	47,508,000	36,559,000
1923	104,402,000	150,848,000
1925	98,391,000	171,107,000

The raw silk and real silk yarns purchased by the cotton industry in 1925 amounted to 4,432,000 pounds as against about 2,000,000 pounds in 1919. And during these six years the amount of rayon used by cotton mills increased from 573,000 pounds to 14,335,000 pounds. The quantities of certain raw materials reported by the 1925 census throw further light on this blurring of the old distinctions between the silk and cotton industries:

CERTAIN RAW MATERIALS USED IN TEXTILE INDUSTRIES
(In Pounds)

	1919	*1925*
Silk Industry		
Raw silk	25,891,000	35,188,000
"Spun" silk	4,768,000	4,597,000
Rayon yarns	3,039,000	15,728,000
Cotton yarns	17,958,000	15,390,000
Cotton Goods Industry		
Raw silk	588,000	2,386,000
Silk yarns	1,414,000	2,046,000
Rayon yarns	573,000	14,335,000
Raw cotton and linters	2,751,798,000	3,105,185,000

Since 1927 rayon consumption has increased enormously. Silk consumption in the United States also set a new high record in the winter, 1928. The lines between the silk and cotton industries grow ever more blurred. To workers in the silk, therefore, certain facts about the latest developments in the cotton industry are of immediate concern.

South vs. North

"No labor organization in any textile plant in South Carolina," boasts an advertisement of the New Industries Commission of Columbia, South Carolina. Southern communities are vying with each other in efforts to persuade northern textile companies to move South. "Annual wage averaged by persons engaged in the textile mills of South Carolina is $631," continues this advertisement. This means, even by the calculations of the employer, a steady average of $12.13 a week.

"No labor disputes or strikes. Reliable native-born labor," reads an advertisement of Columbus (Georgia) Electric & Power Company, while Duke Power Company, a large anti-

union corporation, claims that North Carolina supplies "loyal, native-born operatives."

The Chamber of Commerce of Houston declares that "there has never been a mill strike in Texas." And the Texas Power and Light Company joins the chorus: "In this state you could save about half the wages on the same production. Texas for Textiles."

"No time restrictions. Spartanburg employees are used to working 55 hours a week." The Chamber of Commerce of this South Carolina city advertises also "Good low cost labor." Arkansas Power and Light Co. is not to be outdone. It declares: "Low labor costs. Best of Anglo-Saxon labor."

These advertisements might have added that women work at night in all these states, and that five southern states—North and South Carolina, Arkansas, Mississippi and Florida—have no legal compensation for injured workers. Tennessee and Alabama have only the most inadequate compensation laws, administered by the courts instead of by a commission. But these hardships to workers do not worry the power companies. On the contrary, they are regarded as advantages from the point of view of lowering operating costs.

Since the southern migration started in full force in 1921, about 1,000,000 northern spindles have moved South. In 1927 about 100,000 spindles and 2,000 looms were transferred from the North to Alabama, North and South Carolina and Virginia.

Now for the first time southern states have more than half the textile spindles in the United States. At the end of 1927 the U. S. Census Bureau reported 36,536,512 spindles of which 18,155,218 are in northern states and 18,381,294 in the cotton growing states. Undoubtedly more of the southern spindles were active. Southern mills ran at 102 per cent of

capacity in 1927. In other words they ran double or night shifts for part of the year.

Hosiery companies are trying to escape the Full Fashioned Hosiery Workers' Union, and 26 new hosiery mills began work in the South in 1927. Three huge new plants for the making of rayon yarns were started in the South in 1927.

It is, of course, easy to exaggerate the southern boom. New England textile manufacturers are in no such desperate plight as southern power companies would have us believe. And many of them have long since established their own southern mills. But it is true that in most of the coarser cotton goods New England output has declined. In fine cottons, and silk and rayon mixtures, on the other hand, the New England mills have steadily increased their output and are still far in the lead. In 1925, they produced 147,000,000 of the total 177,000,000 square yards of mixed goods. But companies operating only in the North note with anxiety that from 1923 to 1925 the output of mixed goods increased by only 12 per cent in New England mills while it was increasing by 162 per cent in southern mills.

Silk manufacturers are also beginning to consider the opportunities in the South. The census of 1925 reported twelve silk mills in Virginia, five in North Carolina, three in Tennessee, two in West Virginia, and one each in Georgia and Alabama. During the year 1927 five new silk mills were opened in southern states. But any general development of the silk industry proper in southern states seems most unlikely in the immediate future. New York City is the undisputed center of all silk buying and selling, both for raw materials and for finished goods. The nearness of Pennsylvania silk throwing mills to the New York market will probably outweigh southern advantages for many years to come.

The very fact that large northern companies are pushing into the southern field to protect their profits brings the menace of low southern standards straight back to the wage-

earners in the North. Thus Pacific Mills, a large New England cotton company, is now manufacturing mixed goods in South Carolina; Schwarzenbach, Huber & Company, important silk manufacturers, have their own southern mills. Wage cuts in their northern mills follow as a matter of course. The real pressure of southern competition falls on northern workers. And silk workers will feel this more and more, as southern mills increase their output of cotton and silk, cotton and rayon, and silk and rayon mixtures.

The spectacle of women textile workers on night shifts in one part of the country, while 20 per cent of the textile workers are jobless and a considerable number of spindles and looms stand idle in another part of the country, is typical of the exploitation of labor under capitalism.

A World Market?

American textile mills are equipped to produce more than America alone can consume under the present economic system. The solution, according to some textile manufacturers, is to "Develop a world market for our products."

At present the United States, largest producer of cotton textiles in the world, is exporting only 7 per cent of the cotton cloth produced here. The 7,000,000 dozen pairs of hosiery exported annually are barely 7 per cent of the total American hosiery output. Still smaller is the percentage of silk goods exported.

Americans come late into the field of competition for a world marketing of textiles. Great Britain and the rest of Europe are two or three generations ahead of us, and already their textile exports are rapidly declining, due to the increased production of textiles in the Orient. In silk goods, Japan is steadily increasing her exports to the very countries, Canada, Australia and Latin America, to which American mill owners look for their possible markets.

The High American Tariff Wall

Textiles came in for their share of "high tariff" about seventy-five years ago, on the plea of "enabling American manufacturers in new industries to compete with European manufacturers who paid lower wages." The New England mill owners, with the special lobbying help of Francis Cabot Lowell, forced through high protective tariffs for all kinds of textiles. Lowell kindly took the infant silk industry under his wing, in addition to his own special cotton interests. For this he was given a vote of thanks by the Paterson silk bosses.

High duties on manufactured silk goods have been maintained since the Civil War. A duty of 55 per cent *ad valorem,* introduced in 1864, is still paid on all silk goods. Raw silk has always been duty free.

Instead of stabilizing production, this artificial protection resulted in high prices, low wages, high profits and irregularity of employment. Yet many textile workers, misled by reactionary union officials, have been used by the employers to assist in the agitation for a high tariff wall. A movement is again under way "to cure the present ills in the industry with another increase in tariff rates." This follows significantly on a series of strikes against wage cuts. The United Textile Workers, instead of utilizing all the resources at its command to organize the workers, helps to stage an exhibition showing the advantages of American-made as against foreign-made textiles, thus coöperating in the campaign of the employers for higher duties. Such activities are, of course, only playing into the hands of the employers, because in the end a high tariff adds to the profits of the owners and not to the wages of the workers.

Competition between North and South, competitive advertising by local communities and power companies, speculation

in raw silk, overdevelopment seen in excess capacity and periodic overproduction, overlapping between silk and cotton industries, irregularity, speed-up here, idle looms and unemployment there, price-cutting by weaker companies, increasing concentration of production in the hands of larger manufacturers, combinations to save costs, big banks profiting by close relations with textile companies, poor outlook for a world market to relieve overproduction—the whole picture of the textile industries to-day reveals the confusion and anarchy of capitalism.

CHAPTER III

PROFITS

ALWAYS a matter of concern to the working class to know exactly what profits the owning class is making from the amount produced, it becomes more vital at a time of widespread wage cuts. Christmas presents of 10 per cent pay slashes were given to the workers by most northern textile mills at the turn of the year 1927-28. Contrary to what is generally supposed, many southern mills followed by cutting wages early in 1928. Northern textile workers were meanwhile told repeatedly by company spokesmen that cuts were "necessary because of competition with southern mills." Even the New Bedford workers were told that story, although New Bedford still has almost a monopoly of fine goods manufacturing for the United States. Rates of pay for silk workers in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Connecticut were cut 10 per cent during the past year, but so "quietly and gradually" that a united protest of the workers was forestalled.

Textile workers were led to believe from company announcements that the year 1927 had been a bad year and that financial losses preceded the pay cuts. On the contrary in all textiles except possibly the woolen industry, 1927 was a comparatively prosperous year for the bosses. Deliveries of raw silk to United States mills showed an average increase of 12 per cent over 1926. Rayon production was 15 per cent more than in 1926 and yet not sufficient to meet the demand for rayon. Even wool production increased 5.7 per cent over the previous year.

Exact figures in published balance sheets of the larger

textile companies show that many of the mills which have cut wages have been actually in a very prosperous condition. After funds have been set aside for depreciation and replacement of machinery and buildings, after government taxes and interest on loans have been paid, there has still remained a surplus to be divided among stockholders.

Many of the larger companies are able to use the chaos of the industry as a whole and the hardships of their less powerful or less astute competitors as an opportunity to strengthen their own position. Dividing silk companies, as textile bankers divide them, roughly into three classes, we find a certain number of larger companies successfully making profits, many border-line companies which *might* make profits, and a large number of small unsuccessful concerns which do not and never could make profits. Unto him that hath shall be given, is the rule in capitalist society. The large concerns become more successful; the small ones are eliminated.

1927 a Good Year

A study of 26 textile manufacturing corporations, made by the accountants Ernst and Ernst, places the combined total net profits for the year 1927 at $13,953,000 as compared with a combined deficit of $4,205,000 in 1926. Only two of the firms reported a deficit in 1927 compared with 15 in the previous year.

The *American Bankers' Association Journal* for March, 1928, writing on "Profits in the Silk Industry," compares 1926 and 1927 reports of several leading silk, rayon and hosiery manufacturers. Eleven companies for which exactly comparable statements were available, had aggregate earnings of $10,588,000 in 1927 as compared with $8,728,000 in 1926, a gain of 21 per cent. These figures show net profits available for dividends or to carry to surplus after all ex-

penses, depreciation, interest charges and provision for taxes have been deducted. From the bankers' list and from other sources,[1] the following list has been compiled:

NET PROFITS OF SILK COMPANIES

Company	*1927*	*1926*
Belamose Corp.	$199,000	$61,000 d
Belding-Heminway	522,000	797,000
Celanese Corp.	2,754,000	909,000
Century Ribbon Mills	68,000	156,000 d
General Silk Corp.*	126,000 d	1,397,000
Gotham Silk Hosiery Co., Inc.	3,697,000	2,879,000
Julius Kayser & Co.†	1,729,000	1,139,000
H. R. Mallinson & Co.	464,000	547,000 d
McCallum Hosiery Co.	175,000	326,000‡
Phœnix Hosiery Co.	820,000	1,739,000
Real Silk Hosiery Mills, Inc.	545,000	731,000
Tubize Artificial Silk Co.	2,600,000	.....
Van Raalte Co., Inc.	16,000	136,000

d means deficit.
* Years ending September 30; 9 months ending September 30, 1927.
† Years ending June 30.
‡ Before certain charges.

Gotham Silk Hosiery Company is the prize winner of these companies. Its "earnings" were around $3,700,000. Its "capitalization consists of preferred and common stock carried at $9,630,000 and a surplus of $3,926,000, on which combined investment last year's return was at the rate of 27.3 per cent!" For the first half of 1928, the net profit is $1,389,000. No wonder that the company declared a stock dividend in January, 1928.

The Real Silk Hosiery Mills, Inc., busily engaged in fighting against the Full Fashioned Hosiery Workers' Union, was still able to gather in $540,000 in profits in 1927 and $245,000 for the first half of 1928. Its ratio of current

[1] Moody's Manual of Industrials, and Standard Corporation Records, Standard Statistics Co., 1928.

assets to current liabilities is now 2 to 1, and the company has working capital of over $2,000,000. It employs 3,000 workers in two plants, one in Indianapolis and the other in Philadelphia.

Some Leading Silk Companies

SIDNEY BLUMENTHAL AND COMPANY

Sidney Blumenthal (The Shelton Looms) turned a 1926 loss into a profit of $1,056,000 in 1927, equal to $43.85 a share on the preferred stock, and $3.73 a share on the common stock. For the first part of 1928 they inspire a column in the *Wall Street Journal* headed "Big Profits Seen for Blumenthal." It seems that profits for the second three months of 1928 exceeded profits for the entire first half of last year. The company owns three subsidiaries, South River Spinning Company at South River, New Jersey, for a spinning plant, Uncasville-Shelton Company at Uncasville, Conn., and the Shelton Home Building Association. The main plant at Shelton, Conn., employs 2,500 workers. The company tolerates a weavers' club, watched over paternalistically and not affiliated with any general labor union, but allowed to invite outside labor men or women to speak at Saturday evening meetings. These weavers are mostly American-born of English or Scotch descent.

Blumenthal is one of the small group of silk manufacturers who, together, produce two-thirds of the total silk value in the United States.

THE CHENEY FAMILY

Cheney Brothers, oldest silk manufacturers in the United States, own the town of South Manchester, Conn., control all its public utilities and the scenery too. The company is a family affair and does not publish its balance sheet, because the stock is "closely held." Capitalization was doubled in

1925 from $10,000,000 to $20,000,000. Five members of the family who are stockholders are also officers of the corporation and receive substantial salaries. Seven of the directors are Cheneys. They are also directors of the local electric and water companies and of the street railroad.

Charles Cheney, president of the company, is also director of the Chemical National Bank, New York. Among other directors of this big bank are Lammot DuPont, president of the great DuPont company, and others with close Morgan connections.

As a New Year's present to 4,500 employees, Cheney Brothers announced a wage cut of 10 per cent on January 2, 1928. They claimed to be paying 23 per cent more in wage rates than their competitors in the industry. As the name "Cheney Silks" has a special trade value the company has been able to maintain a price level above most of their competitors. But average earnings of silk workers in Connecticut are less than average earnings of silk workers in New Jersey, and Cheney Brothers employ almost half of all the silk workers in Connecticut. The visitor's questions about wage rates are evaded by the guide who shows him through the great plant.

That the Cheney Brothers had not reduced their own standard of living was clear to the visitor this spring who saw the beautiful mansions and lawns of the family estates dominating the town. Magnificent old trees, planted when the company was established in 1838, partly screen the brothers' big houses and gardens. The quiet park-like security of these estates is a contrast to the shattering thunder of weave-rooms in the mills, a good half mile beyond. On the other side of the mills are the company-owned houses for workers, so proudly shown to all visitors as part of the "Cheney welfare."

But only about one-tenth of the workers can live in these houses. Single men and women are watched over in com-

pany boarding houses. Nothing is said about the families of lower paid workers. And rents of all the company's houses have been increased in spite of the wage cut.

"We are all one big family here," asserts the personnel manager. The company has beaten the union to it. It has provided baseball grounds, basketball field, silver cups as trophies for the winning teams, and above all the company union, called "employees' representation" by the industrial relations department. A council of 25 representatives from the various departments is carefully supervised by the company. "Oh, yes, we supervise the elections," said the company guide. "An election committee meets beforehand, and the employees may vote for one of the three names highest on the list."

No real labor union has ever succeeded in getting a toehold within the sacred boundaries of South Manchester. Every organizer of every real textile union knows that the Cheney watch-men will put him off the premises the moment they discover he is there. To assist the watch-men, the Cheneys keep their own police force in an imposing station-house at the entrance to the town.

SAMUEL J. ARONSOHN

Another family corporation is Samuel J. Aronsohn, Inc., capitalized for $1,000,000, but never revealing its profits in any balance sheet. Not needing to sell stock on the open market, Aronsohn believes that the financial status of his company is his own private affair. That the corporation is in a strong position is known to "the trade." Mills at Paterson, N. J., Christiana, Coatesville and Scranton, Pa., employ about 1,000 workers on broad silks. Aronsohn's does its own throwing in the big Scranton mill.

"If the union gets into Scranton, I'll move my factory to another town," announced Aronsohn. He discharged a girl

for talking unionism and threatened to discharge another. "Wouldn't you like a shorter work week, 48 hours instead of over 50?" an organizer asked some of the Aronsohn workers. "Gee, we don't earn much even on 50," was the answer.

Aronsohn himself lives at the Hotel Plaza, New York City. Room and meals at this hotel cost more for one day than a young girl in his Scranton throwing mill can earn in a week.

CORTICELLI'S PROFITS AND WORKERS

Corticelli Silk Company, second largest silk concern in New England, employs over 3,000 workers in five mills at Florence, Leeds and Haydenville, Mass., and at New London and Norwich, Conn. The company's profits for the last three years have easily paid annual 7 per cent dividends on $1,500,000 preferred stock and $4 a share on 50,000 shares of common stock. Working capital has averaged $4,000,000. This statement does not include the profits of Belding-Corticelli, Ltd., in Canada, controlled by Corticelli Silk Company.

Known to the world by its trade mark of a kitten playing with a spool of silk, the company makes not only sewing, embroidery and knitting silks, but also silk hosiery, dress silks, and satins. The mills at Haydenville and Leeds handle the raw silk material. At Florence, New London and Norwich it is woven into goods. Farmers' wives and daughters work in these New England mills to help pay the farm taxes or mortgage interest. Polish and French workers are here too. One of the older Corticelli buildings at Leeds called the "button shop" is a rickety, dirty wooden structure still used for over a hundred girls. Picking on the top floor is done by 75 girls working for only $10 a week. It is especially tedious work, very hard on the eyes, for the electric

lights glare up from below the glass tables. The girls must see and pick out every straw, hair or foreign particle from the raw silk floss. No talking is allowed in the room.

Downstairs in the spreading room girls are spreading the floss in even layers in machines, preparing the silk for spinning. Those on time work in this department are getting from $13 to $16 a week.

Corticelli's is a non-union company. Neither the United Textile Workers nor the Associated Silk Workers has ever organized these men and women. But in 1922 when a wage cut was put through, workers responded with a spontaneous strike even without an organization. They were beaten and went back to work at the cut rate.

The amount paid in dividends to Corticelli stockholders this last year could have added $5 a week to the earnings of more than 1,000 workers.

MALLINSON OFFICIALS' SALARIES

The papier mâché elephant in Mallinson's Fifth Avenue show window does not tell the secrets of the firm. The profits of H. R. Mallinson Company for 1927 were $463,000 after depreciation and other charges were deducted. Already for the first half of 1928 Mallinson reported net profits of $520,000, which is more than for the whole of 1927. Dividends of 7 per cent on nearly $2,000,000 of preferred stock have been paid regularly for the last seven years.

Minority common stockholders have sued the company, charging that Hiram R. Mallinson, president, and E. Irving Hanson, vice-president, receive excessively large salaries. A few years ago the president's salary was increased from $80,000 to $125,000 a year. The vice-president's was increased from $40,000 to $85,000 a year. The lesser stockholders think the former salaries were "adequate"! To New

York silk workers averaging $1,100 a year, a $40,000 a year salary would seem quite "adequate." The stockholders' suit has just been dismissed; officials' salaries have not been reduced.

Not all the shimmering de luxe silks of this company are what they are advertised to be. Stuart Chase, in *Your Money's Worth,* shows up Mallinson in a battle with the Federal Trade Commission on false advertising. "Witness the case of H. R. Mallinson, a great New York silk house. It advertised 'silks de luxe; the world's finest silk, the word Mallinson on the selvage assures you of the genuine' in connection with certain products which did not measure up to the words used." The case against this large company was dismissed but one of the commissioners in a minority report said it seemed to him "utterly illogical and unfair," to dismiss the case against a large company and prosecute smaller concerns. Mallinson had been selling artificial silk, which costs about half as much as real silk to produce, at real silk prices.

The great modern factory of this company in Astoria, Long Island, is only one of the six mills owned and run by the same corporation. Throwing plants in Paterson and Trenton, N. J., for their own use, another broad silk mill in Union City, N. J., plants in Allentown and Erie, Pa., for the making of plain and Jacquard silks, all contribute toward the profits, probably $1,000,000 in 1928. Silk workers in any one of these towns seeing a Mallinson plant of moderate size cannot afford to underestimate the power of this big non-union silk company. Low wages of their women workers, long hours in the company's Pennsylvania plants, speed-up in making even those figured "silks de luxe" all tend to hold down wages and speed up the pace for other silk workers.

GENERAL SILK CORPORATION, *formerly* KLOTS THROWING COMPANY

This big corporation, reorganized in 1927, constitutes a complete vertical combination in the silk industry. It owns and operates either directly or through its subsidiaries fifteen modern mills in six states. Its throwing mills in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, and New Jersey do 8 per cent of all the silk throwing in the United States. It has a spun silk division in New Bedford, Mass., weaving mills at Central Falls, R. I., and Carbondale, Pa., and its own purchasing offices in Kobe and Yokohama, Japan, and in Canton and Shanghai, China. It purchases raw silk in the East, throws silk both for its own use and on commission, produces spun silk, weaves and finishes and sells all kinds of silk goods.

Marcus Frieder, president of the big company, and Leonard P. Frieder, vice-president, are now identified by all New Bedford textile workers as responsible for the "Frieder plan" of speed-up which will be described in a later chapter.

Charles Cheney of Cheney Brothers helped to reorganize this big silk corporation in 1927. Each stockholder of the former company by this "readjustment" increased his holdings. The company expecting to make larger profits can thus conceal the profits by increasing the number of shares. Holders of preferred stock in the old company fared even better, receiving 110 to 150 per cent in preferred stock of the new company. The working capital of this corporation is now $3,500,000. For the purchase of its own raw silk the company has nearly $3,000,000 in letters of credit.

But the 4,000 wage-earners employed by the General Silk Corporation are kept in ignorance of the company's size and power. The fifteen mills are so scattered that workers do

not even know how many the company employs. They know only that wage-earners in throwing mills average less than $1,000 a year.

DUPLAN SILK CORPORATION

Duplan Silk Corporation, associated by rumor with Cheney, B. Edmund David, and Schwarzenbach, Huber in a proposed merger, announces profits of $1,051,000 for the year ending May 31, 1928. The Duplan corporation itself was made by a merger this year of three partly owned subsidiary companies, now called the Dorranceton, Puritan and Guaranty Divisions, operating plants at Kingston, Wilkes-Barre and Nanticoke, Pa. The corporation now employs about 5,000 workers.

At the Wilkes-Barre plant the older workers have lately been laid off, and a large number of very young workers employed. The workers are sure that many of these children are under the legal age for such employment. It is said that the parents, desperately up against it on account of low wages, have "persuaded" school superintendents to sign certificates for the early employment of these children. Some of the youngest workers are earning only $3 a week, and many get only $5 or $6 a week. This Duplan mill in Wilkes-Barre is a throwing plant and young workers easily learn the spinning and winding.

Profits of this corporation and its subsidiaries have been over a million dollars each year for the past four years, after depreciation and taxes were set aside. Net tangible assets on May 31, 1928, were $14,486,000 or over $289 a share of preferred stock and over $27 a share of common stock. The big banking house, Lehman Brothers, responsible this summer for selling Duplan 8 per cent stock, has a representative on the new board of directors of the corporation.

SCHWARZENBACH, HUBER AND COMPANY

This company, one of the four big concerns named in the silk merger rumor, is very reticent about its financial affairs. The corporation is known to be one of the largest silk manufacturers in the country, with sixteen mills in five states, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Virginia, and Alabama, employing 4,776 workers. The stock is closely held. No balance sheet is published. Even the total capitalization is not revealed.

A shrewd guess would place this company as at least in the class with Duplan Silk Corporation, making profits of a million dollars a year. The combined capital of the four big companies mentioned in the rumored merger is over $50,000,000 and reported in the *Journal of Commerce* to be nearer to $100,000,000. Schwarzenbach, Huber and Company was probably contributing a good quarter of the amount.

Meanwhile in the company's Bayonne, N. J., plant weavers earn an average of $22 a week on three looms and $13 a week on two looms. A young weaver starts on one loom at $10 a week. Winders get an average of $18 a week. Spoolers who spool the silk get $20 a week. The working day is nine hours.

AMALGAMATED SILK CORPORATION

By a merger in 1923, this concern became one of the large silk companies in the United States, with mills at Binghamton and Hornell, New York; Allentown, Catasauqua, East Mauch Chunk, East Stroudsburg, Emaus, Green Lake, Kutztown, Marietta, Northampton, Olyphant, and York, Pennsylvania, and Norfolk, Virginia. With its own dyeing and finishing company at Allentown it is in a position to carry through broad silk manufacture from raw material to distribution in sales-rooms on Fifth Avenue, New York City. The

corporation announced profits of $474,000 for the six months ending April 30, 1928.

Over 2,000 workers employed by this company are so scattered over Pennsylvania, in more than a dozen small plants, that they do not know each other as employees of one big concern. The company has avoided New Jersey where silk workers are partly organized.

SUSQUEHANNA SILK MILLS

Busily selling $8,000,000 worth of 5 per cent gold debentures this summer through Lee, Higginson & Co. and the National City Company, a Rockefeller house, Susquehanna advertises itself as "one of the largest manufacturers in the world of piece-dyed silk, silk mixed textile and artificial silk fabrics woven in the raw and dyed and printed later according to demands." With its subsidiaries it owns and operates eleven mills and plants in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Ohio and Georgia and is equipped to perform every process in course of manufacturing from preparation of thread for weaving to finished product."

Current assets of $12,820,000 of this company are more than eleven times the current liabilities. For six years the net "earnings" have averaged over five and a half times the necessary $469,000 to meet the debentures sold this summer.

About 4,000 employees work in the eleven plants owned by Susquehanna. The corporation runs a savings fund at 6 per cent interest, because, they say, such a savings fund helps to avoid "labor turnover." This means that workers feel it is difficult to get back their savings if they want to leave. The president of the company, Henry Schniewind, Jr., also president of the Silk Association of America, lives on New York's "gold coast," just off upper Fifth Avenue, not far from the H. C. Frick mansion-museum. Silk and

steel have been profitable for presidents and owners of large companies.

C. K. EAGLE AND COMPANY

When Charles K. Eagle, the big silk manufacturer, committed suicide in 1928 it was found that he had left a million dollars "for a foundation for working girls." Another $1,110,000 was disposed of in specific bequests. To make up to "the poor working girls" for what is not paid them in wages, he directed that the money be used to "furnish them more comfortable living surroundings and accommodations." The foundation is to give first preference to "American girls of American parentage."

His company employs 4,163 workers in seven Pennsylvania mills at Shamokin, Kulpmont, Phœnixville, Bethlehem, Gettysburg, Mechanicsburg and Bellefonte. The concern is now expanding with the purchase of a huge twelve-story corner building in New York City's garment center, in order to provide direct service to the cutting-up trade. The C. K. Eagle Company does its own throwing and also commission throwing, winds, weaves, dyes and finishes plain and Jacquard silks.

Ribbon Mills, Union and Non-Union

A comparison of two ribbon mills, one union and the other non-union, shows both to be in excellent financial condition, in spite of fashion's decree against ribbons. Taylor, Friedsam Company, the union firm, employs 250 workers on wide and narrow Jacquard ribbons. With capital authorized up to $500,000 they are doing a successful business, and are respectfully regarded in textile trade circles as in high standing.

The non-union ribbon mills of Miesch Manufacturing

Company are owned now by the John C. Welwood Corporation. The company has recently grown by a merger described in a later section. Its capitalization was increased from an original $100,000 to $1,000,000 in 1920. John C. Welwood, president of the corporation, lives on upper Fifth Avenue, overlooking Central Park. He is the largest stockholder in his company. Assets of over $3,000,000 of the concern are in ratio of about three to one of liabilities. It claims "the largest ribbon business in the world." Broad silk mills at Hawley, Honesdale, and White Mills, Pa., also help largely in building up the profits of the John C. Welwood Corporation.

