

INDIA

Textile Workers' Strike

THE workers in the cotton mills of Bombay are again engaged in a fierce struggle with the federated owners of all the eighty-four cotton mills of that district. It will be remembered³ that a wage reduction of 20 per cent. was inflicted upon these workers after a lock-out of three months in 1924. Before that date, according to an official report issued by the Government of Bombay, the average earnings per day of men in these mills were Rs. 1.7.2., which gives, after a reduction of 20 per cent., approximately 1s. 8½d.

In July, after long consideration of the condition of the industry, the committee of the Mill-Owners' Association recommended a wage reduction of 11½ per cent., to take effect from September 1. It was expected that trouble would occur when the reduced wages were paid, on October 15, but the workers, with surprising determination, struck when the previous wages were paid, *i.e.*, on September 15. Twenty thousand workers struck on that day, and the number increased to 135,000 in a week, and later rose to 154,000, the total number in the industry in Bombay. It should be remembered that there is no union organisation, and these results have been brought about almost spontaneously, by workers who are mainly illiterate, and without resources of any kind. Their sufferings are naturally intense. Epidemics have broken out in the overcrowded tenements where a large proportion of the workers live, and a considerable percentage are reported to have left the city and gone back to the villages.

Officials of the All-India Trade Union Congress, representing the workers, put their case before the Governor of Bombay on August 12, but their demand that he should intervene, or set up a committee of inquiry, was met with the reply that there is no legal authority enabling him to do this. The workers' offer of short time, instead of reduction of wage rates, has also been refused by the owners.

The European trade unions are in this case, almost for the first time, showing their appreciation of the importance of the struggles of the colonial workers. The All-Russian Textile Union sent financial assistance, and was followed by the British Trades Union Congress, the Transport and General Workers' Union, the Amalgamated Weavers' Association, and the Amalgamated Society of Dyers. The Textile Workers' International and the Workers' International Relief have also subscribed, and the International Federation of Trade Unions has appealed to its national centres for funds.