

THE IMPACT OF NEW INDUSTRIALIZATION  
AND CHANGE OF TECHNOLOGY  
ON WORKER HEALTH AND SAFETY  
IN THAILAND

by

Malinee Wongphanich, M.D.

Occupational Health Department

Faculty of Public Health, Mahidol University

Bangkok, Thailand

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## INTRODUCTION

Thailand is a constitutional monarchy in the middle of South East Asia. It has been a progressive and West-ward looking country since the 18th century. CONTENTS contingent of support services to France to fight with the Allies in World War I. Thailand has a population of some 50 million citizens on a land area comparable to France. Even with a heavy foreign influence to develop the economy, over 70% of all workers are in primary products, that is agriculture, forestry and fisheries. Thailand provides somewhat close to 50% of the free-market rice exports for the world and provides a majority of the tropical products to the European Economic Community. Other major exports are sugar and maize.

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INTRODUCTION

Rural family life is rewarding. Children are kept under close supervision, women work interchangeably with men in the household chores. Thailand is a constitutional monarchy in the middle of South East Asia. It has been a progressive and West-ward looking country since the 16th century. It sent a contingent of support services to France to fight with the Allies in World War I. Thailand has a population of some 50 million citizens on a land area comparable to France. Even with a heavy foreign influence to develop the economy, over 70% of all workers are in primary products, that is agriculture, forestry and fisheries. Thailand provides somewhat close to 50% of the free-market rice exports for the world and provides a majority of the tapioca products to the European Economic Community. Other major exports are sugar and maize.

Very few teenagers wish to stay on the farm. They gravitate to the cities. Since the beginning of recorded history, Thailand has supported itself on rice cultivation. The society was founded on farming families and farmers are considered the "backbone" of the nation still. Despite chemical fertilizer, pesticides, tractors and attempts at collectivization, farming remains in a format of the distant past. Work is done in the hot sun. Work is done by hand or with a water buffalo. Work is done by the entire family. The family will eat from its own fields and sell surplus for minor additions to life. The purchase of a pickup truck is not unheard of, but motorcycles are more in evidence on country roads. There are no bosses or supervisors, just your family and extended relatives. Days off, breaks, access to potable water, recreation and other terms of employment depend on the season and the living conditions of the rural community.

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INTRODUCTION

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Village life is attractive in many ways, especially to those of us living amid city pollution and urban crush. There are primary health care representatives and practitioners in thousands of small communities. District centers frequently have hospitals and provincial capitals have hospitals and public health services. There are some districts with TB or dietary deficiencies, we are confident that increasing health and education services will win conditions up to the national standard.

Rural family life is rewarding. Children are kept under close supervision. Women work interchangeably with man in the fields. The elder members of the family do household chores to keep active and support the clan. Although running water is a rarity, many villages now have electricity. Radios are universal, televisions are commonplace. Education is both compulsory and generally neglected after a certain age. But literacy is quite high. Cement paper, auto and motorcycle assembly, construction enterprises all have foreign partners, often with the convenient transport of train and bus service into provincial centers and the pervasive influence of radio and television, consumerism is highly visible among Thai citizens. Very few teenagers wish to stay on the farm. They gravitate to areas of industry in hopes of income. It should be noted that farm labour is without individual income. These Thai youngsters will go into manufacturing in sweat shops so as to gain wages often below the law's minimum so as to contribute to the family back at the farm and to gain a few of the signs of affluence for themselves, such as jeans for the boys and cosmetics for the girls. Whole villages have a demographic gap that leaves of at grammar school and jumps to middle-age with no representation in between. The Thai Board of Trade sets up a complex barrier to interested foreign investors. The investor must have Apart from those hardy spirits who seek their fortune in urban living, there is a major group of farm hands who do temporary industrial work in an off-season, when agriculture is slack. This would include the numerous milling enterprises, set up in isolated areas of the country to handle maize, tapioca and rice before shipping. These enterprises have but two or three employees. What is of more interest to this discussion is the reverse situation, where an industrial worker will work in a congested area and only at harvest time return home to help his/her family. The costs involved in producing a Thai muffler or steering wheel rose in many multiples of what it would take to get one from foreign countries. This increased the cost of vehicles to where they were priced above the market demand.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS IN THAILAND

