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## Is New England's Leadership in Cotton to Go to the South?

BY CARL H. GETZ

Is the South going to become the cotton textile center of America? Is it going to succeed in its efforts to wrest supremacy from the New England States, which now have the largest number of cotton mills and plants?

Ask those questions in the South of most any business men and you will be looked at with amazement. Your sanity will be questioned if you even intimate that there is any possibility that New England will be able to retain its leadership.

Seek the same information in New England and you will be greeted with a confident smile and a shake of the head which means:

"Don't worry about New England. Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island will come through. They always have in the past. They will this time. Don't take this proposal to move mills from New England to the South too seriously."

A Leader in the Industry.

The man best qualified to answer these questions is Frederick K. Rupprecht, who is to the cotton textile industry what Gary and Schwab are to steel and what Wood is to wool. Mr. Rupprecht is President of Converse & Co., one of the largest distributors of cotton fabric in America. He is chairman of the executive committee of the B. B. & R. Knight, Inc., which is composed of owners and operators of Rhode Island mills. He is also chairman of the executive committee of the Consolidated Textile Corporation, a holding company which owns B. B. & R. Knight, Inc., and which owns in its own name nine Southern mills. Converse & Co. is owned by B. B. & R. Knight, Inc. Mr. Rupprecht is the man who effected an arrangement with the American Woolen Company which placed certain executives of that company on the Board of Directors of the Con-

solidated Textile Corporation. This means no exchange of stock or any transfer of money. It is no interlocking directorate. But it does make available to Mr. Rupprecht the administrative genius of the mill managers of the American Woolen Company, who, Mr. Rupprecht believes, are unexcelled in either the cotton or woolen industries. Effecting such an arrangement means that the Consolidated Textile Company and the other companies with which Mr. Rupprecht is associated have a competitive advantage which gives them a position of leadership in the industry which is unchallenged.

Original Mills in the South.

I repeated my question to Mr. Rupprecht. He smiled and shook his head.

"At first glance one might think that the obstacles which the New England mills have to overcome in meeting the competition of the Southern mills are insurmountable. Look at the facts: Originally the mills were established in the South simply to be near the source of supply of raw material. Then it was discovered that atmospheric conditions in the South were not suitable for the weaving of cotton products. So the mills moved into the New England States, where the humid conditions were satisfactory and at a time when wages and hours of labor were attractive to the mill operators.

"But in recent years a method has been perfected whereby moisture can be artificially injected into the atmosphere of a cotton mill and conditions created identical to what is found naturally in New England. In other words, the condition which induced the mills to leave the South originally have been overcome. So there you have the first reason why the mills should return to the Southern States and why new plants should be constructed there.

Conditions Which Favor There.

"There is less restrictive legislation in the South. The New England States have been somewhat severe in passing laws affecting the cotton textile industry. In the South quite a different situation exists. That is your second reason.

"Third, wages are lower in the South, and of course the factory payroll plays a large part in determining a plant's earning capacity.

"Fourth, the hours of labor in the South are longer than in the North.

"Fifth, the South has not been subjected to the activities of the labor leader and his followers like the New England States have.

"Sixth, the Southern mills can effect real economies because of their

proximity to the source of raw cotton. These are days of high freight rates, and it can readily be seen what an advantage the Southern mills obtain in being able to reduce freight costs, which constitute an important item in cotton textile manufacture.

"Seventh, there is plenty of cheap power in the South.

"And finally, the Southern cities are offering every inducement and incentive to the Northern mill owner to move his plant. Free sites are being offered him. He is assured of low taxes for a long period of time. He is promised cheap help and plenty of it. He is told that he need not fear interference from an unfriendly Legislature. And this is not all.

"Various communities are promising to raise whatever capital is necessary to finance new mills. Several cities have offered to match dollar for dollar raised by Northern owners. And yet, despite all these inducements, the actual moving of plants is negligible. Why? Let us sum up:

"In addition to the community incentives, such as help in raising capital, free sites, low taxation, cheap power and adequate shipping facilities, there are also less restrictive laws to contend with, lower wages and longer hours. What has New England to offer.

"At first glance it looks hopeless. But it is far from that.

"The fact is that the one obstacle that the South cannot overcome is climate.

"The South will never be able to produce the finer qualities of cotton fabric simply because of conditions over which it has no control.

"The entire tendency in the industry today is toward improvement of product.

"New England is rich in tradition. It is the home of a class of skilled artisans who have built for themselves a real reputation for expert work. Such a class of workmen cannot be developed in a day. They represent the knowledge and training of a century.

"Grant for the moment that it would be possible to transport all of these highly trained workmen to the South. The moment they arrived there the quality of their work would suffer. This isn't conjecture. Every Northern mill owner who also owns mills in the South knows this to be true. The highly trained Northern worker when subjected to the climatic conditions of states like South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama loses that skill which makes him a master in his trade.

Lack of Skilled Labor.

"The South today not only does not possess the skilled labor necessary to the production of the finer fabrics but there is also little chance of its being able to train such help. The expert from the Northern mill is a failure as an instructor in the Southern mill.

"As a specific example of the utter inability of the South to wrest the supremacy of the cotton textile industry from New England, just remember that there are but 300 cloth printers in the United States. They are in New England, and they are going to stay there, because that is where their fathers were born and that is where their children will be born. And this union of 300 men is one of the most powerful in America. Demands of the Consuming Public, Inc.

