

APPENDIX B

Wage Movements in Recent Years and Attempts at Standardization

In Bombay, the first joint action taken by the Bombay Millowners' Association was in January 1918 when a dearness allowance of 15 per cent. was granted to all workers in all Bombay mills irrespective of the fact whether the operatives worked on time or piece rates of wages. The 15 per cent. granted on the 1st January 1918 was increased to 35 per cent. on 1st January 1919. The next increase granted on the 1st February 1920 was 20 per cent. extra to male workers on time rates and to female workers both on time and piece rates, and 40 per cent. extra to male operatives on piece rates—the total percentages amounting to 55 and 75 respectively. On the 1st November 1920 the 55 per cent. was increased to 70 per cent. and the 75 per cent. to 80 per cent. There have been no changes in these percentages since the year 1921. The percentage dearness allowances have been maintained right through as a separate item on the muster.

In July 1925 the Bombay Millowners' Association notified all operatives in the Bombay mills that the wages of all workpeople in the mills affiliated to the Association would be reduced by 11½ per cent. with effect from the 1st September 1925 owing to the high prices ruling for cotton, increased cost of production due to the high rates of wages, Japanese competition, unprecedented accumulations of cloth and yarn due to the demand not keeping pace with production and to the maintenance of the excise duty of 3½ per cent. on cotton manufactures. Negotiations to bring about a settlement of this dispute between the millowners and the representatives of labour proved abortive and over 30,000 operatives in fifteen mills went out on strike on the 15th September. By the 2nd October there was a complete stoppage of work in all the mills in the City and by the 6th October the strike had extended to the two mills in Kurla. The only point on which there appeared general unanimity was the necessity for the immediate suspension of the excise duty and the Government of Bombay made representations to the Government of India to this effect. At the end of November the Viceroy suspended, by a special Ordinance, the collection of the excise duty with effect from the 1st December 1925. In view of the repeated assurances given by the Bombay Millowners' Association that the old rates of wages would be restored in the event of the excise duty being removed the strike virtually ended as soon as the Ordinance was published.

One of the reasons of the general strike in the cotton mill industry in the Bombay City of the year 1928, which started on the 16th April and lasted till the 6th October, was alleged reductions in wage rates in various mills in Bombay City. One of the seventeen demands submitted by the Joint Strike Committee, which was in charge of the conduct of this strike, to the Millowners' Association was that "the present practices resorted to by some millowners which result in the reduction of wages shall be stopped, and reductions and altered conditions already effected since 1925 shall be restored". One of the conditions of the settlement of the strike which was arrived at on the 4th October 1928 was that pending the report of the Committee of Enquiry that was to be set up, the rates and wages of March 1927 should be paid, with a few exceptions in particular mills.

In Ahmedabad, disputes in connexion with wage rates are referred to a Permanent Arbitration Board, consisting of Seth Mangaldas and Mr. M. K. Gandhi, which was appointed by a Resolution adopted by the Ahmedabad Millowners' Association on the 4th April 1920. Failing an agreement, a dispute is referred by the arbitrators to a *Sirpanch* or Umpire. The system of arbitration in the matter of wage disputes had, however, been brought into effect in the Ahmedabad mill industry three years earlier. Prior to 1917 no concerted action was taken by the Ahmedabad Millowners' Association with regard to granting percentage increases and each mill did as it pleased. The differences in the rates between mill and mill, although wide, were not very abnormal. From December 1917 to 1921, the Managing Committee of the Millowners' Association or the Arbitrators or Umpires chosen from time to time awarded increments to different departments in different proportions. The Warpings obtained an increase of 25 per cent. in their rates in 1917. The Weavers were awarded an increase of 35 per cent. in 1918, and spinners were given an increase of 85 per cent. in March 1919 when the weavers also obtained a further increase. In the beginning of the year 1920 the Association decided upon an increase of 62½ per cent. in wages to workers in the Sizing, Calendering and Engineering Departments. The same increment was granted to mill Mochis (leather workers) and the pay of some workers in the Cloth Folding Department was fixed after giving a similar increase. About the same time increases from 60 to 62½ per cent. over the wages of July 1917 were granted to blacksmiths, to the workers in the Yarn Bundling Department and to some workers in the Cloth Department. In the same year the hours of work for spinners were reduced from 12 to 10 in consequence of a strike, and a further increase of about 40 per cent. was granted to them. In order to keep other workers contented an increase of 40 per cent. was granted to Winders and workers in the Frame