WHEN SOUTHERN LABOR STIRS

PART I

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STRUGGLE OF SOUTHERN MOUNTAIN TEXTILE WORKERS

BY
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This pamphlet is reproduced from When Southern Labor Stirs, by Tom Tippett, copyright 1931 by Tom Tippett, first published in 1931 by Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith, New York.

We publish it now as a good introduction to life in the mill towns of Southern Appalachia and to the struggle of Southern Mountain working people against their oppression. Appalachian Movement Press will publish in sequel 3 additional pamphlets by Tippett, on the Elizabethton, Gastonia, and Marion strikes. In our search for our rich and proud history, an important part is certainly the long and bitter struggle of textile workers to wrest control of their own lives from the mill owners. These 4 pamphlets are intended only as an introduction, and it is hoped they might inspire further more complete work in the area. It is also hoped that we will gain insights on sucesses and failures of the workers as well as the proud spirit of a struggling people, and that our fight today for control of our lives will be spurred on by a knowledge of the valiant struggles of our people throughout history.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

In the preface to When Southern Labor Stirs, Tippett says about himself and the book:

> The material for the book was collected over a period of three years during which the writer traveled through the South as a lecturer of Brookwood Labor College. Contact was made both with the labor leaders and with intellectuals in the leading colleges and universities of the South.
>
> During the year of 1929 the Elizabethton, Gastonia, Greenville and Marion strikes were visited and the same ground covered again the following year after the strikes had been settled. Several visits were made to Danville too during the strike there. Much of the material was gained from first hand observation gathered during the period by the writer and a staff of research workers. During the summers of 1929 and

The president of Brookwood Labor College was A. J. Muste, a founder of the Conference for Progressive Labor Action, and Labor Age, a monthly of the Conference. The Conference was active in support of the struggles of working people, including the strike in the Kanawha, West Virginia fields of the West Virginia Miners Union in 1931. AMP will soon have a pamphlet available taken from Labor Age on the history of the West Virginia Miners Union.

INTRODUCTION

DURING the years 1929 and 1930 the southern section of the United States was the scene of one industrial upheaval after another. Thousands of textile workers left their jobs and went gleefully out of factories, on strike. Rayon plants, cotton mills, yarn mills, and general textile factories were summarily shut down, while their operatives paraded through a dozen different mill villages on a giddy holiday.

Picket lines were thrown around the closed factories, workers assembled in open fields, drew up strike demands, and selected their spokesmen to negotiate a settlement with the employer.

The employer slammed the door in the workers' faces. In retaliation they sent for union organizers and solidified themselves into disciplined groups to force concessions from the factory owners. The strikes grew, newspapers published stories of revolt, and photographed parades of marching cotton mill people. Sheriffs ran from their offices to stand between the manufacturers and the working population.

Strike-breakers were transported from one community to another. State troops came to the strike

zones to lend their numbers—and their bayonets—to the sheriffs' forces. Explosions of dynamite rent the air. Mobs put on masks and drove agitators from mill villages. Ministers stood with the property owners. Southern workers nibbled at a revolutionary philosophy. One policeman and seven textile workers were murdered. The courts were choked with labor cases. Union men went to prison or were put to work on the state chain-gangs.

Cotton mill families were evicted from company-owned houses. Hundreds of them went undernourished and half starved in the long-drawn-out strikes. The South reverberated from one end to the other with the labor question. The second phase of the industrial revolution had come.

I

THE BACKGROUND

THE labor storm that broke out in Elizabethton, Tennessee, March 1929, when more than 5,000 rayon makers went on strike against the huge Bemberg-Glanzstoff Rayon Corporation, gathered momentum quickly. In a few weeks 1,700 textile operatives walked out of the Brandon mills in Greenville, South Carolina, and while the newspapers were setting up type for that story, 1,800 other textile workers revolted in Gastonia, North Carolina. Then followed one strike after another, until the whole Piedmont section, from Greenville to Elizabethton, was dotted with local walkouts. The spectacular Marion strike occurred in July of the same summer. Marion is about halfway between Gastonia and Elizabethton. All told there were around 17,000 or 18,000 textile workers on strike in the spring of 1929. In the fall of 1930 the scene shifted to Virginia with the great uprising in Danville.

In almost every case the workers struck against the stretch-out system, the term they coined for the northern speed-up equivalent. The stretch-out, however,

was only the straw that broke the camel's back. The strikes represented a protest which had been accumulating in the minds of mill people for many years. At strike meetings one worker after another expressed indignation over some grievance of many seasons' standing—in one case as long as eighteen years.

Since Civil War days the South, and particularly the section under discussion, has been busy industrializing itself. In the pattern laid out by the few men who assumed industrial leadership there was no medium in which cotton mill workers could express a reaction to their jobs. In the absence of such a medium the workers created one for themselves, and began laying the foundation of a permanent labor movement—just as workers have done in every other part of the world where factories have been set up. Therefore, the current revolt of southern textile workers is not new, but it is peculiar in many ways and serves to prove once again that we do not learn from history.

Sixty-five years ago the South lay in ruins. Before the Civil War a relatively small number of its aristocracy had doggedly held on to an economic system that could not survive under the capitalistic order which had developed all around the slave states.

To save the plantation owners' interests the southern states went to war with northern capitalism. After four years the chattel slave system was destroyed and the South was bankrupt. The northern carpet-bagger

traveled South to rub salt into the wounds of defeat, and planted seeds that matured into lynching bees and sectional hatred. But the South could not live on hate alone, so it began building a new economic system to replace the one destroyed by the war. It had no choice —factories were inevitable.

The South began a new way of life. Cotton mills were built with an enthusiasm that is thrilling. The completion of a mill was marked by patriotic celebrations. Subscriptions to erect a factory were circulated in an atmosphere that now accompanies a Red Cross drive. Everything in the old South was overshadowed in the wake of the cotton mill.

As in England and New England, the textile industry led the march of manufacturing. Other industries were developed, and to-day the South is an industrial country. Textiles still lead and have continued their growth, until they now challenge the supremacy of that industry in the North. The old planting aristocracy no longer rules the South. The big white house of pre-Civil War days is overrun with unkept vines; many a colonial mansion has been replaced by factories belching forth smoke and grime on lawn and stream. From these factories a new aristocracy has come to rule the South.

The change from one kind of rule to another has been a gradual process, and the South as a whole is not yet aware of this transfer in control. That fact ac-

counts for a part of the confused psychology of the section in its reaction to the present labor situation.

The old southern master was obvious. He directed his slaves and his society from his plantation home. The government and all other social organizations were shaped to conform with his will. In many ways he was a kindly gentleman who rode or drove around in the open to receive applause or complaints. He reigned over his realm, a despot to be sure, but not always a tyrannical one.

Obviously, he has gone from the picture now. The social system of the South is a much more complicated mechanism than was the old one. The modern ruling group directs the whole machinery of life as completely as the slave owners did, but its control is much less manifest. This new group builds factories, gathers raw material, employs workers, produces goods and markets them all over the world. It runs the government, shapes laws, founds schools, builds churches, subsidizes ministers, and organizes charities. It sets up foundations and pays for research workers. Even state universities are influenced by its omnipotence. It turns water into electricity, and paper and old rags into silk. It builds warehouses and buys the tobacco as well as the cotton crop. It opens banks, collects money and sells the farmer a mortgage on his farm. Moreover, it gradually buys up the land and gathers all the tools of production into its fold. Finally, it has the

power to give employment to or withhold it from the population. This new master is called capitalism.

The South is now in trouble with its new system, but it still fights in terms of the old one—in the mill village, in the legislature, in the governor's office, and in the courts. An agricultural psychology is grappling with a manufacturing problem; a planting culture conflicting with an industrial economy.

