

Wage Cuts And Strikes Threat In New England

Cotton Textile Situation in Northeastern States Has Taken More Serious Turn and Manufacturers See in Wage Reductions the Only Way Out of Their Predicament

By J. C. ROYLE
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New York, April 24.—The cotton textile situation so far as New England is concerned, has taken a more serious turn, according to telegraphic dispatches received within the last 24 hours from mill centers.

The impression conveyed by these reports, which come from reliable sources, is that wage reductions in the textile industries of New England are only a matter of time. Labor leaders are frank in saying that if these cuts are put into effect there is a strong probability that a strike would be called.

The effect of such reduction is not confined to New England. It has a bearing on every citizen of this country, for each one of necessity is a purchaser or prospective purchaser of cotton cloth in some form or another, and cotton goods in reality forms one of the chief supports of the dry goods trade.

Cuts amounting to as much as 15 and 20 per cent, have already been posted at several mills where the workers are not unionized. It is predicted that if this 20 per cent cut is made effective generally a strike cannot be averted. Textile wages in New England are now 134 per cent above the pre-war level and only 13 per cent under the high point of 1920. In 1922 scores of thousands of textile workers were on strike much of the year.

New England manufacturers assert that curtailment of production is essential, not only because of the slack demand for finished goods but because of the resistance of buyers to any increase in prices. It is now admitted by many New England consumers of raw cotton that there is every prospect that there will be a shortage of the raw staple before the 1924 crop is available. They say that mill curtailment is necessary because of this also since there will not be enough cotton to run mills full time.

So far as can be learned, the majority of the New England manufacturers have not arranged for their 1924 spring and summer requirements. They therefore face the prospect of having to pay high prices for raw cotton and of being unable to get sufficient to run at capacity if demand should improve. The foreign mills, however, have already bought their raw cotton or are buying it now. Exports for the week ending last Saturday amounted to 76,996 bales compared with 60,329 bales for the previous week and 64,448 for the corresponding week of last year.

The foreign competitors of the New England mills shipped over 175,000,000 yards of finished goods into this country last year and if the demand for cotton goods increases strongly, which is possible, they would be prepared to increase that amount largely if the New England mills were caught with short supplies.

In view of these facts, manufacturers in the North section of this country are seriously considering wage reductions. The old argument is being waged as to whether it is better for workmen to have employment more days a week at a lower wage than few days or none with the high wage scale maintained. The Pecossett and Mechanics mills of Fall River have closed down for ten days. The Pepperell Manufacturing Company, employing 3,800 workers at Biddeford, Maine, will close from April 26 to May 5. The Amoskeag Manufacturing Company plants have closed for the remainder of this week.

The situation is not dangerous so far as the South is concerned, according to reliable reports today from Atlanta and other centers.

The textile situation is not going to the bow-wows, Southern experts maintain. Mills, they say, are not curtailing, but are selling on a basis of warehouse stocks and buying raw cotton as demand for goods calls for it. The South has assumed the lead so far as cotton spindles are concerned. There are now in place in Southern mills 16,747,046, or 44.5 per cent of the country's total. This marked an increase of 872,665 spindles in the South in the last year, and a decrease of 92,510 in other sections. The Southern mills consumed 4,247,748 bales of cotton last year, or 63.72 per cent of the total United States consumption.

DRAINAGE SUBJECT OF BELHAVEN MEET

And Belhaven Is Logical Place for Drainage Association Convention With Its Immense Drainage Projects

Chapel Hill, April 24.—The North Carolina Drainage Association meets this year, April 29-30, at Belhaven, near which are located brilliant examples of success in the reclamation of swamp lands to agriculture. Within a ten mile radius of Belhaven there have been completed a half dozen or more projects which embrace a total of more than 200,000 acres of land of black soil of extreme richness. Formerly worthless and listed, if at all, for a nominal price for taxation, these lands are now on the books at from \$100 to \$150 per acre and are, practically speaking, not purchasable. Their yields are rich, not only in prolific crops of corn, but in grasses which are rapidly building up the extensive cattle business recognized as one of the chief economic needs of the State.

