

The difficulties of displaced textile workers in finding reemployment have continued in the sixties. The United States Department of Commerce sponsored a study, *Economic Effect of Textile Mill Closings, Selected Communities in Middle Atlantic States*, published in 1963. This study examined the experience of six communities resulting from textile mill liquidations and found the same basic story as earlier investigations: "Much evidence of hardship and suffering. Many older workers were unable to find new jobs; many younger men left their home communities to find employment elsewhere. Long periods of unemployment were common, and many displaced textile workers were forced to seek assistance from relatives or public relief agencies, or eventually to take lower paying jobs in other industries. Emigration and lower paying jobs for women had the effect of changing the character of the labor force in some communities, raising the average age of workers and increasing the proportion of women."²⁷

The latest in the series of these studies was published by the United States Department of Labor in 1966. "The Post-Layoff Experience of Displaced Carpet-Mill Workers," by N. Arnold Tolles, examines the workers' experience following layoff from a carpet mill which halved its employment between mid-1960 and mid-1962.²⁸ The following excerpts from the Summary of the report are relevant:

"In April 1963, at the time of the case study of carpet-mill workers who were laid off when the mill halved its employment between mid-1960 and mid-1962, 1 of every 12 had ceased to look for work and 1 of 4 of those still in the labor force was unemployed. The unemployment rate among these workers was over 5 times the national rate at the time. It was 2½ times the rate prevailing even in the small, economically depressed northeastern community where the carpet mill was located.

"The unfavorable employment situation of the carpet-mill workers, compared with other local workers, epitomizes problems confronting jobless workers in areas such as this. There were no other carpet mills within 150 miles of the community, and although manufacturing industries dominated its economy, few of them utilized skills of the kind these workers had acquired at the mill. Most of the workers were middle aged and older persons with comparatively little education or training that would equip them for other kinds of work. These characteristics were especially pronounced among the fairly small number of women in the group studied.

"Moreover, many of the carpet-mill workers had spent most of their lives in the community, to which they were tied by extensive home ownership and, frequently, the local employment of a husband or wife. More than three-fourths of them expressed unwillingness to accept a job beyond commuting distance of their homes, even if such a job should be offered."²⁹

PRESERVATION OF TEXTILE INDUSTRY IS IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST

Measures to preserve the textile industry in the face of growing erosion by imports are clearly in the national interest. The importance of this industry to the nation goes beyond the fact that its 2½ million employees comprise 13% of the country's manufacturing workers. The essentiality of the industry to our national defense is so clear and pressing that it hardly needs elaboration. In addition to providing clothing for our armed forces the industry produces thousands of articles which are indispensable to the defense establishment. The highest priorities have been assigned to textile products during national emergencies. They are a prime necessity in wartime, both for military and for essential civilian uses.

The textile industry has a potent role of particular importance to play in helping to meet the critical manpower problems confronting the nation. The vast technological changes in American agriculture have displaced millions of farm workers. The migration to the cities of millions of people with relatively little education and no industrial skills has created the basis for the current urban crisis.

²⁷ *Economic Effect of Textile Mill Closings, Selected Communities in Middle Atlantic States*. 1963. p. 2.

²⁸ *Weathering Layoffs in a Small Community, Case Studies of Displaced Pottery and Carpet-Mill Workers*, June 1966, pp. v-47.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.