New Bedford, a Mixed Goods Center

The great 1928 strike of New Bedford textile workers against a wage cut of 10 per cent makes the profits of New Bedford fine goods companies especially significant. Late in 1927, just before the New England textile pay cuts began, the trade paper, *American Wool and Cotton Reporter,* under the heading "Mill Shares," boasted, "We bought a few shares of Wamsutta (a New Bedford Company) three or four months ago at $50 a share. Within a few days Wamsutta sold at $72, and as this is written Wamsutta is at $69. We bought some Amoskeag common at $52. Now it is $60. *We are sure that a careful selection of mill shares at present prices will pay large profits.*" (Emphasis mine.—*G. H.*)

Textile World, in its annual review number, reports for New Bedford fine goods mills "favorable operations for 1927. . . . At least fifteen New Bedford cotton mill corporations have never missed paying dividends since they started paying them, covering a period fourteen to thirty-six years." The dividend rate for the past ten years has averaged $11.27 per share. Eighteen out of twenty-three mill corporations paid dividends in 1927, one disbursing as high as $32, an-

other $28, and a third $12 a share. One company, Soule, declared an extra dividend of $20, making $28 a share in all. The Labor Bureau, Inc., made a special study for the New Bedford unions, revealing the fact that twenty-two companies together had a surplus in 1926 of $18,992,000 and in 1927 of $19,024,000.

Border-Line Companies

Between the larger corporations, declaring profits, merging and growing still larger and the weak concerns, always on the verge of bankruptcy, are the companies called by the banking houses "border-line." Bankers keep their eyes especially on these border-line firms, extending credit, advising changes in management, or planning to merge a half dozen of them into one large consolidation.

Here are five typical silk mills in Scranton, Pa., all "operating steadily" this year, and all non-union, as are practically all Pennsylvania mills. The Mutual Silk Throwing Company employs 150 workers, the Bliss Silk Throwing Company employs 100, the Keystone Silk Company has 50 workers, Katterman and Mitchell has 160, and the Black Diamond Silk Company employs 200 in two mills. They work from fifty to fifty-four hours a week in a state where the average wage for silk workers is below $18.

Two typical non-union broad silk companies in Paterson, N. J., are Audiger and Meyer Silk Company and Gilt Edge Silk Mills of New Jersey, Inc. Officers of Audiger and Meyer do not reveal their financial status, but they meet their ordinary contracts promptly, do an active business and are sold up to $15,000. In their modern plant at Paterson, they have 212 Jacquard looms for the making of fancy tie-silks. The company is capitalized at $100,000.

Gilt Edge Silk Mills, also non-union, is a larger concern, capitalized at $200,000 with plants at Paterson, N. J., and at

New Bedford, Mass. The New Bedford mill employs 115 workers who did not go out on strike with the New Bedford fine goods cotton workers this year. The last financial statement of this company gave current assets of $768,000 and liabilities of $203,000, a ratio of 3.7 to 1. The mills operate regularly and are sold up to $75,000. This is what the bankers call "a very satisfactory showing."

A typical union broad silk shop in Paterson, John Hollbach Company, is reported as in good financial condition. It has paid-in capital of $350,000 and authorized capital up to $500,000. The company was established in 1896, incorporated in 1916, and continues a steady business, manufacturing plain and Jacquard tie silks and corset cloth. It is a successful concern, sold up to $10,000. Workers in this shop have union conditions. That means the eight-hour day and the forty-four-hour week. It means a price list for weaving, ranging from ten cents to fifteen and one-half cents a yard, according to the kind of silk to be woven.

Small Concerns

In a list of six new silk firms recently incorporating, only one has a capitalization as high as $100,000. The others are all less, and one is capitalized at only $5,000. A multitude of small concerns in Paterson, N. J., has led to the belief that any silk worker can buy a loom and a winding frame and set up a silk mill. Often the looms are bought second-hand, for only $250, and paid for on time payments. Some silk workers have now become petty capitalists. Incorporating in small concerns, they hire space and have one loom-fixer for several mills, and are winding and weaving silk. But their financial success is uncertain, to say the least. They are ignorant of buying and selling, of raw silk trading, throwing, dyeing, finishing and distributing. They see other small

concerns about them, but they forget or know nothing about the 179 big mills commanding the market and the skilled services of experts in each line, employing half of all the silk workers and producing nearly two-thirds of all the silk produced in the United States.

CHAPTER IV

MERGERS

"1928, YEAR of mergers," was the slogan of banking houses, *Wall Street Journal* and *Journal of Commerce.* Big mergers just put through in automobiles, gas and steel, encourage banking interests to press on for mergers in the textile industries. A big plan for making over the whole textile city of Fall River, smaller mergers of dyeing companies and other textile concerns, persistent rumors of a big merger coming in the silk industry, keep the textile banks in hopeful competition.

A corporation lawyer, Gilbert H. Montague of New York, speaking before the Mining Congress, states that general conditions are now favorable for mergers.

> More and bigger consolidations among producers, manufacturers and distributors under proper conditions and with adequate legal safeguards, are permitted and indeed invited by the present attitude of the court and the government. By avoiding unlawful acquisitions of capital stock, and *by taking care to leave outside enough competitors to insure effective outside competition,* such consolidations can now be set up in many industries in entire conformity to the law. . . . More and bigger consolidations may soon be expected in a number of industries that are now the worst sufferers from these conditions.—(Emphasis mine.—*G.H.*)

As larger undertakings succeed, smaller undertakings are absorbed or fail. The big fellows can divide the markets among themselves, fix the prices and divide the profits. The rayon cartel already has this control over the rayon industry. In other branches of textiles, mergers planned, outlined or

already executed are hastening the concentration of production and control in the hands of a few larger companies.

Bankers and Mergers

Without the big investment banking houses, this process of increasing concentration of production would be impossible. The big investment bankers—usually with the help of smaller investment bankers—sell to the general public of large and small investors the securities through which millions of dollars are gathered in for big plants and up-to-the-minute equipment. The investment house draws off its percentage for the deal—the large banking firms having, incidentally, unloaded most of the risk on the smaller banking firms—and on the basis of inside information the investment house picks up blocks of the choicest stocks and bonds for the members of the firm.

Industrial capital (including textiles) and finance capital are thus growing together more and more closely. The big banks wield an all-powerful weapon. They can grant or refuse credit to the industrial corporations and thus control policy. Biggest companies, already successful, can get most credit, which makes possible technical progress, which in turn makes a larger profit, which again increases the size of the companies.

Various banking houses are financing the textile mergers described in this book. But directly and indirectly all large-scale industry in this country is depending more and more upon the two giant financial groups, Morgan and Rockefeller. Directors of big textile corporations are also directors of big banks. Some of their names and connections are given in Chapter III, company by company.

The Daily News Record, textile trade paper, is valiantly promoting mergers of textile companies by quoting in full the speeches of bankers and "experts" who advocate such

consolidation. Paul M. Mazur, of the big banking house of Lehman Brothers, asserts: "With mergers the textile business of America may be able to prosper; without mergers, its hope of rehabilitation is desperate indeed." Alexander Whiteside, president of the Wool Institute, declares that "the day of alliances—possible combinations—in the textile field is at hand."

As bankers see the problem, "textile mills can be roughly grouped into three classes. First come those unusually successful concerns which have been able to make money even during the depression of the last few years due to ability of the management. . . . The second group is made up of companies whose number and size are still large in spite of the drastic elimination that has already taken place—companies . . . which are not now successful but give promise of profitable operations provided certain changes are made. The third and last group consists of those units which for one reason or another are no longer economically justified."

This is the analysis of a bank president, Walter S. Bucklin of the National Shawmut Bank of Boston, much concerned in loans to textile companies. The smaller unsuccessful mills in his third class would never be considered for any merger or consolidation. In his second class would fall a very large number of silk mills, some of them promising for mergers. The big successful mills in his first class are the most desirable for mergers. Though already large, they can be made into bigger and better consolidations. It is the investment bankers who profit most by the refinancing and rehabilitation schemes. Every new merger tightens the financiers' hold on industry.

Rumors of Mergers

A merger of four large silk corporations, Cheney Bros., Schwarzenbach, Huber & Co., Duplan Silk Corp. and B.

Edmund David Company has been rumored, denied and rumored again. It would include companies employing more than 15,000 workers and a total capital of from $50,000,000 to $100,000,000 (estimates vary); the bankers to execute the scheme would be J. P. Morgan & Co. It is described by the *Journal of Commerce* as a plan of broad silk producers and bankers, "with the view of centralizing mill operations, eliminating disastrous competition and waste, and controlling more effectively the flow of surplus merchandise." The four companies "would dominate the industry." "The consolidated corporation would be like the U. S. Steel Corporation or the American Woolen Company." Charles Cheney, president of Cheney Bros., showed his interest in mergers by helping to reorganize the Klots Throwing Company to become the big General Silk Corporation.

Another rumor, or perhaps it is the same one in another form, associated the name of Floyd H. Rowland, consulting engineer, with a $100,000,000 merger of silk companies, to be called the Silk Products Corporation. Rowland believes in the vertical as against the horizontal merger, in other words, in a corporation controlling everything from raw material to distribution of product, rather than in a grouping of mills making similar classes of goods. He outlined before the recent convention of cost accountants a theoretical merger of silk firms, and ended thus: "Now that I prove these facts, and the paper merger is a success, it is only necessary to prepare a financing plan, get the options, determine the management, find the right bankers and see that the bonds sell, after which we will try to earn our first dividend equal to our estimated savings."

Smaller Mergers of 1928

In order to compete successfully with the two leading dyeing companies, National Silk Dyeing Company and United

Piece Dye Works, a merger of four dye works to be known as the Associated Dyeing and Printing Corporation was effected in May, 1928. The four which put their business and assets into the new corporation were Royal Piece Dye Works, Colt Dye Works, Uhlig Piece Dye Works, and Cramer and King, all of Paterson, N. J. Four small companies have thus combined into one large one. Net profits of these four companies for the last four years were: $430,000 in 1924, $436,000 in 1925, $667,000 in 1926, $957,000 in 1927. Apparently the dyeing business has been steadily improving, but there has been no advance in wages in any of these four companies. Women dye workers who were slaving for twenty-five cents an hour in Paterson in 1925 are still slaving for twenty-five cents an hour in 1928.

These four that have merged their interests employ among them about 2,000 workers. They are capitalized at over $6,000,000. Banking houses headed by Eastman Dillon Company and the International Germanic Trust Company carried out the financing of the new corporation, which becomes one of the largest silk, rayon and mixed goods dyeing and finishing companies in the United States.

Coupled with news of this completed merger goes the report of a second large merger of dyeing companies in Paterson, not yet complete.

The Miesch Manufacturing Company, owned by the John C. Welwood Company, has just been merged with the Buser Silk Company. This company is described in the chapter on profits. The two merging concerns run eleven plants in New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania, and have now become a $3,000,000 corporation, the Miesch Manufacturing Company employing 2,000 workers. The best of the looms in the Buser mill have been moved to the Miesch plant and the old looms are discarded. The company states that all workers in the Buser factory have been taken into the Miesch mill.

A private meeting of hosiery manufacturers and bankers at the Manufacturers' Club in Philadelphia in 1928 will almost certainly result in a merger of seven big hosiery mills in a $15,000,000 plan. The five concerns operating seven plants in the South, Pennsylvania and the West, are American Textiles of Bay City, Mich., True Shape Hosiery Company of Philadelphia, Minneapolis Knitting Works of Minneapolis, Thos. W. Buck Hosiery Company of Philadelphia, and United Hosiery Mills Corporation of Chattanooga, Tenn. These companies employ about 5,000 workers.

Textile mergers are reported in Great Britain and in Europe. Four British silk firms are uniting to put throwing and spinning, weaving, printing, dyeing and distribution all under one central control in a big vertical merger. Manchester cotton-spinning companies are launching the Lancashire Textile Corporation to control 2,000,000 spindles.

In the South

The huge anti-union Cannon Mills group in North Carolina has just become still larger by a merger completed in 1928. Cannon Mills Company acquires all the assets of Cannon Manufacturing Company and of eight other companies making cotton towels, yarns, sheetings, and rayon fabrics. Its output of towels alone constitutes over 50 per cent of all the cotton towels produced in the United States.

Profits of this company and the merged companies for the last three years have averaged $4,000,000 a year. C. A. Cannon, an officer of the company, is also a director of the Duke-controlled Piedmont and Northern Railway. Cannon interests are putting a new mill in Badin, N. C., the American aluminum town. The town advertised for an industry to use wives and daughters of aluminum workers.

Cannon employees are working eleven and twelve hours a day on day and night shifts, sixty hours a week, for wages

averaging little more than $2 a day. Profits of the company for this past year could have doubled the wages of 6,000 mill workers.

The other big mills group in North Carolina, the anti-union Chadwick-Hoskins, is also involved in a vast merger to be floated by the banking house of Flint & Co., New York. The financing company took an option on 150 cotton-spinning mills in five southern states, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama and Tennessee. B. B. Gossett, who is president of Chadwick-Hoskins, an official in the Gossett Mills and also a railroad director, will be executive head of the huge consolidation. Gossett Mills have already expanded enormously by a merger of five South Carolina mills. "If this merger is completed," *The Daily News Record* quoted cotton men as stating, "a considerable number of smaller cotton merchants are going to have to go out of business. The big cotton firms will get all the trade."

By a merger of Brandon Mills with Poinsett and Woodruff Mills, all of Greenville, the Brandon Corporation in 1928 became the biggest South Carolina company, with a capital of $9,500,000. South Carolina does not regard the Pacific Mills and the New England Southern Mills, with headquarters in Massachusetts, but operating plants in the southern state, as strictly South Carolina concerns. Pacific Mills have an authorized capital of $40,000,000.

"No labor organization in any textile plant in this state," boast the South Carolina super-boosters, in their community ads, appealing to textile manufacturers to come South. Wages in South Carolina mills average just over $12 a week.

The Fall River Plan

"Forward Fall River," "Fall River might as well be the starting point." The greatest textile consolidation in the

history of the industry is prophesied as Homer Loring and the banking interests swoop down to take possession of the little old New England city.

A merger is well under way to turn twenty or twenty-five successful companies into one, crush out the small concerns unable to keep up with the procession, scrap 1,000,000 spindles as out-of-date, install new automatic machinery, throw out 10,000 mill workers and their families, and thus build a "smaller and better Fall River." The first step was the merging of three banks into one, the B. M. C. Durfee Trust Company, which will control the banking situation and thus "be in a position to dictate just what course mills are to follow . . . Mr. Loring made it clear that without such a bank, the second step, a merger of the mills, and the installation of up-to-date machinery would be impossible." Boston financial leaders have the consolidation well in hand. New York financiers and banking interests are watching Loring's plan with interest, and may bid to get control of the New England textile industry.

When the Fall River textile industry is made over it is generally understood that other New England cities will be taken up one by one in a movement to merge the entire textile industry of New England.

CHAPTER V

RAYON

TWENTY years ago rayon was a joke. A mill in Manchester, England, was laughed at for years as "the mill where they weave silk stockings out of cabbages." To-day rayon is a $2,000,000,000 world industry.

The rayon boom affects the working class in one way and the owning class in another. Silk workers weave rayon as they weave real silk. The thread breaks a little more easily, but it is more uniform in quality. The same looms can weave silk, rayon, and cotton or mixtures. Working women, daughters and wives of workers, are wearing rayon stockings and underwear. It is cheaper than silk. Rayon socks and underwear for men are now on the shop counters. Rayon mixtures make inexpensive dresses and shirts. Meanwhile the making of rayon fiber is drawing thousands of workers into a new low-paid industry.

But most of all the rayon boom affects the owning class. "The public has gasped at the stupendous figures recently given out by some of the companies manufacturing rayon," as one engineer puts it. Shareholders in British and German rayon companies have "earned" more than 600 per cent without lifting a hand. In the United States rayon factories costing $6,000,000 or $8,000,000 or $10,000,000 and more are springing up in the South. Governor Byrd of Virginia made special trips to New York in 1928 to secure for his state another $10,000,000 rayon plant.

What Rayon Is

The earliest processes of making rayon or artificial silk used cotton linters for the cellulose base. To-day 75 per cent is viscose rayon, made from wood pulp.

Rayon means "the artificial silk product, the basis and chief ingredient of which is cellulose." This is the official definition of the Federal Trade Commission. The U. S. Bureau of Standards describes it as made from "cellulose by pressing or drawing the cellulose solution through an orifice and solidifying it in the form of a filament."

Finely ground wood or cotton is made into a thick pulp or jelly by certain substances of a rather complex chemical nature. The pulp is then forced through the very small holes of a spinnerette, so minute that over 1,000 holes are contained in an area no larger than a five-cent piece. The liquid comes out in tiny smooth rods, often finer than a human hair. The rods harden when exposed to the air or treated with certain chemicals. Thus man makes a filament which is chemically the same as the secretion of the silkworm.

Until lately rayon fibers have broken easily when wet. But perfecting of the rayon-making process has largely done away with this difficulty. Another improvement lately has reduced the high luster of rayon. It is often spun into thread with fibers of real silk.

The manufacture of artificial silk began in France in 1892. In the next twenty years the Courtauld family in England were laying the basis of their great fortune in artificial silk manufacture, but their extraordinary profits were not revealed to the public until after the war.

The Boom

Courtauld's introduced their subsidiary, the Viscose Company, into the United States in 1912. Since then the United

States has moved up from fifth place in the ranks of rayon-producing companies to first place as largest producer, now turning out more than a quarter of the world's supply, and gaining steadily each year. Great Britain is second in the rayon race, Italy third (probably second in 1928), Germany fourth, France and Belgium fifth and sixth, the Netherlands and Japan seventh and eighth.

But British and German corporations still control the largest producing companies in the United States, Viscose, Glanzstoff and Bemberg. They are linked up with the vast international rayon cartel dominated by Courtauld's of Britain. The "Big Three" in the rayon world are Courtauld's, Glanzstoff of Germany, and Snia Viscosa of Italy. And the greatest of these is Courtauld's.

About 200,000 workers are now employed in rayon factories of a dozen countries. World production of rayon jumped from 40,000,000 pounds in 1919 to 285,000,000 pounds in 1927. This is a gain of 612 per cent in eight years. Total world production for 1928 will be more than 300,000,000.

For the United States the story of this rayon boom is told in Department of Commerce figures:

	1927	*1925*	*Percentage of Increase*
Number of establishments...	19	14	
Wage-earners (average no.)..	26,341	19,128	37.7
Wages	$28,649,441	$22,975,605	24.7
Cost of materials.....	$25,747,792	$18,447,965	39.3
Value of products	$109,888,336	$88,060,962	24.8
Value added by manufacture	$84,140,544	$69,582,997	20.9
Horse power	122,406	66,966	82.8

In only two years the number of workers increased by 38 per cent and the value of products by 25 per cent, while horse power increased by 83 per cent. But the increase in amount spent for wages did not keep pace with the larger number

of workers employed. Average earnings of rayon workers were less in 1927 than two years before.

For 1928 it was expected that rayon production in the United States would be 100,000,000 pounds. During 1927 not only the year's home output of around 75,000,000 pounds and a reserve supply of some 12,000,000 pounds was consumed in the United States but more than 16,000,000 pounds was imported. American textile mills use about one-third of the world rayon supply.

Opinions differ as to whether rayon is cutting into the silk and cotton goods industries. Most silk manufacturers think rayon is making for the increased salability of silk and fine goods. "Rayon has given to the textile industry a new fiber to blend with silk, wool, linen and cotton," according to H. R. Mallinson, one of the leading silk merchants.

The largest amount of rayon is used for underwear. Hosiery comes next. Cotton goods manufacture is third. Silk manufacture is fourth in consumption of rayon. Cotton mills are using more and more of this new fiber each year for popular mixtures. Both cotton and silk textile workers are winding and weaving rayon. "Good news for silkworms," says the *New York Evening Journal.* Profits of rayon companies, to be described in this chapter, have been made solely from the production of rayon yarn. None of the rayon companies weaves its own fabrics. They produce rayon filaments and spin them into yarn to be sold to hosiery, silk or cotton mills for knitting or winding and weaving.

Munitions and Rayon

The secret of this big jump forward in rayon production since the war is connected with preparation for the next war! A *New York Times* writer has let the cat out of the bag. The secret was already known in Europe.

"Munitions plants were easily converted into rayon mills." (Emphasis mine.—*G.H.*) "The Armistice released manpower and raw materials." Both rayon (artificial silk) and dynamite can be made from nitro-cellulose. The nitro-cellulose process of making rayon in an artificial silk factory can be changed overnight into the production of dynamite. Under the innocent name of artificial silk factories, munitions plants are extended and maintained. It is probable that equipment in all rayon plants, not only those using the nitro-cellulose process, can be adapted for explosives.

DuPont, largest munitions corporation in the world, and Nobel, dynamite maker and donor of the "Peace Prize," are now making large additional profits from artificial silk. Tubize, an international explosives trust and artificial silk corporation, also connects the rayon industry with the chemical industry.

These great rayon plants are of vital importance to governments in connection with war preparedness. The Italian government has paid big subsidies to Snia Viscosa, now in the giant combine with Courtauld's. The British government in 1911 paid a subsidy to British Celanese, now a private independent company.

Rayon Cartel and Price Control

The rayon cartel comes closer to an international trust than any other known international cartel. This is the opinion of the U. S. Department of Commerce in a special report on cartels. The rayon trust controls 85 per cent of world rayon production. It has interests in Great Britain, the United States, Germany, Italy, Holland, France, Canada, Australia, India, Switzerland, and Japan.

European cartels worry American capitalists. Dr. Julius Klein, director of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, speaks for American business interests when he says

INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS IN THE RAYON INDUSTRY

the cartel is "a deliberately planned weapon to rout American business from foreign markets." But the rayon cartel is peculiar. The official report continues:

> The rayon industry represents the striking anomaly of an American industry producing a staple manufactured product of which the United States produces and consumes more than any other country in the world, but which is either directly controlled by or closely affiliated with foreign interests, in this particular case Courtauld's (Great Britain) and Vereinigte Glanzstoff-Bemberg (Germany), the leading members of the international combination. This condition is explained primarily by the fact that the basic patents of the industry are largely of European origin and that the European producers displayed considerable initiative and enterprise in taking advantage of the possibilities of the American market.

Also they showed considerable initiative in taking advantage of low-priced workers in the southern states. But this fact is not pointed out in the Department of Commerce report.

This international trust aims to eliminate "harmful competition" through (1) an agreement on prices; (2) a certain specialization in marketing without a definite territorial division; (3) an improvement of the product through interchange of patents and technical improvements.

Such international fixing of a stable price gives rayon a big advantage over raw silk. It eliminates, as intended, the speculation in prices which is easy in the raw silk trade. It allows no underbidding of one company by another. Average prices of rayon yarn have continued steadily below $2 a pound ever since early 1924. Throughout the last year and a half they have averaged continuously below $1.50, while raw silk prices went up and down between $5 and $6 a pound.

This gigantic control over millions of dollars and thousands of workers' lives heads up in Courtauld's of Britain. The

American Viscose Company, its subsidiary here, produces more than half the total American output. A combine with the German Vereinigte Glanzstoff and the Italian Snia Viscosa was concluded in 1927. "Close relations" were already established with the Dutch Enka, which is now building a vast American Enka plant in Asheville, North Carolina. With the adherence of the French producers during the second half of 1927, Courtauld's and its related companies now control between 80 and 90 per cent of the world rayon production.

The new combine is mainly held together by the interchange of shares. The whole trade has been rationalized. There has been no attempt as yet to control raw materials, wood pulp and cotton linters. "It is probably true that no great industry ever before has been built up with so little competition and so few failures."

What this international octopus of the "Big Three" means to American rayon workers is seen in the wage figures. Production and profits have increased mightily, even in the two years from 1925 to 1927. But earnings per worker were cut by 10 per cent, averaging now only about $20 a week. Such an average for 26,000 wage-earners means that very many workers are earning far less than $20 a week.

Courtauld's-Viscose Sky-Rocketing

What this international power means to the owners is seen in the spectacular profit figures of the company controlling 85 per cent of the world's rayon supply. Profits of $22,000,000 in 1927 told only part of the Courtauld story.

"Courtauld Shares Rise $65,000,000 in Value in Ten Minutes on Wild London Exchange," headlines on the front page of the *New York Times* in February, 1928, carried the good news to the possessing class. "The Old Lady of Threadneedle Street, as the Bank of England is called, had

a front row seat to-day at the most spectacular trading performance in artificial silk shares on the Stock Exchange which the commercial world has ever experienced. . . . The excitement spread like wild fire and affected all other sections of the artificial silk market. . . . Habitués of the Exchange found a parallel only in the great Kaffir boom in the '90s."

Dividends of Courtauld's for 1927 were nominally at the rate of 25 per cent. But several stock dividends had been issued in previous years to conceal the fabulous profits on actual investment. For every one dollar put into Courtauld's in 1913 the investor can now get $34. This is an increase of over 3,000 per cent. After the February sky-rocketing an extra dividend was declared in July, 1928, of $6,000,000. "A man who purchased 100 of the ordinary shares when the company was floated, and who had kept them as well as the previous bonuses received, could have realized a profit of £5,300 if he had sold them at £9 on the evening of the report. In 1920 he would have received a scrip bonus of 100 per cent; in 1921 one of 200 per cent and a gift in 1924 of 400 5 per cent preference shares. Even then he would have left to him his preference shares."

Courtauld's inspires a long article in the *Wall Street Journal* and special articles in the textile trade papers. *"It has a capital of* $160,000,000, *only* $10,000,000 *of which was paid in. All the rest came out of profits.* And the present market value of its securities is about $500,000,000." (Emphasis mine.—*G.H.*)

Samuel Courtauld is one of England's multi-millionaires, with an income of over $5,000,000 a year, "earned" in artificial silk. Fourteen other relatives share heavily in the profits of the corporation. For 300 years in England, ever since the Huguenot persecution drove them out of France, this family has been one of "master silk weavers," employing first apprentices and then a few "hands," profiting comfortably from the toil of their workers.

Courtauld's largest subsidiary, the Viscose Company in America, paid in a goodly share of the $22,000,000 profits reported by the parent company for 1927. American Viscose was originally financed out of the accrued profits of Courtauld's, and is now capitalized at $10,400,000. It is turning out in 1928 about 60 per cent of the total American production of rayon.

The Viscose Company is a non-union corporation, employing 15,000 workers in five huge plants at Marcus Hook and Lewiston, Pa., Parkersburg and Nitro, West Va., and Roanoke, Va. A new plant at Meadville, Pa., will employ 1,000 more workers.

The financial pages of the papers regret that "unfortunately for the investor, securities in the two largest and most prosperous producers, namely the Viscose Company and the DuPont Rayon Company, are not available." These securities are kept securely in the hands of the two families and their friends who control the two vast parent companies.

The Rise of DuPont Rayon

The mammoth power of DuPont and General Motors has already put DuPont second to Viscose in American production. DuPont will probably be first within the next three years.

New DuPont rayon plants of eight units at Waynesboro, Va., will cost $46,000,000. Construction will be rushed at top speed because the demand for rayon is great. Each unit will employ more than 800 workers, all kept non-union by the anti-union policy of DuPont. This gigantic plant will be the largest in the world. Its production will put Virginia ahead of any other state in the world in rayon output.

Another new DuPont rayon plant already under way at Ampthill, near Richmond, Va., is costing $8,000,000. A special concrete roadway out to the new plant from the

Richmond-Petersburg turnpike has been built by the DuPont Engineering Company. A specially constructed railroad siding to the rayon plant now runs from the tracks of the Seaboard Air Line Railway.

