

CHAPTER X

UNEMPLOYMENT AND OCCUPATIONAL HAZARDS

LIKE all other workers dependent on capitalist production, clothing workers live in perpetual fear of unemployment. Many of the finest craftsmen in the industry, men and women who have spent a lifetime in the trade, are unable to find any employment. Additional numbers work for shorter periods each year. With so conservative a body as the Welfare Council of New York City pointing out in 1933 that 633,000 persons among the unemployed alone in that city were badly in need of clothing, the utter insanity and anarchy of capitalist relationships are made to stand out in bold relief.

For the needle trades worker conditions grow worse and worse. With large numbers of workers not fully employed even during the busiest weeks of the season, tailors, operators and others are being forced out of the industry by the thousands—usually with nothing else toward which to turn. They have given their best years to the industry. To-day they are being told that they are no longer needed, as “over-production” is accentuated with the decline of capitalism and the shrinking of markets.*

Extent of Unemployment

How rapidly jobs are dwindling can be seen from the following figures on employment (yearly averages) given in the biennial Census of Manufacturers :

* For a full discussion of these tendencies in their broader aspects see *Labor Fact Book II*, Chap. I.

INDUSTRY	1929	1931	1933
Men's Clothing	149,868	121,965	119,253
Women's Clothing	187,500	173,514	159,832
Work Clothing	38,201	32,578	55,281*
Cloth Hats and Caps	5,826	3,459	4,053
Shirts	59,830	57,026	53,816*
Furs	15,752	12,358	8,210

For the "wearing apparel" industry as a whole, the employment index of the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics fell from an annual average of 113.3 in 1929 to 88.2 in 1933 (1923-25 = 100), thus registering a decrease of over 22% in the number of workers who found employment in the manufacture of clothing of all descriptions in the shops covered by the Bureau within this four-year period.

But even those who have jobs are far from being fully employed. Less than 5% of the needle workers work full time. All of the remainder are subject to the hazards of seasonal and part-time work.

How Jobs Are Lost

In the six main branches of the needle trades there were 6,104 fewer shops counted in the census for 1933 than there were four years previously. The end of every season is marked by a wholesale exodus of firms which have not been able to make the grade. This has been particularly marked since the current economic crisis with its decreased consumption of clothing. Each shop that closes, of course, throws workers out of jobs. When, for example, J. Schoeneman, Inc., closed their two Baltimore plants in November, 1933, nine hundred workers were involved.

* Because of changes in the classification of cotton garments and shirts in the 1933 census, figures for these industries are not comparable with those for former years. Work shirts, formerly computed as part of the shirt industry, are now classified with work clothing. Pajamas and nightwear, now included in the shirt report, were listed as part of the men's furnishing industry in former censuses.

Many firms, while remaining in business, close their shop doors temporarily "because of conditions." Innumerable plants are to-day kept idle because of lack of orders. Others merely pretend to go out of business. Keller-Kohn of Cleveland, for example, closed its doors to the 300 workers employed in its shops. The retention of its best salesmen and designers, however, indicated that it intended either to reopen under another name, or form new partnerships, or merge with other firms.

Part of the same process is the maneuvering of the "run-away shops." These firms move about from community to community always looking for still cheaper labor. Ten years ago there were between fifteen and twenty thousand shirt workers working regularly in New York City. But the industry "went moving" and it is doubtful if there are three to four thousand left to-day. The same holds true of other sections of the needle industry. Obviously the workers, who generally settle with their families in a given locality, cannot move about from place to place with the same ease as their employers. They are left behind to tramp the streets in quest of work.

In recent years the right of "reorganization" has been conceded both by the officials of the I.L.G.W.U. and the Amalgamated. At specified periods firms may reduce the size of their working forces—"legally" and with union consent. In 1932, Simon Ackerman, Inc., New York men's clothing manufacturers employing about 700 workers, asked the Amalgamated for a "reorganization" involving 50% of their personnel. The union pretended to be indignant and characteristically referred the matter to Dr. Henry Moskowitz, "impartial chairman" of the New York men's clothing industry. Equally characteristic was the "compromise" decision of Mr. Moskowitz who allowed the firm a 40% reduction. "Reorganizations" now deluge both the men's and women's clothing workers—usually striking at those who militantly organize within the shops for improvement of conditions.

