

MAHAMAHOPADHYAYA  
DR. U.V. SWAMINATHA IYER LIBRARY  
TIRUVANMIYUR 11 MADRAS 41

## MEMORANDUM

Submitted to the Court of Enquiry  
about Textile Industry.

16497

*by*

Karumuttu Thiagarajan.

16497.  
MEMORANDUM.

---

Submitted to the Court of Enquiry about Textile Industry.

The condition of the working class is the pressing question of the hour, and nothing can be of higher interest to the State than to solve this problem, none too easy, and to settle it justly and reasonably.

It cannot be denied that the condition of Labour is miserable and wretched and they have been in the past treated by Capital and State as little better than chattel or commodity. Therefore a thorough change of heart on the part of Capital is most urgent. This is all the more urgent to avoid danger to industry and State before the unscrupulous agitators take undue advantage of the present disastrous state of things, to get within their grasp the whole field of Labour and stir it up to revolt—only to level down all to a like condition of misery and degradation.

The remedy or the relief does not lie in doing away with private property and nationalising the whole of Industry as advocated by misguided communists. This remedy will be worse than the disease. It will only increase the misery by drying up the source of wealth brought forth by individual talents and industry. When Industry is nationalised it does not in the least take away the evil of employer (the State) and employee—State managed concerns like Railways, too, are not free from strikes and troubles.

Therefore, the remedy lies in removing the existing evils and drawing Capital and Labour more closely together by defining clearly their relative rights and mutual duties, and binding them with better understanding and sympathy. Here the State should play their part well.

It is clear that Capital must realise that it is only by the Labour of workers that Industry prospers and their contribution is not small and that Labour is quite indispensable and its concomitant co-operation is essential.

Labour has also to realise that Capital has to maintain strict internal discipline and order and to exercise its right to take disciplinary action for misbehaviour or misconduct, by way of fine and dismissal within the limits of the Law, and it has also the right to dispense with the services of Labour in case of inefficiency and retrenchment.

Though Labour and Capital are mutually dependent on each other, former may and should claim its rights but in a friendly spirit and in a constitutional manner, through a properly organised Labour Union. The Statutory object of the Union should be the regulation of the relations between Labour and Capital, and Labour and Labour and generally the amelioration of their conditions; its object should not be to foment class hatred, to organise strikes and to advance the private ends of leaders. The offices should be duly and properly constituted and the office-bearers legally and openly elected. The Union funds must be invested in the name of the Union, subjected to Government audit, and administered with strict honesty; large funds as now, should not be invested in the personal account of leaders by whom they are being actually misappropriated.

The Unions as constituted now are hurtful to Labour and Industry and dangerous to the State, while the utmost freedom and liberty is conceded to Labour leaders. Unions are becoming more numerous and are warring with one another. Whence they spring, what their objects are, or what means they employ, are open secrets, and there are evidences which go to prove that some societies are run more

as a profitable concern, and some are in the hands of secret leaders, and managed on most dangerous principles. The State should intervene to put restraint upon fire-brands; to save the working classes from being led astray by their manoeuvres to strike, for such paralysing of Labour not only affects the masters and their work-people alike, but is extremely injurious to trade and to the general interests of the public; moreover, on such occasions, violence and disorder prevails and public peace imperilled. Labour should not be allowed to be fooled with empty promises and deceived under false pretexts. There is no free membership, nor are subscriptions voluntarily paid, but exacted at the mill gates on pay day — what high-way robbery is practised in open day light? Sufficient safeguards against exploitation of Labour at the hands of self-constituted leaders should be provided. The State should prevent and dissolve Associations dangerous to Labour, Industry and State.

This question of Trade Union has been dealt with at some length in my letters to the Prime Minister of Madras, and to the Commissioner of Labour, dated the 4th January 1939, and 10th February 1939 respectively. Copies are enclosed herein.

The remedy then lies in a uniform living wage, proper housing, healthy working conditions, medical aid and educational facilities.

The first and chief thing is the question of wages. The working classes, which contribute largely to the Industry, should themselves have a fair share in the benefits by receiving a *living* wage sufficient to raise Labour quite or clearly above poverty. The low wages prevailing in other industries cannot be completely ignored and has to be, unfortunately, taken into consideration. The State should,



therefore, set an example by paying this living wage to men under their employ.

“The wages should be *standardised* in all the Textile mills in the Presidency and the work should be well defined. For instance, the number of spindles each spinner should attend etc., should be clearly laid down. Generally the Labour in India is very inefficient and consequently, very dear and every attempt should be made to raise it to the higher standard prevailing in Japan and other advanced countries, by introducing into India from abroad skilled men to train our Indian workmen at certain centres.

As stated by the Southern India Millowners' Association, the piece-rate system in all departments with the exception of mixing and carding may be adopted successfully.

Secondly, the labourers should be freed from *dirty slums* and housed properly *within walking distance* from the factory, in well laid out colonies provided with sanitation, hospitals, schools, markets etc. The necessary land should be acquired by the Government and the scheme should be subsidised by the State to an extent of 50%. Plans of an ideal colony, house and dormitory prepared for our scheme, are sent herewith for your reference in this very important matter.

Thirdly, the children of the Labour should be educated by Capital and State free up to the middle school, coupled with technical education.

Fourthly, healthy working conditions should be prescribed. If mills are air conditioned it will go a great way to improve the working conditions of Labour. This additional expenditure will be repaid by higher efficiency. Thus it will benefit both the employee and employer.

Hand reeling is an unnecessary strain on the woman-worker besides being inefficient. This should be prevented by introducing power-reels.

The labourer and his family should get free medical relief.

There should be statutory obligations to carry out recommendations regarding wages and housing.

Lastly, an Industrial Council on the lines suggested by the Royal Commission for the co-ordination of Capital and Labour may be established in industrial centres.

In the interest of Industry and the Public, new mills should be located outside towns with an ideal colony of their own, and in any case no new mills should be allowed to be started within a distance of atleast six miles from the existing ones. Necessary land for old and new mills should be acquired by the State.

Madura,  
2nd September, 1946. }

(Sd.) KARUMUTTU THIAGARAJAN,  
*Managing Director,*  
The Sree Meenakshi Mills, Ltd.