The third unit of DuPont Rayon at Old Hickory near Nashville, Tenn., is costing $4,000,000. A paltry $200,000 from DuPont profits this year is building a new office for the DuPont Rayon Company in Buffalo. This rayon corporation, with a big plant in Buffalo, and these newer plants in Tennessee and Virginia, was capitalized at $25,000,000. The parent company issued $10,000,000 of new stock in 1928 to pay 6 per cent, in view of the big rayon expansion program. Rayon in 1927 brought in more than one-eighth of the DuPont total income.

Internationally DuPont Rayon, through the parent company, E. I. DuPont de Nemours Company, is directly connected with Nobel Chemical, with Comptoir des Textiles Artificiels in France, and with Mitsui in Japan. It is indirectly connected with the rayon trust through Nobel and the French interests.

Combined profits of all DuPont companies for the last year and a half are stupendous, reflecting in part the record profits of General Motors. In the first six months of 1928 DuPont cleared $30,125,125. This gives the owners a profit of $11.32 a share or about 51 per cent on their investment. The company's investment in General Motors brought them approximately $20,000,000. DuPont holdings in U. S. Steel sold at $2,600,000 profit in March. Extra dividends of nearly $16,000,000 were declared by the DuPont Company two months later.

For 1927, DuPont "earned" $41,113,968. This was more than 10 per cent increase over 1926. A statistician examining fifty-five leading common stocks for the six years, 1921 to 1927, found that an investment of $1,000 in DuPont six

years ago had paid more than 1,000 per cent. "An investment of $8,000 in DuPont has increased to $88,480."

From some of his surplus, Pierre DuPont, chairman of General Motors, on leave of absence to work for Governor Smith as Presidential candidate, donated $50,000 to the 1928 Democratic campaign. Big business and politics worked hand in hand. John J. Raskob, vice-president of the DuPont Company and chairman of the Finance Committee of General Motors, was chairman of the Democratic National Committee. Lammot DuPont, brother of Pierre and president of the main company, supported Hoover and the Republican campaign.

Senator DuPont of Delaware, brother of Pierre, hardly needed his salary of $10,000 as a senator in Congress. Senators' salaries were raised by Congress early in 1926, "in almost stealthy haste," from $7,500. DuPont of Delaware was a powerful ally in the Senate for the super-power trust which has so far escaped investigation.

The company surplus of over $30,000,000 this past half year would be enough to double the half year's average wages of more than 50,000 rayon workers. DuPont rayon workers in Buffalo are averaging $20 a week or barely over $1,000 a year, when the minimum family budget calls for $2,255.97. In Virginia the girl rayon workers get 24 cents an hour or $11.88 for a 49½-hour week.

Other Important Producers

AMERICAN BEMBERG CORP.

Johnson City, Tenn., and a new plant at Elizabethton, Tenn., costing $3,000,000. Employs 6,000 workers.[1] Output about 4,500,000 pounds a year. Incorporated 1925. Capitalized at $3,500,000.

Part of international rayon trust. Branch of German Bemberg

[1] Number of workers reported by companies differs from total given by Department of Commerce.

and connected with Vereinigte Glanzstoff Fabriken of Germany. Closely connected with Enka of Holland. British branch of Bemberg established June, 1928, capitalized at $6,250,000.

The new American plant is built by Lockwood Greene Company. Edwin Farnham Greene, former treasurer of Pacific Mills, and still a director, is chairman of this company.

Dividends on 7 per cent preferred stock are "guaranteed by Vereinigte Glanzstoff and by Bemberg of Germany."

AMERICAN GLANZSTOFF CORP.

Elizabethton, Tenn., plant to cost $37,500,000. Near new Bemberg plant. First unit costing $7,000,000 now complete. Employs 5,500 workers. Output about 4,500,000 pounds a year. Incorporated 1927. Capitalized at $7,000,000.

Part of international rayon trust. Branch of German Vereinigte Glanzstoff Fabriken. Parent company (V. G. F.) shared with German Bemberg in establishing American Bemberg. Closely connected with Courtauld's, I. G. Farbenindustrie, etc. Also connected with Dutch Enka, and French C. T. A.

Profits of parent company for 1927—$2,600,000.

By merger in Germany capital of V. G. F. increased March, 1928, from $3,500,000 to $18,500,000. Dividend of 20 per cent declared for past year. American Glanzstoff has very "friendly relationship" with neighboring Bemberg plant.

CELANESE CORP. OF AMERICA

Amcelle, Cumberland, Md. Employs 2,000 workers. Output 3,000,000 pounds a year. Building new plant to cost $1,500,000. Incorporated 1925. Capitalized at $7,050,400.

Independent of international rayon trust. Branch of British Celanese, Ltd., with branch in Canada. Rejected invitation of Courtauld's-Glanzstoff to enter combine.

Its subsidiary, Safety Celluloid Company, merged in 1927 with Celluloid Company of Newark, N. J. Transaction carried out by J. P. Morgan and Company, "who owns a substantial interest in both companies."

Profits of Celanese Corp. of America for 1927—$2,754,072. Recent sale of $11,481,800 stock. Money will be used to build new plants. Company was originally subsidized by British Government as British Cellulose and Chemical Manufacturing Company.

Wages of workers in these two companies range from $8 a week for young workers to $18 a week for men.

INDUSTRIAL RAYON CORP.

Cleveland, Ohio. New plant to be built at Covington, Va., costing $7,500,000 "will provide homes for employees." Cleveland plant employs 1,475 workers.

New plant will employ 2,000 more in first unit.

Output about 4,250,000 pounds a year. New plant will more than double production. Incorporated 1925, buying out Industrial Fiber Company (original company established 1920 as merger of American Borvisk and Italian Snia Viscosa). Capitalized at $11,426,000 (recently increased).

Closely connected with Dutch Breda, but not directly in international rayon trust.

Profits of corporation for 1927, $908,000, and for first half of 1928, $680,000, increase of 153 per cent over same period in 1927.

TUBIZE ARTIFICIAL SILK CO. OF AMERICA

Hopewell, Va. Plant expansion has cost $2,000,000. Employs 3,200 workers. Output 7,000,000 pounds a year. Incorporated 1920. Capitalized at $5,000,000. Part of international rayon trust. Branch of Belgian Tubize (Fabrique de Soie Artificielle de Tubize), which has branches in France, Poland and Hungary. International Holding and Investment Company (formed by Alfred Loewenstein, multi-millionaire), owns majority of shares in Belgian Tubize. Company had cash on hand of $4,250,000 in January, 1928. Ratio of current assets to liability was eight to one.

International Holding and Investment Company also controls Dutch Breda, and blocks of stock in German V. G. F., Bemberg and Dutch Enka.

Alfred Loewenstein, Belgian rayon financier and multi-millionaire, owned $41,000,000 of rayon stock, including a majority of Belgian Tubize. He had ambitious plans to complete the international rayon cartel in a still larger combine, but died mysteriously in July, 1928, by drowning in the English Channel. He is said to have lost $60,000,000

just before his death. While in New York, in April, shortly before his death, he and his party occupied twenty-six rooms costing $400 a day at the Ambassador Hotel.

Earnings of women rayon workers in the Tubize plant at Hopewell, Va., average $11.88 a week, or about $617 a year. It takes a woman rayon worker at Tubize eight months to earn $400. Men rayon workers are paid one cent more an hour. A company paper, *The Tubize Spinnerette,* "published for and edited by employees of Tubize Artificial Silk Company" at Hopewell, is full of pious exhortations about "making work a pleasure." The company baseball teams, company tennis teams, company cafeteria, "our girls' corner," all aim to keep the workers contented on the low wages.

Rayon Workers

A letter about conditions in the Tubize plant in 1928 follows:

We finally secured jobs in the finishing room of a rayon mill, where we get 24 cents an hour for a nine-hour day, five hours on Saturdays. It takes six weeks to learn the work, we were told, and costs the company $100 to teach a beginner, "and we expect people once hired to stay."

We are living in a company dormitory. Asked if we belonged to a union, we said no, and were told that "we aren't union here because we don't need it; if anything is wrong just go to the foreman and he will make it right."

A copy of the rules of this dormitory includes such provisions as: "Each girl shall keep her room clean and make her bed before going to work. She will be expected to clean it thoroughly once a week; if she wishes the company to do this, the charge will be 25 cents.

"No girl is permitted to keep food or eat in her room. Ready-cooked food may be eaten in the kitchenettes. The matron will be glad to advise the girls in any way she can, except on Thursdays; on that day the assistant matron will take her place.

"Girls going out for more than an hour, or overnight or for

a week-end, are expected to register before leaving and on their return."

Weekly pay is made by check, and in order to get them cashed at the company stores, you have to buy something, or they charge you ten cents for cashing it. Nothing is as cheap down South as in the North, except labor power, and that is dirt cheap, especially the Negro labor.

The only way I can describe the work is to say that we beat the kinks out of artificial silk and get kinks in our shoulders doing it.

The letter carries the whole story. Men spinners and twisters in this plant (Tubize at Hopewell, Va.) get one cent more than the girls—25 cents an hour. They work in alternating shifts each week, from 7 A. M. to 3 P. M. and then from 11 P.M. to 7 A.M. At one time spinners were paid for overtime, but now they get their straight 25 cents for all Sunday and overtime labor.

In the Twentieth Century plant at Petersburg, Va., workers were getting 33 cents an hour until the end of May, 1928, when pay was cut to 30 cents. The superintendent promised a return to the old rate when business picked up. But when business did pick up, he broke his promise and a spontaneous strike followed. Two hundred organized workers, mostly girls, walked out, demanding the old rate. After six days the strike was broken. The workers went back to their machines, "but with a vision of what might be when the union comes."

"It seems that the unions have forgotten us," said the strike leader. "Everything was against us. We had no union and the local press either lied about us or refrained from informing the public. I asked the reporter why he didn't give us more publicity. He told me that *the Chamber of Commerce doesn't want anything said about the strike because it might drive new industries away.*" (Emphasis mine.—*G.H.*)

A worker gave the following description of a strike at the Bemberg plant at Elizabethton, Tenn., in 1927.

Three hundred of the workers at the Bemberg Works of this city are on strike, and efforts are being made to tie up the entire mill employing 1,300 men and women.

Conditions in this mill are abominable. The bosses do not know what humanity is. They work the men 66 to 72 hours a week at wages of 28 to 32 cents an hour. The girls and women work 10 hours a day, 56 hours a week. They begin with $8.96 for 56 hours. The average scale for women is 20 cents an hour after they learn how to do the work.

Living expenses, on the other hand, are as high as in the big cities. Board and room cost from $7 to $10 a week.

The work is unhealthy for the women and many of them get tuberculosis. But there is a vast reservoir of workers in the hills of Tennessee, West Virginia and Kentucky to draw on,—innocent, ignorant "hill-billies" who are being turned into industrial slaves.

The workers in this plant have struck before. Last spring they were on strike, but after three days went back defeated. This time they are demanding 8 hours' work and higher pay. They are trying to form a local union and hope this time that they will win. Up to the present only 300 have gone out, but these men and women are doing everything possible to get out the 1,000 others.

When workers begin to strike in the South—and twice within a period of a few months—then there is hope for the American workers.

Special health hazards for rayon workers are now recognized by British trade unions. They are demanding a government inquiry into the causes of disabilities among rayon operatives. British rayon workers have been partially blinded from the acids used and have suffered from chest and lung troubles. "Firms think more about acid than they do about the health of their employees," comments one leader. The atmosphere of rayon spinning rooms is described by workers as "etherized."

Rayon plants usually operate twenty-four hours a day.

There is a tendency to try to make this in two shifts instead of three, employers acknowledge. A majority of the workers, 60 per cent, are women. In Virginia and Tennessee, where the largest rayon plants have settled, there is little protective legislation on the hours of work for women. Virginia law allows a ten-hour working day, Tennessee a ten and a half hour working day, out of every twenty-four hours. Night work is common in both states. Women are used for overtime work on Saturday afternoons and Sundays. Most of the larger rayon plants make Saturday a five-hour working day.

Rayon engineering experts, explaining why rayon plants have been built in the South instead of the North, state frankly, "Hours of labor in southern states are, in many cases, longer than those permitted by the laws of northern or eastern states." The problem of housing for employees worries the engineers, because "it is doubtful whether, in the event of providing a village for employees, work could be found for all the men since about 60 per cent of the employees required would be women." A mill village for workers in the new Industrial Rayon plant at Covington, Va., is laid out near the mill. But the mill executives are building for themselves a choice residential section on the hills, two miles from town.

Class-conscious workers, hearing the rayon foreman's words, "We aren't union here because we don't need it," can guess the rest of the story. Working hours are nine, ten, eleven or twelve hours a day or night. Pay is twenty-four to thirty cents an hour. Weekly earnings of rayon workers, skilled and unskilled, North and South, averaged $23.09 a week in 1925, but only $20.77 a week in 1927, by Department of Commerce figures. Company managers are watching every move of every employee in order to keep the union out.

All this is in an internationally organized industry, one of

the largest and richest of international combines. As the industry has grown richer and larger, in the last two years, workers' pay has gone down. In Italy, as in the United States, wages of rayon workers have recently been cut by 10 per cent.

Rayon workers are practically unorganized in every one of the five leading rayon countries. The 26,000 American rayon workers must be included in any effective plan of textile union organization.

CHAPTER VI

SPEED-UP

"WANTED: weaver to run six looms." This sign on a Paterson mill was up in the morning, gone in the afternoon. A weaver willing to run six looms had been taken on.

Anna Martin, a woman broad silk weaver in Paterson, has stood out for fifteen years, ever since the great 1913 strike, against the multiple loom system. Always she has refused to run more than two looms. But in 1928 she has had to give in; the third loom has been put on her and the fourth will be added as soon as the mill gets more orders.

At the Equity Mills in Paterson the writer watched a weaver tending four looms. The Equity was running a thirteen-hour day in the spring of 1928. It had closed down for a while, and when it was opened up again it was easy to find workers who would take the longer day.

Doubling up of machines, new devices on old machines, new machines and new processes with fresh division of labor, longer hours, extension of piece-rate in place of time-rate—all these familiar types of speed-up have been tried out in a drive to increase the workers' output of silk goods.

Tending More Machines

In Pennsylvania all the weavers are running four looms. At the Egypt silk mills of Allentown weavers have been tried on six looms and even on eight, but they cannot keep it up. The Paterson Chamber of Commerce is critical of the speed-up in Pennsylvania, where the workers' average output is greater than in New Jersey. "They are little more

than loom tenders and not weavers at all. The machine is the craftsman; the worker is the servant of the machine." A letter from Scranton, Pa., says, "They are speeding up machinery, and in most cases one girl is doing the work of two, with very little extra compensation."

Winders in many Pennsylvania mills have faced a new form of speed-up this year. Formerly on a time-rate of pay, the winders are now put on a pound-rate per week. Each worker must wind so many pounds of silk as her "task" for the week. If she cannot make the task—and it is all a fast worker can do to make it—she gets less pay. If she can do a little more—and only the very fastest workers can do more, with good luck in the quality of silk—she gets a little more than the task-rate. Winders say it means less pay than formerly for most of the workers.

Over a hundred girls in the rayon winding department of the Manville-Jenckes Company mill at Manville, R. I., struck this year against an order to run more spools for the old rate of pay.

There is plenty of speed-up in Paterson also. Many weavers are tending three or four looms. Winders, each tending, not so long ago, one side of a machine with forty ends of yarn, now tend at least two sides, and often three sides with 120 ends. The speed-up of weavers and winders passes on to the warpers and loomfixers. Because a weaver does more a warper must do more. A loomfixer used to look out for forty looms, but now he often has 100 and must teach the job to a young helper at the same time.

The speed-up of production spread to New Bedford fine goods mills. Testimony at the forty-eight-hour hearing in the State House, Boston, February 15, 1928, brought out the fact: "Weavers are doing up to 300 per cent more work since the advent of the quality-destroying multiple system. . . . From New Bedford we get the report that forty years of age is the limit, and workers with flat feet must get out. It

matters not that their feet became flat chasing around from loom to loom or in the course of their work."

The "Frieder Plan" of speed-up now advocated by the New Bedford Manufacturers' Association is in force at the National Spun Silk Mills of which Leonard P. Frieder is vice-president and general manager. Marcus Frieder is president of this company and of ten other companies in the big General Silk Corporation, formerly the Klots Throwing Company. Weavers on this plan run twelve looms, instead of four or six as a few years ago. "The harder we work, the less we get," said a Lancashire weaver known as one of the most skilled weavers in New Bedford. He described Frieder's as the worst mill he had ever worked in after twenty years in silk and fine goods mills of that city. On the Frieder plan an automatic magazine is attached to the loom to feed the filling into the shuttle. But with poor silk the filling often breaks after the transfer of the bobbin, and the loom stops like an ordinary loom. The weaver must then connect the thread with the thread that was broken.

The Allen-A Company of Kenosha, Wisconsin, made the two-machine system their issue with the Full Fashioned Hosiery Workers' Union in 1928. Branch No. 6 of the union in their statement to the people of Kenosha explained, "Full fashioned hosiery manufacture is at best a nerve-racking occupation for the worker. There are 14,000 needles to a full fashioned machine. These needles have to be kept in perfect order, at great strain on the eyes. Topping, likewise, is wearing on the eyes, and it is significant that most of the girl toppers, though still young, are compelled to wear glasses."

Not only silk workers and hosiery workers, but other textile workers are involved in the speed-up. The South wins out in the game. Striking weavers of the Loray mills at Gastonia, N. C., issued the following statement in the spring of 1928: "We were making $30 to $35 a week and were

running six to eight looms. Now we are running ten to twelve looms and getting $15 to $18 a week. We can't live on it. All we are asking is simple justice. A weaver cannot run ten or twelve looms at any price. It is more than a man can stand, let alone a woman. There used to be women weavers in the mill, but when the number of looms increased the women all had to give up the work." The Loray mills are owned by the great Manville-Jenckes Company of Pawtucket, R. I., capitalized at $39,000,000.

At the Converse mill in South Carolina three women weavers, with the assistance of four battery fillers, young girls of fourteen, fifteen and sixteen, now do the work formerly allotted to ten weavers. The terrible pace makes a nineteen-year old girl look like an old woman.

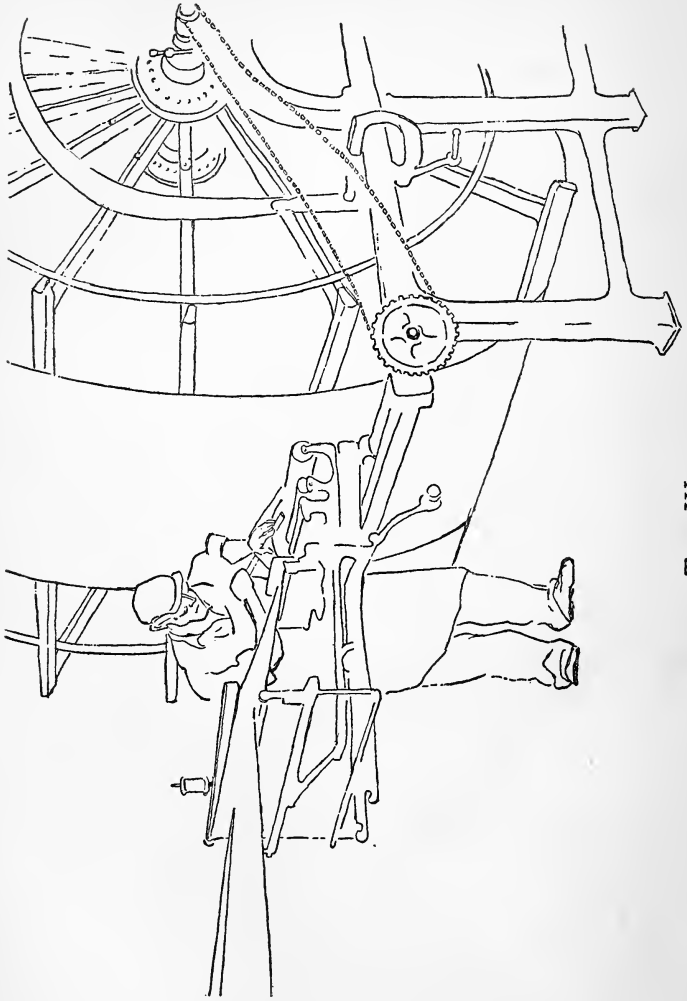
"Nice fast worker, ain't he?" asked the boss at the Pacific Mills of Lyman, S. C., pointing out a young man working like a machine. "Yes, only the youngsters can stand the pace that way. But there are plenty of 'em." The Pacific Mills gives a bonus to the worker who keeps up with the pacemaker. Pacific Mills has big rayon and silk departments.

New Machines

Another form of the technical revolution is the introduction of new machines utilized in the speed-up of workers. The "ads" in the masters' trade journals tell the story:

> One machine doing the work of three. Three men doing the work of seven, in less time, less floor space, with a smaller investment, with one-third the handling and with better results. By actual test we find that this unit due to its construction and arrangement can be operated by less help than the older Palmer operated individually.

The Van Vlaanderen Machine Company thus introduces finishing machines, a Palmer, a Tenter and a Quetsch in one.



THE WARPER

A machine advertised in the trade journals to-day by an established company is already in the larger silk mills. "Fast appearing in the silk mills that set the pace," the "ads" can truthfully claim.

Other advertisements read as follows:

"New Quilling and Copping Machine; Uniform Cops, *less labor.*" (Italics in advertisements are mine.—*G.H.*) "Perfect seams made *by Low-Priced Help.*" "Our customers adopting our Special Light Frictionless Type, Perfect Balanced Bobbin are *increasing production at least one-third with less labor.*" "Lever so mechanically counterbalanced that *a boy can operate the machine.*" A Skein Dyer: "the price is so moderate that it has made the cost of hand dyeing prohibitive. They are driven by only a ½ H. P. motor controlled by a snap switch."

For the Crawford Stop Motion, this claim is made: "This nimble stop motion halts with the machine the instant the yarn breaks out at the carrier—There's no chance of the yarn running into waste . . . and *each operative can tend more machines.*" "100 per cent Production Increase through Batten System for Ribbon Looms," and a 50 per cent saving in weavers' wages are promised in one "ad."

"Universal High Speed Warping. Half to two-thirds reduction in labor cost," reads another advertisement. Introduction of four of these and 672 of their spindles has replaced seventeen slow-speed warping units and 1,350 spooler spindles in a well-known southern mill. *A one-half to two-thirds reduction in labor costs* on warping and reeling is directly attributed to this change."

An automatic Warp Let Off for Broad Silk Looms is described "to permit a weaver to tend one more loom than when weights are used."

Other advertisements explain employers' devices for what they think will be a painless speed-up:

Getting all hands ahead of the game. As soon as your operatives have personal quotas—production standards—the job becomes a game. Reach the goal, beat the record, get there on time or ahead! The production standard for each machine will be the normal expected output, including allowances for all necessary stops.

The fun thus described is given by Veeder Counters, counting the picks or units thrown in the day by the weaver.

"The looming of greater profits on the horizon of the textile industry. If you would receive actual value for every cent spent in production pay your weavers by the pick via Root Pick Counter; they register nothing but picks actually woven," advises another advertisement. "Spindle Speed Tests. Make them frequently and avoid the lazy spindles. *So simple a boy can use it,*" is the boost for another device.

These "ads" are taken from recent numbers of the *American Silk Journal, Silk, Daily News Record* and the *Textile World*. One issue of *Silk* for March, 1928, lists forty-five new patents of interest to silk manufacturers. The writer has watched the advertisements in textile trade journals for six months. The great majority stress speed and pace in production. Of course they never mention the effect of a machine on the comfort or health of employees.

Workers' Output Increased

Silk workers in the Cheney Silk Mills at South Manchester, Conn., know the meaning of the speed-up. The employment manager of this plant "reported at a conference of the American Management Association that at this large silk mill, employing 'normally' 4,400 persons, the number of wage-earners in relation to each $1,000 worth of product had decreased by 46 per cent from 1914 to 1926, the number of salaried employees had decreased 5 per cent, and power

consumed per hour had increased 21 per cent. Or, in terms of 1914 dollars, value of individual production had increased by 86 per cent."

One silk worker in these mills who produced $1,000 worth of silk for Cheney in 1914, was producing $1,860 worth of silk for them in 1927.

This increased output of each silk worker since 1914 shows up also in government figures for the silk industry in the United States as a whole. Wage-earners increased by 23 per cent in the eleven years from 1914 to 1925. Horse power, which includes engines and electric motors, increased by 91 per cent. Value of total output, in terms of the 1914 dollar, increased by 83 per cent.[1]

In 1914 each wage-earner produced $1,012 worth of silk, but in 1925 each one produced $2,452 worth, which means $1,515 worth in terms of the 1914 dollar. This is a 50 per cent increase in productivity. *Two silk workers produced in* 1925 *what it took three workers to produce in* 1914.

Most of this increase has happened since the war. Wage-earners "in the silk" increased by only 5 per cent in the six years from 1919 to 1925. Horse power increased by 22 per cent. Value of total output in terms of the 1919 dollar increased by 41 per cent.

In 1919 each wage-earner produced $2,366 worth of silk, but in 1925 each one produced $3,191 worth, in terms of the 1919 dollar. This is a 35 per cent increase in productivity in six years. Three workers produced in 1925 what it took four workers to produce in 1919. One worker in four could be laid off with no loss of production. Or put it another way: *One wage-earner in* 1925 *put out as much in six hours as he had put out in eight hours in* 1919. He is doing as

[1] The figure used in this computation is given in the Census as the "value added by manufacture" and is here corrected for the change in the value of the dollar by the wholesale price index of the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

much in a thirty-six-hour week as he did formerly in a forty-eight-hour week.

The worker's output has risen in each of the leading silk states. The actual number employed in silk mills increased only in Pennsylvania—from 53,152 wage-earners in 1919 to 60,809 in 1925. In New Jersey, New York, Connecticut and Massachusetts fewer silk workers were employed in 1925 than in 1919. The figures of changing output for these five states are interpreted on page 184.

What Employers Say

Textiles do not show as much increase of output per worker as certain other industries, but textile manufacturers are boasting of the speed-up and the increased productivity of each worker. The *American Wool and Cotton Reporter* for July 21, 1927, prints the following on its front cover:

> Are Wages Too High?
> Wages are too high in any individual textile mill unless that mill—on the basis of full time—is to-day operating its equipment with a little more than 50 per cent the same number of operatives that it had on its payroll ten years ago. In every branch of textile manufacturing *it has been discovered that operatives can tend twice the number of machines than has been their habit. In many cases operatives are tending three times as many spindles and four times as many looms.* (Emphasis mine.—*G.H.*) . . . By this stretching out of the machinery, the wages per week per operative can be increased, but the actual wage per machine radically decreased.

This editorial was written two months before the first of the 10 per cent pay cuts which swept like a scourge through New England mill towns in 1927-8.

Labor Extension

In the midst of the pay cut epidemic, a manufacturers' journal, the *Textile World,* printed an article on increased

output of textile workers. It gives the speed-up a new name, "labor extension, which means making labor go further in mill operations." It states that increase of output per operative in some mills is "100 per cent, 200 per cent, or even more." This means, say the manufacturers themselves, that employees "*are earning larger profits for their employers.*" "Labor extension is efficiency," explains the employing class. "Labor extension is speed-up," explains the working class.

Engineers have in some cases gone into the mills and made recommendations to the management based upon the number of employees it could weed out. But they do not describe their plan as a speed-up. J. M. Barnes of the Barnes Textile Service explained the labor extension or labor specialization system to labor officials in New Bedford: "Take away all battery work and any other labor which is not strictly weaving, and the weaver can run still more looms. . . . The higher paid hands do the skilled work on a greater number of looms while the other work is done by younger, less experienced people at lower pay." He acknowledged that a large number of workers were immediately displaced when the new system was introduced. Others estimate that 20 per cent of the workers are dismissed and become "disemployed."

A Portuguese striker in New Bedford summed it up. "They take away six looms and give the worker twelve automatics. The company profits, but the worker gets no more wages. And what becomes of the displaced workers?"