Although efficiency men strive to preserve an even flow of work in the plants, most shops have some operations that take less time than others, and workers (on piece rate wages) often find themselves idle while "waiting for the work to catch up."

Changes in style and uncertainties of weather all take their toll in the number of available jobs. A delay in the arrival of cold weather results in a wide-spread lay-off among those making topcoats. Unseasonable weather during the summer and fall months plays havoc with cloak and dress makers who will find themselves called in to work every now and then for a week or two and then be laid off. A heat wave in the middle of October brings cancellations of tens of thousands of orders for fall garments of every type.

Workers' insecurity is made worse by the "hand-to-mouth" buying policy that prevails among retailers throughout the country. "Manufacturers must refrain from cutting up garments other than those required for the actual filling of bona fide orders," urges the Industrial Council of Cloak, Suit and Skirt Manufacturers, an employers' organization. Other employer groups constantly issue injunctions in a similar vein.

The hand of Dame Fashion has also been ruthless. The decreased use of women's suits and shirtwaists, the substitution of simple, straight frocks for elaborate dresses and the simplification of styles on other garments have eliminated thousands of workers, for obviously straight coats and plain dresses require comparatively little work. Some crafts, such as tucking, have been left completely stranded as changes in style have done away with this type of accessory work.

We have seen how in the larger shops new machinery and the efficiency man have increased unemployment by simplification of processes, giving to one worker the tasks formerly performed by several. "Hart, Schaffner & Marx today," wrote the *Daily News Record* in December, 1929, "with some 3,930 workers in their factories, are producing more garments, giving better value and making more money than

in the boom days when they employed about 7,000, or nearly twice as many workers." In the needle trades, as in capitalist industry generally, machines are brought in deliberately to reduce the number of workers. This stands in marked contrast to industry in the Soviet Union where new machines are being introduced as rapidly as possible in order to increase the output, raise the standard of living of the working population and make possible a shorter work period for all.

Diminishing "Seasons"

Clothing workers are engaged in one of the so-called "seasonal" trades. They are subject not only to the ups and downs of general business conditions but to their own seasonal unemployment as well.

The major clothing industries have a winter season and a summer season. Before the present crisis and depression, men's clothing for fall and winter wear was made during June, July, August and September and for summer wear during December January, February and March. These were maximum conditions, the average worker finding six or seven months' employment a year. The dress industry similarly had a season of approximately eight months, with the fall peak in August and the spring peak in January or February—although by about 1929 the average work periods had tapered down to about 25 to 30 weeks a year. Cloak and suit shops, likewise with two seasons, a fall one from July to December and a spring season from January until about April, usually furnished from 30 to 35 weeks employment a year. In their "best days" furriers also had two seasons—one beginning during May or June and extending through October; the spring season beginning in February and lasting until April. Furriers then had a "normal" work year of eight to ten months each year.

In those days needle workers knew rush periods, accompanied by great pressure and nervous strain, followed by long periods of unemployment. Undesirable, however, as

was such a condition, it seems ideal compared with what these workers experience to-day.

Seasons have become progressively shorter every year during the crisis. For the past three to four years the season for men's clothing workers has been only 10 to 12 weeks. The *Advance* summed up the situation as follows, in March, 1933: "Like all other clothing markets we have had very little of what might be called a season. Our people, those that are lucky enough to be employed, work two or three days a week. . . . Although it is the middle of March, supposedly the height of the season, there is little work in the shops." In September, 1934, it again pointed out that, "At the beginning of September the season should be in full swing. Actually, very few shops are working full time, and most of the shops are working very little, if any." On another occasion the same organ put the case thus: "The difference between the season and off-season period, as we have come to experience it, is that one has little work and the other less. The past few seasons had enough people alternating to give them the regular appearance of an off-season."