The Chambers of Commerce, within the new industrial structure, recruit factories to come South. To attract them there, land is either donated outright or sold at reduced figures. Taxation is manipulated, labor and factory legislation is passed that will please the factory owners. The state lays miles of hard road around factories and leaves its farmers to pull themselves out of the mud. In addition to these man-made advantages, there are natural resources offered for exploitation. A factory may pollute a river as freely as it ruins a mountain stream. The geographical beauty of the old South is painlessly sacrificed in the factory-building program. Even Asheville, North Carolina, whose beauty draws thousands of tourists weekly, has succumbed to industry. The huge Enka rayon plant now disfigures this so-called "land of the sky."

Over and above all other attractions to industry, the South offers a huge untapped labor supply. This labor supply is made up of poor white and black families. There are thousands of them, some already trained in-

dustrial workers, others eagerly waiting on the land for the call of the factories.

In the old South the ancestors of these poor people were divided into two distinct groups. The Negroes were caught in the slave system and did the manual labor. The whites, because of their color, were pushed from the main economic structure and eked out a precarious livelihood on the tiny patches of land that are called farms in the South, or else they went up further into the hills and developed the classic culture of the Southern mountaineer. The descendants of the Negro slave and of the poor whites are now rapidly becoming members of the wage-earning class of the new South. It is they who make up the factory labor supply. They come willingly, and in droves, to the rising industrial centers and offer their hands to tend the new machines.

Economists in that section say the supply of agricultural workers now waiting to be industrialized cannot be exhausted for the next fifty years. This reservoir of labor is the South's greatest asset. It is the foundation upon which the new South must build. Conscious of this fact, the Chamber of Commerce features it in its booster literature. "Come South," the advertisements say, "and exploit our cheap and contented labor."

The strikes which have inflamed the South during the past two years are ample proof that all these workers are anything but content. They have challenged

the undisputed right of the factories to reign over them. Their protest has already taken such form that the prevailing industrial pattern is held up to the gaze of the critical public. Because of its labor system, the South is under attack again. Congressional investigation committees have summoned factory owners to Washington and have heard them apologize for their labor conditions. A favorite son of the South was denied a seat on the most powerful judicial bench in the world partly because of his unsavory labor record. Distinguished Southerners themselves have added their protest to the swelling chorus of criticism of the South's industrial policy.

What the future holds will depend pretty much on whether the South will stop its mad race for power long enough to heed the complaint of its working people who are now demanding a right to be heard.

II

TEXTILE MILL WORKERS

THE textile workers who occupy the stage of labor strife in the South at the present time have a common background with all other workers in that section. As yet there are not enough Europeans or Northerners in southern industry to affect the picture at all. The factory labor supply is homogeneous, and might perhaps best be analyzed when assembled in a strike meeting.

Whether in Gastonia, Elizabethton, or Greenville, they look and act in almost the same way. They are tall and lean, not very articulate, and seem to have the patience of Job. Every striker is extremely poor and most of them are obviously undernourished. Many of them have lived in the hills and are longing to return to their highland homes. Others, having lived on small farms surrounding the textile factory, remember what they call the country. Still another group is composed of those who have known life only in a textile town, and all of the three classes are so much alike as to be linked by a common family blood stream.

Child-workers as well as men and women operatives are at the meeting. Their ages range from thirteen to sixty. In addition to the textile workers themselves, there is a non-factory group made up of still older people and little children, all attached to the other workers, all depending on the mill for bread. They come out *en masse* and participate collectively in the activity of the strike. Ordinarily, there is no meeting hall at their disposal. They stand in an open lot hour after hour, at night and during the day, listening to labor speakers. Effervescence such as marks similar gatherings in the North is conspicuously absent, but all eyes are trained on the speaker; all strain to hear every word of the program. They sing a hymn or two, and some local mill preacher prays as the meeting closes. In groups, leaving, or back in their own cottages, they discuss the strike. Nearly all say they believe in a literal interpretation of the Bible, most of them go to religious services regularly, and a majority claim membership in some Protestant church. They know practically nothing about trade-unionism, and are participating in a strike for the first time.

Around the edge of the open air meeting may be crouching a small group of Negroes. They are few in number because as yet they hardly ever do the technical work in factories but are restricted to the manual labor of outside gangs and inside porters or cleaners. Moreover, in their work as well as in their other activi-

ties, the Negroes have a way of living on the outer edge of white society in the South and extending themselves into it without seeming to be there at all. Up to the present time, therefore, the Negroes are but a small factor in the cotton mills—especially in the minds of the white mill operatives themselves.

This is "the cheap and contented labor" offered for sale much below par by the Chambers of Commerce of the South. The "pure Anglo-Saxon" mill workers are a unique group with a unique background, which is now being pictured as peculiarly American in current literature. One artist after another has gone back into the hills to live among these people and has come forth with vivid mountaineer stories. The internationally known folk-theater of the South, at Chapel Hill, North Carolina, is most distinguished for its drama of these highlanders.

In every one of the fifteen strikes which agitated the Piedmont South in 1929, hundreds of these mountaineers were active participants, and all the mill workers spring from this common stock. Their ancestors made up the group of the old South on the borderland of slavery. They were the poor whites who were pushed back by the slave system onto tiny patches of hill country. They lived outside the main current of life in the former system, perpetuating an old world culture as best they could, and hung onto an attitude of independence throughout many generations.

They took very little part in the progress of the civilization which grew up all about them. Their main contact with the outside world was when its representatives climbed up into the hills to interfere, in one way or another, with the culture of the mountaineer—to arrest him for selling whiskey, to hang him for shooting his enemy, or to compel him to go off and fight in another man's war.

There never was a very friendly bond between these mountain folk and the rest of society. Even the social workers, when they came to introduce "book-learning," hygiene, dietary changes, scientific farming, and medicine, were met with suspicion, for their rôle too was one of interference. It was a difficult task to assimilate these highlanders into a modern civilization.

The old South had no place for them because the chattel slave left them out of the essential labor supply. The mountains formed a natural barrier to the cultural stream below. The inevitable interference of the law caused a prejudice that became the normal attitude of the hill folk. Life was rough and lean in many ways, but it was more or less free. The rising standards which were taken for granted in the working population as a whole were unknown and unappreciated in the hills. One summer recently I sat on the porch of a cabin atop the Blue Ridge mountain chain that skirts the industrialized Piedmont section of North Carolina, and talked with a housewife who had

never heard of a kitchen sink. She carried her water from a spring a hundred yards up a mountain side. The water stream went bounding over the rocks directly opposite her back door. With a half hour's work the water could have been obtained a few steps from her work-table; and with little more labor piped right into her kitchen. Yet she trudged up the mountain side for water because her mother and her grandmother before her had done so, and no one ever thought of changing the custom.

But that simple life in the mountains could not go on forever. The new industrial system, eliminating the old plantation, wrought changes which included the hill people. In the past the mountaineer remained in his hills because there was no other place for him to live. Now there is an opening for him in the factories of the South. In the last thirty or forty years these factories have been growing and the hill people, as well as the small farmers in the lower lands, have been persuaded to leave the soil and join the constantly increasing army of wage-workers who tend the factory machines.