Since 1899 the volume of American manufactured goods has increased two and three-quarter times while the number of workers employed is only 1.8 times as great. Herbert Hoover, as Secretary of Commerce, in his annual report for 1927 interpreted these figures. Output per factory worker has increased 49 per cent in the last twenty-seven years and 40.5 per cent since the war. This means that two factory workers now put out as much as three workers put out in

1899. Three factory workers now produce more than four workers produced eight years ago. *Manufacturers could lay off one worker in four of those employed in* 1919 *and still make a gain in production.* And as a matter of fact the manufacturers in 1925 were meeting the nation's increasing demands with 7 per cent fewer workers than they had employed in 1919.

Meaning of the Speed-Up

Long names are used to describe this technical revolution, but they cannot hide its meaning for workers. In Europe, the system is called "rationalization." Writers on rationalization analyze the general tendency under these three headings:

1. Lower wages, longer working hours and speed-up plans with present equipment of a plant.
2. Introduction of new machines and other equipment with a system of "scientific management," involving a reorganization of production in the individual plant, to increase output per worker.
3. Combination and centralization in the industry as a whole to develop the most efficient plants and standardize the industry.

One worker is producing more than he ever produced before, and employers can get along with fewer workers. To the owners this means lower labor costs and increased profits. To the workers it means greater exploitation and increase of unemployment in almost every industry throughout the country.

Unemployment

It is estimated that "normal" unemployment leaves always about 1,000,000 workers in the United States out of jobs. This is the labor surplus on the market from which the em-

ploying class can choose its supply of labor. A year of business depression increases the so-called normal unemployment, but no one ever knows exactly how many are unemployed in the United States, for there is no national system of unemployment insurance or labor exchanges which could give the accurate information.

Labor-saving machinery and speed-up of workers have brought now a new unemployment. "Laid off," say the workers. "Technological unemployment," say the government officials. "Relief needed as never before," say the social workers, and send out extra special appeal letters.

The average unemployment of the members of trade unions was 18 per cent in January, February and March, 1928. This was the A. F. of L. report given in the *American Federationist* for May. It means that at least one in every six skilled trade union members was out of a job. Careful estimates for the country as a whole gave over 4,000,000 as unemployed in March, 1928.

A study of 32,719 textile workers in Philadelphia in March, 1928, showed 6,584, or about 20 per cent, unemployed. Most of the unions in that center reported that 50 per cent of those who were employed were on part time work.

For silk workers no definite estimate of unemployment was possible. Of 8,000 silk workers in the Easton-Phillipsburg center only about 3,500 were employed in May, 1928. For silk workers in Paterson, N. J., the Associated Silk Workers stated in May, 1928, "We have estimated that there are about 300 to 500 ribbon and hatband weavers who have no shops or connection with shops. There are always about 300 to 400 weavers who have only part time work; that is, work three weeks and 'loaf' three weeks or more." As an estimate of present unemployment in the spring of 1928, "We would say about 3,000—including all branches of the industry." This would mean 18 per cent of unemploy-

ment among the 16,368 silk workers, listed for Paterson, in the latest census. Probably one out of every six silk workers was out of a job in 1928.

When only part of the surplus labor in the United States can be absorbed even by newly created industries, a crisis is recognized. "I have watched this crisis approaching for years," said Ethelbert Stewart, Commissioner of Labor Statistics, in February, 1928. "It is not created by a slump in the nation's production or prosperity, but by more efficient machinery and manufacturing methods. Every machine that is built to do the work of four men throws three out of work. . . ."

Union Policies on Machinery

Textile workers were among the first industrial workers to learn the meaning of machinery under the complete control of the employers. When these "iron men" appeared in England more than a hundred years ago, workers discovered two facts: first, iron men took away jobs from handworkers, and second, profits from the vastly increased production of iron men went entirely into the hands of their masters. Handworkers were maddened by the helplessness of their position. They burned the mill built by Richard Arkwright who had patented his invention of the spinning jenny in 1771. They broke the mule spinning machines patented by Crompton a few years later. Mass demonstrations in Lancashire in 1779 were called "riots" by the capitalist authorities. Weavers broke the first power looms, which were patented by Cartwright in 1785 and put into general use about the time England and America were fighting each other again in the War of 1812.

By the time spinning frames and power looms were set up in New England cotton mills, workers had accepted iron men as inevitable. Lancashire weavers, called "mob-ites"

by their masters, because of the so-called mobs in England, led the first factory strike in the United States at Paterson in 1828, but it was a strike for shorter hours, not against power machines. Two of the long strikes, Paterson 1913 and Paterson 1924, were started against the multiple loom system.

The official policy of the American Federation of Labor on machine development has been stated at every annual convention since 1897. Increased production as a result of the development of machinery should be utilized as a means to reduce the hours of labor. At Atlantic City in 1925 and again at Los Angeles in 1927, the reports on shorter work day adopted by the convention called for the five-day week. "If anything has been proven beyond the shadow of a doubt it is that the reduction in the daily hours of labor and the work week, has been accompanied by a most material increase in the volume of production. . . . It is no longer a question of whether the five-day week can be established. It is established. It is here."

The five-day week may be here for a small number of skilled workers, grouped in trade unions. Even in organized trades, the practice is not general. In textiles, union members have in some instances achieved and maintained the forty-four-hour, five-and-one-half-day week. For the great mass of textile workers, as well as for the millions of workers in other unorganized industries, the A. F. of L. statement stands as a mockery. As a cure for existing hardships in industry, the A. F. of L. instead of aggressively striking out to organize the workers, joins hands with the employers in their policies of still further mechanizing the workers and pyramiding industry under capitalist control. On the theory that increased profits will somehow come back to the workers in higher wages, a theory that is only too forcibly disproved by the experience of lock-outs and wage cuts, Federation officials spend their time elaborating schemes

for "Union Management Coöperation" and offering themselves to the employers as safe investments to stem the tide of radicalism.

The stated policy of the United Textile Workers echoes that of the A. F. of L. It is "to see that the worker gets a share of the increased profits coming to the company from the improvements in machines. As the value of products increases the workers' share should increase as much. As to the speed-up of workers on the machines, we fight it wherever it occurs, and we are going to keep on fighting it." It is a policy that has been stated but never carried out.

Thomas F. McMahon, president of the United Textile Workers, has lately advised the textile manufacturers to curtail uneconomic operations, close inefficient mills, displace 20 per cent of the workers and provide steady work for the remainder. As for the displaced workers he says, "It would be better for them to seek employment elsewhere and allow 80 per cent to live under American living conditions than under conditions existing at present, where all are suffering because of lack of employment." President McMahon himself has a salary at least five times as large as the average silk worker's earnings.

The Full Fashioned Hosiery Workers, affiliated to the United Textile Workers, state their policy on machinery in the preamble of their constitution:

> The high development of machinery increasing the production, thereby creating a greater number of unemployed, makes competition keener for a job and thereby creates a tendency to lower wages. We therefore pledge ourselves to secure the 44-hour week and call upon all workers engaged in the manufacture of knit goods to combine into a compact federation, to be affiliated with the American Labor movement.

The first trade rule of this hosiery union reads, "No member of this federation shall operate more than one ingrain machine nor more than one footer. No member of this

federation shall accept a position to operate two silk machines."

The policy of silk workers on the multiple loom system was discussed even before the great Paterson strike of 1913. That strike started against the three- and four-loom system and was turned into a demand for the eight-hour day. The strike was lost and the four-loom system came into some of the Paterson mills.

Since the 1924 strike, opinion has been divided in the Associated Silk Workers as to the correct policy on the multiple-loom system. It was one of the main issues in that strike, and some of the workers who went back defeated left the union as a result. After six months it was voted by the union to permit three- and four-loom weavers to remain in the union and to recognize shops operating under the multiple-loom system.

The left wing National Textile Workers' Union, organized in New York City in September, 1928, states its policy in relation to rationalization or speed-up as follows: against the speed-up system in all its forms; forty-hour, five-day week; abolition of overtime work; where overtime is permitted, payment equaling time and a half for overtime and double time for Sundays and holidays; fight against the piece-rate system; for week work and weekly pay.

The Long View

In an address before the Congress of the Red International of Labor Unions in April, 1928, the executive secretary, A. Losovsky, gives a proper analysis of the "rationalization" of industry. "We cannot oppose machines as such. But we must demand the shorter work-day of seven hours, rest periods during work hours, increase of wages, and safety measures for the protection of life and health. It is not

necessary—it is not our job—to assist the owners in putting through rationalization."

Rationalization under capitalism benefits the owners and increases exploitation of the workers. A long view ahead sees machine development in a workers' republic giving all workers leisure enough to live and to create. It is already reasonable to estimate that the world's needs for goods and services can be supplied by four-hour shifts of adult workers in mines, factories and transportation. But this can never be achieved under the present capitalist system of production and distribution. Only an integrated, scientific system of socialism, with the producers in control, would make this possible.

CHAPTER VII

PAY ENVELOPES

"ALWAYS in debt when the children are little."

John Lamson looked around the room, and every silk worker, old or young, nodded his head. "Can't help it," he went on. "Even a warper's pay isn't enough for a family. The wife must work, too. The children must work as quick as they're old enough, or rather as quick as the law will let them."

It was a meeting of a union executive board. Every man present picked up the statement and proved it from his own experience. Some of the men had been in the silk for forty years. Some were young unmarried fellows who had left school at the seventh grade only a few years before, though they wanted to stay on for high school.

Child Workers

What these union silk workers were saying is acknowledged even by the employers. James Chittick, a manufacturer now known as a silk "expert," has written a standard book on silk manufacturing and its problems. In it he states that one weaver's wage will not support a family, but if the family between them earn three times a weaver's wage, "it is quite sufficient to support them very comfortably." To get this "comfortable" family income, Chittick justifies child labor.

A hard and fast age limit has its disadvantages, as some children are as mature at 13 as others are at 16, and if the age limit is set too high it debars many children, anxious and well

able to work, from getting it and leaves the employer short of their labor.

This is the argument of a representative of the employing class while thousands of adult silk workers are walking the streets looking for work.

Howell Cheney, vice-president of Cheney Brothers' silk mills at South Manchester, Conn., is chairman of the committee on child labor of the National Association of Manufacturers. They do not call it child labor, but give it a fancy new name, "Junior Education and Employment Committee." In their pamphlet on "Junior Education," Cheney baldly asks this question, "What can the schools do to attract a better type of children to factory work?" After discussing standards of child labor, he adds, "but in no case should these standards prevent the employment of physically able children over fourteen years who are unable or unwilling to go further in school than the sixth grade, and who in the judgment of their parents or guardians would be better employed at work."

In *Textile World,* an employers' trade paper, a writer, "K. C. L.," gives advice on directing young workers, from his experience as manager of a cotton mill:

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

Silk manufacturing shows a larger percentage of workers under sixteen than any other manufacturing or mechanical industry.

The last Federal census of occupations shows 8 per cent

or about one in twelve of all "laborers and semi-skilled" silk workers as under sixteen. This is a higher percentage of child labor than is reported by any other branch of the textile industry. Over 10,000 children under sixteen work in silk mills in the United States.

In actual numbers of children employed, textiles with their 54,649 workers under sixteen come first, while the iron and steel industries come second.

CHILDREN UNDER 16 IN TEXTILE INDUSTRIES, 1920

Occupation *Laborers and semi-skilled*	*Number*	*Per Cent of All Workers*
Textile, cotton	21,875	5.8
Textile, silk	10,023	8.0
Textile, knitting	7,991	6.7
Textile, woolen and worsted	7,077	4.8
Textile, all other	7,683	4.4
	54,649	5.9

Close-Ups

Fifty-eight silk workers gave in writing the facts about their working conditions, including the age at which they first went into the silk. Thirty-four of these workers, or more than half, had started work in American silk mills under sixteen. One of these who was big for her age had begun when only nine years old. Three others were under twelve. Six were between twelve and fourteen, and twenty-four other workers were between fourteen and sixteen years old when they left school and went to work in the silk.

One Allentown girl winder, sixteen years old, after a year's experience, is earning $6.50 a week, on a nine-hour day. The family of six live on $34 a week, brought in by three wage-earners.

A spinner in Allentown, fifteen years old, has already

worked for a year in the silk. She now earns $9 a week. Three others in the family of five are working outside the home.

A winder in Scranton after ten years' experience is averaging $14 a week. She must help to support younger brothers and sisters.

In a Paterson household there are four wage-earners earning $60 among them for a family of six. The girl of nineteen is a quill-winder and has already been in the silk three years. She earns now $15 a week.

Gertrud Braun is seventeen years old and one of a family of seven. She earns $18 a week as a straightener, after two years' experience. There are three other wage-earners in the household and all four together make $75 a week. Three of the children are under sixteen. The three who are over sixteen are all working.

Mary Fuller is a winder earning $20 a week and supporting herself and a child under sixteen.

An Easton weaver earning $28 is supporting himself and his wife who does not go out to work.

A loomfixer, John Mason, who usually would be earning $45 a week, has had to take a job as a weaver averaging $25 a week.

In thirty-six other families more than one wage-earner is necessary to bring in the needed income.

Every worker knows what the family situation means to a child who must leave school and go to work. Karl Mueller, a hatband weaver, writes:

There were five children. Mother was working at the time. Her work was broad silk picking, which work includes examination of the woven goods and removals of filling knot marks and loose ends, etc. For her work at home we had a wooden frame made, upon which the woven goods was placed on rolls and wound and unwound from two separate rollers. She was able to earn from $8 to $13 per week at this work. Father, of course, sometimes worked at home on her frame in the evening

and also on Saturday afternoon in order to give her a chance to attend to the children and finish her housework. . . .

At the time of the 1913 strike Father and Mother were both employed by the Cedar Cliff Silk Company as pickers. The oldest son, who was 18, was weaving broad silk at the time and was earning $15 a week. The oldest daughter, next in age, 16, was employed as a quill-winder and was earning $3.50 a week. Both started to work at the age of 14, neither completing grammar school. I graduated from grammar school that year at the age of 14 and was anxious to go to high school, being of a studious nature and regarded as a bookworm. . . . No member of the family worked during the entire time of the strike.

After the strike was over I went to work as a floor boy in a hatband shop, working fifty-five hours a week (the standard at that time) for $3 per week.

The 9-hour day became the standard in May, 1916. The youngest of the family, a daughter, started to work in a ribbon mill as quiller, receiving $5 per week, later becoming a warper, and higher-skilled work resulted in increased pay.

The hardest times for the family were the years when all of the children were small. . . . Fortunately no one was ever sick for a long time nor were there any serious operations or doctors' bills at any time. . . . When the children went to work they were given 10 per cent of their wages as pocket money. . . . Mother stopped working at home when the youngest child started to work in the mill.

Women in the Silk

Silk workers are convinced that the great majority of the men in the industry are earning too little to support a family. When we come to study such figures as there are about wages in the silk, and the cost of living, we shall see that experience and statistics confirm each other. The daughters and wives of silk workers do not go into the mills to earn luxuries, but to help provide the necessities of life.

Silk mills everywhere employ a high percentage of women. Low wages of men send women into the mills. Women are "cheap" and their presence pulls down the level of wages for the men.

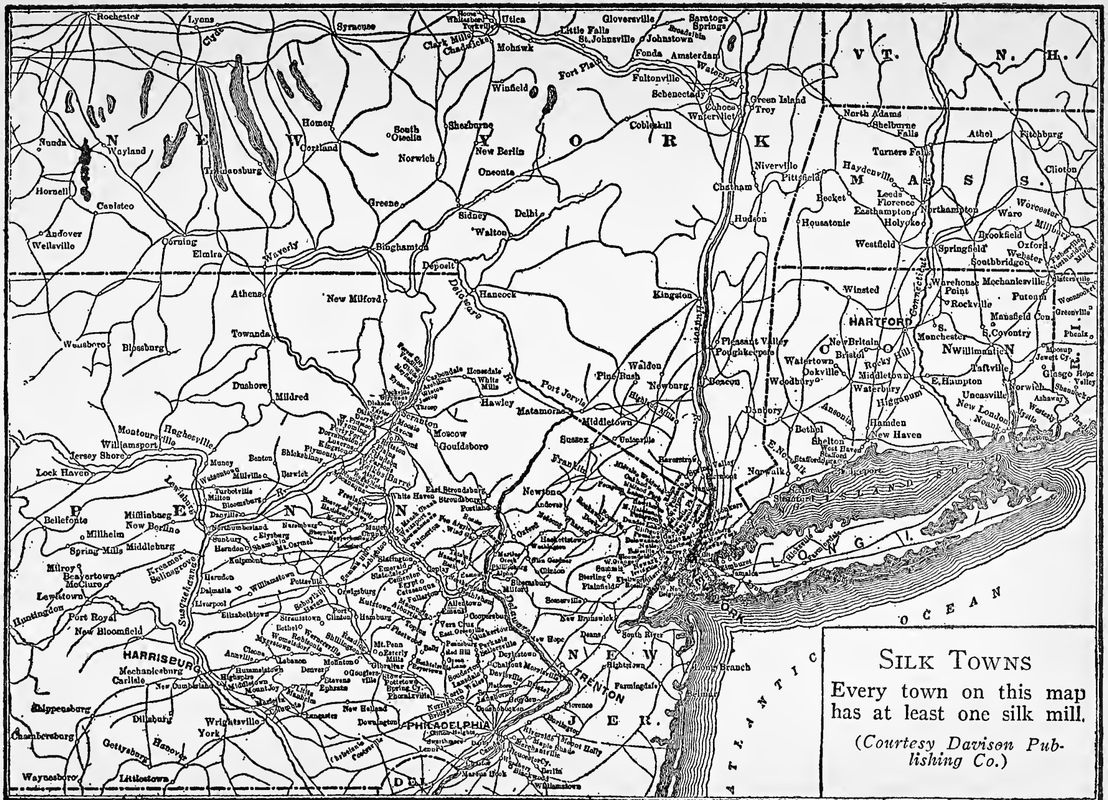
In every country silk mills go in search of women and girls in districts where mines and steel mills use the men. In the old days in Paterson the big locomotive works used the men. Now the locomotive works have gone into Pennsylvania, and Paterson needs a man-employing industry. James Wilson, president of the Paterson Chamber of Commerce, states that they are trying to persuade such an industry or industries to come to the city. He does not explain why business men of the Chamber of Commerce worked to put women originally in the place of men workers in the silk industry.

So in Pennsylvania, the silk map shows mills dotting the anthracite coal region.

In the Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton district, steel and other man-employing industries take the fathers and husbands. But the men do not earn enough to keep a family in health and decency, so wives go into the silk mills and daughters follow as soon as they are fourteen, fifteen or sixteen years old. Coal operators, steel corporations and silk manufacturers all profit by the resulting cheapness of labor.

The old myth about girls going into industry for a short time just to earn a little extra money "until their Jack comes along" has been exploded once and for all by studies of women in various industries by the Federal and state women's bureaus. These all indicate that most of the women at work in the United States are either sharing the responsibility for a family's support or are wholly dependent on their own earnings. After studies in many states, the Federal Women's Bureau agrees with the silk workers at the union meeting. The bureau says:

> The burden of support of dependents does not, as a rule, fall upon one wage-earner alone. . . . A contribution of part or all earnings by several wage-earners for the support of the family is the more usual situation.



Silk Towns

Every town on this map has at least one silk mill.

(*Courtesy Davison Publishing Co.*)

Earnings

PAY DAY

Pay day in the silk comes every two weeks in the middle of the week. Pay is for the two preceding weeks and leaves always three days' work done but not paid for. Thus a man who has been out of work and finally gets a job must still wait two weeks and a half before getting any pay. A weekly pay day is advocated by the Associated Silk Workers and by the National Textile Workers' Union.

Petty fines for mistakes or lateness are often deducted from the pay. Piece workers may have had bad luck in the goods handled and so find in the envelopes even less than the average. "Bad silk" will hold up piece workers all along the line. The weaver gets it in the neck for every mistake made before the silk comes to him. A survey made by employers states that the weaver must average one-third of his time repairing broken ends and other imperfections. Yet he is paid by the piece.

One old weaver expressed it, "I have two wa'ps, do you hear, and they are worse than wa'ps. If the ends don't break, a shaft-cord will give way and smash things generally. Two wa'ps and they won't give me a minute's peace."

Weavers paid by the yard and winders paid by the pound must accept the boss's measure. Trickery in the count of the piece worker's output is not unknown. The silk worker never knows just how much he will get on pay day. The time worker has other difficulties. One Paterson worker describes them thus:

> If you were late five minutes you would be docked. If you quit your job without telling the boss three days ahead he would keep three days' pay on you. If you went to the toilet and stayed ten minutes you would be fired.

For the student all figures on silk workers' actual earnings are unsatisfactory. Official Federal or state wage statistics

are based on payroll records of manufacturers who report periodically to the government or submit their books to government investigators on the understanding that the name of a company shall never be made public. Monthly state figures show only the average weekly earnings for the total number of employees on the payroll for the month. The Federal census of manufactures, taken every two years, gives figures showing the total amount spent in wages and the average number of wage-earners, by industry and by state. From these figures average yearly earnings may be computed.

"Average" earnings do not, however, tell the actual amounts the workers receive. Many earn more and many earn less than the average. The union wage rates for time workers in Paterson give a fair indication of the highest earnings in the silk. These are so far above the average figure that a very considerable body of silk workers must be earning amounts below the average.

The U. S. Women's Bureau, in its study of women in Paterson industries in 1922, gives a median wage instead of an average. This is a little more definite since the median weekly earnings are the actual earnings in a given week of the worker who is at the exact middle point in a list of all earnings shown. It means that half of the workers earned more and half earned less than the median amount. But the median, like the average, gives no information as to the range between the highest and lowest figures.

Routine state reports of weekly average earnings are published from one to three months after the period to which they refer. The Federal census of manufactures and all special industrial studies are very much slower in appearing. Thus, the latest silk figures from a Federal census of manufactures refer to 1925. Since that year wage cuts have swept through the textile industry in the North.

But with all these disadvantages, state and Federal reports are the best source for general figures on wages. They give

the only facts we have, based on payroll records, for the silk industry as a whole.

WEEKLY EARNINGS

Four of the leading silk states publish figures each month giving average weekly earnings of employees in certain industries. Here are their latest figures for textile workers:

AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS, 1928

	Silk Goods	*Cotton Goods*	*Dyeing and Finishing Textiles*	*Hosiery and Knit Goods*
Pennsylvania (July).....	$17.48	$21.46	$24.90	$24.73
New Jersey (July).....	23.11	17.71	24.25	27.30
New York (July).....	21.11	20.98	25.05	17.38
Massachusetts (June)....	21.78	18.01	22.69	19.41

More than half of all silk workers are women. A detailed study of women in New Jersey industries made by the Federal Women's Bureau in 1922 showed the median week's earnings of 3,543 women silk workers as $15.90. This means that in 1922 in New Jersey silk mills 1,771 of these women earned more and 1,771 of them earned less than $15.90.

WOMEN IN NEW JERSEY TEXTILE INDUSTRIES, 1922
Median Week's Earnings

Cotton textiles	$16.75
Hosiery and knit goods.....	16.10
Silk textiles	15.90
Woolen textiles	14.75

But silk workers in New Jersey have had cuts of 10 and 20 per cent since this study was made, while the cost of living (contrary to what most people think) is slightly higher than it was in that year.

That Pennsylvania women earn far less will almost certainly be shown in a study now undertaken by the Pennsylvania Bureau of Women and Children.

The "aristocratic tenth" of silk workers have a weekly rate of $40 to $45 a week "when working." This tenth includes loomfixers, twisters and men warpers. Women warpers in Paterson get about $35 a week. Union rates for loomfixers and twisters are $44 for the forty-four-hour week, or $1 an hour.

Broad silk weavers are thought to average $30 a week on three looms, "when working." Women winders, quill-winders, examiners, pickers, folders, blockers and straighteners almost certainly average less than $20 a week. From inquiries among 100 silk workers and interviews with nine union officers, the following weekly averages have been roughly estimated:

ESTIMATED WEEKLY AVERAGES, 1928, PATERSON, N. J.

Weavers, broad silk	$30
Weavers, ribbon	35–40
Weavers, hatband	40
Winders (women)	18
Quill-winders (women)	12–14
Quill-winders—ribbon (women)	18
Warpers (men)	40
Warpers (women)	35
Twisters (union rate)	44
Loomfixers (union rate)	44
Dyers' helpers and finishers	23
Miscellaneous women workers	12–18

In Pennsylvania silk workers are now averaging only $17.48 a week according to the latest state figures. A 10 per cent pay cut in many Pennsylvania silk mills in 1928 brings down the averages, which were already far below the Paterson center. Paterson workers have been at least partly unionized. Pennsylvania workers are still unorganized.

More than three-quarters of the silk workers in the anthracite district of Pennsylvania are women. Also, the large number of throwing mills in Pennsylvania helps to pull down the state average, as spinners everywhere have lower wages than warpers and weavers.

PREVAILING WEEKLY RATES IN SCRANTON DISTRICT
(*estimated*)

Young workers	$ 5.00
Spinners	12.00
Winders	14.00
Weavers	18.00

Weavers are paid only five cents a yard on plain silk in this center. Scranton is always the lowest-wage city in Pennsylvania.

PREVAILING WEEKLY RATES IN EASTON-BETHLEHEM DISTRICT
(*estimated*)

Young workers	$ 7.00
Spinners	16.00
Winders	18.00
Weavers	25.00

YEARLY EARNINGS

If a silk worker's weekly pay could be multiplied by fifty-two to show his yearly earnings, that man would be in a class by himself. Men and women in the silk do not expect more than nine or ten months' work in a year. After autumn and spring rush, mills close down entirely for some weeks or at best lay off a good number of workers. Members of a family never want to work in the same mill, because then all would be thrown out of work when that mill closed down. When one mill is closed, another may be running, at least part time, and the family must try to live on earnings of the one lucky enough to keep a job.

The average yearly earnings for all silk workers in the United States in 1925 was about $1,077. But the census of manufactures shows differences in the five silk states.

AVERAGE YEARLY EARNINGS OF SILK WORKERS IN 1925
(*Computed from U. S. Census of Manufactures*)

United States	$1,077
Pennsylvania	951
Philadelphia, Pa.	1,044
Scranton, Pa.	770
New Jersey	1,312
Paterson, N. J.	1,346
New York	1,117
Buffalo, N. Y.	1,106
New York, N. Y.	1,224
Connecticut	1,197
Massachusetts	1,052

For 346 women silk workers in New Jersey in 1922 the yearly median earnings were $839. The employing class buys a woman's labor for a whole year at less than the price of a Durant or a Dodge six-cylinder car.

WOMEN IN NEW JERSEY TEXTILE INDUSTRIES, 1922

Industry	*Median Year's Earnings*
Hosiery and knit goods	$995
Silk textiles	839
Woolen goods	741
Cotton textiles	Not reported

Living Costs

What matters to a worker is not what government statistics may say about his earnings, but what the pay envelope will actually pay for in rent, light and fuel, bread, meat and clothing.

Many standard of living studies have been made. The

most useful is the "minimum health and decency budget" of the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, for a family of father, mother and three children. The cost of this quantity budget is priced by the Labor Bureau, Inc., from time to time. Their latest figures for ten cities show that even this minimum for a family with three children still costs over $2,000 a year in industrial centers of the United States.

Paterson and Scranton are not among the ten cities for which the budget has been priced, but the pricing for Reading, Pa., gives an approximate estimate for such towns. There is a glaring deficit between the average yearly earnings of a silk worker and the cost of a family's living even at the low level of this minimum budget. Pennsylvania workers do not average even half the minimum necessary for health and decency.

"Minimum for Health and Decency" Family Budget Compared with Earnings of Silk Workers in 1925

	Cost of Living	*Average Earnings*	*Annual Deficit*
Paterson, N. J.	$2,188	$1,346	$ 842
Philadelphia, Pa.	2,402	1,044	1,358
Scranton, Pa.	2,188	770	1,418

From partial figures for 1927 and 1928, the deficit seems to be more glaring than it was in 1925.