The women's cloak and dress industries have likewise been going from bad to worse with only part-time work during what would normally be the peak of the season. "The cloak and suit season this Fall," summarized the I.L.G.W.U. organ, *Justice*, in December, 1933, "was a poor one, one of the shortest on record. October in particular was a bad month and in hundreds of shops there was not a stitch of work to be had. . . . The workers, who anticipated at least ten or twelve full work weeks during this past Fall, were the most disappointed ones." In 1934 it was the same story again. "This last Fall season . . . was a disappointing one in the cloak industry in nearly every market. . . . In the dress industry—including the cotton and wash dress line—the season has not been much better."¹ For dressmakers, the same organ points out, "When under normal conditions

not an unemployed dressmaker could be found in the trade, there are still many thousands of workers without employment." The furriers' trade has likewise reached so depressed a state that the worker who finds four months of employment a year counts himself lucky.

Such conditions the NRA codes pretended to correct. That this failed to materialize, however, is known to every worker in the industry. The trend was clearly indicated by the Statistical Division of the Cotton Garment Authority which reported: "The net change of employment in the [cotton garment] industry is zero. The industry as a whole, judging by facts gathered by the Cotton Garment Authority, from 63,234 employees in 672 plants, has employed no more people in February, 1934, than in February, 1933, one year ago, at the lowest point of the depression. If a comparison were drawn between August, 1933, and February, 1934, the showing might have been worse."

Need for Unemployment Insurance

The government makes no provision for workers who have been thrown out of their jobs or who have had their earnings drastically reduced by part-time work. The unions have made some pretenses in the matter, with a plan originating in the cloak industry of New York City through a demand made by the I.L.G.W.U. in 1924. Under the agreement of that year the workers contributed 1% of their pay and the manufacturers 2% of the weekly payroll as a reserve for slack periods. Under this scheme workers could receive \$10 a week for a maximum of 6 weeks a season, or \$120 a year, provided they had lost 396 hours before becoming eligible for benefit payments, not counting time lost through strikes or stoppages. There were also many other limitations and restrictions. However, even this plan with all of its shortcomings went out of existence in 1927.

The Fur Department of the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union succeeded in compelling the bosses to set

aside $1\frac{1}{2}\%$ of the payroll for the unemployed and in the fur dyeing trade settlements many of the shop agreements provided for 3%. This is an important achievement, especially in view of the fact that the fund is paid for *entirely by the employers* and administered exclusively by the workers without any of the customary red tape. Due, however, to the scarcity of work in the trade, the fund has grown slowly and has not gone very far in times of need.

The Amalgamated in 1923 set up an unemployment insurance scheme in the Chicago market. To this the employer contributed $1\frac{1}{2}\%$ (later increased to 3%) of the payroll and the worker $1\frac{1}{2}\%$. The fund was administered by a board of trustees chosen by both sides. Since that time the system has been extended with modifications to Rochester and in 1928 to New York (on a basis of $1\frac{1}{2}\%$ of weekly payrolls). The union officials make extravagant claims concerning the virtues and accomplishments of the scheme, always failing to cite the amounts paid to each individual worker. Instead they give the total amount paid out of the fund of the entire industry which, as totals, can be made to appear quite impressive. In point of fact, however, most workers get so wound up in the red tape and administrative limitations of the scheme that they never see a penny of the insurance money. How well the remainder fare was described in 1929 by Dr. John R. Commons before the U. S. Senate Committee on Education and Labor as follows: "It was devised that these checks should be distributed in two payments, not weekly payments but in two lump sums. . . . It amounts only to about \$60 or \$70 per year to an employee, so that he will get a check for \$30 or \$35 twice a year."

All in all, obviously, the present set-up is altogether inadequate. Most workers get nothing, even in those limited sectors where benefits are supposed to be available; the overwhelming majority of markets and trades have no unemployment reserves whatever; nowhere do workers in open

shops benefit; even where benefits are paid they amount to next to nothing.