The Civil War left the South poor. Taxes had to be collected in order to enable it to rise from the wreckage. It is still poor compared with the North, and thousands of small farmers have lost their lands under the auctioneer's hammer. The inevitable result of the loss of land to a farmer is that he becomes a tenant or

a cropper, and therein lies a tale that explains the ease with which the factory owners obtain help from the farms. Dr. Carl Taylor has shown us the plight of the small farmers of the South in the studies he has published of their conditions in North Carolina,[1] which reflect conditions of southern farmers as a whole. They are bound down to horrible poverty because they do not own their land, and much of their labor goes to pay the absentee landlord. Between the small farmer and his market, stand the cotton and tobacco brokers. He must sell to the middlemen, and he must sell at the price they set. In addition, there are the boll-weevil, the drought and the floods, constantly to haunt his peace of mind. Life could hardly be lived at a lower ebb than that of the small farmers of the South. The large number of abandoned farms that one sees all through the rural section testify to the farmers' steady march into the mill villages.

In the economic field the small farmer's produce is not missed in the national crop because there are far too many petty producers in the South. Large corporations, such as timber and electric power companies, are buying up cheap land, and so are enterprising realtors who look wisely to the future and put their fences up. As a result the farmer is not only persuaded but actually compelled to go to the factory. His

[1] Taylor and Zimmerman, *Economic and Social Conditions of North Carolina Farmers,* North Carolina State College of Agriculture and Engineering, Raleigh, N. C.

bridges are burned behind him by forces outside his control. He becomes a permanent factory hand.

Side by side with these economic factors, the culture of the urban centers is seeping through the old barriers into the rural culture. It has its attractions for many, and especially for the younger generation. The World War gathered thousands of hill and country folk into its machinery and shoved them into the outer world. Not all of them returned, but many of those who did come back rebelled at the solitude of their old environment and left it for the first mill village that offered a job.

Hard roads penetrated the mountains too, and intercourse with the town, which was impossible a decade ago, became a simple matter. The mill village with a house that boasted three or four rooms, not to mention an electric lamp, appeared as a luxury to the young women who had known nothing but crudely built cabins that often did not have windows or floors. The mill village store opened up a new world to many country people who had lived in a culture that knew only products made at home by hand. The jingle of coins was a new sensation also to many of the men and women who were brought up far from a money economy. It is not any wonder then that they walked unsuspectingly and willingly into the factory system. Whole families went gladly to work in the textile factory, and accepted the paternalistic system of the

mill village as a marked improvement in their living standards. At first they made no protest at the long hours, the low wages, and the night shift, because everything was new and strange and, in tangibles at least, better than what they had left behind.

Now they are in revolt. Company houses, long hours, short wages, the company store are bitterly denounced. The workers are meeting, marching, and going to jail; but they are still protesting. What water has passed under the bridge since they walked into the factories, smiling—"contented and cheap"?

III

MILL CONDITIONS

THE textile industry is in a bad shape. The employers use this as an excuse for the poor conditions they impose on their workers. But it is the managers of the textile industry themselves who are responsible for the lack of planning and the overdevelopment which have brought them to their present pass.

The South followed the northern pattern closely in its scramble for a factory system. When the Revolutionary War with England was over, America's problem was "How can we make goods?" The answer was the factory system in the North. Then came the next problem, harder to solve than the first, "Where can we sell what our factories have made?" The North has not yet found the answer to the second question. The South has to-day reached the same phase of its industrial development as has the North, though most of its factories are less than fifty years old. This is particularly true in the case of the textile industry—the industrial torchbearer the world over. There are too many textile mills for the local, and even for the world,

market. As a result there has arisen cut-throat competition among various sections of the South, and also between the South as a whole and the North. Textiles are produced more cheaply in the South than in the North. Many New England factories have been closed by southern competitors. However, on some occasions some of them have moved South actually at the invitation of southern men themselves who were eager to build up that section. Overproduction continues.

Another contributory cause to this overproduction was the World War which pumped a new life into the textile industry. The army had to be clothed as well as fed. Not only cotton and gauze for the wounded soldiers, but also tents and parachutes come from textile factories. A war does not mean death for the textile industry, certainly not while the battle rages. Millions of dollars in profits rolled into war textiles, and to prevent some of them from rolling into Uncle Sam's pocket via the tax collector, new factories were built, old ones remodeled, mill villages extended, tax-exempt stock created, and a general policy of inflation pursued.

After the war the inflated structure had to be carried in a diminishing market. Textile manufacturers began to complain of deficits. Attempts were made within the owning group to curtail production, but textile corporations are not trustified. Gentlemen's agreements were violated and the competitive scram-

ble for customers continued. As the inevitable depression hit the overdeveloped industry sharp reductions were applied to the workers' wage scale, hours were lengthened and the stretch-out system introduced in the general movement to lower production costs.

In the absence of collective bargaining machinery the workers were not talked into accepting these wage reductions gradually, as in the North. Notices were simply posted at the factories informing the operatives that their wages had been reduced. One cut followed another and finally the stretch-out system appeared. Efficiency engineers came into the factory and talked about northern unit production levels. The machines were speeded up and the engineer measured fatigue reactions with a stop-watch. When the worker groaned he was told to "stretch a little." Some of them did and multiplied their efficiency. Production increased, wages usually remained the same, but in a number of instances they were actually reduced simultaneously with the introduction of the stretch-out. One mill after another adopted the new system to dig itself out of the depression.

The program got a severe check when 17,000 or 18,000 workers rebelled by walking out on strike in at least fifteen different communities. These strikes have accomplished one thing at least to date—they have caused the South to realize that it has an ugly labor problem on its hands. Thousands of southern

people living apart from the mill village have been made aware of mill conditions, and not a few of them have enlisted, in one way or another, to improve those conditions. As one striker put it at a labor meeting, "Folks don't know about us 'less'n we go on strike."

Textile manufacturers in the trouble area, without exception, claim that the conditions of the industry compel them to maintain the current low labor standards. They say they are not making any money as it is, and that they must close their factories altogether if work standards are pegged upward. They offer all sorts of excuses to justify their point of view. What the actual truth is, seems difficult to ascertain. The record of all employers in trouble with their employees is such that their unsupported statements regarding business conditions can hardly be accepted as pure gospel. And so it is in the South.

In North Carolina, the leading industrial state of the South, the manufacturers, supported by the state officials, have tenaciously refused any and all investigations of a public character nor have they allowed an examination that would permit an honest account to be recorded for the laboratories of industrial research.

In 1923 public-spirited women in that state at-

tempted to have a survey made into the working conditions of the 170,000 or more women wage-earners in the North Carolina industries. The League of Women Voters, the Young Women's Christian Association, and the Federation of Women's Clubs in the state started the movement for the industrial survey and gradually added to their number practically every civic organization of women in North Carolina. There were the usual diplomatic maneuverings on the part of the politicians, who "felt that the survey was needed" or who "indorsed" the idea, etc; but they successfully prevented the survey from proceeding. At first the women suggested that the Women's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor should make the survey. The old cry of states' rights was put forth and a North Carolina investigation suggested instead. The women then pushed that proposition, in and out of the political wilderness. To this commission and that committee they went, into the Governor's office, and to the legislature, but without results. In the summer of 1927 the women renewed their efforts to have a survey made. In the end they failed.

After the women began their agitation, the Institute for Research in Social Science at the University of North Carolina proposed to make a study of industrial conditions in the state and naturally enough, being scientists, they wanted to see the manufactur-

ers' books. One of their number approached the North Carolina Cotton Manufacturers' Association with the project. The Association, then in convention, flatly refused. And again no survey was made.

After the strikes broke out a resolution was introduced in the United States Congress to investigate southern textiles. It was vigorously opposed and finally blocked by congressmen from the South and by the united mill fraternity. If the financial condition of the southern textile industry warrants the prevailing work standards, the manufacturers are exceedingly hesitant to produce the records that could prove their case. Until the owners open their books to a reliable investigation, they need not expect everybody to believe them when they say, "This is the best we can do or close our doors."