Not in the Budget

The ruling class expects the working class to live at a minimum level. Many things which men and women want and need for themselves are not included in the government budget. The Labor Bureau, Inc., has added the following list of very modest needs which it would include in a so-called "skilled worker's budget."

A home with simple but attractive furnishings, not such bare living quarters as the government budget allows.
Clothing more adequate than the scanty allowance of the minimum budget.
Weekly savings.
A short vacation each year.
Cultural education for at least one child.
Books and papers for the family.

To provide these necessaries requires at least 16 per cent more in family income beyond the cost of the minimum budget. For Scranton, the Labor Bureau estimates that the less inadequate budget calls for $2,639 in 1928.

In terms of a weekly wage, the minimum budget calls for a steady $41.50 a week in a small city for a family of five. The "skilled worker's budget" calls for at least $50 a week for fifty-two weeks in the same city. Even the union loomfixer in New Jersey cannot alone provide for a wife and three children the modest standard of the "skilled worker's budget." Working fifty-two weeks a year at $44 a week, he would fall $350 short of the "skilled worker's" family budget, and he would have only $100 saved from the bare "minimum of health and decency" family budget. But other silk workers earn far less than loomfixers, and wages are lower in other silk centers than in New Jersey. Most silk workers, whatever their craft, have jobs less than fifty-two weeks a year. The "average" silk worker in New Jersey, with $23.11 a week—even assuming fifty-two weeks of work—would face a weekly deficit of $18 in the minimum family budget.

At least ninety in every hundred workers in the silk who have families to support know from bitter experience that one worker's wage alone can never be stretched to cover the rent of the drab, uncomfortable little home plus the cost of the family's food and clothing.

CHAPTER VIII

NIGHTMARES

THE good shoemaker, Nicola Sacco, wrote to his son, Dante, shortly before he himself was done to death by the ruling class in Massachusetts, "The nightmare of the lower classes has saddened very badly your father's soul."

For workers in the silk, as for others of the working class, there are three outstanding nightmares—unemployment, illness and old age.

We have seen how the speed-up is increasing the silk workers' production and reducing the number of wage-earners required for a certain output. It has already increased the number of jobless silk workers. The rapid pace calls for young hands and makes men and women old before their time. The boasted increase in productivity is intensifying these nightmares of the working class.

The illness nightmare haunts the workers of each industry in its own special form. In the silk as in all textiles there are special strains in the long day, in the shattering noise and the dampness of work rooms, and in the slow physical exhaustion of overworked, underpaid workers.

Strain

A half hour in the close air, even of a model weave room, in the crashing, shattering noise of the looms, gives the visitor a frantic desire to escape. An English writer describes the Jacquard loom as making "a most dreadful noise, but in the factory noise does not seem to matter or at any rate has to be endured." Eight, nine, ten hours a day, forty-

four, fifty or sixty hours a week in the weave room drains the life-blood of a man or a woman. What a textile worker is up against is described by Sir Thomas Oliver, a British medical authority:

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

If any outsider wants to see for himself what long hours and speed-up in silk mills do to a man's life, let him look through the doorway at the faces of silk workers in an evening union meeting. Workers' eyes and cheek bones tell the story.

The strain on a human body of standing, stooping, watching for eight, nine, ten or eleven hours a day has never been accurately measured, even by specialists in industrial disease, but it is measured in faces and bodies. Weavers have an intent stare that does not leave their eyes when they leave the machines. To provide against the eye-strain of long-continued watching for breaks and imperfections, the best oculist and the best glasses would be none too good. Workers cannot afford to consult the best oculists nor buy the best glasses. I watched an old weaver bending intently over his looms. His glasses were down on the end of his nose. He had four looms to tend and he was doing overtime that brought his working day up to thirteen hours. Only one worker? There are thousands under a similar strain.

Weavers frequently suffer from deafness caused by the loom thunder. As one young weaver expressed it, "When any one wants to speak to you, he has to yell into your ear above the noise. It hurts the ear-drum. I have been quite deaf for a long time. Many weavers find themselves deaf."

After a few years of work, the weaver's back is bent in a peculiar curve. To relieve the body from the shattering jar of the looms, the weaver gets the habit of bending his knees while standing at the machine. (See *Frontispiece.*)

The National Industrial Conference Board, an employers' organization, has recognized the fact of special strain in silk mills. In the study of Hours in Relation to Output and Health in Silk Manufacturing they state that silk yarn is so delicate it requires more attention than cotton or woolen yarn. There is less opportunity for rest in silk than in cotton or wool manufacturing. The report states:

> Often the chief fatigue factor, even under excellent working conditions, is not so much actual physical effort as it is the tension of continued watching, of being constantly on the alert. . . . Again, as in other factory industries, noise, monotony, poor ventilation, standing, reaching, stooping, eye-strain, etc., alone or in combination, may cause serious fatigue. Sometimes the operatives most exposed to these objectionable features are women and children who suffer in consequence considerable fatigue, although the required physical effort may be light.

Workers themselves state it more simply:

"My, but I'm tired, always tired now," said one vigorous woman who always ran two looms but finds three almost unbearable.

"I was so tired this morning I didn't hear the alarm clock go off."

"All day long I think about half past five, half past five. If only it was half past five."

"I am working on a job that half kills me," writes another

worker. "The clash of looms sounds like the gnashing of teeth in hell."

"Gee, there is about the same difference when you strike a set of bad warps or a good set, as there is between heaven and hades."

"My God, what a hell of a life."

The worker who has been out of work or ill, who has had illness in the family and debts to pull him down, looks at a steady job as the highest good. So when unemployment is as widespread as it is now in every silk center, the bosses have found it easy enough to cut pay, lengthen hours, and get workers to accept these worse conditions. Resistance has been at a low ebb. But the strong resistance of the working class is gathering itself together again.

The Long Day

PENNSYLVANIA

Pennsylvania law limits working hours for women in factories to ten hours in any one day, six days and not more than fifty-four hours in any week. Night work for women is forbidden between 10 P.M. and 6 A.M. Night work for men is common in Pennsylvania silk millks. Silk workers from Easton at the organizing convention of the National Textile Workers' Union had to leave New York in time to get back for a night shift in the mills, lasting from 11 or 12 P.M. to 8 A.M. Children between fourteen and sixteen, with working papers, are allowed to work nine hours a day, fifty-one hours a week, but not at night after 8 P.M.

Pennsylvania silk workers have had no organization strong enough to demand shorter hours for all workers. The usual working hours in Pennsylvania silk mills are nine a day and fifty or fifty-one a week.

NEW JERSEY

The other day the Paterson *Morning Call* carried these two advertisements:

WANTED—Experienced weavers on hard silk; hours from 7 to 7; none but experienced need apply. Apply Ring Silk Co., 85 Marlock St.

WANTED—Weavers and winders for night work, from 4 P.M. to 3 A.M. Apply Commerce Silk Co., 15½ Van Houten St.

Winders are women. They are expected to answer an advertisement for night work of ten or eleven hours. A hundred years ago, hours of work in Paterson were from 7 to 7, and workers struck for a shorter work day.

Paterson silk workers fought for the eight-hour day and the forty-four-hour week for more than twenty years and finally won them in 1919. But in the last two years Paterson mills have been slipping over to longer hours and now even the ten- or eleven-hour day is not uncommon in the smaller factories. While 3,000 workers are walking the streets looking for work, others are doing overtime. Workers will take overtime when earnings for a shorter work week are or have been below the average rate. Pay cuts of more than 20 per cent in the last few years have put pressure on the workers to take longer hours.

New Jersey law forbids night work for women between 10 P.M. *and* 6 A.M. *by Act of 1923.* But the State Attorney General, urged on by Passaic woolen manufacturers, has been trying to have the law declared unconstitutional. There is no penalty attached to breaking the law, so that it is regarded as unenforceable. The law limits working hours of women in factories to ten hours in any one day, six days or fifty-four hours in any one week. Children between fourteen and sixteen, with working papers, are allowed to work

eight hours a day or forty-eight hours a week, but not at night after 7 P.M.

Hours of work and state laws in New York, Connecticut and Massachusetts are given in Appendix V.

Breaking the Long Day

Most of the northern states have laws requiring seats for all women workers who "shall be allowed to use the seats." Whoever saw seats for spinners, winders or weavers in a textile mill? Even if the seats were there these workers could not stop to use them. Regular rest periods during working hours are unknown in textile mills. The strain of standing and stooping for eight or nine hours a day goes unrelieved except for the brief lunch period. Not until textile workers have a union strong and militant enough to demand and enforce a living wage for a shorter work week will that strain be relieved.

What that one hour more a day, nine hours instead of eight, eight hours instead of seven, means to a worker's health and life cannot be expressed in words. Up one hour earlier on dark winter mornings and in the mills before the sun is shining on the street, out into the dark again at night when the mill day is over—the worker never sees his family by daylight from one end of the winter week to the other. Summer allows daylight outside the mill but the hours inside are worse. As Martin Russak, a young silk weaver, puts it in a verse which he calls *Summer:*

> You cannot frighten us, priest,
> With your stories of burning hell;
> We work all summer in the mills.

The lunch period is often too short to change clothes, get outdoors and back again. By the time a worker is ready

to leave at night, he probably has spent nine hours in the mill if he is on an eight-hour day, ten hours in the mill if he is on a nine-hour day, eleven hours in the mill if on a ten-hour day.

The very workers most in need of a strong union to demand shorter hours are often too exhausted at night to attend union meetings. The writer has seen silk workers, keenly interested in the union, fall asleep at a meeting from exhaustion after the day's work.

Health Hazards

"So constructed as to better withstand Weave Room Humidity," reads an advertisement in *Silk* of harness cords made by the Crompton and Knowles Loom Works. The machine is precious; its costs the employer money to replace it. It must be made to withstand weave room humidity. The body of a weaver is not "so constructed as to better withstand weave room humidity." But it costs the employer nothing to replace the worn-out body of a weaver with the body of another younger weaver.

Weave room humidity is a recognized health hazard throughout the textile industry. If the air is not damp enough for the goods, artificial humidifiers may be used. Windows are not opened "because the delicate thread of the yarn would break with a gust of wind."

The soaker who soaks the spools of silk thread in water and chemicals is described by a fellow-worker as exposed to special health hazards. "He is always wet up to his hips. He always reminds me of a galley slave, working monotonously all day long, putting the silk into one trough, taking it out of the one previously filled. He has no time to speak to any one, stopping only when the boss gives him orders. The perspiration rolls down his face and neck and he has grown a sallow yellow. The air is very foul in this section

of the factory, and it is very unpleasant to pass through it, but the soaker must toil here all day."

Dampness, bad air, fatigue from long hours of constant standing and stooping, the poor food of low wages, cause the high percentage of deaths among textile workers recorded in the following government mortality figures.

Percentage of deaths of males and females due to tuberculosis in relation to the total mortality for the silk, wool and cotton industries and for all manufacturing and mechanical pursuits are shown in the special U. S. Census Mortality Statistics for 1909:

PERCENTAGE OF DEATHS DUE TO TUBERCULOSIS

	Males	*Females*
Silk	19.8	37.7
Wool	22.3	29.3
Cotton	21.1	29.7
All manufacturing	15.5	27.4

The very high rate among workers is especially significant since more than half of all silk workers are women.

The Prudential Insurance Company reports 38.8 per cent of deaths of silk workers due to tuberculosis as compared with 23 per cent in seventy-nine other occupations.

In the cool language of disinterested observers, the National Industrial Conference Board sums up the question of tuberculosis in silk manufacturing:

> It may be considered as established that the death rate from tuberculosis among silk mill operatives is distinctly high as compared with the average rate for factory industries in general. There is a strong presumption, moreover, that conditions in the industry itself are partly responsible, although these conditions have not been identified.

Dr. Alice Hamilton of the Harvard Medical School, authority on occupational diseases, does identify some of the conditions:

Textile dust is not in the dangerous class. The cause of tuberculosis in the industry must be largely conditions of exhaustion from moisture, heat, long hours, and the youth of the workers. Most significant of all are the low wages causing privation. The women's death rate from tuberculosis which is usually low is strikingly high in this industry. The causes are all preventable.

Physicians of the Workers' Health Bureau, in physical examinations of 404 Passaic textile workers, including many silk dye workers, selected at random during the great strike of 1926, found twenty-five cases of positive tuberculosis. This was six out of every hundred or one of every seventeen workers examined.

Accidents in the textile industry are fewer than in many other industries. This fact blinds people to the number of accidents that do occur in textile mills. Thirty-one of every thousand textile workers are injured each year, according to the National Industrial Conference Board. One in every thousand textile workers is permanently disabled each year. Nine of every 100,000 textile workers are killed each year.

Not many? An accident resulting in permanent disability means everything to the one man or woman or young worker who is injured. A fifteen-year-old girl quiller employed illegally in a New York silk mill, earning only $10 a week, had her fingers caught and badly injured in the quilling machine. The employer was required to pay double compensation because a fifteen-year-old girl is not allowed by New York law to operate this machine, but this does not repair the permanent injury to the worker's hand.

Among Dye Workers

Disease among dye workers and finishers is a natural result of working conditions. There are 13,135 men, women and young workers employed in the dyeing and finishing of textiles in the state of New Jersey (April, 1928), mostly in

Paterson, Passaic and nearby towns. Eighty-five per cent of all the silk textile dyeing in the United States is done in this center.

Many plants do only dyeing and finishing. But the larger textile mills now often have their own dyeing and finishing department. All the dyeing rooms the writer has observed or heard described have the same conditions—steaming, damp air, smells of acids and other mordants, and wet stone floors. Sometimes there are wooden boards on the floor to protect the workers' feet; sometimes there are none. Sometimes the workers wear rubber boots or unusually heavy shoes, supposedly water-proof; sometimes there is no such protection. Often the worker's outside clothes hang in the same damp dye rooms where he works. He must put on these damp clothes when he goes out. But this dangerous dampness is not the only hazard for dyers and finishers.

A physician, Dr. W. G. Thompson, in a standard book on occupational diseases gives a good description of health hazards in dyeing and finishing:

> Dyers make use of a great variety of poisonous substances such as coloring, bleaching, and fixing agents, called "mordants." Among the most important of them are ammonia, the mineral acids, naphtha, gasoline, chloride of lime and other bleaching agents, salts of such metals as copper, arsenic, iron and chromium, aniline dyes, wood alcohol, and a variety of coloring materials made from foreign woods, some of which are poisonous. The hazards of the trade comprise irritation of the respiratory system from inhalation of hot vapors and fumes, often strongly acid or alkaline, or, as in the case of chlorine, specifically poisonous. The workroom is often hot and filled with steam. The bare hands and arms may suffer from skin irritations or the dyestuff may spatter into the face and injure the eyes. The workmen are in some cases almost constantly wet from their own perspiration, from spattering the clothing or where clothes have become saturated with the moisture from the kettles where the hot processes are used. Anemia and digestive disorders are common.

The specific poison, aniline, causes recognized conditions of disease, described by Sir Thomas Oliver:

Aniline is widely used in the dyeing of textiles and is responsible for many cases of poisoning. On cotton printing, for example, aniline is inhaled both as a vapor in the warm, moist, dyeing rooms and as a dust in the "napping" and finishing processes. Its poisonous action is worst in the more highly heated rooms, as in drying rooms, where the temperature may reach 120° to 140° F. Chronic aniline poisoning gives rise to anemia, bronchitis and predominating nervous symptoms.

In plain language, dyers, dyers' helpers and finishers feel sick and dizzy most of the time from fumes, heat and steam. Fainting and vomiting are very common. Yet hours of work are often longer than in any other part of the industry—twelve or even thirteen hours a day or night whenever there is a rush of work. The average time worked by seventy-five dye workers studied was fifty-eight hours and forty minutes a week.

For these conditions, easily breaking the health of the strongest man, the dyer himself, with knowledge and experience of the chemicals used, gets $1 an hour. A dyer's helper or finisher gets fifty cents an hour. A woman helper or finisher gets twenty-five cents an hour, sometimes thirty cents.

The Workers' Health Bureau gives the following story of mill conditions as told by seventy-seven dye workers examined:

The dye houses work day and night. The air in some of the processes such as dyeing and drying is that of the tropics. The steam is so thick you cannot see the worker opposite you. Dangerous machines stand in this fog, and workers constantly run the risk of serious accidents from walking into them. The atmosphere is unbearable, filled as it is with fumes from bleaches, acids and other chemicals. Floors are running with water, so that workers must wear rubber boots or wooden shoes for

protection. Clothes are dripping with steam and perspiration. Yet workers are forced to work ten, twelve, even fourteen hours a day or night during the rush season, and, in many instances, are left totally unprovided for in slack seasons when the market is glutted and mill owners hold their stocks of materials for better prices.

The conclusion of the Workers' Health Bureau, and of Dr. Alice Hamilton, who reviewed the whole report, is that the dye workers of Passaic and vicinity are suffering from an unusually high rate of disease, due to their occupation, and largely preventable.

Silk City Poverty

"Two weeks away from starvation." A fortnight out of work, a fortnight of illness in the family and savings are gone. How else can it be when the great majority of workers are getting so much less than the wages that would allow for savings? Even with more than one wage-earner in the family, the burden often becomes too great. Then the worker's family in desperation must choose between starvation and "charity" help.

The president of Paterson's Chamber of Commerce, James Wilson, is also president of the Paterson Charity Organization Society. The right hand of charity gives in "relief" a fraction of what the left hand of business takes as profit.

The writer went to the office of the charity organization to ask whether the families of silk workers were on the lists of those needing relief. "Our families are practically all in the silk or have been," was the answer. "We have over 8,000 records of those needing help. Last year we had over 600 active cases for relief. Never before has there been so much unemployment and need of relief as during these last two years." This was in 1928.

In this small city of only 136,000 population, there are

more than 8,000 records of families who have had to accept "charity." The rich like the word; it covers a multitude of sins. To the working class it spells the ugliness of poverty. Dingy tenement houses when people want to be clean, evictions for non-payment of rent, lack of milk for children, the white plague of tuberculosis, hunger, disease, death; then the charity visitors step in.

The C. O. S. Christmas campaign among the very same business men who have laid off workers and increased unemployment brought a small charity fund in 1927 of $3,091.35 for "relief." The two outstanding reasons for need of help, as stated in the year's report of the Paterson Charity Organization Society, are "unemployment" and "incapacity through illness or accident." Next in number of cases come "care of children" and the "aged."

Lack of Social Insurance

In European countries through the pressure of workers' organizations, unemployment and old age are regarded as social causes of want and are at least partially covered by some form of social insurance. Old age pensions are provided by statute in twenty-six foreign countries. State health insurance is common in Europe. The cost of such insurance is usually shared by workers and employers; in some countries the government also contributes. Eighteen countries have some form of public insurance for those who are unemployed. In the Soviet Union a comprehensive system of social insurance providing against unemployment, illness, accidents, old age, invalidity, etc., is provided for all workers at the expense of industry.

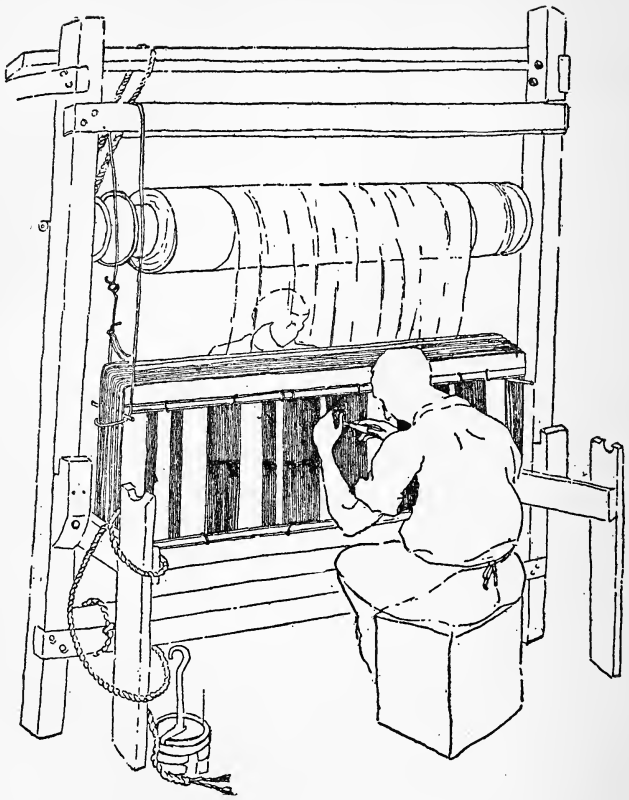
In the United States, a very few large silk companies have set up private schemes of old age insurance and a limited provision for illness. But such private funds serve to tie workers to one company and take away their independence.

They do not touch the problem of workers thrown out by new machinery or a slackening in the company's business. These funds, like other welfare schemes, are a part of the open-shop system and are aimed against the trade unions.

In the great majority of cases the silk worker and his family, in this country, when they are overwhelmed by one of the nightmares of capitalist industry must either submit to the degrading ordeal of charity or starve.

It is true that in the principal silk states widowed mothers of young children receive a "pension," but the amounts allowed are very small and the families are supervised in typical charity fashion. Also, most states have now a workmen's compensation law under which a silk worker injured in connection with his work—or the family of a worker killed on the job—receives after long delay an inadequate amount of money. But in the problems of silk workers the industrial accident plays a minor rôle. Tuberculosis and other illnesses, irregular employment, and the hopeless unemployment of old age are their more usual nightmares. There is no compensation for their occupational diseases. There is no insurance against unemployment or old age.

We can fairly say that this richest of all capitalist countries makes no social provision for the silk workers it throws on the scrap heap. Until the workers are united in strong, militant unions and a political party of their own, they will continue to suffer without even a measure of protection given by social insurance.



THE ENTERER

CHAPTER IX

A HUNDRED YEARS OF CLASS STRUGGLE

In the hundred years of textile strikes in this country since the first in 1828, no struggle of silk workers has been more spirited, more vivid in workers' memory than the Paterson strike of 1913. "Gentle, alert, brave men," wrote John Reed, when it was over. "Ennobled by something greater than themselves. *They* were the strike—not Bill Haywood, not Gurley Flynn, not any other individual."

Lawrence 1912, Paterson 1924, Passaic 1926, New Bedford 1928, Paterson 1928—each strike dramatizes the class struggle. Older weavers remember other dates too—Paterson 1902 and 1900 and 1894, Fall River 1884, and Paterson 1878. Fighting continuously against pay cuts, for shorter hours, and for recognition of the union, textile workers have written important pages of American labor history.

Early Strikes

PATERSON 1828

The first strike of factory workers in the United States was declared at Paterson, N. J., in 1828, a hundred years ago.[1] Men spinners, children and women walked out of the cotton mills at 12 o'clock of a July day and were joined by the carpenters, masons and mechanics of the town. It was cotton in Paterson then. Silk began twelve years later.

The masters had "conceived that it would add to the comfort and health of the children to take their dinner at

[1] Commons, John R., and associates, *History of Labor in the U. S.*, Vol. I, p. 418.

one instead of 12 o'clock, it being a more equal division of time between their meals." [2] The workers struck for the 12 o'clock noon hour. Their fellow workers in building trades and machine shops showed their solidarity by striking at the same time in sympathy, and all demanded a shorter day of ten hours. The bosses called out the militia to drive the workers back to work, discharged the strike leaders, and then gave in on the noon hour question. It was the first time in America that the militia was used against the workers.[3]

The bosses in a statement given to the papers boasted that they have united "determined to resist the unworthy efforts of the mechanics, and teach the children the necessity of civility and obedience. The ringleaders of the mechanics, among whom were some Manchester mob-ites, have been discharged, and all things are going on quietly." [4]

These children under sixteen were from the families of the men spinners who all lived in company-owned tenements. There were more women than men in the mills. They worked eleven, twelve, thirteen or fourteen hours a day, from sunrise to sunset. The bosses, backed up by public opinion, wrote that it was good for the children to work long hours in the mills.

But the solidarity of all the workers, striking together, women, children, men of the factories, mechanics, masons and carpenters, was feared even then by the masters. Another strike in Philadelphia that summer called forth an editorial in the *New York Evening Post,* "We cannot too deeply regret the frequent recurrence of these disorders which tend to throw a shadow over the brilliant hopes which the philanthropist and the patriot have formed for our country."

The first labor union, the Mechanics' Union of Trade As-

[2] *New York Evening Post,* July and August, 1828.
[3] Commons, *op. cit.,* Vol. I, p. 418.
[4] *New York Evening Post, loc. cit.*

sociations, was formed that year in Philadelphia. The members were not fully class-conscious, but they wrote that they worked unceasingly for a meager subsistence in order to maintain "in affluence and luxury the rich who never labor," that the products of their work were accumulating into "vast, pernicious masses," and "would prepare the minds of the possessors for the exercise of lawless rule and despotism, to overawe the meager multitude and fright away that shadow of freedom which still lingers among us."

FOR SHORTER HOURS—1835

Demanding a shorter working day, 2,000 Paterson cotton mill workers came out on strike in July, 1835. Twenty mills, all in the town, were completely tied up. The working day "from sunrise to sunset" meant thirteen and one-half hours in the summer. Strike demands were for an eleven-hour day, abolition of the store-order system and of excessive fines.

The organization calling the strike had a long name, "Paterson Association for the Protection of the Laboring Classes, Operatives of Cotton Mills, Etc." A vigilance committee did effective work in raising relief and keeping up the spirit of the strikers. Workers in other centers showed their solidarity with Paterson strikers. Newark working men sent $203. New York appointed committees in every city ward "to raise funds and take such other measures as they may deem expedient to sustain the operatives at Paterson."

The Paterson *Courier,* called by the strikers "organ of the factory lords," acknowledged some weeks after the strike began that the operatives were resolute in standing out. But after six weeks a compromise finally broke the strike. Two-thirds of the workers returned to work at twelve hours for five days a week and nine hours on Saturday. Bosses had thus yielded one hour and a half of the long day. Workers

who still stood out for an eleven-hour day were blacklisted, "especially the children of the leaders."

Spirited strikes of New England textile workers at Lowell, Dover, Fall River, Taunton and Springfield and two of Philadelphia workers, all in these early years, were usually against wage cuts. General cuts of 15 to 25 per cent were sweeping through cotton mills. Two thousand girl strikers in Lowell marched through the streets of the city. "One of the leaders mounted a pump and made a flaming speech." But though the workers resisted the cuts with militant spirit they were usually driven by starvation to go back into the mills at the reduced rate.

The first silk mill was started in Paterson in 1840. The Cheney Brothers had already started a successful silk mill in Connecticut. But the cotton industry was still strong in Paterson until 1860. Silk gradually took the place of cotton in the mills, and Paterson became the chief silk center of the United States.

"FIGHTING MC DONNELL," 1878-1890

"Organize the unskilled," was the cry of J. P. McDonnell, leader of the Paterson strike of 1878, and president of the International Labor Union. A pay cut in Paterson mills that June brought out the operatives in a long strike of eight months.

McDonnell, editing a daily paper, *The Labor Standard,* first from Fall River and then from Paterson, called strike-breakers "scabs" and was sued for libel. Two months' imprisonment and $500 fine could not stop fighting McDonnell in his work. "He was again arrested and sentenced to a short term of imprisonment in 1880 for publishing a letter disclosing the terrible conditions existing in the brick-making yards in Paterson." It was McDonnell who brought about

the Labor Day law passed in New Jersey in 1887, the first in the United States.

Textile workers from Fall River came down for a big convention of the International Labor Union at Paterson in December, 1878. Cotton mills were moving South. Silk mills were expanding rapidly. The silk manufacturers had organized a few years before in a national association. Pelgram and Meyer had started their Paterson mill in 1871. The width of silk was much narrower than it is now, and the weaver was not under so much strain of crashing noise and speed-up. As one old weaver puts it, "In those days the looms rattled. To-day they thunder." But long hours and periodic attempts to cut wages kept the workers always tired, always uncertain of the future. Another bitterly fought strike of Paterson silk workers came in 1884, also on the question of wages.