Yet never before was the need of unemployment insurance as urgent as it is to-day. It is for this reason that unemployed councils, six state federations of labor and over 3,500 A. F. of L. local unions had by March, 1935, endorsed the Workers Unemployment, Old Age and Social Insurance Bill, introduced in the 74th Congress on January 3, 1935, as H. R. 2827. It provides compensation "equal to average local wages, but shall in no case be less than \$10 per week, plus \$3 for each dependent," and that "Such unemployment insurance shall be administered and controlled by workers and farmers. . . . All moneys necessary to pay compensation guaranteed by this Act . . . shall be paid by the Government of the United States." Rank and file needle trades workers, who see their working seasons diminishing to shorter and shorter periods, are fast rallying to the support of this bill.

Accidents

Many outside of the trade believe that accidents are rare in clothing factories and that the industry is not hazardous. While it is true that the needle trades do not have as many accidents as the extra-hazardous industries, the danger encountered by workers is about equal to the average for all industry.

The greatest number of accidents occur from needle injuries, which frequently result in infected wounds. The terrific pace at which all shops are working leads to an ever increasing number of injuries of this nature. The drive for increased production involves abandonment of caution, with an inevitable rise in the frequency of the needle striking the finger instead of the cloth. Usually the needle goes practically through the finger. Many times it breaks into one or more fragments upon striking the bone.

Among fur operators and some other crafts, when needles break they fly about—sometimes striking the eyes. Workers

are intimidated, however, against reporting such accidents to the workmen's compensation authorities, for this would result in a rise in insurance rates for the employer.

The danger involved at the cutting tables, where workers guide power driven knives sharpened to the point where they will cut through cloth piled many lays high, is obvious. Accidents of this kind vary from small cuts to amputation of fingers.

Poor ventilation is frequently responsible for an accumulation of poisonous gases with dire consequences to the workers. Typical of such accidents was one which occurred in the dress factory of Rilander and Schwartz, New York City, in December, 1933. Because of the cold weather all windows in the shop had been closed. Slowly the gas heaters attached to the pressing machines consumed the oxygen in the air. Twelve operators fell to the floor almost simultaneously.

Where gas irons are used for pressing, poor grades of tubing that crack easily and permit gas to escape are the rule rather than the exception. The danger of carbon monoxide poisoning is also an ever-present hazard.

A good many of these accidents could be avoided through modern ventilators and proper spacing between machines, tables and walls. All revolving parts of machines might easily be protected by guards that would prevent operators from coming in contact with any moving parts under or above sewing machine tables. There are guards on the market for all types of cutting knives as well as guards that will prevent the fingers of operators on ironing presses from being caught between the ironing surfaces.

Similarly, if employers desired it, sewing machine manufacturers could construct a machine designed to eliminate needle injuries through a needle lift sufficiently low to protect the fingers of sewing machine operators. However, employers are concentrating upon improvements designed to

promote efficiency and speed. Safety is a secondary consideration.

Occupational Diseases

No detailed studies of occupational diseases in the trade have been published since the Workers' Health Bureau ceased its activities in 1927. It is a commonplace in the markets, however, that the exhausting conditions of work and increased economic insecurity which have been the rule since that period have resulted in an increase in health hazards and occupational diseases.

Comparison of an examination of furriers made by the Workers' Health Bureau for the International Fur Workers Union in 1926 with a study made in 1915 by Dr. Louis I. Harris, later Health Commissioner of New York, disclosed a decided increase in the number of workers suffering from disturbances of the nose, throat, and air passages. Whereas the 1915 study showed 5.9% cases of bronchitis, the 1926 report showed 14.5%, an increase of 245%. In 1915, 12% of the workers had throat trouble (laryngitis and pharyngitis); the 1926 report showed almost double the number, 21.7%. Acute irritations of the nose and throat showed the same alarming increases—29.7% in 1915 as against 53.9% in 1926. The latter report also disclosed other significant danger signs, with 12.5% of the workers suffering from neurasthenia and 38.6% with flat feet. With nailers standing up all day and cutters most of the time, the latter condition is not surprising.

