

# AGAINST COLONIAL OPPRESSION

## Government Report on Bombay Cotton Strikes.

### • Reformist Leaders and "Co-Operation".

By W. M. Holmes.

London, 25th March, 1929.

The outstanding feature of the Report of the **Bombay Government Committee of Inquiry** into the strikes in the cotton textile industry in and around that city is its insistence on the need for "co-operation" between the mill-owners and the **Workers**.

By "Co-Operation" the Report clearly means **Mondism** — industrial peace and rationalisation enforced by the employers with the aid of the reformist leaders. This fact emerges very clearly from the Report's discussion of the mill-owners' proposals for standardisation of wages and the regulations regarding the conditions of employment of workers.

It was the mill-owners' attempt to enforce these proposals, which may be briefly characterised as rationalisation proposals, that led to the strike. The Report declares that these proposals of the mill-owners are "fair and reasonable"; and it adds that the owners' demand for a 7.5 per cent. cut in weavers' wages is also justifiable.

But, the Report adds, there is an over-riding consideration against the mill-owners pressing their demand for a wage cut — namely, the necessity for "full co-operation" with the (reformist) Labour leaders in operating the standardisation scheme; and it goes on to declare that if the Labour leaders "undertake really to co-operate" in this way, the mill-owners should drop their wage cut demand. The Report supports 10 of the 17 demands of the strikers; but 8 of these 10 have already been conceded by the mill-owners. Five of the strikers' demands the Report holds to be either wholly or partly "unfair".

During the sittings of the Committee there were 70 strikes in the Bombay textile industry. Noting this fact, the Report declares (with a thinly-veiled threat) that it is "prejudicial to the well-being of the industry" and its continuance "may result in an increasing tendency on the part of the mill-owners to establish mills up-country where labour is cheaper and steadier".

The Report advocates the achievement of economies by the amalgamation of mills, and by a cartel to regulate the production of certain classes of cotton goods.

The Bombay correspondent of the London "Daily Telegraph" reports that the (reformist) leaders have "promised" that if the mill-owners withdraw their wage cut demands, they will endeavour to persuade the workers to accept the standardisation scheme.