

THE
COLLECTED
WORKS
OF
MAHATMA
GANDHI

VOLUME FOURTEEN



THE PUBLICATIONS DIVISION

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OF
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GANDHI

XIV
(1917-1918)

GANDHI - XIV



166. LETTER TO MANGALDAS PAREKH¹

AHMEDABAD,
[Before *March 12, 1918*]

Many friends come to me and try to persuade me that I should somehow bring to an end the struggle between the workers and the mill-owners. I would certainly do so if I could, even at the cost of my life. But that is not possible. It is in the hands of the mill-owners to bring it to an end. Why make it a point of prestige not to give 35 per cent because the workers have asked for it? Why is it taken for granted that I can get the workers to accept anything I want? I claim that the workers are under my control because of the means I have adopted. Shall I now see to it that they break their pledge? If I do so, why should they not sever my head from my shoulders? I hear that the mill-owners find fault with me. I am unconcerned. Some day they themselves will admit that I was not in the wrong. There can be no bitterness between them and me, since I am not going to be a party to any bitterness. Even bitterness needs encouragement; it won't get any from me. But why don't you participate in this? It does not become you merely to watch this great struggle unconcernedly.

[From Gujarati]

Ek Dharmayuddha

167. AHMEDABAD MILL-HANDS' STRIKE

[*March 12, 1918*]²

LEAFLET No. 12

Today a new chapter begins. The employers have decided to withdraw the lock-out and have expressed their willingness to take back those who are ready to accept a 20 per cent increase. This means that today the employers' lock-out is at an end and a workers' strike has commenced. You have all seen the announcement of the employers' resolution to this effect. They say in it that many workers are ready to resume work but could not do

¹ A prominent mill-owner of Ahmedabad

² The lock-out was lifted on *March 12, 1918*.

so owing to the lock-out. The information which the employers have received ill accords with the daily meetings of the workers and the oath they have taken. Either their information is true or the presence of the workers in the daily meetings and the oath they have taken are a fact. The workers bore all these things in mind before taking the pledge and now they cannot resume work without securing a 35 per cent increase, whatever the inducement held out and whatever the suffering they may have to go through. Their honour is at stake in this. If you weigh a pledge against a sum of hundreds of thousands, the pledge will be seen to be of greater consequence. We are sure the workers will never forget this. They have no other way to advance themselves except to stand by their oath and it is our conviction that, if only the employers realize it, their welfare too lies in the workers' keeping their oath. Eventually, even the employers will not gain by taking work from workers who are too weak to keep their oath. A religiously-minded person will never feel happy in forcing a person to break his pledge or associating himself with such an effort. We have, however, no time now to think of the employers' duty. They know it all right. We can only entreat them. But the workers must think seriously what their duty is at this time. Never again will they get an opportunity like the present one.

Let us consider what the workers are likely to gain by breaking their oath. These days, any honest person in India can earn twenty to twenty-five rupees a month by intelligent work. The worst that can happen to a worker is that his employers may dismiss him and he will have to look for other work. A thoughtful worker should realize that he will get work anywhere after a few days' search. We are sure, however, that the employers do not want to take this extreme step. If workers are firm in their resolve, even the hardest of hearts will relent.

It is possible that the workers from outside Gujarat (i.e., those from the North or the South) are not well informed about this struggle. In public work we do not, and do not wish to, make distinctions of Hindu, Muslim, Gujarati, Madrasi, Punjabi, etc. We are all one or wish to be one. We should, therefore, approach these workers with understanding and enlighten them about the struggle and make them see that it is to their advantage, too, to identify themselves with the rest of us.

[From Gujarati]

Ek Dharmayuddha