Furs are treated with highly poisonous dyes, which affect all who handle them. The air in fur shops is full of harmful dust from animal skins which have been treated with powerful chemicals. Among the poisonous dyes used in the trade are ursole, arsenic and lead. The first of these causes skin irritation and attacks of bronchitis and asthma. Arsenic affects the skin, is absorbed by the blood and attacks vital organs and tissues of the body—heart, nervous system, di-

gestive system, nose and throat. Lead, also used in the dye, affects the blood vessels, causing hardening of the arteries, colic and paralysis. These things may come on slowly, so that the worker remains unaware of what is the matter with him for a long time.

Practically all furriers are afflicted with one or more of these ailments. The inevitable result is that their vitality is sapped quickly and they are thrown on the scrap heap in the prime of life. The Workers' Health Bureau concluded after its study that: "in 1915 only 10% of the workers examined were over 50 years of age, in 1926 only 4% were over 50 years of age. In 1915, 72% were under 40 years of age, while in 1926, 85% were under 40 years of age. Surely the average worker in a seasonal industry is not able to retire voluntarily from earning his living at the age of 50."

Occupational diseases are prevalent in other sections of the needle trades. Even where no special poisonous dyes or other injurious substances are used, general conditions in the trade are such as to cause a resultant breakdown in health. Lack of sanitation and speed up, causing chronic fatigue, and the like, are present almost everywhere. The very nature of the work, requiring as it does intense concentration and a stooped position, creates conditions of sub-normal vitality as well as widely prevalent tuberculosis. The needle trades have long been among the industries supplying large numbers of tubercular patients as a result of faulty posture and the presence of suspended matter in the air of shops.

Pressers are usually placed in a part of the shop shut away from direct light and ventilation. The pressers' work requires great physical exertion as well as the added strain of continuous standing. They must often inhale gas escaping from improper tubing and are also exposed to steam rising from the pressing boards. As a consequence, physicians and dispensaries attest to the considerable number in this craft suffering from fatigue neuroses, particularly affecting

the arm used. Frequently there is added neuritis and partial paralysis.

Eyestrain, characteristic of any needle industry, is intensified by poor working conditions and badly laid out work-rooms. Natural light is very uncommon and frequently artificial lighting is supplied by naked or badly shaded electric lamps, so placed that they cast direct light into the eyes of the workers and severely injure the eyesight. The number of garment workers who suffer from near-sightedness, squint or wear glasses and who have nystagmus, or dancing pupils, is appalling for the sewing trade is rated as one of the most severe visual tasks to be found in all industry.

Bowed over posture, resulting from badly constructed chairs and tables, is still another characteristic of the trade. Bad seating causes needless fatigue. Fatigue in turn is responsible for bad posture, which leads to round shoulders, sunken chest and curvature of the spine.

When the average clothing factory needs chairs, no thought is given to a scientific solution of this problem. Usually some second hand furniture dealer is told to send up the cheapest batch he has. A tour of needle trade shops in almost any community will reveal that very few are equipped with model factory chairs now on the market, which can be adjusted to the exact height of the worker and which fit the back. Instead there will usually be found a wide variety of ordinary wooden benches, folding camp chairs, ice cream parlor chairs, straightback dining room or kitchen chairs or stools without backs. This only adds to the chief hazard of the work—fatigue, with its accompanying occupational disorders and ailments.

Since the crisis, moreover, a new factor has entered the picture which in many ways far transcends all of the others. The workers in the shops are in large proportion suffering from obvious malnutrition—a direct consequence of scanty wage envelopes and of frequent periods of unemployment.

Sanitation and Conditions of Work

Some of the most expensive garments come from work rooms where intolerable conditions prevail. The price of a garment is no index as to how it is made. From the most inexpensive item to the finest wrap, clothes are in every sense of the word being made out of the lives of the workers. The shop environment is frequently one of darkness, filth, and dust, abuses from ill-mannered foremen and employers, profane language and lack of sanitation.

There are no figures on the subject of shop sanitation and safety. But a survey of garment centers soon reveals that while some shops in the larger districts are located in well constructed buildings with wide stairways, fire prevention facilities and with airy and not overcrowded workrooms, these are far from typical. Small employers, struggling to cut down overhead and beat competition, crowd their workers more and more in poorly lighted and ventilated, unsafe and unsanitary workrooms.

