

# Willimantic Daily Chronicle

Willimantic, Conn., Monday, March 9, 1925

## THREAD COMPANY PLANT HARD HIT BY STRIKE

**Finishing Department at Standstill as Result of Failure of 1,500 Operatives to Return to Work This Morning. --Employees of Works Department and Printers Also on Strike.--Strikers Gathered in Front of Entrance to Mills This Morning, Then Marched to Gem Theatre Where Mass Meeting Was Held.--Gathering Addressed by Miss Mary Kelleher, Organizer for Textile Workers.-- Manufacturing Department Said to Have Full Complement of Help.--Agent Curtis Regrets Action and Says Mills Will be Kept Open and Work Provided as Far as Possible for Those Who Remain or Return.**

The threatened strike of operatives of the local mills of the American Thread Company became an actuality this morning in protest against the ten percent reduction in wages imposed on the twenty-five hundred operatives of the plant on January 12 last.

According to the strikers' committee, 1,800 of the twenty-five hundred operatives are out. The balance are those who are employed in the manufacturing department, which is not unionized. The committee states that with but a few exceptions, every operative of the finishing department along with members of the works department, are now out on strike and it is expected that a large number of those who are employed in the manufacturing department will not return to work tomorrow after delegations of strikers get in touch with them this evening. Officials of the company admit that the finishing department was practically at a standstill today. As to the manufacturing department it was said that every department is running full handed, only a few of the operatives not returning to work this morning.

The strike thus far is being conducted in an orderly manner. This morning Thread Mill Square and Main Street as far as No. 4 mill gate presented an animated appearance, the workers having gathered here. The assemblage was greatest in the road and on the sidewalk in front of the No. 5 and 6 mill doors and the gate to the printing and box shop and No. 4 mill gate.

Those passing through No. 4 mill gate were not molested but some jollying remarks were made by those loitering there. A few people passing through the crowd into the mills at the other places were addressed in a manner that would impress them that their place was with the strikers.

Chief of Police Allan McArthur and Lieutenant Frank McLean were at Thread Mill Square in case their services were needed but everything was quiet and order. The strikers remained in their positions until 7:15 o'clock, fifteen

minutes after the mills are due to start and then marched up Main Street to the Gem Theatre where a mass meeting was held. The theatre was crowded. Miss Mary Kelleher of Scranton, Pa., organizer for the United Textile Workers of America who is supervising the strike with Miss Amy Hooker, president of the local textile council and officers of other local unions with which the strikers are affiliated had seats on the stage.

The reason for holding the mass meeting, which was open to the public in the theatre was the fact that Central Labor Union Hall was not large enough to seat the mass of strikers.

Miss Kelleher delivered an address to the strikers which lasted nearly an hour. In her talk she gave a short resume of the conditions in the textile industry in New England and the cutting of wages by textile manufacturers in general. She deplored the reduction of wages of textile workers, they being the chief sufferers in this respect since January. It is strange, she said, that the textile workers are the first to have their wages reduced and at times they have been "the goat" for wage reductions. Miss Kelleher told of the last coal strike in Pennsylvania and other strikes. "There is no reason for a cut in wages of the textile workers now or at any other time," she said. "Textile companies are paying big dividends to the stockholders and it is unfair to cut wages of operatives."

Miss Kelleher said that it was true that not all of the local plant was unionized but that an effort would be made at once to organize all departments. The members of the unions were asked to endeavor to bring their fellow workers of the manufacturing department into the textile workers locals.

"There must be unity in this fight for in unity there is strength. This is a strike on which the eyes of textile workers all over New England are focused. It means everything, not only to you but to your fellow textile workers. Will you do your bit?" Miss Kelleher asked. She then cautioned the operatives to be ladies and gentlemen and not to

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figure in any demonstrations that would cast reflections on their efforts to win the strike. [*small piece missing from original article...*]

"This strike must be won," Miss Kelleher said, "and to bring it about there must be unity." The operatives were cautioned about people talking to them deploring their stopping work and in any way trying to dishearten them.

Toward the close of the meeting Miss Kelleher announced that the work of organizing for the fight would commence immediately at Central Labor Union Hall. Secretaries of the various locals were told to assemble at the hall and make out lists of men and women employed in the various sections of the mills who were out so that when the time came for issuing orders for maintenance and advice that the system would be perfect. The operatives were instructed to enlist as quickly as possible, operatives at the plant who are not in the union ranks.

A rising vote of thanks was given to John R. Pickett, manager of the Gem, for the use of the theatre for this morning's meeting. Cheers were given in turn for the various departments of the finishing section of the plant for the one hundred per cent turn out. An extra cheer was given to the printers for coming out.

Announcement was made by Miss Kelleher that another mass meeting would be held at the theatre tomorrow morning and meetings thereafter will probably be held twice a week. It was also agreed that the strikers assemble at the gates of the mills just before starting time in the morning and at noon. The meeting was a most enthusiastic one.

Officials of the Thread Company this forenoon admitted that the finishing department was at a standstill but said that the manufacturing department was operating with a full complement of operatives. They stated that 1,500 operatives were employed in the finishing department, 800 in the manufacturing department and 200 in the works department.

### Agent Curtis' Statement

D. H. Curtis, agent of the American Thread Company, when interviewed by a Chronicle reporter this morning, stated that he regretted the strike action taken by some of their employees, as the recent decrease in wages was made not only in all the mills in the company but in practically all textile concerns in New England and was necessary in order to meet competition and for the successful conduct of the business.

Mr. Curtis stated that in making wage adjustments, the company always took into consideration the welfare of their employees and in this case, he felt that the reduction would eventually react to the advantage of the employees as well as the company in that it would make for better business and for more steady employment.

The statement was made that the mills would be kept open and every effort would be made to provide work for all who remained or returned.

There was no unusual occurrence in connection with the strike this afternoon. The appearance of the strikers on the street during the day gave Main Street the semblance of a holiday. The operatives gathered here and there discussing the situation, while at the hall, members of the committee and assistants were busy preparing lists of the number of operatives out on strike to be used at such times as they are needed. This noon the strikers assembled at Thread Mill Square and before starting time gathered about on the sidewalk in front of the mill doors and gates to the plant. Everything passed off quiet and orderly.