

The Department of Agriculture has estimated that "average farm employment in 1980 will be about 3.6 million workers, a 36 percent decrease from 1965 * * *. Decreases in farm employment are expected to occur in all regions but will be greatest in the Northeast and the three southern regions, where declines from two-fifths to almost one-half are anticipated. Most of the declines will come from continuation of large reductions in farm operators and family labor in the southern areas."³⁰

The geographic distribution and the types of jobs required by the textile industry make it especially suitable as a major source of employment for the workers who will be displaced from the farms. More than 95% of textile mill products employment is located in the regions which face the greatest reduction in farm employment. (Table 7) In the textile-apparel-manmade fiber complex, the Northeast and South comprise 88% of the industry's total.

Because of its relatively low educational and skill requirements, this industry has historically served as a means of entry into the industrial labor force for people with little or no industrial experience. As noted by Professor Donald B. Osburn, "The textile mill industry may serve as a training ground for Negroes in the future as it has for whites in the past * * * employment in this industry teaches skills to workers who have previously engaged in unmechanized agricultural production, thus allowing them to participate in an industrial or at least non-agricultural society, and perhaps to move on to higher paying jobs as the opportunities present themselves."³¹

The rapid increase in employment of nonwhites in the textile mill products industry in recent years provides clear evidence of the great potential in this industry for helping to meet the need for expanded job opportunities for Negroes. The ratio of nonwhites to total employment in the industry increased from 4.6% in 1962 to 5.3% in 1964 and 8.0% in 1966. (Table 8) Both males and females have participated in the sharp rise: Males boosted their ratio from 6.4% in 1962 to 10.0% in 1966 while females rose from 2.5% to 5.3%. While later statistics are not yet available, our observations indicate that the ratio of nonwhites to total employment in the industry now exceeds 10%.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Import quotas on synthetice fibers and all textile products are needed to prevent the crisis confronting textile workers from causing the destruction of thousands of jobs and creating severe distress in many textile communities. The Government has recognized the special vulnerability of the textile and apparel industry to disruption from imports from low-wage countries. A system for regulating imports of cotton products through international arrangement has been effectuated but no controls have been instituted for manmade fiber and wool products. Consequently, import of these articles are threatening to engulf the domestic market. The tariff mechanism is inadequate to deal with this situation. Adoption of import quotas is essential to safeguard the jobs of 2½ million textile and apparel workers in the United States.

The special character of the textile work force makes government action imperative. The industry is predominantly located in small towns, where alternative employment opportunities are not available. The age, sex, educational and skill characteristics of the labor force all militate against mobility. Consequently, the dislocation of textile workers would lead to persistent unemployment and human suffering.

Preservation of the textile industry is clearly in the national interest. The industry is essential to the national defense. Moreover, it has a major contribution to make in helping to meet the critical manpower problems confronting the nation. It should be encouraged to fulfill its historic role of serving as a means of entry into the industrial labor force for people with little or no industrial experience.

³⁰ *Report on Manpower Requirements, Resources, Utilization and Training*, U.S. Department of Labor, April 1967, p. 106.

³¹ *Negro Employment in the Textile Industries of North and South Carolina*, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, November 1966, pp. 49-51.