The only public investigation that has come out of the strike area suggests that employers may well hesitate to have conditions in their factories exposed to public gaze. A committee appointed from the South Carolina legislature to investigate the enforcement of labor laws reported [1] that the records were "replete with instances of violations of the criminal laws of South Carolina in regard to the regulations of working conditions in textile manufacturing corporations."

[1] Report of House of Representatives' Committee to Investigate Department of Agriculture, Commerce and Industries (1929).

The report continued:

At most of the factories where strikes have occurred there have been flagrant violations of the labor laws that have not been brought to any court for redress, in fact have not been brought any further than to the attention of the commissioner.

That the mill managers have their troubles is pretty certain, but it is just as certain that their attempt to solve them by putting more burdens on their already overburdened mill operatives will not bring peace to the industry.

Although the books of the owner are shrouded in mystery, the problem of the worker is clear. There is nothing secret about the conditions under which he labors and lives. The length of his shift can be measured by the mill whistle, the size of his pay envelope by his and his family's general appearance, and his whole way of living can be appraised by one glance at a mill village.

The conditions under which the textile operatives worked in all of the strike areas except Elizabethton were by and large the same. A list of the main complaints of these workers included: Long hours, low wages, paternalistic mill villages, the stretch-out system, and a denial of the right to form trade unions. The existence of these grievances no one would publicly deny.

The working hours of the South are long. The 8-hour day is practically unknown in cotton mills. Ten- and 11-hour shifts are practiced everywhere, and the 12-hour day is not uncommon in the industry. In Gastonia the mills were operating a 12-hour shift when the strike occurred; at Marion textile workers struck against a 12-hour, 20-minute shift. It is sometimes the custom where the 12-hour day prevails to reduce the Saturday shift, so as to make a weekly schedule of 60 or 65 hours, but the strikers often complained of 72-hour weekly work schedules.

The legislation that is supposed to regulate the hours of women permits a working week of 55 hours in South Carolina and of 60 hours in North Carolina, and each state allows a night shift for women workers. It is generally admitted throughout the South that even this inadequate legislation is not always obeyed, as was shown by the South Carolina legislative committee report. The enforcing machinery of the law is weak; there are not enough factory inspectors,[2] and those who do function have very little real power to compel action. When the strikes occurred, hundreds of workers testified that they had never seen a factory inspector. In fact, the majority of them voiced complete ignorance of the existence of any reg-

[2] Cf. footnote 1, page 21. "The committee finds that there are 232 textile factories in South Carolina, and only two field inspectors, who are charged with the duties of inspecting and investigating them."

ulations at all. Certainly it is true that the Marion textile workers did not receive the benefits of the hour-restricting law until after the strike. When questioned about it a foreman there said, "I have never heard of any law that tells us how long we can operate this factory." And perhaps he had not.

Wages are as low as hours are long when compared with generally accepted American standards. It is quite common to talk with a textile worker and learn from him that he earns less than $2.00 for a 12-hour day. If he earns $3.00 a day, he is one of the highly paid workers. In all the strikes, including the one at Elizabethton, workers swore they received from $7.00 to $15.00 for a full week. In the files of those strike records are thousands of pay envelopes on which are printed official company figures to sustain the workers' word. Governmental bureaus, which collect wage data, cite tables not at variance with the workers' own statements. And when one remembers that governmental agencies gather their wage figures by mail from the factory office, one can rest assured that they are not too low. They are, in the last analysis, the textile companies' own figures. The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics compiled by the sampling method figures which give $15.24 as the full-time weekly wage in 1928 for textile workers in the five leading southern states, including those states where strikes occurred. Since each strike was precipitated

by a series of wage cuts, the wages in 1929 in this area were probably even lower than in 1928.

Naturally some workers receive more than $15 for a full week's work in a textile factory, but it is equally true that others earn less than that amount, and those in the lower brackets outnumber by far the more highly paid workers.

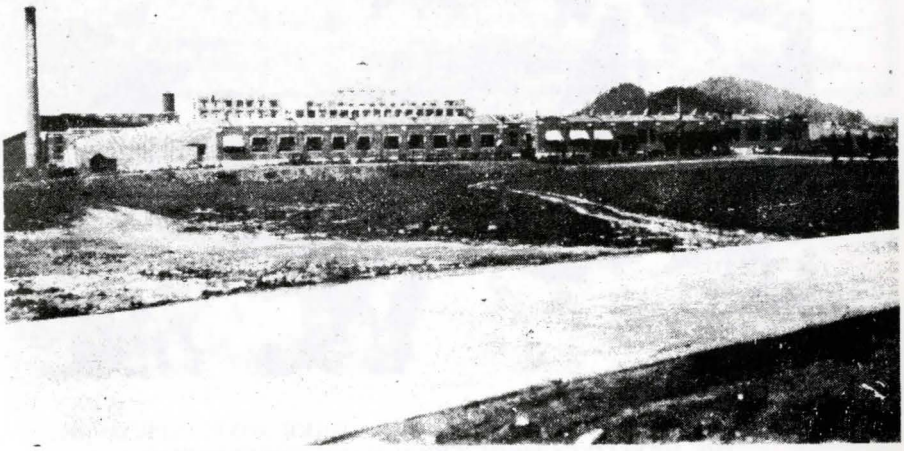
When the strike occurred at the East Marion Manufacturing Company's cotton mill, 650 workers were employed. Among them was a group of eighteen highly skilled operatives. They worked 12-hour, 20-minute shifts, and received a few cents less than $19 for a full week. Wages for the less skilled workers ranged as follows:

Group I	$13–$15 per week
II	10– 12 per week
III	6– 9 per week

All these figures are for full weeks. The mill operated both night and day. The night-force worked 12 hours and 20 minutes for five nights a week. The day shift was one hour shorter but worked until noon on Saturday, so the weekly wage was for 61 hours and 40 minutes on the night shift, and 62 hours and 40 minutes on the day shift. Men, women and children all worked the same number of hours on both shifts without age or sex discrimination.

