

REPORT ON AN ENQUIRY INTO THE WAGES AND HOURS OF LABOUR IN THE COTTON MILL INDUSTRY IN 1926

CHAPTER I

Method of Conducting the Enquiry

The Labour Office of the Government of Bombay conducted enquiries into Wages and Hours of Labour in the Cotton Mill Industry in the Presidency in 1921 and 1923, the Labour Office itself having been formed in April 1921. The method of obtaining the information in both enquiries was that of the schedule. Forms were sent to all the mills setting out the information that was required and these forms were filled up and returned by the mills, being followed up, in many cases, by visits from the Investigators of the Labour Office. Two reports containing the results of these investigations have been published and in them will be found details of the method followed and the results obtained.

2. An entirely different method has been adopted for the present report because a careful examination of the forms used and the results obtained in the earlier enquiries, combined with the experience gained as the result of those enquiries by the Labour Office, and a more extended acquaintance with the complicated and confusing system of wage payments in the Textile Industry, led to the conclusion that the only satisfactory method of securing accurate wage statistics in the Textile Industry was to obtain those statistics from the muster-rolls themselves and to tabulate the results in the Labour Office. The ideal method is, of course, to obtain copies of the muster-rolls for a particular wage period for every concern in the industry that is being covered. The practical objection to this is the impossibility of handling the mass of figures that would have to be tabulated, unless a very large staff was engaged on the work—a staff far exceeding that possessed by the Labour Office. The only alternative is the sample, a well recognised method of statistical enquiry. As has been pointed out by the International Labour Office, “As it is not practicable to make frequent wage censuses concerning all undertakings in a given industry or groups of industries, the sampling method is generally adopted, representative establishments being selected in each district in which the industry is important.” In the United States, where the collection of statistics is far advanced, only 15 per cent. of the total number of persons employed in the cotton manufacturing establishments in the United States were covered by the last census in that industry.

3. The Labour Office accordingly addressed a comprehensive letter on the subject to the Bombay Millowners' Association on the 12th May 1926 enquiring—

- (1) whether the month of June would be a suitable month for the enquiry,
- (2) whether muster-rolls could be adopted as the basis of the enquiry, and