"The consuming public is demanding better grades from the cotton textile industry. And the public must look to the New England States to get those finer fabrics. Today the cotton mills of New England are turning out cotton cloths which compare most favorably with the finest fabrics which the English and French mills are capable of producing. All this progress has been made because of the demands of the cotton cloth buying public.

"The South is going to learn that conditions equalize themselves. Just as rapidly as the mills spring up in the South the labor agitator will follow, and with him will come the demand for higher wages, shorter hours and changed conditions of labor. And the Southern mills will find themselves harassed by the same demands that are made on the New England mills.

"The economic advantages which the Southern mills enjoy today are more or less temporary. Time will prove this."

"Is it the industry's only hope that the advantages gained by the Southern mills are temporary and that the Southern mills will be unable to produce the higher grades of cotton fabrics?" I asked Mr. Rupprecht.

"No," he said. "In addition we have a gradually changing point of view in the New England States. There is slowly being created in New England a public appreciation of the economic importance of the cotton textile industry. In the years past there was never any question as to whether the industry would always be there. That was taken for granted. But the moving of a few mills and the building of new plants in

the South have resulted in the problems of the industry getting into the consciousness of the New England public.

Room for Both in Textiles.

"And New England, like every other section of the country, is fair. If the demands of the workmen are unreasonable they immediately lose public support. And public support is necessary to the achievement of their wants.

"Northern mill owners are confident that public opinion will support them in their efforts to retain leadership in the cotton textile industry. This of course is not to be done by cutting wages unreasonably and by making conditions of labor impossible but rather to be done by a compromise of demands by both the employee and the operator. Both must make certain concessions. And New England communities today realize that the textile industry is something to be fostered, not penalized.

"But rest assured that the cotton textile industry is secure in New England. Climatic conditions, lack of skilled workers, lack of mechanical equipment—these are the reasons why the South must be content for many years to manufacture grades that it can make more cheaply, leaving to New England her present supremacy in fine goods. I do not want to belittle the South's position. It is of growing importance, but I do want to point out that there is room for both North and South in their respective fields. The real leadership in the industry will continue to be held by New England—at least during our lives."—New York World, Sunday, November 11, 1923.

### HELPFUL SPIRIT.

The Father—"Young man, you couldn't buy my daughter's clothes." The Sutor—"I could help."—The Passing Show (London).

### SENATOR SHIPSTEAD HALTS COUGE OF THE RAILROADS

A high-handed effort on the part of a number of railroads to place coal consumers of Minnesota at the mercy of eastern coal operators through an extraordinary increase of freight rates on lignite has been temporarily halted by the Interstate Commerce Commission after a protest was made by Senator Henrik Shipstead, of Minnesota.

The new rates were declared by Senator Shipstead to be confiscatory and would prevent the consumers of fuel from obtaining lignite coal, a cheap and efficient substitute for high-cost eastern coal.

He further charged that the proposed rates were a part of a campaign to destroy the mining industry that has been built up in North Dakota and would if permitted to stand, throw thousands of workers out of employment, with no means of subsistence during the severe winter months.

The rates proposed by the railroads, according to Senator Shipstead, are higher than the cost of lignite on board cars at the mines. High freight rates have made the cost of coal to consumers in Minnesota almost prohibitive.

### RAILROADS SET RECORD.

NEW YORK, Nov. 28.—The nation's railroads carried a greater tonnage during the first nine months of this year than in any corresponding period in their history, according to figures compiled by the bureau of railway economics. While this record was being made the railroad executives were making another record by their poverty pleas that "government interference" makes the operation of railroads impossible.

A deep sense of economy is almost as effective as the "still small voice."

Take time to think. Memory systems would be all right if you could only remember to use them.

### NOTICE OF SPECIAL CALLED MEETING CARPENTERS UNION NO. 2146

Members of Carpenters' Local Union, No. 2146 will take notice that a special meeting has been called for Monday evening, December 10, at the hall in East Charlotte, Belmont. This call is issued upon authority of the Carpenters' District Council, and matters of importance are to be voted upon. All members requested to be present.

H. A. STILWELL, Secretary.

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### NOTICE SERVED BY PUBLICATION.

H. L. Banks, Plaintiff, vs. Estella M. Banks, Defendant.

The defendant above named will take notice that an action entitled as above has been commenced in the Superior Court of Mecklenburg County for an absolute divorce. And the defendant will further take notice that he is required to appear before the Clerk of the Superior Court of said County on the 24th day of December 1923, at the Court House of said county in Charlotte, North Carolina, and answer or demur to the complaint in said action, or the plaintiff will apply to the court for the relief demanded in said complaint. This the 14th day of November, 1923.

J. A. RUSSELL,  
Asst. Clerk Superior Court.  
G. A. Smith, Attorney for Plaintiff.  
N16-23-30-D7

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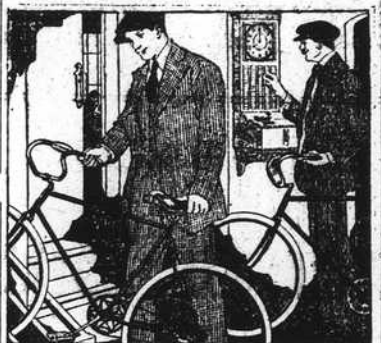
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