

THE
COLLECTED
WORKS
OF
MAHATMA
GANDHI

VOLUME FOURTEEN



THE PUBLICATIONS DIVISION

THE
COLLECTED
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OF
MAHATMA
GANDHI

XIV
(1917-1918)

GWING - XIV



129. AHMEDABAD MILL-HANDS' STRIKE

February 26, 1918

LEAFLET No. 1¹

The lock-out commenced on February 22. From that date the workers of the Weaving Department have been compelled to go without work. When the mill-owners issued notices withdrawing the Plague Bonus and there was unrest because of this, the employers resolved to get the dispute settled by arbitration and it was assumed that the workers would agree. Accordingly, the mill-owners resolved, on February 14, to appoint an arbitration board to decide what increase in lieu of the Plague Bonus was justified by the increase in the cost of living. Mahatma Gandhi, Shri Shankarlal Banker and Shri Vallabhbai Patel representing the workers, and Sheth Ambalal Sarabhai, Sheth Jagabhai Dalpatbhai and Sheth Chandulal representing the employers, with the Collector as Chairman, were appointed to arbitrate. Thereafter, workers in some of the mills struck work owing to a misunderstanding. That was a mistake and the workers were ready to rectify it. The employers, however, thought that the workers were in the wrong in striking before the Award was given by the arbitrators and that, therefore, they would be justified in cancelling their resolution regarding arbitration and this they did. They simultaneously passed a resolution to the effect that workers be paid their due wages and be discharged if they were not content with a 20 per cent increase. The weavers were not satisfied and accepted discharge, and the lock-out by the employers commenced. But the arbitrators for the workers felt it their responsibility to tell the workers, under the circumstances, what increase they could properly

¹ Apart from visits to workers' houses and public meetings for educating the workers about the struggle, it was decided to "issue instructive leaflets every day with a view to fixing firmly in their minds the principles and significance of the struggle, and to supply them with simple but elevating literature which would conduce to their mental and intellectual development and enable them to leave for posterity a heritage of the means for its progress." The leaflets were issued in the name of Anasuyabehn Sarabhai but, as stated by Mahadev Desai in *Ek Dharmayuddha*, of which *A Righteous Struggle* was the English edition, they were in fact written by Gandhiji. This leaflet appeared on the fifth day of the lock-out. The leaflets were read out at the public meetings in the evenings.

demand. But before doing so, they consulted amongst themselves and, after giving full consideration to the interests of both the mill-owners and the workers and to all the other circumstances, decided that an increase of 35 per cent was justified and that the workers be advised accordingly. But before doing so they intimated their intention to the mill-owners and promised to consider if they had anything to say against it. The employers did not express their view on this matter. The workers, whose demand was for a 50 per cent increase, withdrew it and resolved to ask for a 35 per cent increase.

WORKERS' PLEDGE

The workers have resolved:

- (1) that they will not resume work until a 35 per cent increase on the July wages is secured;
- (2) that they will not, during the period of the lock-out, cause any disturbance or resort to violence or indulge in looting, nor damage any property of the employers or abuse anyone, but will remain peaceful.

How the workers can succeed in their pledge will be discussed in the next leaflet.

If workers have anything to tell me¹, they are welcome to see me at my place at any hour of the day.

[From Gujarati]

Ek Dharmayuddha

129. LETTER TO COLLECTOR, KHEDA

February 26, 1918

I am satisfied from the inquiry which I have made myself, and from inquiries² made by other fellow-workers, that postponement of land revenue is justified, but if you are nevertheless unable

¹ Anasuyabehn, to whom workers frequently went for advice during the struggle

² On arrival at Nadiad, on February 16, Gandhiji and his fellow-workers had themselves divided into groups, each of which undertook investigation of crop conditions in a number of villages. In a week's time reports in regard to 425 out of 600 villages had become available and Gandhiji had personally investigated conditions in 30 villages. The findings formed the basis of his letter to the District authorities,