Since all the textile workers do not have steady

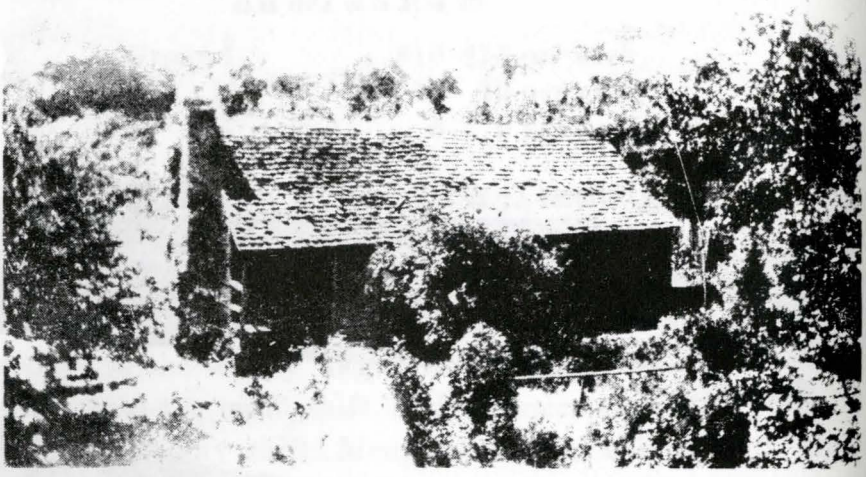
STRIKING RAYON WORKERS WEARING WEEKLY PAY CHECKS
OF $8.75, $7.50 AND $5.45



ONE OF THE TWIN RAYON PLANTS

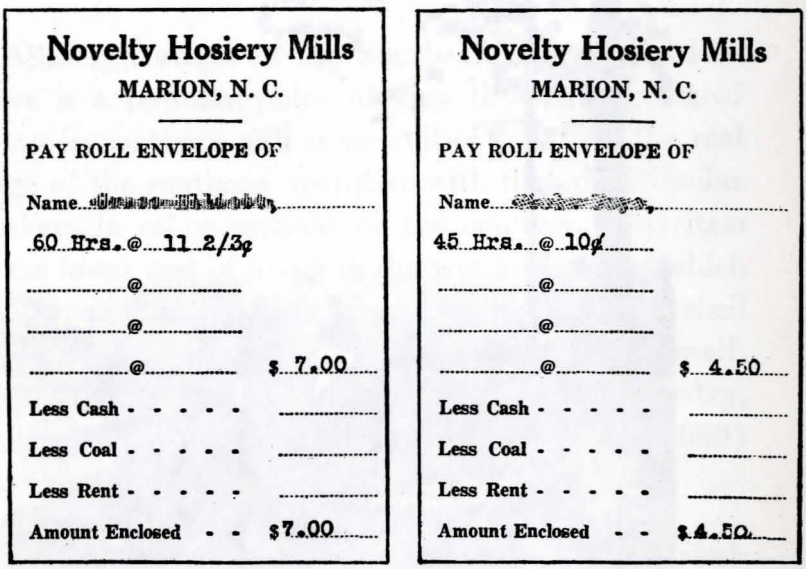
SCENES OF THE ELIZABETHTON STRIKE

BEYOND THE MILL VILLAGE MARION IS BEAUTIFUL



A MOUNTAIN HOME NEAR THE STRIKE ZONE TYPICAL OF THE DWELLINGS FROM WHICH MANY WORKERS HAD COME

THE MOUNTAIN BACKGROUND OF THE STRIKERS



Novelty Hosiery Mills
MARION, N. C.

PAY ROLL ENVELOPE OF

Name [redacted]

60 Hrs. @ 11 2/3¢

@

@

@ $ 7.00

Less Cash - - - - -

Less Coal - - - - -

Less Rent - - - - -

Amount Enclosed - - $7.00

Novelty Hosiery Mills
MARION, N. C.

PAY ROLL ENVELOPE OF

Name [redacted]

45 Hrs. @ 10¢

@

@

@ $ 4.50

Less Cash - - - - -

Less Coal - - - - -

Less Rent - - - - -

Amount Enclosed - - $4.50

CURRENT WAGES (1930–1931) IN A SOUTHERN HOSIERY MILL. NAMES OF OPERATIVES DELETED IN THE FACSIMILE BY THEIR REQUEST TO AVOID BLACKLIST. BOTH ARE MARRIED WOMEN.

BLACK-LISTED OPERATIVES MOVING THEIR FURNITURE
AWAY FROM MARION AFTER THE STRIKE

employment throughout the year, their annual wages cannot be computed accurately from the weekly scale. The same bureau that lists the weekly wage as $15.24, estimates that, because of part-time work, the average actual weekly wage through the year would be $10.

Although wages in the South are admittedly low, there is a popular point of view that a low cost of living in southern mill communities equalizes the real wage of the southern operative with that paid similar workers in other sections of the country. This item of the lower cost of living in the South is a point which has aroused much discussion. Dr. Broadus Mitchell of Johns Hopkins University, a Southerner himself, and a recognized authority on southern industry, writing in the *Harvard Business Review* (April 1930) has this to say on the point:

The National Industrial Conference Board made studies of the cost of living of cotton-mill employees in New England and in Southern textile centers in 1919 and 1920. The figures are old, but remain the best available. The studies sought to ascertain the cost of maintaining "a minimum but reasonable standard of living for a representative wage-earner's family" in Lawrence and Fall River, Massachusetts, in Greenville and Pelzer, South Carolina, and in Charlotte, North Carolina. The items involved were not precisely the same, because of differences in food habits, but every effort was made to have them comparable. The results showed, to the surprise of

many, that for a family living in Greenville and Charlotte, even considering the low rates paid for shelter, fuel, and light, the cost of living was higher than in Fall River and in Lawrence; in Greenville it was $1,393.60 yearly; in Charlotte, $1,438.03; in Fall River, $1,267.76; in Lawrence, $1,385.78; and in Pelzer, a typical isolated mill village, $1,374. If the family did not live in a company house in Charlotte, the cost, $1,525.67, was much higher than in the North. Comparing Lawrence and Greenville, the saving in the item of shelter in Greenville, $137.28, was a little more than offset by the cost of food, $143; clothing cost $16.89 more in Greenville than in Lawrence. Fuel and sundries also cost slightly more in the Southern textile center.

The National Industrial Conference Board, whose figures Dr. Mitchell quotes, is an employers' organization, but all the employers do not agree with its computations; they have been disputed many times in the South. However, anyone familiar with mill village prices and living costs elsewhere has no trouble in accepting the conclusion drawn by the National Industrial Conference Board. Moreover, the figures do not indicate that workers in southern textile villages pay more for food, clothing, and shelter than textile operatives do in the North. What the figures do show is that southern mill people do not live on the same standard as their northern brothers. They have to buy a cheaper kind of food, clothing, and shelter.

Persons who defend low wages in the South say

that the worker there receives benefits in the mill village system which are not reflected in the size of his pay envelope, but that these benefits constitute wages none the less. Some manufacturers spend more money than others on welfare work in their villages, and it is difficult to ascertain in any general terms what the other-than-money wage actually amounts to. The study made on that subject by Main and Gunby of the Society of Mechanical Engineers, says that the southern textile manufacturer spends $1.13 per spindle per year on his mill village over and above similar charges upon northern manufacturers who do not maintain the village system. Dr. Mitchell, citing the figures of Main and Gunby,[3] says that this extra cost to the southern manufacturer would amount to $1.62 per week if added in money wages to the operative's pay envelope. It seems, therefore, that neither the low cost of living theory nor the idea of the pay envelope being supplemented by the bounty of a paternalistic mill owner can serve as defense of the present wage-level of the South. The textile workers are right when they say, "Our wages are too low."

There are very few important textile mills which do not maintain villages. Some villages are good, most are bad, and all give the manufacturer complete control over the private lives of his textile workers. The

[3] Broadus Mitchell, "The Present Situation in the Southern Textile Industry," *Harvard Business Review,* April, 1930. p. 296.

system developed with the industry. The early manufacturer had to build a village to house his employees because there was no other place for them to live. Gradually there has evolved a modern feudal system which has given him such complete control over his workers that, although the original need for the village has long since gone, the manufacturer refuses to relinquish it because of the supreme power it gives him. Therefore, the mill village persists.

In a typical village in the strike area, the manufacturer owns a good many other things besides places to house his employees. He owns the houses, to be sure; he also owns the store, the church, the recreational center, the school, the drug store, the doctor, the school teacher, and the minister. He owns the community and he regulates the life that goes on there after the day's work is over in his mill. He has the power to discharge the worker at the mill, to refuse him credit at his store, to dump a worker's furniture out of a house, to have him expelled from church, to bar his children from school, and to withhold the service of a doctor or hospital. These prerogatives do not exist in theory alone; all of them and more were actually exercised in the strikes of 1929 and 1930. In short, sixty-five years after the Civil War is over, the cotton mill owner, under the mill village system, still retains the power of the old plantation master of antebellum days.