Nearly all of Thai manufacturing and industry is done in close association with foreign investors and experts. Either the principles are immigrants, many are from Taiwan, or they are in a joint-venture with Thai nationals, who hold a controlling interest, at least on paper. Industry is not indigenous to Thailand. Foundry, cement paper, auto and motorcycle assembly, construction enterprises all have foreign partners, often Japanese partners. Because of the technical know-how, the backing of foreign banks and admiration for foreign expertise, Thai nationals have a bias for foreign partners and products. This creates a depression on the all-Thai companies, goods and services, within the domestic business community. It has been a stated goal of the Thai government, that foreign investors are welcomed to participate in the economy especially if they create goods for export, but in nearly all cases, foreign-sponsored enterprises in Thailand sell into Thailand and pre-empt their economic and commercial sector.

In an effort to gain an advantage for the country in its industrialization the Thai Board of Trade sets up a complexing barrier to interested foreign investors. The investor must have a major Thai shareholder, must employ Thais wherever possible, allow Thais to gain greater share of ownership and operations, and facilitate a transfer in technology. If it can do all this, the new company is granted a monopoly and given trade protection. As with the very best of plans, this one has not been a total success.

For example, in automobile production, the government at one time pressed for a schedule of ever-increasing use of Thai-manufactured parts in the total assembly. The costs involved in producing say a Thai muffler or steering wheel rose in many multiples of what it would take to get one from foreign countries. This increased the cost of vehicles to where they were priced above the market demand,

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**IMPACT OF INDUSTRIALIZATION ON HEALTH AND SAFETY : A SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS.** A survey of the whole country showed 122,917 enterprises with 1,629,115 employees. A bit more than 80% of This is an appropriate place to lay the parameters of the discussion of the impact of industrialization on health and safety. Because of the diversity, isolation and expense of obtaining baseline identification of workers in agriculture, no studies are in the literature. Hospital admissions show striking characteristics of rural life, such as snake bite, bladder stones and TB, which are not matched up by urban counterparts. Until recent border migrations, malaria was in sharp decline in the country. Even pesticide poisoning is found well-represented in urban areas, not just farming communities, thanks to being a popular form of suicide attempt. Therefore it will be generally assumed that aside from TB and a few other living hazards, farm life is free from industrial health risks. And that the society, with a base of family love and community supports, is beneficial to the general well-being of agricultural workers. This would then leave us with the correlary that incidents of impaired health among industrial workers arises from their working and life circumstances. Craft/vehicle deaths accounted for 52.3% of all industrial deaths. The part of the body most often affected were : hands/fingers, feet/toes, eyes, neck/head/face, legs, multiple, back and shoulders, trunk, and ears.

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a. Accidents 272 deaths, and 514 permanent disabling claims.

