

Editorial

Southern Textile Bulletin.

April 2, 1914.

RELATIONS BETWEEN EMPLOYERS AND  
OPERATIVES.

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The textile industry of the South has always been proud of the friendly relations that have existed between the mill owners and the operatives for the same feeling probably does not exist in any other large industry in this country. The mill presidents and treasurers and those who control the mills have always shown an active personal interest in the welfare of the operatives and have always stood ready to do what they could to better their conditions.

The wages that have been paid have been reasonable and while not quite as high as in some sections of the country, they have always been as high in proportion to the cost of living, for the cost of living is less in the mill centers of the South than in other parts of the country. Wages in the cotton mills of the South have steadily advanced in late years and although the mills have passed through several years of depression they have not asked the operatives to share their losses and there has never been any reduction.

The hours of labor have been gradually shortened from 11½ until the 10-hour limit applies over the entire South, but there has been no corresponding reductions in wages, for the operatives, as would undoubtedly have been made in other sections of the country.

Being able to view the matter both from the standpoint of the mill owners and the operatives we believe that the present scale of wages in the Southern cotton mills is as high as manufacturing conditions will permit and that they are enough to provide good living conditions for the operatives.

Because they have been treated fairly and because the mill owners have never shown any disposition to oppress them, the operatives have come to look upon the mill owners as their friends and a relation exists which is very rare. One great factor in this feeling of friendliness is the fact that we have no foreigners in our mills and both the mill owners and the operatives come of pure Anglo-Saxon blood, which is the best on earth. Being of one race and one people there is a natural understanding and kinship which could not be expected if our mills were filled with the dagoes and the riff-raff of Europe.

Only once has these friendly relations between Southern mill owners and operatives been broken and that was about 1900, when agitators from Fall River, Mass., came into the South and stirred up trouble which was only serious at Augusta, Ga., and Burlington, N. C.

That trouble was, however, short lived, for the mill operatives soon found that they had been deceived by their new friends who were working for their own financial gain and they resumed their friendly relations with their employees.

For almost fifteen years these relations have remained firm despite the efforts of outside agitators and under them wages have increased and hours of labor become shorter. Welfare work in some form or another has been established in all cotton mills of the South and the living conditions of the operatives have been greatly improved.

Such a conditions is galling to the professional agitator and now they have come into the South again with a determined effort to stir up trouble and we regret to say that they have succeeded in at least one place.

It is against our policy to give publicity to such matters, but at the present time we are reliably informed that agitators from Fall River, Mass., are working in the South at several points.

These men have not come South with any philanthropic motive and no matter how smooth tongued they may be, they cannot get around the fact that by causing trouble they make financial gain for themselves. They are in the South for the purpose of stirring up trouble between the employers and the operatives, knowing that if they can convert a condition of peace and friendliness into one of unrest and enmity, they "pickings" will be good.

Statistics in the North show that these agitators, most of whom started with nothing, are now well fixed in this world's goods, while those whom have used for their purposes have lost much by reason of strikes and dues.

Will the mill operatives of the South remember their experience in 1900 and the friendly relations that have existed all of these years, or will they listen to smooth tongues from Fall River and turn against their friends?

We believe that our people can attend to their own affairs without the aid of men who have come all the way from Fall River, Mass., to give them orders, for independence of action has always been a characteristic of the race whose blood flows in the veins of the Southern cotton mill operative.

We hope that the present effort to disturb the relations between the Southern mill owners and the mill operatives will prove a failure as did a similar effort fifteen years ago, for should it prove successful it will produce a state of turmoil from which both the mills and the operatives will suffer.