Certain advances were being made toward improvement of these conditions when the economic crisis threw the industry back several decades. In 1932, the situation had come to such a pass that a Baltimore clergyman described conditions in that center as, "a real menace to the communal and moral welfare of the city."²

Many of the shops which desert the large centers locate in old-fashioned lofts; others in the rear of buildings; some even in cellars. "Whole families work underground by artificial light, far into the night," reported the *Federated Press*,⁸ in describing conditions in San Francisco's Chinatown. "Children sew on buttons and make buttonholes. . . . Sanitation and disease prevention are almost unknown." Elsewhere the same community is described as follows:

Three sub-cellars deep, where neither light nor air ever penetrate, where days and nights are spent under the dim lights of an electric bulb, you will find narrow garment factories, long

lofts hardly wide enough to walk through between the sewing machines. Each machine is segregated from its neighbor by a wooden wall, the size of a seated person. Thus the Chinese are observing privacy even in the shop, which, incidentally, keeps the girls from seeing or conversing with each other.

In these holes, unfit for human habitation, heaps of overalls, corduroy pants, shirts, cotton dresses, children's dresses, pajamas, slacks, nurses' and waitresses' uniforms, shorts, undergarments, silk dresses, skirts and blouses are manufactured by the thousands. At eight-thirty in the evening some shops are still working.⁴

Often lofts, otherwise light, safe and airy are "subdivided" by high and frequently unpainted partitions which interfere with the light, ventilation and means of exit. Airless, stuffy rooms result. Many are foul and ill-smelling. Floors are littered with newspapers, rags, cigarette ends and spit and are cleaned only infrequently. Heaps of garments are scattered here and there, and a heavy odor of perspiration permeates the place.

Workers testifying before Dr. Jacob Hollander in October, 1932, in connection with an investigation of conditions in the clothing industry of Baltimore, gave vivid descriptions of the shops from which they came. We quote from the testimony of Mrs. Marion Vigneri:

The windows were below the level of the pavement, letting in dust and dirt, which was the air we breathed. On one side of the building was a parking place for automobiles. The exhaust from these cars threw out monoxide gas and frequently during the day girls complained of the strong odor and being sick. We worked under artificial light all day. We had no provision whatsoever for our clothes. We had no rest room or no lunch room to eat the lunches we brought. Our lunches we placed on work benches where rat poison was thrown around and roaches crawled up and down continuously all day. . . . We made frequent complaints and he told me if I wanted my job very badly, I should keep my mouth shut.

Another girl, Margaret Baker, from another shop supplemented the above testimony as follows:

One day I asked the boss to let me go home because I had a temperature of 104 and had pleurisy. He refused and told me if I went home I would lose my job. . . . I heard the boss tell the pressing girls they couldn't go home unless they fainted five times. Some of them, when they fainted, they laid them out on the cement floors, some in the toilet and some in the hall right by the pressing machines. They laid some on the cot but it was filled with bed bugs. . . . We were told not to put our lunches on the tables or machines, but we must put them on the floor or window sills. When we opened our lunches they were full of roaches and bed bugs. We didn't have no place for our clothes. When we hung them by the wall we found bed bugs and roaches on them. . . . The boss would come round and he would insult you. He would ask you personal questions—about not having children. And his hands would roam all over you. If you would say anything to him you would lose your job.

Worker after worker appeared before the committee and testified to the same general effect—with only slight variations in details. Nor are such conditions confined to the Baltimore area, for similar reports come from every section of the country. An Allentown, Pennsylvania, newspaper, for example, stated that "two score of girls ranging between the ages of fourteen and twenty brought testimony that . . . they lost their positions when they resented advances from their superiors and employers. One girl testified that to keep their jobs three of them made a week-end trip to New York with their boss."* And Mrs. Gifford Pinchot, wife of Pennsylvania's Governor, stated on the same occasion, "I don't believe that conditions in the needle industry of Allentown and vicinity are any worse than I find them in Philadelphia, Reading, Lancaster, York and other cities which I have visited."