The stretch-out system was the most emphasized grievance of the workers and was an important cause of the strikes. Employers who defend the stretch-out say Southern textile workers are much slower than those in the North, and must learn that they too should muster up a speed to match modern machinery. If southern workers really do work less efficiently than Northerners, the difference might be accounted for in part by the additional fatigue that comes from tending a machine constantly for eleven and twelve hours a day instead of eight, nine or ten hours as in the North. Besides the additional fatigue caused by the longer working day, there are plenty of other disadvantages that would naturally cause Southern operatives to work less rapidly.

In the first place, the whole tempo of life is much slower in the South than it is in the North. The sun is hotter, and the old leisurely manner of life from pre-Civil War culture hangs over into the more swiftly moving industrial economy. Cotton mill people have recently come from agriculture and a backward agriculture at that. Work on the land is a much slower occupation than mechanized industry. Their living there was frugal, so they come to the mill undernourished, and must work in a factory that continually undermines their health. Because of atmospheric conditions, textile factories use humidifiers to facilitate the passage of delicate cotton fiber through the

sensitive machines. The vapor dampens human bodies as well as cotton thread. Furthermore, operatives at work from six to six get very little sun. Tuberculosis is quite common in cotton mill communities. The present pellagra epidemic is also fostered by the lack of sun and inadequate diet, which are a part of the cotton mill system. Every one who came into contact with textile workers for the first time in the strike zone was struck by the appalling number of sick strikers. As a matter of fact, much of the money collected for relief was spent for medicine.

It must be remembered also that when the long shift is over in the cotton mill, the average operative has still more labor to perform. Whole families work in cotton mills in the South, and much of the labor that goes into keeping house and bringing up a family is done at home after the whistle has blown. I lived in a textile household in a typical cotton mill village one summer. They rose at five o'clock. The men chopped wood to build the kitchen fire, the children carried water from a well that supplied eight families, milked the cow and turned it out to pasture. The women prepared the morning meal and instructed the non-working children in the program for the day. At 5:45 the workers were off to the cotton mill; fifteen minutes later they were tending their machines. At 6:30 P. M., they were home again with twelve hours and forty-five minutes of their day gone. No sooner

back than they picked up the household work again, washed dishes, brought the cow home and did the milking. Some one went to the company store for the next day's supply of food. Supper was prepared, more wood chopped, dishes washed, the family mending and sewing done, and the hundred other tasks that are common in every household were performed. It was often nine or ten o'clock when the family could sit down for a short breathing spell before they dragged themselves wearily off to bed. Time after time, the mother would nod in sleep, as we sat talking at the table after supper. Vitality was always at a low ebb. They all seemed as tired in the early morning as when the long day was over.

When the strike occurred in this village, the people were transformed as much and as rapidly as a plant brought out into the sun of early spring after a winter in the cellar. The color of their skin changed, they took on weight, sang songs and marched in parades with a tempo that was entirely new. Men and women stood up at meetings and boasted of increased weight since the strikes had begun.

Anyone watching the long lines of people as they trudged wearily down the hills of the village into the mill before daylight should have hesitated to speed them up without a reduction in their hours of labor, but neither the efficiency engineers nor the manufacturers considered the fatigue of the workers, and as

a result of their blunders they created an epidemic of strikes.

In some places the work schedules were changed with the introduction of the stretch-out system so that a given worker confined himself to one single operation, and had "tenders" carry the auxiliary tasks. His function was simplified and he produced at least twice and sometimes six times as much as before. He did fewer kinds of work but his whole process was speeded up, so that he had to stretch out his body to accommodate his actions to the increased speed and number of the machines. It is said that some mills reduced hours or increased wages as the stretch-out was introduced. That was not true in the strike zone, where wages and hours for the most part remained as before. In some places wages were actually reduced. At Marion the Baldwin mill added twenty minutes to the regular 12-hour shift to make up a $40,000 deficit caused by the transition to the stretch-out system.

Cotton mill operatives in the South cannot be expected to work as fast as northern operatives, regardless of what the efficiency engineers say, because their muscular power has been impaired by the factories themselves. A fire cannot be extinguished by pouring oil on the flames.

In addition to the changes in hours, wages, mill villages, and the stretch-out, southern textile workers are demanding the right to organize trade unions.

Factory owners oppose this demand more stubbornly than they do all the other demands put together. Their opposition to the recognition of trade-unionism as a natural part of the present industrial order is the most serious stumbling block to peace. The fifteen textile strikes of 1929 grew out of the refusal of mill operatives to tolerate any longer the downward curve of their wages and work standards. After they went on strike, the local trade union leaders were called in and there came a formal invitation from the southern organized labor movement to the American Federation of Labor to initiate a general campaign to organize the South. The invitation was accepted, and the following year witnessed the beginning of the trade union campaign.

Although the drive for unions in the South takes in all crafts, textiles holds the center of interest and is the industry in which the opposition to labor organizations is greatest. No southern textile manufacturer has as yet recognized a trade union or given any indication that he intends to change his attitude in the future. What this attitude of opposition to textile trade unions means is that the same rights which are recognized for many other workers in the South will not be tolerated in the mill villages.

IV

THE UNIONS AND THE CLASS STRUGGLE

TRADE-UNIONISM is not new in the South. It was established there as early as in the North and continues to exist. In fact, some of the strongest trade unions in America were first organized in southern states. This is true of the International Association of Machinists, as well as a number of other strong national trade unions. Prior to the organization of the American Federation of Labor, the Knights of Labor were very active in the South. Even radical trade-unionism there is not new. The Industrial Workers of the World conducted a lively campaign in southern states before the World War, and functioned in the textile as well as in other industries.

The American Federation of Labor has state and city organizations in all the southern states. Most of the national unions of the American Federation of Labor have locals all through the South, which, in spite of the common belief to the contrary, has now and always has had as large a trade union membership

as the North in proportion to its industrial strength. The textile industry is an exception to this rule, which fact largely accounts for its extremely low work standards. If workers in other industries have found trade-unionism so valuable that they have maintained it for nearly half a century, it seems but natural that textile operatives, dissatisfied with non-union conditions in the industry, should want to organize unions of their own. The denial of the right to unionize to this group of workers is difficult to justify from any point of view.

Trade unions were evolved in America after the Revolutionary War because it had turned the United States into a manufacturing country, and factories breed labor unions. So the South in its opposition to the organization of textile unions is shutting its eyes to a natural industrial growth. The only way in which southern textile manufacturers could have prevented the organization of their operatives into trade unions was for them to have removed the causes which have developed labor organizations in every other industrial section. Present labor standards testify to their unwillingness to do this. Trade-unionism, therefore, is inevitable in the southern textile industry.

The situation is complicated by the existence of two separate and rival labor organizations in the field. Both of them are textile unions, and each one is challenging the jurisdiction of the other in the mill vil-

lage. The United Textile Workers of America is an American Federation of Labor union. The National Textile Workers of America is affiliated with the Communist Party of America. The two unions struggle against each other in the immediate vicinity of the mills and in the national field. The American Federation of Labor and the Communist Party are engaged in a war to exterminate each other.

The Communist group appeared in the open in the South in the Loray mill village strike in Gastonia at about the same time as the American Federation of Labor union went into the strike zone of Elizabethton. The spectacular Marion strike was conducted by the United Textile Workers as was the Danville one and some strikes in the Greenville district. Some of the other walk-outs which occurred in the same period were influenced by the National Textile Workers, but outside of the Gastonia area the American Federation of Labor union dominated the scene. The American Federation of Labor made no attempt to go into Gastonia after the strike broke out. It was carried on from its inception until the end by the Communist organization.

