

INTRODUCTION

This Report on an Enquiry into the Wages and Hours of Labour in the Cotton Mill Industry in the Bombay Presidency, 1926, is the third conducted by the Labour Office on this subject.

The first was made in 1921 and related to May 1914 and May 1921. The results of the Enquiry were published in the form of a special Report early in the year 1923. The second census for the year 1923 was taken in August of that year for all centres. The results were published also in the form of a special Report in July 1925. The third Enquiry was undertaken in May 1926 for Ahmedabad and in July for Bombay and Sholapur and the Report now published gives the results of that Enquiry, which, it will be seen, is more detailed and has entailed infinitely more labour in its preparation than either of the two others. The principal reason for this is that that Enquiry was conducted, not by the Schedule method as in the case of the other two enquiries, but by the Muster-roll method combined with the sample. A number of mills were selected at each centre, employing about 30 per cent. of the operatives engaged in the industry, and special forms, following very closely the lines of a mill muster roll, were distributed to the mills, who entered upon them all the particulars appearing in their muster rolls for every individual employed by them in the mill. In the three centres over 70,000 workpeople were covered and when it is stated that the entries relating to each individual numbered from 12 to 16 the amount of tabulation necessitated by the Enquiry may be imagined.

The labour of tabulation and analysis has been added to enormously by the astonishingly varied methods of wage payments in the textile industry. Not only do these methods differ fundamentally in the three centres themselves, but there are wide variations in every mill and even in departments of the same mill. At every stage in the tabulation difficulties arose which had to be solved by personal enquiry or correspondence and the census has shown, as nothing else could ever have shown, that the muster-roll method, where the information is derived from the pay-rolls of the mills, is the only method that can ensure the collection of accurate wage statistics in the mill industry. The whole work has therefore been done by the ordinary staff of the office. No such enquiry has ever been undertaken before in India and I think I am right in saying that in few countries has so detailed and comprehensive an examination of the wage statistics of a particular industry been undertaken.

A perusal of the Report will indicate the nature and the extent of the enquiry and there are several factors which contributed to its successful preparation to which I desire to draw attention. First, I would