Such elementary needs as proper drinking and toilet facilities, suitable rest rooms and the presence of a nurse or a matron to care for girls during periods of illness on the job, are rarely found in the industry.

Homework

With earnings falling far below the minimum "health and decency budget" housewives and members of their families are forced to accept what they can get for long hours of homework. Very often finishers in particular are forced to take home bundles and work far into the night after having spent long hours in the shop.

By giving out work to be done at home the employer saves himself many normal business costs such as the expense of supervision, rent, heat, light and general overhead. Moreover, wages of home workers are extremely low. "In Philadelphia," reported the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry in 1933, "a little wan 10-year-old boy was found to be spending all his waking hours outside of school helping his mother 'finish' men's coats. The investigator visiting his family sat down with the father and went into the situation carefully and found that the little boy's work, at the highest possible estimate, was adding not more than 50 cents to the weekly pay check of the family."

The clothing industry, particularly men's clothing, includes the largest homework industry in the country. It is known to be widely prevalent in most tenement districts in spite of laws and regulatory devices intended to limit or prohibit it. Homework converts the dwellings into small sweatshops, with work of the father, mother and children extending far into the night, often seven days a week. Along with homework frequently goes the disgraceful padrone system under which the worker sub-contracts part of his work to "helpers" who become thereby subjected to triple exploitation—that of the padrone, the contractor and the jobber.

Homework has been "abolished" time and again, but still continues to flourish. Most recently it was "discontinued" on clothing by NRA code requirements but in the tenement districts of New York throughout the entire life of the Recovery Act any observer could see baby carriages heavily

laden with bundles being taken from shop to home for finishing. The New England Labor Research Ass'n. pointed out in June, 1934, in its report on *The Needle Trades in Boston under the NRA* that "Homework goes on openly" and in October, 1934, David Drechsler, counsel for the Clothing Code Authority, in discussing New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Baltimore, pointed out: "We have been aware of the growth of homework in recent months." ⁶

Moreover, in President Roosevelt's executive order made public May 16, 1934, there were large loopholes which virtually legalized the practice. The order permitted homework for men and women for reasons of age, injury, physical defects or certain types of illness, or because they must be at home to care for another person who is bedridden or an invalid.

Under the latest New York law, effective July 1, 1934, homeworkers are required to present a certificate from the State Department of Labor before receiving any work from employers. This does not apply, however, to those living in one or two family houses in communities of less than 200,000 population—another convenient loophole enabling firms to send out work to be done in neighboring towns.

Elmer F. Andrews, Industrial Commissioner of New York State, estimates the present number of homeworkers in New York at 30,000 (most of whom are clothing workers), and a million in the country as a whole. Although weekly earnings averaged \$6.19 in 1928, he points out that these "have been cut to as little as 25 cents a day for 14 hours work." ⁷

The Return of the Sweat Shop

During the course of twenty years the needle trades have completed a cycle—from sweatshop back to sweatshop. Once again this evil, supposed long since to have been hounded out of the trade, has returned. Once again "super-garments"—at bargain prices—fairly reek with sweat.

Delegate Sue Smith stated the case briefly when she spoke at the 1934 Convention of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers: "We have sweatshops. They are not wiped out as yet. Wages are terrible. They do not pay minimum wages. We ask that a drive be put on to help do away with the sweatshop conditions. They torment the people. They make the minimum the maximum. They torment the girls so that they sit at their machines and cry."

This is the inevitable outcome of all of the forces and factors which we have examined. While the Amalgamated and I.L.G.W.U. officials bewail the demise of the NRA, the bosses gradually revive the "good old days" by converting the shop into a veritable jungle where even skilled mechanics toil long hours for wages that do not enable them to eke out a meager existence. Among the workers who are being thus betrayed by leaders who refuse to fight, conditions grow worse daily. However, workers' despair at these conditions is giving way to a spirit of struggle, especially among those in the opposition groups within the unions. They are rising to fight the cumulative effect of unemployment, degradation of wages and wholesale violation of work standards.