Although the National Textile Workers is admittedly a Communist union, there was very little Communistic philosophy attached to its strike in Gastonia. Aside from its direct connection with a revolutionary party, it acted just as any other militant

trade union would have in a similar situation. However, the cotton mill against which the strike occurred used the union's Communistic affiliations to organize a public opposition to the strike. A policeman was killed during the struggle and the subsequent trial of the leaders of the National Textile Workers, who were charged with his murder, brought the Communistic affiliations of the union out in the open. From then on the issue in court and in the mill village was fought out as a contest between Communism and capitalism . . . the latter won in the court trial and in the strike. Nevertheless, the Communists remained in the South.

The political philosophies of the United Textile Workers and the National Textile Workers are diametrically opposed to each other. The textile manufacturers have many reasons for opposing Communism; and there is no use arguing with them that a union sponsored by the Communist Party is one whit different from a Bolshevik army thundering at their mill gates. Yet in all truth it must be said that where a strike occurred without the slightest tinge of Communism, as in Marion or Elizabethton, the manufacturers opposed it with as much venom and brutality as they meted out to the Gastonia Communists. Although there are many differences between the Communist and the American Federation of Labor unions in the South, as they affect the mill workers, there is

no difference between them at all from the standpoint of the opposition of mill managers.

Southern industrial workers, like their allies in other sections of society, cannot afford to delay the establishment of an organized labor movement until the factory owners grant them the right to unionize. If other workers had waited until business men withdrew their opposition to labor organizations, there would be no trade union movement in the United States to-day. Every union in its early years had to go through a terrific struggle with the manufacturing class for recognition. The early labor organizations had to fight their way into existence against the employer's opposition in the factory and in the civil courts which the manufacturers controlled.

In spite of the bitter opposition of southern employers, trade unions are legal organizations. As the factory system grew, associations of workmen naturally evolved and the courts of the United States were forced to recognize them as legal institutions.

Communism too is legal in America, although attempts are being made to outlaw it. The Communist Party, to be sure, is a revolutionary organization bent upon destroying the American form of government altogether, and establishing a government for and by the working class to rule the world. The United States of America is now a capitalist country with a capitalist culture firmly established in every phase of its life.

Communism is a philosophy of coöperation completely opposite to competitive capitalism. Therefore Communism and capitalism must engage in ceaseless war until one destroys the other. Nevertheless our traditions of freedom of speech have permitted Communism and Communist activities. The official organ of the Communist Party is admitted to the United States mails, and Communist candidates stand for election along with Democrats, Republicans, and Socialists. And so it has come to pass that a cotton mill operative in a Southern mill village has as much right to enroll in a Communist organization or an American Federation of Labor union as he has to join the Baptist Church.

The mere right to join a labor organization in itself means very little. The difference between joining a trade union and becoming a member of the Baptist Church is that membership in a trade union is of little use to a cotton mill worker unless his employer will recognize the union and enter into collective bargaining with it. And that is what southern textile manufacturers firmly refuse to do. I have heard many employers say in public, "Our workers can join any union they please, so long as they don't let us know about it."

It so happens, however, that society in general has now become opposed to the notion that a manufacturer has an undisputed right to operate his factory

and treat his employees in any way he sees fit—just because he happens to control the ownership of the factory. Legal development, following the recognition of the right of the industrial workers to organize themselves into labor unions, has firmly established their right to bargain collectively with their employers. But in order to get the employer to bargain with them collectively, the workers very often have to engage in a strike.

The first stage is that workers want certain concessions granted from their employers. Then they organize a union, present their demands, the boss refuses them, and the workers go on strike. They attempt to close the factory and compel the owner to grant their demands. If they refuse to work, he cannot make profits; and since he must make profits, he will give in. That is the theory of all strikes. This theory looks very simple on paper, and would be so in practice but for the fact that there are usually plenty of other workers, burdened by poverty, anxious for employment. Manufacturers attempt to recruit a new working force to take the place of the strikers who, in turn, to prevent this, form picket lines around the factory. The element of class consciousness enters when the strikers appeal to the identity of interest of all wage-earners by asking the non-union workers to join them and by soliciting help from all workers, thus relying on labor solidarity to keep the factory

closed. The manufacturers in turn enlist the support of other business men in their struggle with the strikers. Then you have the class conflict in action—the operatives against the boss, the manufacturer against the union, the capitalists against the working class.

All of this is a part of trade-unionism; all of it is recognized as legitimate in the United States courts. Basically, then, every union is more or less "radical"; all of them organize workers for protection against their employers.

When a situation of conflict between workers and employers arises, the government also enters into the picture—on the side of the manufacturers. The partisanship of the government becomes most obvious and formidable when, under the pretext of maintaining law and order, troops are sent in to hold the workers in check. In 1929 and 1930 in North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia alike the state militia helped to break the textile workers' strikes. In the use of troops to crush strikes the South is but following the history of the North and it is just as resourceful in creating a justification for the intervention of its soldiers in an industrial dispute.

There was a time in America when the governments of the various states did not send soldiers to threaten or shoot down their citizens who walked out

of intolerable factories. But without the use of force it was difficult for our industrialists to prevent a powerful labor movement in this country.

During the great railroad strike in 1877, when a social revolution seemed to impend in America, both state and federal troops were used for the first time to shoot down and defeat striking industrial workers. The industrial powers succeeded in having legislation passed providing public funds from which arsenals were built all over the industrial sections of the country. Large numbers of militiamen were trained and held in readiness, some retained under arms and others subject to call from private life, ostensibly for "national defense"—but in reality to defend the interests of the capitalists against the claims of those who worked for them.

The states and the federal government need a certain number of military reserves to preserve peace in time of unusual emergency, such as race riots or the chaos following a flood, fire, or tornado. Soldiers were used in the very first years of our nation to put down Shay's Rebellion and the Whiskey Rebellion, but since these uprisings troops have rarely been called out to maintain the authority of the state. The federal troops were summoned in 1892–1893 to keep the Governor of Colorado from issuing state money, and now and again a governor has called upon state troops to help him keep his office. But after the 1877

strike, the number of militia was increased in size beyond all need for such purely civil or political requirements. And in the main the militia are used to stand between owners of industry and striking workmen. Moreover, if the state troops need assistance, the federal army is either threatened or actually moved into a state for the same purpose. In most important strikes outside of big cities since 1877, the soldiers have played a decisive rôle in bringing about defeat. Our armories are conveniently near industry. Within an hour or so any strike zone can bristle with bayonets —and it often does.

It must not be forgotten in this connection that there is another police power in addition to the military in America. Every town has its policemen, every county a sheriff, with power to expand in all emergencies. They are usually subject to the control of the local voters and there are other checks on them, such as warrants, which are theoretically designed to protect the civic rights of the people from an abuse of police power. When a strike arises, these local police officials are on hand to preserve law and order. Many strike activities are, according to any common definition, perfectly lawful—peaceful picketing, parades, union placards, house to house visits aiming peacefully to persuade workers not to be strike-breakers. If a striker or a union leader exceeds the legal limits or is charged with breaking the law, the local

police officers are there to arrest him, the courts to try him, and a jail to lock him up in if he is guilty. Thus the local machinery of the law provides a normal means for safeguarding the rights of the workers and at the same time preserving order.

According to the rules of the legal game in America the federal or state governments cannot arbitrarily march their military machine into a self-governing community. The local law-enforcement officers must first prove their ineffectiveness in any emergency and send out a cry for help. In order to secure a semblance of compliance with these regulations, if a given strike situation does not actually necessitate a call for the militia, some artificial manifestation of disorder is created to apparently justify the presence of troops. That accounts for the charges of "insurrection," "riot," "assault with intent to kill," etc., that appear in the warrants to arrest strikers for some petty misdemeanor in the early stages of most strikes. These serious charges are always dropped later in court but usually by that time the troops have arrived. Another easy means for creating a justification for the use of troops is to circulate sensational reports of rioting, embroidering an impressive description of uncontrollable violence out of slight events such as the moving of furniture or the parading of singing workers. A pretext for troops can be found without difficulty, as at Elizabethton, Marion,

Gastonia, and Danville, and the union's arguments as to the superfluity and illegality of their presence in the strike zone will not secure their withdrawal.