McDonnell saw that the future would be dark for unorganized workers. He had been a friend and co-worker of Karl Marx, and repeatedly imprisoned in Europe. His work in the United States was for industrial unionism to organize the unskilled, while Samuel Gompers was developing his policy of craft unionism for skilled workers. McDonnell led strike after strike in the textile industry in the next few years, but in the end the workers were starved into submission to wage cuts.

Between 1873 and 1880 wages of textile workers in Fall River were reduced by 45 per cent. Workers were out on strike for many weeks in 1875 against one of these slashing cuts. The strike was broken by the owners who introduced a yellow-dog contract requiring the workers "to sign an agreement to join no association in which individual members were to be governed by the will of the majority in respect to wages or hours of labor." A sixteen-week strike of 14,000 cotton mill workers, begun in June, 1879, was also broken by the masters who brought in French-Canadians as strikebreakers.

Five thousand Fall River spinners and weavers in ten cotton mills walked out on strike against another pay cut in 1884. After eighteen weeks this strike also was broken by the master class. This time the imported strikebreakers were Swedes. Leaders of the strike and of the spinners' union, fifty of them, were blacklisted and never again able to get jobs in Fall River mills.

These were the years when the employing class in the United States was beginning to amass greater and greater wealth. Less spectacular than Carnegie, Frick and Rockefeller, but no less secure in possessions, the textile masters of New England—Lowells, Lawrences and Cheneys—built up fortunes at the expense of low-paid workers.

POLICE CLUBBING—1894

It was low wages that brought on the strike of ribbon weavers and other silk workers of Paterson in March, 1894. Skilled weavers had been earning at the most only $14 a week. This was "insufficient to buy the commonest kind of food and purchase coal and wood," even the owners' paper, *The Daily Guardian,* acknowledged. Women winders were getting only $4.50 a week.

Demanding "a uniform price list that will guarantee us living wages," workers from one mill and then another joined in the walk-out until fourteen mills were closed down. As the strikers picketed Bamford's mill one March morning, police charged the lines, "clubbing unmercifully, irrespective of sex." The capitalist press then called it a riot. But the workers' paper, *The Labor Standard,* declared, "There has been no rioting in this city. The strikers have been orderly and lawful. There has been no bomb throwing. And yet the newspapers have been filled with reports about 'Anarchists' and 'Reds' in Paterson and even bomb throwing has been charged."

New York ribbon weavers joined the strike. A crowd of Paterson strikers walked all the way into New York to visit fellow strikers. Later the New York strikers returned the visit. Paterson silk bosses organized with New York bosses to resist the workers' demands.

Some of the mills increased the rate of pay, but others did not. The strike was neither won nor lost.

Already there were three craft unions in Paterson—the Horizontal Warpers' Association, the Ribbon Weavers' Union and the Loomfixers' and Twisters' Union, all of them organized during the eighties. Another, the Silk Workers' Union, small but militant, was organizing workers not included within these craft lines. Five years later the Broad Silk Weavers' Union is mentioned and the Silk Workers' Union is not so strong.

"BLOWING FISH HORNS," 1899-1902

Inch by inch the silk workers fought for a meager increase in pay. Strike after strike appears on the front page of Paterson daily papers through 1899, 1900, 1902. Picketing, arrested, picketing again, arrested again, the strikers, men and women, were determined to earn a living wage, but found the police, the jails, the courts and the churches used against them by the owning class.

A strike called by the United Ribbon Weavers' Union of America in 1899 lasted eight months and ended in a one-cent increase in the piece-rate. During this strike the Paterson authorities arrested, jailed and fined a number of girl strikers for calling "scab" at strikebreakers going into the John Hand mill. The worst "crime" was serenading the scabs. Girl strikers blew "fish horns of a fancy make and all of the same color." A boy striker called a patrolman "peanut nose" and was fined $5.

Other long strikes marked the turn of the century for silk

workers. The Broad Silk Weavers' Union was recognized in Paterson only after many struggles. The United Textile Workers of America was established in 1901 and Paterson craft unions became affiliated with it one by one. Meanwhile Paterson silk bosses started plants in Pennsylvania during 1898 and 1899 to use the cheap labor of girls whose fathers worked in steel and anthracite. Silk workers in Pennsylvania averaged only $5 a week, according to state figures. Silk mills in the anthracite and the Lehigh valley grew and multiplied, and the employing class prospered.

"We must have an injunction to stop the strikers from picketing," the Paterson bosses announced in the paper during the strike of 1902. "Arrests seem to have no effect." The 1902 strike lasted many months and included not only broad silk weavers and ribbon weavers but also the silk dye house workers.

Women were active on the picket line. Strikers serenaded and "annoyed" strikebreakers, but were "very careful not to resort to any disorderly acts," complained the ruling class, and the authorities could not agree as to whether peaceful picketing was or was not illegal. But the decision went against the strikers, of course, and the Ribbon Weavers' Union had to pay fines of $1,000 in picketing cases. Pelgram and Meyer finally granted an increase of a cent and a half a yard.

The manufacturers in their Silk Association announced that 20,000 silk workers in Paterson were earning $10,000,000 a year and producing $30,000,000 worth of silk. In weekly pay this meant an average of less than $10 a week per worker. Foreign workers in Passaic dyeing plants were working sixty hours a week for less than $5. Textile workers in Lawrence, Mass., were averaging less than $10 a week. Meanwhile cost of living during the ten years, 1903-1913, according to a Bureau of Labor Statistics report, increased

by 60 per cent. The stage was set for the great strikes of 1912-1913.

Paterson—1912

The "Detroit faction" of the Industrial Workers of the World led a strike of silk workers in New Jersey in 1912. Craft unions had held the Paterson field for twenty years. Teavens of the American Federation of Labor had been organizing for the United Textile Workers. By 1910 there were 30,000 organized textile workers out of 800,000 in the United States, less than 4 per cent. Few of the women and few of the foreign-born workers belonged in the old craft unions.

The Katz strike in Paterson, 1912, was the beginning of the broad silk weavers' protest against the four-loom system. It started with the weavers, but the less skilled workers also joined the strikers' ranks. Rudolph Katz of Paterson was a member of the Socialist Labor Party and of the Detroit faction of the Industrial Workers of the World, later to be called the Workers' International Industrial Union. Boris Reinstein, formerly also of the S. L. P., came in to help him lead the strike. It attracted little public attention at first but it showed the skilled workers that foreign-born non-English-speaking workers could stand with them through weeks of hunger.

BILL HAYWOOD IN ACTION, 1912-13

The spirit of the great I.W.W. textile strikes, Lawrence 1912, Little Falls 1912, Paterson 1913, is in *Bill Haywood's Book* and also in a newspaper man's memories of Big Bill Haywood at Lawrence. A wage cut in Lawrence mills, where pay was already very low, brought out more than 20,000 workers. Marlen E. Pew, now editor of *Editor and*

Publisher, as a young newspaper reporter in 1912, was sent to Lawrence to cover the strike for the Scripps papers. Writing in his own journal in 1928 when Bill Haywood died, Pew describes Haywood as he saw him in action in 1912.

Haywood hastened to the scene of the strike and proceeded at once to organize the workers under the banner of the I.W.W. In a few days the strike was brought to a system. If I recall correctly thirty-two dialects were spoken by the strikers, of whom there were men, women and children. To swing this mass and keep it in line called for master technique and Haywood had it in abundance.

Reporters who covered the meetings of the strikers in Franco-Belgian Hall, where a soup kitchen was established in the basement, will never forget Big Bill on the platform, calling through interpreters the roll of the faithful and dictating the policies of the campaign. Nor will they forget Big Bill at the head of a strike picket parade at 5 o'clock of a frosty morning, with thousands following down the main broad street of the city, singing the stirring Marseillaise and at the sight of the gray-coated state police or the blue-coated militia, uttering that weird, foreign "boo-boo" than which nothing could be more bitterly contemptuous.

Ambushed in some alley ahead would be a hundred or more city and state police who, when the paraders would reach a given spot, would dash out and club men and women with startling violence. . . . I have seen a group of women pursued by mounted officers through a park, driven until they fell in the snow. Scores of strikers would be arrested and lined up before a magistrate who dealt to them unmerciful sentences.

One striker, I recall, was sentenced to a penitentiary term for carrying concealed weapons, and the reporters sniffed cynically when the weapon was shown and proved to be an ordinary pocket knife. Broken heads were common enough. Another reporter and I found a woman in her dreary tenement rooms dying from the premature birth of a child as result of a clubbing. She held in her hands a sacred picture and called upon God to avenge the crime against her. . . . Day by day the terror of the strike increased. . . .

The man (Bill Haywood) possessed striking magnetic qualities as a speaker. After the picket parade had been battered to

pieces by the police, he would rally the strikers in the afternoon and the next morning they would turn out again to brave the organized armed assaults.

One day in the basement of a Catholic church Big Bill addressed a meeting of women strikers. Several reporters were present. In the company of women Big Bill was the soul of gentleness. . . . He urged passive resistance and told the women that while he appreciated their spirit in the campaign, he hoped in view of police violence, they would not venture out to do picket duty but would urge their men to do this service.

At the back of the hall a little woman with a red bandanna over her head was making signals to Big Bill that she wished to speak. He beckoned to her to come forward. He put out his big hand and raised her to the platform. "This sister-comrade has something to tell us," said the big miner, smiling appreciatively.

In broken English the woman said: "Now, ladies, me have big idea. Mr. Haywood, he say ladies not go on picket line in morning because cops he strike with club. Very good, but we must win strike. Men all right, but not so brave in striking as ladies. Now I have big idea. Many ladies in strike are like me, see! (opening her wrap) soon have child.

Now all ladies who are large with child must come early to picket line in morning. We go ahead and the men follow us. We sing and march and then, from alley, the cops charge on us. But when they see us and that we are large with child they not hit us—no, they have mothers and wives and they will say, 'No, no, we no club good mothers like this,' and they go 'way and leave us alone."

Big Bill, tears streaming down his red cheeks, grabbed the earnest little woman in his arms and made a speech about self-sacrificing motherhood that I recall as a classic. Of course he told the woman that the "big idea" was but a sweet dream, and that no one should risk it. It is with a sense of craft shame that I here record that a certain morning newspaper in Boston next day headed its false story thus: "Haywood Urges Expectant Mothers to Head Picket Parade."

Terrorism against the workers in Lawrence went to all extremes. The National Guard was called out. Young Harvard undergraduates were allowed credit in their college courses without mid-year examinations in return for military

service against the Lawrence textile workers. A frame-up against Lawrence strikers landed Joseph Ettor and Arturo Giovanitti in jail charged with a "bomb plot." But when the strike was over, William Wood, president of the American Woolen Company, was himself indicted for placing dynamite among the strikers. Ettor and Giovanitti were acquitted. The woolen monarch, Wood, finally committed suicide in 1926, after a life of financial trickery and deceit. According to specific charges against his estate, he had cheated his company of at least $2,500,000.

The Lawrence strike was a victory. Instead of a wage cut the strikers gained a small wage increase, though not the 15 per cent increase demanded by the workers. "The women won the strike at Lawrence," said Bill Haywood speaking at Paterson a few months later. "The women will win the strike at Paterson."

The Great Strike, Paterson—1913

"You don't believe in the Class Struggle? Just go out to Paterson and make a noise like a free citizen. See what happens to you. That's all John Reed did, and he got twenty days in jail. It's getting so you can't even collect your thoughts without being arrested for Unlawful Assemblage." Thus the old *Masses* commented on police terror in Paterson, 1913. "The I.W.W. in Paterson has given the world a supreme example of the power of a working man to wake up the public when he simply keeps his hands in his pockets."

Bill Haywood himself describes the city and the strike in his autobiography: [5]

Paterson, the silk city of America, is built near the mosquito-infested swamp lands of New Jersey. It is a miserable place of factories, dye-houses, silk mills, which are operated by from 20,000 to 25,000 workers. There is not a park in the workers'

[5] William D. Haywood, *Bill Haywood's Book*, p. 261.

quarter for the children to play in, no gardens or boulevards where mothers can give their babes a breath of fresh air. . . .

The workers were on strike for better conditions and to prevent the companies from increasing the number of looms that they should operate. Among these workers, as in Lawrence, were many nationalities—Italians, Syrians, Armenians, French, Germans, Jews from all countries, and many others.

Daily meetings of the strikers were held in Turn Hall and other places. We often had great mass meetings in the adjoining town of Haledon where we spoke from the veranda of a house occupied by a Socialist.

Barred from holding any meetings in Paterson, the strikers went out over the bridge to Haledon. Walking out by the hundreds, the striking workers passed the Paterson police, massed at the city line waiting to arrest the I.W.W. leaders. Next morning mass picket lines would form again at each mill, to be clubbed and beaten back by the police. Recorder Carroll in the Court would deal out heavy sentences to all pickets gathered up in the police net. There were 25,000 striking silk workers, and their weapon was the picket line. After nine weeks of police brutality, the picket lines were still forming and reforming. Chief of Police Bimson was known to the strikers as "Chief Bums."

John Reed pictures the county jail with forty strikers crowded together. Dutchmen, Italians, Belgians, Jews, Slovaks, Germans, Poles, "wops, kikes, hunkies," there they were, united in one common struggle. John Reed's cell was 4 x 7 in size "with an open toilet of disgusting dirtiness in the corner." A crowd of pickets had been jammed into the same lock-up only three days before, *eight or nine in a cell,* and kept there without food or water for twenty-two hours. Among them was a young girl of seventeen who led a procession right up to a police sergeant's nose and defied him to arrest them. "In spite of the horrible discomfort, fatigue and thirst, these prisoners had *never let up cheering* and singing for a day and a night."

The strike had started as a protest of weavers against the four-loom system. The president of the Broad Silk Manufacturers' Association describes in a state report on the strike the bargain made by a silk employer, Henry Doherty, with the officials of the United Textile Workers. He "entered into a compact with them that in consideration of his making his mill a union shop and joining the Master Mill Owners' Association, they would endeavor to furnish him with weavers who would run four looms on the same class of work as they were running in the East. . . . Other weavers were needed and taken in who were not allied with any organization but who were taken later by the I.W.W. This produced friction among the workers and was the cause of the strike a year ago, and also the cause of the beginning of the recent strike."

The strike became a general walk-out of all silk workers, including the dyers and dyers' helpers. When Bill Haywood came in, demands were strengthened to make the eight-hour day the main point of the strike. He predicted the unemployment sure to come from the multiple-loom system and declared the solution lay in shorter hours of work. "The eight-hour day. The forty-hour week." And then, "To the worker belongs the product of his work." Speaking at a mass meeting of 6,000 children, workers in the Paterson mills, Haywood said, "Who made all the beautiful things around us? The working class. Who gets them all? The capitalist class."

Up in strike headquarters at Helvetia Hall, Bertha Johnston was receiving and acknowledging checks, money-orders and dollar bills as they poured in for strike relief, totaling $63,000. Tom Moore at the next desk was keeping record of members. Upstairs over their heads, John Reed was rehearsing the chorus of strikers for the great Pageant to be held in Madison Square Garden, to dramatize the silk workers' struggle. "Whoever heard of learning to sing with

your feet?" Bertha Johnston asked John Reed when feet thumped out the tune above her head while she added up columns of figures. But the chorus did learn to sing. A parade was held the day before. The great Pageant was a success, "the greatest labor pageant ever held in America," described in *Bill Haywood's Book.*

A friend of the strikers pawned her furniture to help pay for Madison Square Garden. Upton Sinclair was one of those who worked to meet expenses of the Pageant, so that all proceeds should go for Paterson relief. Yet enemies charged that the I.W.W. was taking the money raised for relief! It is an old charge, ever new in every strike.

The 1913 strike was called a failure. The eight-hour day was not won until six years later. It is not really won even to-day. The four-loom system was established in many Paterson mills. The I.W.W. dwindled and lost its hold in the East. But workers who went through this greatest of Paterson strikes will never forget its lesson. They had learned the meaning of class solidarity.

A local of the Workers' International Industrial Union, formerly the Detroit faction of the I.W.W. established in 1912, and a local of the I.W.W. also, continued to exist in Paterson, even after the Associated Silk Workers and the Amalgamated Textile Workers were organized in 1919.

Associated Silk Workers—1919

Paterson hatband weavers, ribbon weavers, and then broad silk weavers broke away from the United Textile Workers in 1919. All charged that the older officials betrayed the rank and file in the campaign for an eight-hour day and a forty-four-hour week.

A strike to demand the shorter week was officially called in February, 1919, but the ribbon weavers found they were not supported in their stand by the local or national officials

of the United Textile Workers. The War Labor Board, injected into the strike, recommended forty-two and one-half hours a week. United Textile Workers' officials recommended compromising with the employers on a forty-eight-hour week.

Rank and file hatband weavers took matters into their own hands, called a strike in July and won the forty-four-hour week. For this action they were expelled by the United Textile Workers. A secret meeting between the United Textile Workers' officials and the manufacturers agreed to postpone adoption of the shorter week. A strike of the broad silk weavers' local and of rank and file workers in five ribbon shops followed in August, and continued several weeks until the forty-four-hour week became general throughout the city.

Meanwhile the Associated Silk Workers was organized independently in August by the 300 hatband weavers expelled from the United Textile Workers. They were soon joined in the new union by ribbon weavers whose charter had been revoked by the older union's national organization. The story of the Associated Silk Workers continues in later sections of this book.

Amalgamated Textile Workers

"One Big Industrial Union for the Textile Industry." With this vigorous slogan the Amalgamated Textile Workers of America, organized in May, 1919, led brilliant and successful strikes in Lawrence, Paterson, Allentown, Pawtucket Valley, West Hoboken and Lawrence again, until a final victory at Lawrence in November, 1922. Its greatest strength was among wool and silk workers. In Paterson alone, the Amalgamated led three strikes, one of broad silk weavers for the forty-four-hour week in 1919, one for a wage schedule a few months later, and another for the dyers.

The dyers' strike was part of the general forty-four-hour campaign of 1919. More than a thousand dye-workers struck. The companies would make no concession, though hours in dye houses were even longer than in the silk weaving shops. A few shops finally promised a forty-eight-hour week, only to go back on their word when the workers were back on the daily grind.

Spies of the Sherman Service were busy among the strikers. One active "striker" who played the piano enthusiastically for the singing of the strike songs was found to be in the pay of that agency. Another operative carelessly left his "report" in his coat pocket when he took his suit to the tailor. The tailor sympathized with the strikers and turned in the papers to union headquarters.

Arrests for handing out strike notices to workers at the mill gates, arrests of pickets in the early morning, lack of funds to feed the workers through many weeks of holding out, betrayal by spies—and then the dyers drifted back to work. But "in principle" the eight-hour day and the forty-four-hour week were recognized in the Paterson silk industry generally. Dyers had stood with other silk workers to demand shorter hours.

The period was favorable for labor organization. The war boom was still on. Cost of living had increased so greatly that the need of increase in wages was overwhelming. All unions were at their peak. The slump of 1921 had not yet come.

While Paterson hatband and ribbon weavers were starting the Associated Silk Workers in 1919, broad silk weavers became a local of the Amalgamated Textile Workers and led the struggle for the forty-four-hour week which was gained in the broad silk shops in August, 1919.

This was the year of victory at Lawrence, too, when after a fiery strike of fifteen weeks, the woolen and worsted workers won a 15 per cent increase in wages and the forty-

eight-hour week. This strike recalled the terrible and glorious days of 1912. Workers were beaten on the picket line by police and by hired thugs, and the final triumph, described in *The New Textile Worker,* was "due to the blood shed by the workers." When relief was failing, children of strikers were secretly sent to sympathizers in other towns. A spy within the inner circle of the union itself worked against the strike. It was a four months' struggle before the strike was won. These Lawrence textile workers, 30,000 strong, also became members of the Amalgamated Textile Workers along with the Paterson broad silk workers.

The silk workers at Allentown, Pa., formed a local of the Amalgamated Textile Workers. The United Textile Workers' Allentown local of 1,250 members in 1919 revolted against a dishonest union treasurer. The Amalgamated came in with a progressive program and vigorous organizers. A strike was called against an attempt to reintroduce the ten-hour day in certain shops. A thousand workers were out. Strikers picketed plants of the Allentown Spinning Company and the Allentown Silk Company. Arrests of pickets could not stop the strike. Something of the spirit of Paterson came for a few years into Allentown, but for a few years only. The organization lapsed when the Amalgamated Textile Workers disbanded in 1923.

Much of the success of the Amalgamated in fields where other unions had failed lay in its plan of local autonomy. The local had as much freedom as was "consistent with healthy, centralized strength." It paid attention to workers whom the older unions had ignored. "Our appeal is to all unorganized textile workers from the dyers and spinners of silk yarn to the weaver of carpet and the truckman who carts it from factory to freight station."

After the war and post-war boom an unusual slump in the textile industry starting in April, 1920, lasted a year and a half and affected all textile labor unions. More than half

the union members stopped paying dues. Most of the mills closed for six or eight months and the rest ran only on short time.

The Paterson local of the Amalgamated Textile Workers voted in 1921 to merge with the Associated Silk Workers so that all silk weavers, hatband, ribbon and broad silk, would stand together in the one union. The United Textile Workers broad silk weavers' local in Paterson had disbanded in 1920.

In New England in 1922, another great struggle, nine months long, led by the Amalgamated Textile Workers, was successful. It was a long and strenuous fight against a 20 per cent reduction in wages. Eighty thousand workers in various textile centers stuck it out week after week, month after month, until a final settlement in November left them victorious. Not that the meager wages, always averaging under $20 a week, were increased, but the wage reduction was withdrawn. The Amalgamated, in this ninth inning of its last game, scored a victory.

Hidden away now in the New York Public Library is the account of those five years of a progressive industrial textile union. The union failed in the end for lack of effective leadership. Copies of the union organ, *The New Textile Worker,* are already crumbling at the edges and the folds, and the reader must turn the pages carefully as they fall to pieces in his hand. But the record of that vigorous union is written also in the lives of 50,000 textile workers, many of them silk workers, who were its members.

Paterson—1924

It was the night of October 14, 1924. Turn Hall, Paterson, meeting place for generations of silk workers, was packed to the limit with men, women and young workers who had been out on strike for two months against the

speed-up system and for retention of the eight-hour day. The streets outside were lined with people who could not get into the hall.

Police who had been overactive for eight weeks were quiet for once. Two weeks before, they had arrested 107 strikers on the picket line. On October 6, at the City Hall, they had charged a meeting of workers, swinging their night-sticks, cracking heads, fingers and wrists, and arresting a dozen men and women. Police did not know it was a meeting planned by the American Civil Liberties Union to test free speech and put Paterson police terror on the front page of the *New York Times.*

But now Chief of Police Tracey's orders were, "Make no trouble." So the police stood and looked at the strikers and at the little group of leaders, speakers and committee for whom the crowd made way. As they stepped into the hall, every worker was on his feet, shouting, cheering, tossing a hat in the air, sending the speakers up the aisle to the platform with a call of victory that will echo down the years in Paterson. This meeting meant that Turn Hall was again open for daily strike meetings, and that H. M. Wicks, the popular Communist speaker who had withdrawn to call the bluff of police authorities, would come again to speak.

More than 13,000 broad silk workers, members of the Associated Silk Workers' Union, had been out on strike since August 12. Locals of the United Textile Workers had not scabbed, but Sara Conboy, secretary of this organization, had sent a letter to all A. F. of L. unions in the country calling the Associated Silk Workers "an outlaw organization" and telling them not to support the Paterson silk workers. The letter instead of being a knock-out turned out to be a boost for relief.

Demands for the eight-hour day to offset the three- and four-loom system were strengthened to include a 15 per cent

wage increase, and recognition of the union, the Associated Silk Workers. Relief work was well organized. Tickets for grocery orders were given to all strikers' families. Funds came in steadily from other unions and from class-conscious workers in other centers.

Conditions in Paterson had been growing worse since the 1922 strike of broad silk weavers. Rates had been cut so drastically that workers found they were actually earning less on three and four looms than they had formerly earned on two looms. In the midst of post-war high cost of living a skilled weaver was still averaging only $21 a week. A bookkeeper for a silk company asserted in *The Paterson Sunday Chronicle,* "I wish to state that in the last three years, during which I have been keeping books for a 100-loom concern, *not one of our weavers made $1,000 a year, but $900 and even less,* or about $16 to $19 a week."

And this was at a time when the minimum family budget called for over $2,000 a year or about $42 a week. Then, as now, at least two wage-earners in a family were necessary to support five people (three children under working age) even on the lowest level of health and decency.

This 1924 strike of the Associated Silk Workers was a partial victory seen in the long view of the class struggle. By December 12 many shops had settled with the union. Not every concern granted an increase in rate of pay, but many did. Enlightened workers know now that there were mistakes in the conduct of the strike. It was a short-sighted policy to oppose the three- and four-loom system as in itself the main evil. Basic issues of a wage increase and the eight-hour day as reducing unemployment should have been kept more clearly in the forefront of union demands. But the union was recognized in Paterson as able to unite workers of differing nationalities, Italians, Jews, Syrians, and English-speaking groups. Ribbon weavers and broad silk weavers

were in one union. Out of the struggle came a new generation of class-conscious younger workers. They had seen the employing class use injunctions, courts, police, church and press against them. They had been educated by policemen's clubs on the picket line, as their fathers had been educated in 1913, and their grandfathers in 1894 and 1878.

Passaic—1926

The great strike of Passaic, 1926, was of special significance to silk workers because dyers of the United Piece Dye Works and the National Silk Dyeing Company, as well as silk workers of the Dundee Textile Company, struck with the woolen workers. Sixteen thousand workers of Passaic, Garfield and Lodi, New Jersey, walked out in January, 1926, against a 10 per cent wage cut and for recognition of the union. Companies dealing out the cut had declared profits running in some cases up to 93 per cent on capital invested. Wages for woolen workers had averaged $17 a week for women and $24 for men.

A United Front Committee of Textile Workers, under left-wing guidance, led the strike. Demands for abolition of the wage cut were strengthened to include a 10 per cent increase over the old rate, return of money lost by the cut, time and a half for overtime, the forty-four-hour week, sanitary conditions required by law, no discrimination against union workers, and first of all recognition of the union.

Every day for twelve months through 1926, Passaic textile workers faced police on the picket line. Their spirit equaled the spirit of Paterson, 1913. Albert Weisbord, leader of the strike, was arrested, held in jail for days and released on the extraordinary bail of $50,000. All the most active strike leaders were repeatedly arrested. Newspaper and movie men had their cameras smashed by police clubs and

came out next day in armored cars and airplanes to get pictures and news. Chief of Police Zober, most active against the strikers, was later found to be guilty of stealing automobiles and was suspended from the police force for "violating the criminal laws of New Jersey."

Denouncing the strike leadership as Communist, the companies refused to deal with the United Front Committee. Forstman and Huffman, employing about half the workers involved, had a company union of their own, which went to pieces during the strike and was never revived.

Summing up the strike as it ended, Albert Weisbord wrote in his book, *Passaic:*

> The Passaic Strike has marked a milestone in labor history. . . . Sixteen thousand textile workers, men, women and children, have waged a terrific struggle against one of the most powerful sets of employers in this country. Poles, Russians, Ukrainians, Slovaks, Hungarians, and Germans, all have struck with unexampled discipline and firmness in the face of all the forces that the ruling powers of capitalist society can hurl against them.

Two years after the strike, in September, 1928, the United Textile Workers' convention expelled the delegates from Passaic, elected by the local unions, on the ground that they were active in the Textile Mills Committee at New Bedford. Passaic locals withdrew from the United Textile Workers and affiliated with the National Textile Workers' Union.

Spies in Hosiery—1928

Labor spies figured prominently in battles of hosiery workers in 1928. A. R. MacDonald, "industrial engineer," head of a large labor spy service, was active against union organizers of the Full Fashioned Hosiery Workers' Union at the Real Silk Hosiery Mills in Indianapolis. Real Silk maintained a sort of company union, the Employees' Mutual

Benefit Association, but the knitters almost to a man lined up with the real union. A "yellow dog" contract, pledging the employees not to belong to a trade union, was then clamped on the workers. The union retains its following but the membership is secret.