In many respects the drainage district around Belhaven, with their 150 miles of canals from 24 to 40 feet in width and the contrast, illustrated by their profitable development, with the swamps out of which they have recently been created, are the Q. E. D. of the drainage principle as applied through legislation. The drainage law of North Carolina, passed in 1909, is a model that has been widely approved and copied but not yet

pected to connect with this road by building from Gum Neck to the Hyde County line.

The Board of Commissioners also passed an order directing the sheriff to summon a jury of three men to lay off the road and estimate its cost with the aid of a civil engineer or surveyor whom the jury is empowered to employ. As this road connects the county seats of Tyrrell and Hyde, the State will be asked to take the road over and a delegation from Hyde County will go to Raleigh the latter part of this month to present the matter at the next meeting of the State Highway Commission. This road was in contemplation last winter when George P. Carter of Fairfield, while in the city, gave The Advance an interview setting forth the advantages that would accrue to Elizabeth City by the establishment of a ferry between Pasquotank and Tyrrell counties. Such a ferry, in Mr. Carter's opinion, would with the establishment of the Fairfield-Gum Neck road, put Elizabeth City within a few hours of Fairfield and Swan Quarter by motor car.

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Improved upon except in detail in any quarter. Under its operation a total of approximately a million acres of swamp and overflow lands have been reclaimed to agriculture, chiefly in Eastern North Carolina, but to a considerable extent in the Piedmont as well. Capital, the interest on which is assured of collection as by a tax levy, is secured by the lands themselves, and the bonds thus authorized have found a warm welcome in the markets. While there are yet vast acres of swamp lands which could be drained, the feasibility of this kind of reclamation is so well established that it only needs efficient planning and cooperation to bring any particular swamp or overflow area to productivity.

A few figures in rough will give an idea of the magnitude of the magnitude of the work and results possible in Eastern North Carolina, not only through drainage, but reclamation in the broader sense. And though drainage has been the principal and first step, its end is re-water, but those which have been cut over and left idle. Of lands unreclaimed in this broader sense, there is an estimated total in Eastern North Carolina of 2,370,000 acres. Of these a half million are not deemed suitable for agriculture in anything like the immediate future, and an additional 200,000 acres are in peaty lands, themselves potentially valuable as fuel producers, but not to be considered from the point of view of the farm or land settlement. There is, therefore, an acreage of something like 1,500,000 which constitutes the material with which State reclamation, through drainage districts and analogous legislation of the future, has to deal. There must also be deducted from this total many thousands of acres of cut-over land which can be redeemed to forests and which it is needed to put to growing the timber so essential to sound agricultural practice.

As to drainage, the percentage of failures that marks a general success in the average project has emphasized in experience the mistake of confusing hope with mathematics. A thorough survey and preparation, careful cost estimates, close contracts and sound engineering skill and judgment are necessities. These having become the rule, the drainage district, the bonds of which are always sound, can be depended upon to be a dividend payer for its owners.

In reclamation in the broader sense the problem is more closely related to land settlement. Lands suitable for agriculture are available in quantity. Men to buy and work them properly are lacking. Capital is not available for proper preparation. Here is indicated a need for legislation to create in the case of such lands a sound policy of credit and finance, such as the drainage law has proved to be practicable. At the meeting of the Association

in New Bern last April one of the most interesting discussions had to do with the extension of the Federal Reclamation Act for irrigation of arid lands in the West to the redemption to agriculture of swamp and cut-over lands in the South. The condition of the lands in the South and their right to equality of treatment with those of the West was described by F. H. Newell, then chief of the United States Reclamation Service. Senator Simmons and Representative Abernethy also declared themselves as in favor of the South asserting its rights in this respect.

In sight of and with opportunity to inspect prosperous lands as exhibits of what reclamation means, the Drainage Association and its visitors will be in a position for effectively visualizing what reclamation in the sense of utilizing economically

clamation, to embrace ultimately not only lands rendered waste by available idle lands can be made to mean to North Carolina, the South and the Nation.

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HYDE PLANS ROAD TO TYRRELL LINE

County Commissioners Take Action at April Meeting Looking Toward Connecting Fairfield and Gum Neck

Steps toward putting Hyde in line to reap advantage of any ferry service that may be established between Pasquotank and Tyrrell counties were taken by the Hyde County Board of Commissioners at their April meeting when the Board passed a resolution providing for the laying out of a road from Fairfield to the Tyrrell County line at the Alligator River. Tyrrell is ex-

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