When the troops come marching in, the defeat of the strikers is practically assured. Militarism is designed to stimulate fear. Soldiers drilling, bayoneted rifles flashing, machine guns pointing their ominous eyes toward a crowd, gas bombs in readiness, and the blare of a war trumpet do not exactly bring a sense of security to the strikers.

Besides instilling fear, the troops actively interfere with the peaceful and legal activities of the strikers. The military officer usually has little sympathy with, and scanty understanding of, a labor struggle. In his eyes the purpose of the militia is to restore the normal order, and the normal order to him means the factory in operation again. Therefore, he orders the soldiers to see that strike-breakers enter freely into the factory —and in America soldiers obey.

Picket lines are, therefore, summarily disbanded, or, perhaps a very few pickets are permitted by the military to stand near the gate. But the pickets are not allowed to talk with the strike-breakers, nor are they allowed any emotional demonstrations, such as singing. In short, they are shorn of all their effectiveness. The soldiers escort the non-union workers into the mill and at times they accompany for miles trucks or trains which are bringing in outside professional

strike-breakers. Moreover, in the general routine of their duties, the troops rattle their sabers in such a way that the fighting spirit of the strikers is completely broken.

Workers may complain of the action of the troops to the governor, who in turn will refer them to the officer in charge of the troops—that is to say to the very man who has directed the soldiers' actions. The strikers may arouse the tax-payers to complain of the extra expense of the troops but no governor is influenced by such economy. Or a striker may attempt to have a soldier arrested for attack, but the civil court will refer the case back to the military.

In short the presence of troops at a factory on strike always throws a cordon of steel between the workers and their jobs, and keeps it firmly planted there until those jobs are taken by other workers. There is no way in which strikers can penetrate such an obstacle —and that is the chief reason why the factory owners so often use the military arm of the government to defeat their industrial hands.

Again and again in the South the state troops have bolstered the power of the employers. It has made no difference whether the strikers who were threatening the profits of the particular company were unorganized or whether they belonged to the American Federation of Labor or a Communist union. Four southern governors proved perfectly willing to use the militia

to crush the United Textile Workers in spite of the extraordinary efforts of the American Federation of Labor to prove its conservatism and harmlessness.

The Communist unions frankly boast of their radicalism. They accept an anti-capitalistic philosophy. Membership in the Communist party is determined by the faithfulness with which one retains hatred for everything capitalistic. On the other hand, the American Federation of Labor is by and large opposed to all "radical" philosophy. It accepts the capitalistic system of society and joins forces with it, at every opportunity, to oppose Communism in any of its forms. When Samuel Gompers died in 1925, after he had organized and presided over the American Federation of Labor for nearly half a century, his last words were: "God save our American institutions." His successor, William Green, now President of the American Federation of Labor is no less frank in his satisfaction in the capitalistic way of life. Matthew Woll, the spokesman of the labor federation over which Mr. Green presides, goes to all lengths to denounce Communism in favor of the capitalist system. But that does not tell the whole story, because the American Federation of Labor is so organized that various shades of opinion make up its composite state of mind.

The Federation is a loosely organized body having within itself 104 autonomous national unions which

maintain jurisdiction throughout the United States and Canada. They include altogether between two and three million members. Each national union carries on its own business and elects its own officers from its own membership. Federation officials are selected from the executive families of these unions, and they have very little to do with the everyday workings of the national union machinery.

These national unions are the most important groups in the American Federation of Labor. In addition to them, there are city central unions and state federations in all parts of the country to which local unions may belong. These city central bodies and state federations are also parts of the American Federation of Labor although they have little power to influence its policies.

The American Federation of Labor members are, then, a heterogeneous group, doing different kinds of work, living in different parts of the country, and reflecting the differences of their environment. The members differ as completely as do the various sections of the country. It is true that the present American Federation of Labor is more united in its general aims and tactics than it has ever been before, but there is not by any means complete harmony within its circle. Some of its unions are socialistic in so far as their written constitutions are concerned, and all of them flare into militancy now and then. As a matter of fact,

in its past history the American Federation of Labor has witnessed one attempt after another on the part of the progressive unions within its own structure to have the whole Federation adopt a more radical program. The conservatives have won out in the main, but the Federation has been forced to move in the direction of socialistic measures more than once.

Since the World War the American Federation of Labor has gone in the direction of conservatism rather than radicalism. It chose that course as an alternative to militant action in an attempt to hold the large increase in membership gained during the war. This increase was threatened during the open-shop drive inaugurated by employers to destroy the American labor movement. The American Federation of Labor is now attempting to bury its old militant policy and to substitute therefor what it calls union-management cooperation, which tends to reduce the number of strikes or any other form of conflict with employers of labor. This program consists chiefly of convincing the boss that a trade union is an essential part of modern industry which brings assets rather than liabilities to the manufacturing group. In such a scheme of unionism there is no need of mass agitation, no need for organizational campaigns among the working masses that necessarily would alienate their affections from their foreman. Under the new policy the boss is organized, and if he agrees his employees are brought into the

union without a struggle with him and sometimes even by his persuasion. Then there is peaceful coöperation between employer and worker, with the interests of the industry holding the first claim on future adjustments.

Such is the unionism Mr. Green advocated in connection with the American Federation of Labor campaign precipitated by the strikes in the South. There is something to be said for and against that policy, but the point to be made here is that the American Federation of Labor has a certain amount of ability to adapt itself to changing conditions, and that so long as it remains outside the ranks of actual company-unionism, it has within its own organic body certain structural germs that may mature in almost any form. Moreover, it is extremely difficult to state a policy that expresses the unanimous sentiment of the American Federation of Labor even now.

The United Textile Workers, which is now organizing in the South, is considered one of the conservative organizations of the American Federation of Labor and is in no wise socialistic in outlook or program. It subscribes to the union-management coöperation policy of the American Federation of Labor and is emphasizing that kind of unionism in the South. It does not want strikes, it did not go into the trouble zone until after the walkouts of 1929 had occurred.

The labor problem of the South is indeed a vast one. In the first place the textile workers are extremely

backward in the ways of trade-unionism of which there are two vastly different types in the field, and they enthusiastically accept whichever is offered to them first. After their initiation, they are gradually brought to a painful realization that there is a division in labor's own ranks, and they are, as a natural result, completely confused in their own minds about the whole situation. The American Federation of Labor attacks the Communists; the Communists denounce the American Federation of Labor, while the boss damns both. In the last analysis it is the completely uncompromising intention of the mill owner to crush both kinds of trade-unionism, wherever they appear, that is the crux of the problem.

Despite all these obstacles, however, unless a great many concessions are granted him by his employer, the textile mill worker will continue the struggle upon which he has launched until he has established trade-unionism in the South.

Future strikes of the mill workers will bear the characteristics of their struggles in the past. The conflicts in Elizabethton, Gastonia and Marion were the three most important strikes of 1929 from the standpoint of size, duration, violence, and general effect upon future industrial relations in the South. The story of these strikes, presented in the next chapters, together with the later description of the 1930 struggles, culminating in the Danville strike, reveals not only the causes of revolt but the way in which the efforts of the

workers for a better life are met by the public, the mill companies, and the state governments.

Repercussions from these areas were felt all through the southern states, and through the nation as a whole. Agitation was set in motion and is still going on. From it constant unrest and more strikes are bound to follow.

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