At Kenosha, Wisconsin, labor spies were continuously employed by the Allen-A Company. This concern in February, 1928, locked out 300 workers in the full-fashioned department of its Kenosha plant, because they belonged to the hosiery workers' union. The workers turned the lock-out into a strike and picketed the mills. Strikebreakers were put in by the company to run two machines each, although union men agree that one machine is all a skilled knitter can operate. A sweeping injunction, police clubbing, arrests, fines in court cases, frame-ups, spies—all the usual weapons of the employing class have been used against the striking men and girls in Kenosha.

A lock-out of workers at the Milfay plant of Buffalo in 1928 was turned into a strike for union recognition and union conditions. When the workers refused to sign a "yellow dog" contract they were locked out. For a seventy- to seventy-four-hour week, Milfay knitters had been averaging $40 in earnings. Union knitters on the same kind of work would earn $60 up, for forty-eight hours. Fines were imposed by the company for thirty seconds' tardiness, for going to the toilet often, and for unavoidable breakages.

The Duffys, owners of the Duffy Silk Throwing Mills, tried to conceal their connection with the Milfay company, but finally admitted their responsibility for the importation of thug strikebreakers. Through contracts, the Milfay concern is tied up with the Berkshire Knitting Mills, one of the largest anti-union hosiery companies in the country. The owners had hoped to hide from the union by establishing a plant in Buffalo, 400 miles from other hosiery centers, and concealing their identity.

Shorter Strikes

Girls in Wilkes-Barre silk mills walked out on strike in a spontaneous protest against a wage cut in 1927. The strike attracted no general attention, but it proved that young girl workers can be aroused. When asked about this Wilkes-Barre strike, President McMahon of the United Textile Workers dismissed it as beneath his attention. "We have so many strikes, you know."

Easton and Phillipsburg silk workers struck early in 1927 against a pay cut of 15 to 25 per cent. The R. H. Simon weavers were the first to go out, and after a few weeks gained back half of the cut wages. Workers of the Stewart Silk Company were out for nine weeks and also won a compromise of half the pay slash. Phillipsburg workers at the Tirrell Brothers Silk Corporation were out for ten weeks and won better shop conditions with abolition of the whole cut. During these strikes in the Easton-Phillipsburg center, a meeting arranged by the Workers' (Communist) Party for Albert Weisbord was broken up by the police. But these local strikes stopped the wage cuts.

Southern workers have recently proved that they are beginning to realize the class struggle. The Henderson, N. C., strike in 1927 was a spontaneous revolt against low wages. One thousand cotton mill workers found the state militia and machine guns used against them. The militia was called out on the personal order of the mill owners and their attorney. Silk workers of the Covington, Va., plant of Schwarzenbach, Huber & Company walked out in protest against the introduction of foreign workers at lower wages. The management smoothed things over hastily and the 250 strikers went back to work.

Battling to keep the forty-eight-hour week, Rhode Island textile workers in 1928 had to accept the fifty-four-hour system. A concerted drive by the mill owners was aimed to

put over a 10 per cent cut and longer hours. A three months' strike at the Parker mills, Warren, R. I., resulted in a partial victory. The union, United Textile Workers, was recognized by the company, and a 10 per cent wage cut was rescinded. But the 450 cotton mill workers went back to work on a fifty-four-hour week.

The Darlington Textile Company of Pawtucket used an injunction, state police, deputy sheriffs and local police against the 200 striking workers in May, 1928. Weavers and loom-fixers started the walkout against a wage cut and were joined by the beamers in a sympathetic strike. National officials of the United Textile Workers have been kept busy negotiating with the employers for a settlement. The $24,000,000 Manville-Jenckes Company has used its company union to vote in the fifty-four-hour week for 2,000 workers. The United Textile Workers led a strike at this mill in 1926, when the company began to hire non-union workers. State militia was used against strike pickets. The big Manville plant is only one of the chain of mills owned by this great company. Its plants at Gastonia and High Shoals, North Carolina, run on an eleven- and twelve-hour basis.

New Bedford—1928

The five months' strike of New Bedford cotton fine goods workers against a 10 per cent wage cut in 1928 included many silk workers. Two New Bedford silk mills settled independently with their workers early in the strike. Many of the 26,000 workers who stayed out on strike for twenty-six weeks were winders and weavers of silk and rayon in mills manufacturing mixed goods.

The mills dealing the cut had recently declared substantial profits as recorded in a previous chapter. The Pierce Manufacturing Company had maintained a dividend rate of $32 per share since 1923. In 1927, eighteen of the twenty-three

important mills in New Bedford paid dividends totaling $2,100,000. The dividend rate figured for the past ten years is $11.27 per share.

Yet, early in April, 1928, a notice appeared on the mill bulletin boards announcing the cut. Unions were not consulted or considered. The answer was a walk-out of all workers. Union officials must have guessed the cut was coming when wage rates were slashed in Fall River and other New England centers earlier in the year. If New Bedford workers had struck in January when Fall River wages were cut, they would have caught employers in the busy, early spring season. As it was, spring and summer orders had been filled and store shelves were piled high with fine goods before the wage cut was announced. For the first few weeks the strike was almost a lock-out.

Wages in New Bedford had averaged $19.95 in 1927, but dropped to $19 for the first three months of 1928. The cut would have brought average wages down to $17.10 in return for almost fifty hours of work.

An "average" tells only a small part of the story. Skilled workers earning $25 or $30 a week bring up the average. Countless workers were getting less than $15 a week. But the minimum family budget called for $41 a week in New Bedford in 1928.

Organized workers in New Bedford had been for many years members of the American Federation of Textile Operatives, started in 1916. Craft unions of loomfixers, warp twisters, weavers, slasher tenders and carders were represented on a Textile Council of which William E. G. Batty and Abraham Binns were officials. Early in the strike the American Federation of Textile Operatives merged with the United Textile Workers.

Unorganized workers in New Bedford were led by the Textile Mills Committee, known as the T. M. C. Largely Portuguese, these unorganized workers have a tradition of

industrial union leadership dating from I.W.W. days. Mass picketing by these left-wing strikers, led by William Murdoch and Fred Beal, began in the early days of the strike. The local T. M. C. organized in June as the New Bedford Textile Workers' Union. Demands of the left-wing union included not only abolition of the wage cut, but also a 20 per cent increase in wages over the old wage scale, forty-hour, five-day week, abolition of speed-up, equal pay for equal work, no discrimination against union members, and recognition of the union.

The "show-down" date, July 9th, when employers tried to open the mills, saw more than 5,000 strikers picketing the gates. Textile Council followers had separate picket lines. But rank and file strikers came together for an all-night watch over mills where scabs were reported at work. The New Bedford Cotton Manufacturers' Association at last broke their policy of silence. Mass picketing must stop. The police must "tolerate no fooling." Two hundred and twenty-five men and women were arrested in one day. Militia with loaded guns faced unarmed workers standing outside the jail where their leaders, Murdoch and Beal, were imprisoned. Augusto Pinto, Portuguese bicycle rider for the Textile Workers' Union, was sentenced to jail for five months for "obstructing policemen" and "disturbing the peace." He was arrested twelve times. Four policemen set upon him one night in the "house of correction" and beat him with a blackjack over the chest, head, arms and legs. After three weeks on a farm to recover from this terrible beating, Pinto came out on the picket line again, only to be immediately arrested by the police. The International Labor Defense, handling Pinto's case, defended over 600 New Bedford strikers arrested on the picket lines.

Relief work was carried on by the Textile Council through a Citizens' Relief Committee. The Workers' International

Relief distributed aid from two stations, one at the north and one at the south end of the city.

The strike was settled in October, 1928. Officials of the Textile Council, representing seven craft unions, voted to accept a 5 per cent wage cut proposed by the State Board of Conciliation, and accepted as a compromise by the manufacturers' association. Rank and file workers voted against yielding to any cut. A second vote was ordered by the union officials "to accept the cut," and by a small majority, only a handful voting, the members of these United Textile Workers' locals voted to take the reduction.

The Textile Workers' Union held out with fighting spirit for continuing the strike. But police of five cities, armed with riot sticks, were sent out against these left-wing leaders in what the police chief called a "cleaning and sweeping up process." Not only those on the picket line but others who were quietly at work in relief headquarters were hunted down and arrested. Cases of 662 strikers arrested during the twenty-five weeks' struggle were still pending in the New Bedford courts at the beginning of 1929.

Paterson—1928

In October, 1928, about 3,000 Paterson silk workers, mostly weavers of plain broad silk, came out on strike for enforcement of the eight-hour day, for an increase in wage rate, and for recognition of the union. They represented nearly 200 small shops. The Associated Silk Workers, in calling the strike, published a standard price-list for broad silk weaving ranging from 9½ to 15½ cents a yard, according to the kind of silk to be woven. This price-list involved an increase in rates of about 10 per cent. Jacquard weavers, in the same union, already enjoying better conditions, voted to contribute toward relief, but refused to strike as a measure of solidarity.

A vigorous strike committee of 50 members arranged daily mass meetings of strikers and daily mass picketing to bring out workers in the larger shops. Early dark mornings in the autumn saw picketers meeting at strike headquarters in Turn Hall. At the whistle of the picket captains, men and women piled into buses for the drive across town to more distant shops, or strode out in lines to picket the nearer mills. "It's the women that does it!" exclaimed a woman picket, leading back a line of women, and the writer remembered Bill Haywood's words about women as the backbone of a strike. Seventeen pickets were arrested in one day, but the cases were later dismissed in court.

Many employers, eager not to miss the busy season, came forward day by day to settle with the union. In many cases, however, strikers on returning to work found that the settlement was only a fake. Bosses went back on their promises. Shops would return to the longer day and the lower pay rate as soon as the workers were back on the job. Many workers stood out for real settlements and came out again on strike.

Officials of the Associated Silk Workers claimed that the strike committee was too much under left-wing influence, and in the midst of the strike declared this committee disbanded. This action was upheld by a 2 to 1 vote of a general membership meeting of the union. Jacquard weavers and ribbon and hatband workers, not themselves on strike, helped to pile up the vote against the left wing.

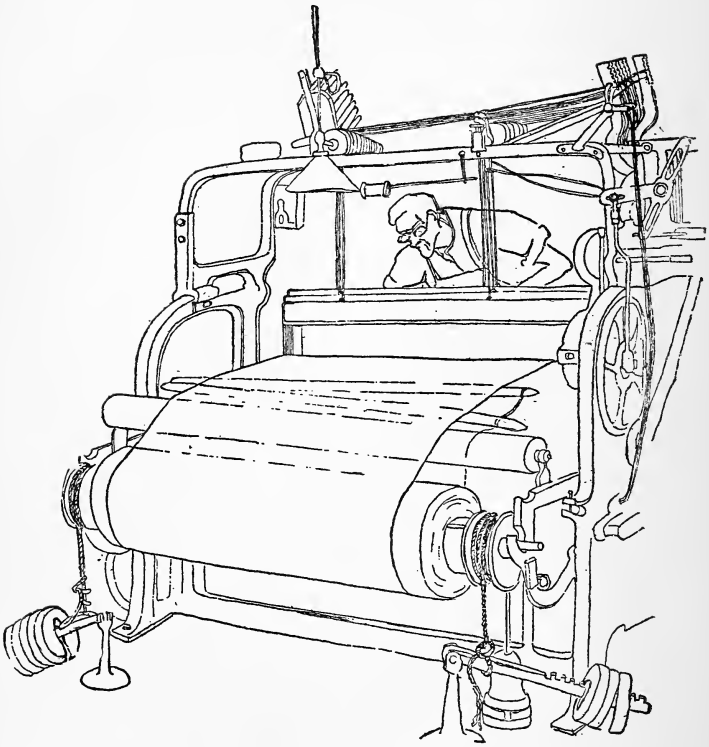
Left-wing workers, maintaining that the strike committee was unfairly and unwisely dismissed, withdrew from the Associated and formed a Paterson local of the National Textile Workers' Union. By January, 1929, this new industrial union, with one man and two women organizers, had started work to organize all Paterson silk workers, including the dye workers.

The strike was officially called off by the Associated during the last week of December, 1928, with the statement, "this

does not mark the end of our struggle with the silk bosses for the eight-hour day, a decent minimum wage, and union recognition. . . . From now on the strategy will be unceasing guerilla warfare with individual bosses, rather than a general strike." [6]

In the textile industries, lowest paid of all important industries, wage cuts and anti-union drives by employers have goaded the workers, in many instances unorganized, to strike against intolerable conditions. In the year, 1928, one hundred years after the first Paterson strike, at least 30,000 textile workers, preferring starvation for themselves and their dependents, have again made use of this weapon to free themselves from the tyranny of the mill owners. Freezing and drenched in rain, they have stood valiantly on the picket line, holding out for months against starvation on the one hand and police brutality and imprisonment on the other. Surely the time has come to weld these workers into one strong union which can successfully resist the attacks of the employers, and develop the collective power which workers need in the silk as well as in other textile industries.

[6] For an analysis and the lessons of this Paterson strike, see pamphlet *The Paterson Textile Workers* by Albert Weisbord.



The Weaver

CHAPTER X

THE SILK WORKERS' FUTURE

MANY American workers, in silk and other industries, comfort themselves in the face of speed-up, wage cuts, and unemployment, with the chilly consolation that after all they are better off than workers in Europe and the Orient. They do not yet realize that American standards are genuinely threatened by the unemployment and the very low wages in other countries. But textile workers are beginning to see that northern standards are pulled down by lower wages and longer hours in the southern mills. Paterson workers know that they are suffering from the competition of Pennsylvania. The strong trend toward concentration together with increased efficiency and the speed-up system is casting a shadow of serious and steadily increasing unemployment among silk workers.

Grievances

Speed-up is taking three forms. With existing equipment, old machinery and wasteful methods of management, employers expect workers to accept lower wages, longer working hours and doubling up of machines. With new machines and new efficiency methods of management in the local plant, the individual worker is expected to double and treble his present output. Displaced workers are thrown out to join the growing army of the unemployed. With a tendency toward centralization or combination in the textile industry as a whole, the most efficient plants are developed to produce more and the less efficient are crowded out.

In many mills, say the textile trade journals, half the number of workers are now producing more than was formerly produced by the larger number. Instead of shortening hours to take up this "slack" in employment, there is a tendency to lengthen hours and "make labor go further." About 17 per cent of the silk workers, and a higher percentage of all textile workers, were unemployed in 1928.

For the unemployed, thrown out by new machinery and efficiency, and for the "normally" unemployed, there is no social provision in the United States. The larger the number of unemployed silk workers, the greater is the bargaining power of the boss. "If you don't like it, you can get out. We can get plenty more workers any minute."

Jobless silk workers find no openings in other industries for the same story is told in each industry. With 7 per cent fewer workers, manufacturing industries are producing 40 per cent more than in 1919. Lack of any unemployment insurance and of any national system of unemployment exchanges leaves the United States marked as the most backward of all western capitalist countries.

In earnings, silk workers average $20.71 a week, *slightly* more than other textile workers, but not enough to bring the general average for all textile workers above $20 a week. The latest government figures show that textile mill workers average only $18.46 a week. Countless women and young workers earn less than $15 a week. In Massachusetts, boasting of "progressive" legislation, textile workers averaged $20.40 a week in 1928. The industry as a whole pays lower wages than any other basic industry in the country.

While textile workers average less than $20 a week, the minimum family budget, for the lowest standard of health and decency, calls for $40 to $42 a week in industrial centers of the United States. At least two, often three members of the family and in countless cases the whole family must work to earn a meager living.

Economic pressure brings the children into the mills at sixteen or younger. A larger percentage of workers are under sixteen in the silk industry than in any other industry. Exploitation of these young workers, forever cut off from high school, college and other educational advantages, is justified as "necessary" by employers. Young workers "come cheaper" than adult workers. Yet there are enough unemployed older workers to replace all the children in the mills.

Averaging fifty-one hours a week, textile mills are now tending to lengthen hours of work, instead of reducing hours to match increased output. The eight-hour day, won by Paterson silk strikers after bitter strikes, is unknown in any other textile district. The New York and Massachusetts forty-eight-hour law allows nine hours a day. The majority of silk workers average fifty hours a week. Many men and women in silk and other textile centers are even now working ten and eleven hours a day. At the recent convention of the new National Textile Workers' Union, the demand that brought the most prolonged applause from all delegates was the one calling for the "forty-hour, five-day week." Night work is still common not only in the South but in New Jersey and Pennsylvania too. Only a strong union can bring about reduction of the present long hours.

Contradictions in the textile industry puzzle economists, managers and owners alike. Immense operations and immense profits of big companies exist side by side with the free competition and trade of small concerns. Southern companies compete with northern companies, but large corporations own plants both North and South. Overproduction, since the wartime inflation, is generally recognized as a basic evil in the textile industry, yet mills are allowed to run night shifts and long days when shortening the work day would seem an obvious solution.

A general tendency toward centralization is as marked in

textiles, and in the silk branch, as in other industries. Mergers are encouraged by big banks; then planned and accomplished. Yet small concerns go on underbidding recognized companies and preventing the stabilization of buying and selling.

In all this confusion of unplanned production of textiles, unplanned buying and selling, characteristic of capitalist society, the workers are always the losers. Yet whenever, in a hundred years' history, textile workers have demanded better conditions, abolition of pay cuts, increased wages or shorter hours, they have always found the police power of the state used againt them. Textile workers in the United States to-day are scarcely better off than they were fifty years ago. Many Paterson silk workers are worse off than they were forty years ago. The strain of speed-up and unemployment is far worse.

Where is the silk worker who has any security against unemployment, against illness, against old age? Where is the silk worker who has even a week's vacation with pay out of a year's work?

In Soviet Russia

Only in one country has the silk worker a genuine measure of security. In the Soviet Union the silk worker, like all other industrial workers, has social protection against unemployment, against illness, whether temporary or permanent, and against old age. He has two weeks' vacation with pay.

A pregnant woman worker has two months' leave of absence with pay before the baby is born, and two months' leave of absence with pay after the baby is born. Free medical care is provided by the industry and by the state for all workers. Men and women in Soviet Russia have equal pay for equal work. The family is provided for in case of the death or desertion of the wage-earner.

A young worker may not work eight hours a day in a factory until he is eighteen years old. At sixteen, he may work six hours in the factory and two in the factory school, being paid for eight hours' work. In the factory school the training is in general and social educational subjects for the earlier years and in special vocational subjects in the last year or two of the course.

The writer visited a large silk factory and a larger cotton factory in Soviet Russia. After visiting many textile mills in four different countres, one can bear witness to the freer, richer life that textile workers already enjoy in the workers' republic.

Most significant of all is the fact that Russian silk workers from now on are to work only seven hours a day. One by one the textile factories have gone on the seven-hour-day continuous process basis. Among the large plants that shifted to the seven-hour-day plan in 1928 were the Abelman in Vladimir province, the Sverdlov, the Proletarian Victory and the Red Banner textile factories.

The first day of the new order at the Abelman factory began dramatically with the hiring of over 900 unemployed workers. The new program at the Red Banner plants called for 3,000 additional workers. The labor exchange could provide only 700 textile workers of whom 200 were specially qualified. The other workers needed for the new system of reduced hours were immediately trained in special classes.

The program of the *Gosplan* (State Planning Commission) based on the seven-hour-day system calls for progressive increase of production and a lowering of factory expenses. For instance, in the Abelman factory, the plan outlined a 30 per cent increase in output and a lowering of expenses by 38 per cent on spinning and 48 per cent on weaving.

Those especially responsible for the welfare of textile workers in Russia are interested in studying weavers' deaf-

ness, referred to in this book. A young weaver from America, one of the rank and file trade union delegation to Russia in 1927, found herself the subject of special interest to these textile experts in the Soviet Republic on account of her deafness. They told her of their efforts to do away with the terrible noise of looms, and thus protect the weavers from that strain.

Workers have the deep satisfaction of knowing that the industry is *theirs,* and that their day's work fits into a plan of coördinating all industry. "These are our railroads, our factories, our country," the Russian worker will explain to a visiting worker. "We run them and improve them because they are ours. We will make them constantly better and strengthen Socialism year by year."

What the *Gosplan* means in this workers' republic is summarized by Stuart Chase in *Soviet Russia in the Second Decade:*

> The goal to be achieved by the plan is simple and straightforward; a maximum production of necessities and plain comforts for the workers and peasants of Russia at a minimum of human effort, while scrupulously safeguarding at the same time the health, safety, education, opportunity for leisure, and working conditions of those who labor. In other words, however great the benefits of low cost production, it must not be obtained at the expense of the fundamental health and welfare of the workers. Only enough capital will be permitted to flow into a given industry to balance consumer requirements; just enough shoe factories to provide shoes for the people of Russia; just enough textile mills; just enough sugar factories.
>
> To integrate in detail the economic life of one hundred and fifty millions of people over a six-thousand-mile stretch of territory is a bigger job than has ever been attempted in administrative annals.

Demands

American silk workers cannot hope to secure under capitalism the protection accorded to textile workers in the Soviet

workers' republic. Russian workers gained their freedom through a revolution. To secure even a small measure of such protection under capitalism will require a strong and militant union organizing broadly and persistently. Such a union will make certain immediate demands.

The forty-hour, five-day week is a first step in securing protection against the worst phases of speed-up. To lessen the strain of long hours, the shorter work week is a basic demand. That such a shorter week will mean the employment of many workers now unemployed is obvious. With fewer unemployed the workers have greater bargaining power to resist wage cuts and secure increases.

Demand for the abolition of overtime work must go with the demand for a shorter week. Extra pay for overtime work is no solution of the basic grievance. If a double or triple shift is needed for production, it should be effected by the employment of more workers.

Payment by week rather than by piece is an immediate demand. Payment by piece is in itself a form of speed-up and as such should be abolished. Silk workers and other textile workers are beginning a new drive against the whole piece-rate system.

Increase of wages is so urgent a necessity as to require no explanation. An immediate 20 per cent increase in pay would mean nothing more than the restoration of the wage paid to silk workers a few years ago. As we have seen in discussing the conditions of the workers, silk wages are entirely inadequate to provide the necessities of life.

Equal pay for equal work regardless of sex is a demand for the protection of men as well as of women. When a woman can be hired at lower wages to do the work for which a man gets more, employers take advantage of the cheaper labor, and a larger number of men go jobless.

A minimum wage for young workers means again the protection not only of children but of adult workers. In silk

throwing mills where child workers can easily learn the process, young people under sixteen are underbidding older workers in the competition for jobs. Demand for a minimum wage is basic.

Abolition of child labor under sixteen should be by Federal Amendment. For young workers between sixteen and eighteen, the six-hour day and five-day week should be secured and maintained by the union until such protection can be provided for by adequate legislation in the United States.

Prohibition of night work for women is a demand disputed by certain women of leisure who talk about equal opportunity for women and know nothing of what the "opportunity" to do night work means to working women. Most of the women in industry are now carrying a double burden of housework and factory work. Night work increases the burden. It should be prohibited by law, and the law enforced by a strong union.

Demand for social insurance must include the condition that it is provided by the industry and by the state, never from the meager savings of the workers. Private insurance schemes promoted by employers are used as weapons against unions and should be abolished. Unemployment insurance should provide an amount equal to wages earned up to a certain amount per week. An adequate system of old age pensions, health and accident insurance is of the utmost urgency.

Freedom of speech, press and assembly are vital to the workers for the protection of their right to organize, to strike and to picket. Abolition of injunctions in labor struggles is an immediate demand. Calling out of militia, Federal troops, guards, gunmen or deputy sheriffs to be used against the workers must be prohibited by law. Such prohibition is an immediate demand.

It is not the job of the workers to see that companies com-

bine to become more efficient. But in the face of the increasing tendency toward concentration of production in the hands of fewer and larger companies, in the face of the larger profits of these larger companies, it is the job of the workers to resist every attack upon their working conditions. The larger the company the more power it has to keep out a union and compel acceptance of its own terms. Now, before consolidations progress any further, is the time to organize silk workers in the unorganized centers. These workers and textile workers generally cannot successfully resist the power of the big corporations unless they build a powerful union.

Extent of Organization

Less than 5 per cent of the 1,110,000 textile workers in the United States are organized in any unions. At the peak of organization strength, just after the war, 225,000 textile workers, or from 22 to 25 per cent of the total number, were organized in the United Textile Workers, the Amalgamated Textile Workers, the American Federation of Textile Operatives and in independent local unions. The depression of 1920-21 caused a loss of from 50 to 60 per cent in the total number of union members. The unions have never regained their lost strength. In 1928 not more than 40,000 textile workers were organized. Union strength was confined largely to Massachusetts, New Jersey and the vicinity of Philadelphia.

Of the 132,500 silk workers, less than 3 per cent are organized. The Associated Silk Workers enrolled about 25 per cent of the 16,368 silk workers of Paterson, and a few individuals in other centers. The United Textile Workers of America, the A. F. of L. union, has not more than 300 strictly silk workers on its books, if we except those who are members of the American Federation of Full Fashioned

Hosiery Workers. The National Textile Workers' Union had just begun to organize in Paterson in 1928.

The most important unions now engaged in organizing silk workers may be briefly described.

Full Fashioned Hosiery Workers

The American Federation of Full Fashioned Hosiery Workers has been affiliated with the United Textile Workers since 1926. Founded in 1913 it had 3,000 members by 1920 and has recently, through vigorous organization work, increased its membership to 12,000. By a special agreement with the United Textile Workers the Full Fashioned keeps the right to strike and has its own strike fund.

Of the 187,000 knit goods and hosiery workers in the United States about 12,000 hosiery workers are in the Full Fashioned. Half the members of this union work in and around Pennsylvania. Seamless hosiery workers are unorganized. There are 50,000 hosiery and knit goods workers in Pennsylvania and 36,000 in New York State. Tennessee has 15,000 and North Carolina 14,000.

The union does not stand for equal pay for equal work for men and women. Its "lady hosiery workers" have less representation than the men, one for every 300 "lady" members, as compared with one to every 100 men. "But in no case shall the lady members be entitled to a representative unless the lady membership of the Branch averages at least twenty-five members." The clause reads as if it were written the middle of last century.

Associated Silk Workers

Having voted to table the proposal for a merger with the United Textile Workers on the same basis as the Full Fashioned Hosiery Workers, the Associated Silk Workers

continued as an independent union with about 3,500 members in the fall of 1928. It was started by the hatband and ribbon weavers of Paterson in 1919, joined by the broad silk weavers in 1921, and showed its greatest strength during the 1924 strike in that city. Its present strength is largely among the hatband, ribbon and a section of the broad silk known as the Jacquard weavers.

With the old local in Paterson and smaller locals in New York City, West Hoboken, and Phillipsburg, New Jersey, and Allentown, Easton and Stroudsburg, Pa., the Associated calls itself a national union. About a third of its members are women workers. Few of the women winders have been organized. The 13,000 dyers and finishers of textiles in New Jersey (chiefly in Paterson and Lodi, New Jersey) have never been organized by the Associated Silk Workers.

National Textile Workers' Union

Meeting in New York City, September 22-23, 1928, a convention of 169 delegates from twenty-one cities and towns organized a new progressive organization, the National Textile Workers' Union of America. The four main branches of the textile industry were represented—cotton, silk, woolen and worsted, hosiery and knit goods. Workers in the silk came from Easton, Allentown, Bethlehem, Wilkes-Barre, Scranton, Nanticoke, Old Forge, and Luzerne in the great Pennsylvania silk area.

From New Bedford came delegates from the fifty-six mills on strike, representing the New Bedford Textile Workers' Union recently organized with a membership of 2,500. In all there were ninety-three delegates from the cotton goods section of the industry, tweny-four from the woolen, thirty-three from the silk, and nineteen from the knit goods section. Forty-five of the 169 delegates were women. More than a third were under twenty-five years of

age. From the six Passaic locals, withdrawn the week before from the United Textile Workers, there were twenty-four delegates.

The constitution of the new union contains a special provision that wages of the union officials shall be no higher than the average wage of a skilled textile worker. Union dues are graded according to the wages of the members. Those earning $50 to $99 a month will pay dues of 50 cents a month.

The basis of the union structure is the mill as a unit. Where more than 500 members work in one mill, the unit is the mill-department, to insure democratic discussion of all union questions.

This new union is organized "in order to unite all workers in the industry into one strong organization which will be able to launch a determined struggle for higher wages, shorter hours, and better working conditions." The preamble of its constitution reads in part:

> The formation of all-powerful trusts in the textile industry has made the old craft form of trade-union organization obsolete, impotent. Our union is, therefore, built along industrial lines with the mill as its basic unit. Only an organization which unites all workers regardless of craft, nationality, race, or creed, can serve as an instrument in the hands of the textile workers in their struggles against the mill magnates.
>
> The traditional policy of coöperation between workers and employers is bankrupt. It results in the lowering of the standard of living of the textile workers, merciless wage-cuts, inhuman speed-up, dwindling-down of the trade-union organization. The policy of our union must be one of bold, uncompromising struggle for the interests of the workers as against the interests of the bosses. The basis of our union must be the recognition of the fact that there cannot be peace between the working class and the master class, that only a militant class struggle of the workers can better their conditions, can put an end to wage slavery, and emancipate the working class.
>
> The National Textile Workers' Union will lead the textile

workers in this struggle, and will join hands with the other sections of the working class in America and throughout the entire world for a united front against the system of capitalist oppression and exploitation and for the complete freedom of all toilers.

Economic demands of the National Textile Workers' Union adopted by the convention are as follows:

WE FIGHT

1. Against wage cuts and for higher wages.
2. Against the speed-up system in all its forms.
3. For a 40-hour—5-day week.
4. Against overtime; where overtime is permitted—for time and a half for overtime. Double time for Sundays and holidays.
5. For equal pay for equal work for women and young workers. Minimum wage of $20 a week.
6. Against piece-work, and the piece-rate system. For week work and weekly pay. For a standard scale.
7. Against child labor.
8. Against night work, especially for women and young workers.
9. For 6 legal holidays a year with pay.

For the New Bedford strike the program of the new union called for abolition of the 10 per cent wage cut; 20 per cent increase in wages over the old scale; forty hours and five days a week; abolition of speed-up; equal pay for equal work of men, women and young workers; no discrimination against union members; recognition of the union.

An organizer of the National Textile Workers' Union is in charge of each regional district. Recognizing that 50 per cent of all textile workers are women, the union has several women organizers in northern textile centers. The educational program includes a weekly paper, shop papers, a library and research department in each local, workers' classes in every textile center, sports clubs, and recreation.

Problems of Organization

Any union conducting a national campaign to organize silk workers will have to take into consideration certain characteristics of the industry and its workers. Tactics and union structure must be determined accordingly.

1. Silk workers are of many nationalities. Italians, Syrians, Jews, Belgians, Poles and others are working in the typical plant. The last census reported one-third of the population of Paterson as foreign-born. One out of every four women silk workers in New Jersey in 1922 was foreign-born. The same mixture of nationalities prevails in Pennsylvania silk towns. Only a union that understands the approach to the foreign-born worker, that uses foreign language organizers, that emphasizes the solidarity of all races against the employers, will succeed in organizing silk workers.

2. Silk workers, particularly in Pennsylvania, are largely women and a large number of them are young women. The union should choose organizers who have enthusiasm, persistence, and a knowledge of the tactics that appeal to girl workers.

3. Only an industrial union will be effective. Workers must be organized by shop, not by craft. Old craft lines have broken down where automatic stop looms have largely displaced much of the weavers' skill. Work in throwing mills does not require any great measure of skill. The union must think by factory and not by crafts. All workers in one mill or mill-department—skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled—should belong to one union local.

4. The union will have to fight not only the small mill with 20 to 200 workers but, in Pennsylvania particularly, all the financial power of a great company owning dozens of mills, each in a different town. Only a large-scale union campaign or a large-scale strike can succeed in such an industry.

5. Persistence and stability in the work of organization

will be essential. Such towns as Allentown, the largest silk center in Pennsylvania, have seen unions come and go. The United Textile Workers just after the war period had 1,250 members in Allentown locals, but now only a handful of union members are left. The Amalgamated Textile Workers led a strike there in 1920, just before the slump that weakened all unions. The Associated Silk Workers also attempted some organization work in this district.

ORGANIZING THE SOUTH

Most of the 300,000 unorganized textile workers in the South are in cotton mills. But as the southern mills gradually increase their output of fine goods with silk mixtures, they are coming into competition with a section of the northern silk industry. Some 26,000 southern textile workers are in the huge new rayon plants, feudal in their management and remote from other industries. Some 40,000 are in the knitting mills, including plants turning out full-fashioned silk and rayon hosiery. A few thousand workers—exact figures were not given in the 1925 census of manufactures—are scattered through mills classified as silk mills in Virginia and other southern states. Only in the Piedmont district has unionism begun to take hold among southern textile workers.

Unorganized southern mill workers have been in the past opposed to unionism. Families of old American stock, coming down from rough cabins in the hills, thought at first that the mill village was a paradise. A little cash in hand from working in the mills seemed like wealth in comparison with bare existence in the mountains. They found the whole community around them opposed to a labor union and its principles as a "foreign institution."

But the second generation of textile workers is beginning to wake up. They are realizing that the whole family has to

work in the mills in order to live in the company houses and make a meager living. They hear now about better conditions in other states and in other southern industries. Wages are higher in furniture manufacturing, in steel and in coal. The mill village will lose its hold on the children as they grow up.

Unless unions begin at once on a far-reaching, large-scale campaign to organize southern textile workers, we shall find the new industrial South more and more powerfully anti-union. The textile industry in the South is for the most part large-scale industry. Big northern companies, with southern branches, compete with big southern companies. Mergers are as much the tendency in the South as in the North.

To forestall the anti-union policy of big cotton and rayon companies, a union should go for the "big fellows." The only force that can oppose the financial power of large scale industry and of the great banks behind it is working class solidarity. In this rapidly expanding southern industry, new conditions are bringing in new ideas. There is far less unemployment than in northern textile centers. All is on the up-grade. *Now* is the time to organize southern textile workers.

Outlook

The contrast is only too clear between the programs of the various unions, their demands for better conditions, and the actual conditions, described in this book, under which silk workers are living and working.

More and more the benevolent and clever employers will try to head off organization by welfare schemes and company unions; but most of these same employers will not hesitate to spy on their workers and blacklist those who try to organize. The building up of a strong union will not be easy. Whenever in the past hundred years silk workers have de-

manded better conditions, abolition of pay cuts, increased wages or shorter hours, always they have found the police power of the state used against them by the employing class. Under capitalism this will continue. It is part of the same world-wide struggle that calls out textile workers on one side and British police on the other side in Bombay and Shanghai. The textile strikes of 1928 in Germany, France and Poland were not something foreign to American silk workers.

Beyond certain immediate aims, silk workers in capitalist countries cannot hope to go. For exploitation of workers, chaos in production, irregularity and uncertainty of employment there is no solution under capitalism.

The future depends upon organization. With united action silk workers can resist wage cuts and lengthening of hours. With 100 per cent organization, silk workers, as well as other textile workers, can gain wage increases, shorter hours, and some protection against the worst phases of the speed-up system. With a union headed by fearless and untiring leaders, textile workers will truly join hands with other workers in America and throughout the world against capitalist oppression and exploitation and for the complete emancipation of all workers.

APPENDICES

I. SILK MANUFACTURES[1]

Description of the Industry

This industry embraces two classes of establishments: (1) Those engaged primarily in the manufacture of silk fabrics and other finished silk products, not including knit fabrics, hosiery, and other knit goods made of silk; (2) those engaged primarily in the manufacture of silk yarn, known technically as organzine, tram, hard or crêpe twist, and spun silk, and of warps. The greater part of the work performed by throwsters and by warpers is done on contract. (For table see next page.)

II. PROCESSES IN SILK MILLS

THE following simple descriptions of processes in silk mills are based partly on a written account by Anna Burlak, a Bethlehem silk weaver, partly on an account by Shichiro Matsui in his *History of the Silk Industry in the United States,* published in the magazine *Silk,* and partly on the writer's observations in silk mills.

1. *Throwing.* When the raw silk arrives from Japan or China, it is converted into yarn in the throwing mill. The word *throwing* comes from the Saxon "thrawan" to twist. "The purpose of the throwing mill is to twist, double, twist, and combine again as often as necessary to produce the desired yarn. The silk goes through five or six processes in the throwing mill, soaking, winding, spinning, doubling and reeling. Organzine, used chiefly for the warp, goes through a second spinning. Tram, used chiefly for filling, is made by combining two or more ends (or threads) of raw silk and then twisting them together more or less loosely."

Doubling is a process whereby yarn from two or more bobbins is wound on to another bobbin, without any twist, making a heavier silk.

Spinning. The process by which the silk is run from one spool to another, meanwhile putting 60 twists into the silk per inch. The girls must work swiftly to keep several hundred spools

[1] U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Manufactures,* 1925.

Silk Manufactures: Summary for the United States (1914 *to* 1925)

(Data for establishments with products under $5,000 in value included for 1919 and 1914 but not for subsequent years.)

YEAR OR PERIOD	Number of establishments	Wage-earners (average number)	Wages	Paid for contract work	Cost of material [1]	Value of products	Value added by manufacture [2]	Horsepower
			(In Thousands of Dollars)					
1925	1,659	132,509	$142,734	$41,564	$484,123	$808,979	$324,857	212,609
1923	1,598	125,234	126,849	30,341	479,038	761,322	282,284	206,020
1921	1,565	121,378	113,396	30,682	337,559	583,419	245,860	([3])
1919	1,369	126,782	108,226	43,146	388,469	688,470	300,000	[4] 173,748
1914	902	108,170	47,108	14,551	144,442	254,011	109,569	[4] 111,417
	PER CENT OF INCREASE OR DECREASE (—)							
1913-1925	3.8	5.8	12.5	37.0	1.1	6.3	15.1	3.2
1921-1923	2.1	3.2	11.9	—1.1	41.9	30.5	14.8	.....
1921-1925	6.0	9.2	25.9	35.5	43.4	38.7	32.1	.....
1914-1925	83.9	22.5	203.0	185.7	235.2	218.5	196.5	90.8

[1] Including also costs of fuel, electric power, mill supplies, and containers.

[2] Value of products less cost of materials.

[3] Not called for on schedule.

[4] These totals differ from those given in the reports for 1919 and 1914 because of the exclusion here and the inclusion in the 1919 and 1914 reports of data for purchased power other than electric.

running all the time. The spinners run twelve machines per girl.

"Throwing machinery is simple, automatic and run at a high speed. Devices which cause the machine to stop automatically when an end breaks are now generally used." The workers are usually young girls who supply new skeins and bobbins and tie in breaks.

Reeling. Before being dyed in the yarn or shipped to another mill, the silk must be reeled again into skeins. "To prevent tangling during the dyeing the skeins are laced by running short strings in and out across each skein, dividing it into four parts."

2. *Winding.* The skeins are put on reels or swifts and are wound from these to bobbins. The winder now usually tends three sides of the machine totalling 120 ends of yarn.

Quill-winding. The filling or woof for weaving usually consists of tram or loosely twisted yarn, but is frequently spun silk. The silk is wound from spools on a quill or bobbin. This work is done by girls also. The quills are put in the steaming room for half an hour to take the brittleness out of them and then they are ready for the weavers.

3. *Warping.* Preparing the warp takes more time and skill in silk manufacture than in other textiles. Warpers are both men and women. Warps contain from 120 to 300 threads to the inch, and even 600 threads for especially heavy goods. "The yarn is first run on a large horizontal reel, known as the warper, and then in the reverse direction on to a loom beam." Each end of silk must be placed in the proper slit called the dent, in each reed, or comb. "This is a tedious hand process, one which requires close attention, as well as supple and deft fingers on the part of the worker." The big reel, "operated by power, slowly revolves and winds an even band of yarn on itself until a section of the required length is obtained."

Beaming. "The warper is reversed and the yarn slowly wound on a large spool, called a beam, that is placed at the back of the loom." Defects are remedied by the beamer, while the yarn is wound on the beam.

4. *Entering-in.* Each individual end of the warp is carefully drawn through a heddle eye of the loom harness. The tedious process is usually done by hand, two skilled operatives working together. The yarn is then drawn through the dents of the loom reed.

5. *Twisting-in.* The ends of a new warp are tied to the ends

of the old warp. Each end is tied separately, usually by hand. Twisters are usually men. In coarser warps, a machine can do the twisting-in about three and a half times as fast as it can be done by hand. On a Jacquard loom, the process of twisting-in is more complicated as each warp yarn has an individual weighted heddle.

6. *Weaving.* The weaver controls the loom which is power-driven, the shuttle shooting automatically back and forth with a terrific noise. Most looms are now equipped with stop-motion devices, so that the loom stops whenever a break occurs in the filling yarn. The weaver then repairs the break.

A few silk looms, used for mixed goods, have a magazine attachment for the automatic changing of the filling. But on most looms, the shuttle is still changed by the weaver as soon as the yarn runs out. Weavers are both men and women. The fineness of silk yarns means that the silk weaver cannot handle as many looms as the cotton or woolen weaver.

For complicated patterns, the Jacquard loom is used. The pattern is woven according to holes punched in the Jacquard cards which hang in festoons above the loom.

"Ribbons are woven in the same manner as broad silks. The only difference is that, due to their narrowness, from 20 to 30 ribbons may be woven on the same loom at once."

7. *Picking.* The cloth is examined and all defects or foreign particles are removed. Pickers are usually girls. It is practically the only process in silk manufacture during which the worker may sit down.

8. *Dyeing.* Silk is dyed either in the skein or in the piece. Skein-dyeing is now done by a machine which turns the skein in the dye-bath. Workers hang the skeins on the wheel, tend the machine and remove the finished skeins, to be dried in an extractor. Air in dye-rooms is always steaming and unhealthful. Drying rooms are excessively hot.

Piece-dyeing follows the manufacturing processes. Broad silks to be piece-dyed are woven in the gray. Piece-dyeing usually includes degumming, bleaching, dyeing, inspecting and drying.

Printing. Silk printing in the United States is done by machine or roller. The pattern is stamped on the silk as it rolls through the machine. The receiver then takes the printed goods from the other side of the roller.

Weighting. "Silk dyeing is frequently followed by a process called weighting or loading, by which the volume and weight of

silk are arbitrarily increased." The substance used for weighting is usually tin.

Finishing. Finishing processes are often numerous and complex. Names for these processes are *sizing, drying, calendering* and *tentering.* The object is to smooth and stretch the material, singe off any loose fuzz, and to roll it on boards for shipment.

III. NUMBER OF TEXTILE WORKERS

Average number of wage-earners in 1925 in

State	Silk Mills	Dyeing and Finishing of Textiles	Knitting Mills	Cotton Mills
Pennsylvania	60,809	8,271	50,430	18,743
New Jersey	28,196	19,270	5,146	8,977
New York	13,030	6,852	35,774	9,905
Connecticut	9,977	2,408	1,657	14,773
Massachusetts	6,497	13,872	10,551	98,939
Rhode Island	6,087	9,860	1,821	34,420
Other New England states	N.R.[1]	N.R.[1]	3,701	27,718
Maryland	1,127	97	939	2,365
Virginia	1,222	N.R.[1]	2,732	8,035
All other states	5,564	10,119	73,917	244,477
Total United States	132,509	70,749	186,668	468,352

[1] N.R. means "no report."

The workers in silk mills, dyeing and finishing plants, knitting mills (including hosiery) and cotton mills, account for 858,278 of the 1,110,209 wage-earners in textile mills in 1925. Of the remainder, 165,224 were in mills making woolen and worsted goods, and 86,707 were scattered among the minor textiles,—linen, carpet, cordage, oilcloth, etc.

Number of Textile Workers in the South

Southern textile centers are unorganized. There has been much exaggeration about the number of textile workers in the South. The 1925 census of manufactures reported:

230,000 cotton goods workers in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Virginia.

40,000 knit goods (including hosiery) workers mainly in Tennessee, North Carolina, Georgia and Alabama.

26,000 rayon workers centered in Virginia and Tennessee (advance figures for 1927).

In all there are about 300,000 textile workers in southern states. Cotton workers in the South, although mainly working on coarser goods, use silk and rayon to a certain extent. Knit goods workers use silk yarn thrown in Pennsylvania and shipped to the South. The southern knit goods industry would be directly affected by a strike in silk-throwing mills.

IV. PRODUCTIVITY OF SILK WORKERS

Pennsylvania Output

Wage-earners in the silk in Pennsylvania increased by 15 per cent in the six years after the war, from 53,152 in 1919 to 60,809 in 1925. Value of total output, in terms of the 1919 dollar, increased by 65 per cent.

This meant a 44 per cent increase in the productivity of each silk worker for the six years from 1919 to 1925. Three workers were producing more in 1925 than four workers produced in 1919. One worker in four could be laid off, and the output of the companies still increased. *One wage-earner was putting out more in six hours in 1925 than he put out in eight hours in 1919.*

New Jersey Output

In New Jersey in 1925 fewer silk workers were employed than in 1919. Wage-earners in the silk *decreased* in the six years by 13 per cent, from 32,326 in 1919 to 28,196 in 1925. But value of total output, in terms of the 1919 dollar, increased by 11 per cent.

Productivity of each wage-earner increased by 30 per cent. Four workers were producing more in 1925 than five workers produced in 1919. One worker in five could be laid off and output still slightly increased. *A New Jersey silk worker was putting out as much in 6¼ hours as he put out formerly in 8 hours.*

Paterson Output

In Paterson also fewer silk workers were employed in 1925 than in 1919. Wage-earners in the silk *decreased* in the six years by 25 per cent, from 21,836 in 1919 to 16,368 in 1925. In other words, 5,468 silk workers who were employed in 1919 were not employed in the silk in 1925. Value of total output in terms of the 1919 dollar decreased by 8 per cent.

But the output of each wage-earner increased by 22 per cent. Each silk worker produced $2,883 worth of silk in 1919, but $3,519 worth in 1925, in terms of the 1919 dollar. Five workers were producing more in 1925 than six workers produced in 1919. One worker in six could be laid off and output still slightly increased. *A silk worker was putting out more in 7½ hours than he had put out formerly in 9 hours.*

New York Output

This richest state in the United States showed a still larger increase in the productivity of each silk worker. Wage-earners in the silk *decreased* in the six years by two per cent, from 13,342 in 1919 to 13,030 in 1925. Yet value of total output, in terms of the 1919 dollar, increased by 69 per cent. Output of each wage-earner increased by 72 per cent, from $2,654 in 1919 to $4,570 in 1925, in terms of the 1919 dollar. Three workers were producing more in 1925 than five workers produced in 1919. Two workers in five could be laid off and output still slightly increased. *One wage-earner was putting out more in 6 hours in 1925 than he put out in 9 hours in 1919.*

Connecticut Output

In Connecticut in 1925 fewer silk workers were employed than in 1919. Cheney Brothers employ more than a third of all the silk workers in the state, and we have seen from their own statement that the number of wage-earners was reduced and productivity increased. For the state as a whole, wage-earners in the silk decreased in the six years after the war by 11 per cent, from 11,254 in 1919 to 9,977 in 1925. Value of output in terms of the 1919 dollar increased by 5 per cent.

Output of each wage-earner increased by 18 per cent, from $2,712 in 1919 to $3,222 in 1925, in terms of the 1919 dollar. Six workers could put out in 1925 a little more than 7 workers put out in 1919. One worker in seven would be laid off and output still slightly increased. *One silk worker was putting out more in seven hours than he put out formerly in eight hours.*

Massachusetts Output

In Massachusetts, wage-earners in the silk increased by 14 per cent, from 5,697 in 1919 to 6,497 in 1925. Value of total

output, in terms of the 1919 dollar, increased by 31 per cent. Output of each wage-earner increased by 15 per cent, from $2,624 in 1919 to $3,025 in 1925, in terms of the 1919 dollar. Seven workers could put out in 1925 about what eight workers put out in 1919. One worker in eight could be laid off and output still maintained. *One silk worker of this state in 1925 was putting out as much in seven hours as he had formerly put out in eight hours.*

V. LAWS ON HOURS OF WORK

New York

The so-called 48-hour law in New York, limiting the hours of women factory workers, allows a 9-hour day and a 49½-hour week, if Saturday is a half day. It also allows 78 hours of overtime during the year to be so spread out that no woman works more than 54 hours in one week. But by securing permission from the Department of Labor, employers can add this 78 hours of overtime to the working week and make a regular schedule of 51 hours throughout the year.

Night work between 10 P.M. and 6 A.M. is not allowed for women factory workers in New York. Children between 14 and 16 in this state are allowed to work an 8-hour day, 44 hours a week, but not at night after 6 o'clock. Young workers between 16 and 18 are allowed to work 9 hours a day, 54 hours a week, but not at night after midnight.

Connecticut

The Cheney Silk Mills, employing more than a third of all the silk workers in Connecticut, are on a schedule of 8⅞ hours a day, 49 hours a week. Connecticut law limits working hours of women in factories to 10 hours in any one day, 6 days or 55 hours in any one week. Night work for women is forbidden between 10 P.M. and 6 A.M. Children between 14 and 16, with working papers, are allowed to work 8 hours a day, 6 days a week, but not at night after 6 P.M.

Massachusetts

The battle in the Massachusetts state legislature through the winter of 1928 to change the law and allow night work for women textile workers was won by workers when the House

finally voted down the bill which had been passed by the Senate. Allowing night work would have seriously menaced the 48-hour law. Massachusetts textile bosses were determined to "make labor go farther" by using women on night shifts. They were defeated on March 28, 1928.

The law in this state still limits the working hours of women to 9 hours a day, 6 days and 48 hours a week. No night work for women is allowed between 10 P.M. and 6 A.M. or for women textile workers after 6 P.M. Children between 14 and 16 with working papers are allowed to work 8 hours a day, 6 days or 48 hours a week but not at night after 6 P.M. Young textile workers (boys under 18 and girls under 21) work 10 hours a day, 6 days or 54 hours a week but not at night after 6 P.M.

For hours of work in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, see pages 117 and 118.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

American Labor Year Book, Research Department, Rand School of Social Science, New York.

Avram, Mois H., *The Rayon Industry,* Van Nostrand Co., New York, 1927.

Bimba, Anthony, *History of the American Working Class,* International Publishers, New York, 1927.

Blanshard, Paul, *Labor in Southern Cotton Mills,* New Republic, New York, 1927.

Chase, Dunn, Tugwell, *Soviet Russia in the Second Decade,* John Day, New York, 1928.

Chittick, James, *Silk Manufacturing and Its Problems,* Chittick, New York.

Commons, John R., and Associates, *History of Labour in the United States,* Macmillan Co., New York, 1921.

Davison's Silk Trade, *The Silk Guide,* Davison Publishing Co., New York, 1928.

Dunn, Robert W., *Company Unions,* Vanguard Press, New York, 1927.

———, *Soviet Trade Unions,* Vanguard Press, New York, 1928.

———, *Americanization of Labor,* International Publishers, New York, 1927.

Foltzer, Joseph, *Artificial Silk,* Pitman and Sons, London, 1921.

Foster, William Z., *Misleaders of Labor,* Trade Union Educational League, New York, 1927.

Haywood, William D., *Bill Haywood's Book,* International Publishers, New York, 1929.

Hooper, Luther, *Silk; Its Production and Manufacture,* Pitman & Sons, London.

International Economic Conference (May, 1927), *Summary Memorandum on Various Industries.*

Lenin, N., *Imperialism, the Last Stage of Capitalism,* Communist Party of Great Britain, London.

Lovestone, Jay, *The Government Strikebreaker,* Workers Party, 1924.

Manchester, H. H., *The Story of Silk and Cheney Silks,* Cheney Bros., New York, 1916.

Matsui, Shichiro, *History of the Silk Industry in the United States,* Howes Publishing Co., New York, 1928.

Moody's Investors' Service, *Moody's Manual of Industrials,* New York, 1928.

National Industrial Conference Board, *Hours in Relation to Output and Health in Silk Manufacturing,* New York, 1919.

National Textile Workers' Union, *Constitution,* 1928.
Price, George M., *Labor Protection in Soviet Russia,* International Publishers, New York, 1928.
Rawlley, R. C., *Economics of the Silk Industry,* P. S. King, London, 1919.
Russak, Martin, "Memories of a Silk Weaver," *New Masses,* New York, 1928.
Saposs, David J., *Left Wing Unionism,* International Publishers, 1925.
Standard Statistics Co., *Standard Corporation Records,* New York, 1928.
Russia After Ten Years, Report of the American Trade Union Delegation to Soviet Russia, International Publishers, New York, 1928.
Trumbull, L. R., *History of Industrial Paterson,* Herrick, Paterson, N. J., 1882.
Tugwell, Rexford Guy, *Industry's Coming of Age,* Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York, 1927.
Vorse, Mary Heaton, *The Passaic Textile Strike,* General Relief Committee of Textile Strikers, Passaic, 1927.
Walton, Perry, *The Story of Textiles,* John S. Lawrence, Boston, 1912.
Weisbord, Albert, *Passaic,* Daily Worker Publishing Co., New York, 1926.
———, *The Paterson Textile Workers,* Workers' Library Publishers, 1929.
Wicks, Harry M., *The Paterson* 1924 *Strike.* Unpublished Manuscript.
Wolfson, Theresa, *The Woman Worker and the Trade Unions,* International Publishers, New York, 1926.
Workers' Health Bureau, *Report of Medical Examination of* 404 *Textile Workers in Passaic and Vicinity,* New York, 1927.

Periodicals

American Silk Journal, Organ of the Silk Association of America (monthly), 373 Fourth Ave., New York.
American Wool and Cotton Reporter (weekly), 154 Nassau St., New York.
Daily News Record, 8 East 13th St., New York.
Daily Worker, 26 Union Square, New York.
Facts for Workers (monthly), Labor Bureau, Inc., 2 West 43rd St., New York.
Federated Press, *Weekly Labor Letter and Daily News Service,* 166 W. Washington St., Chicago, Ill.
International Press Correspondence, Postamt 66, Schliessfach 213, Vienna IX, Austria.
Masses. Files for 1912 and 1913.
National Textile Worker, Organ of National Textile Workers' Union, 104 Fifth Ave., New York.
New Textile Worker, Organ of the Amalgamated Textile Workers of America, Files for 1919-1922.

New York Evening Post, Files for 1828.
Silk (monthly), 90 William St., New York.
Textile Worker, The, Organ of the United Textile Workers of America (monthly), Bible House, Astor Place, New York.
Textile World (weekly), 334 Fourth Ave., New York.
Wall Street Journal (daily), 44 Broad St., New York.

Government Documents

Connecticut State Department of Labor and Factory Inspection, *Biennial Report,* 1926.
Massachusetts Department of Labor and Industries, Division of Statistics, *Monthly Press Releases,* 1928.
New Jersey Bureau of Statistics of Labor and Industries, *Report,* 1913.
New Jersey Department of Labor, *The Industrial Bulletin,* Monthly Issues, 1928.
New York State Industrial Commission, *The Industrial Bulletin,* Monthly Issues, 1927-28.
Pennsylvania State Department of Labor and Industry, *Labor and Industry,* Monthly Issues, 1928.
U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Biennial Census of Manufactures,* 1925.
U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census,* 1920.
U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Record Book of Business Statistics,* Textiles Section.
U. S. Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, *The International Cartel Movement,* Trade Information Bulletin, 556.
U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Monthly Labor Review,* 1927-28.
U. S. Commissioner of Labor, *Annual Report,* 1901.
U. S. Women's Bureau, *Women in New Jersey Industries,* Bulletin 37.

INDEX