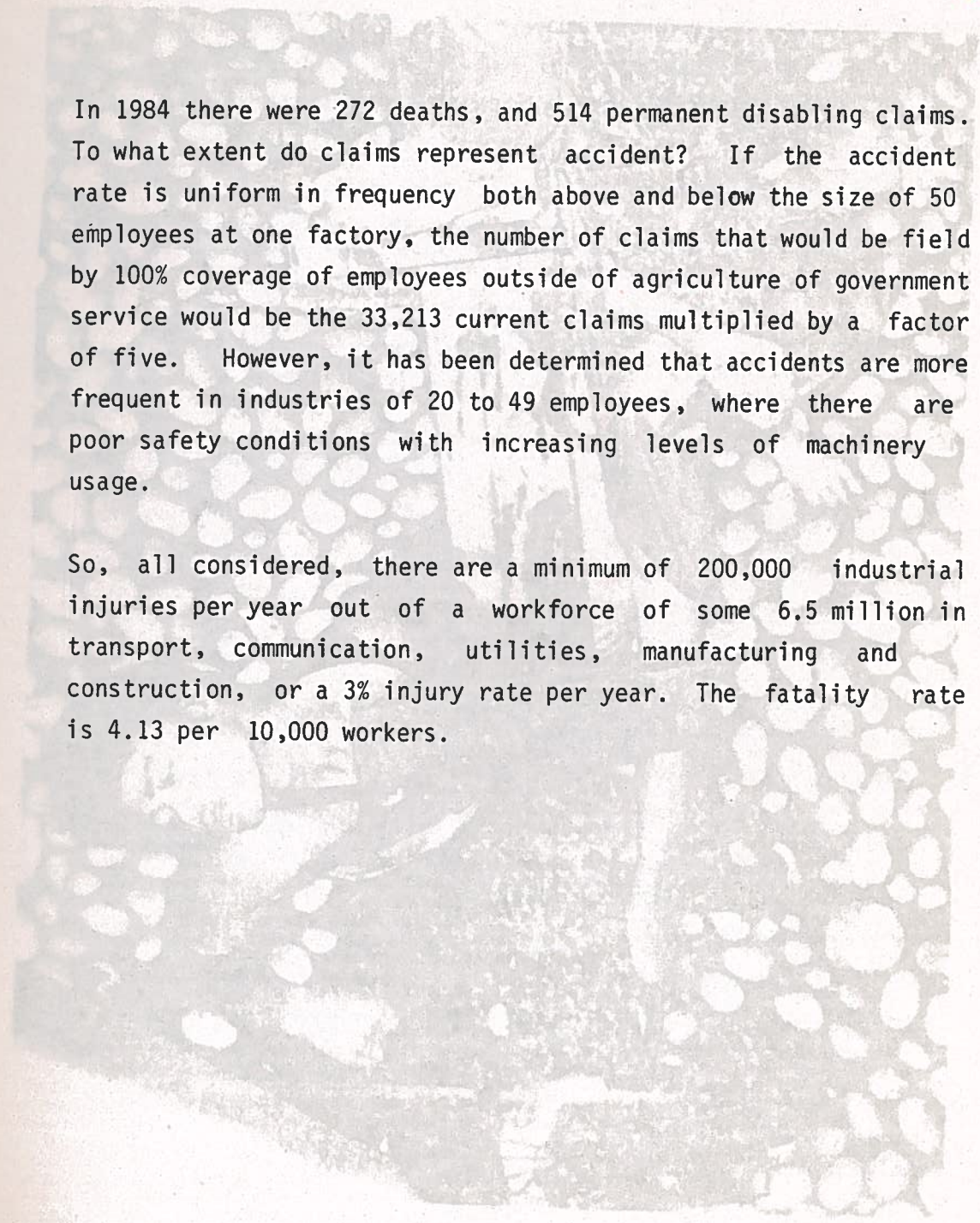
To what extent do claims represent accidents? If the accident Due to an expanding coverage of Thai workers in industry, the government accepts industrial accident claims in 72 provinces covering the whole country of Thailand. In 1984 there were 33,213 injury claims filed, with fatalities at the level of 4.13 per 10,000 workers. The payout for compensation of all claims was US \$ 8.66 million. The worker population base covered by compensation was 873,059 workers in 91,314 enterprises. A survey of the whole country showed 122,917 enterprises with 1,629,115 employees. A bit more than 80% of all enterprises have less than ten employees. Nearly 20% of all enterprises employed more than 10 up to 3,000 workers per each enterprise. Payment is on a sliding scale of payment of 50% of the monthly salary for a temporary disability up to 60% of salary for ten years for complete permanent disability. For a death, payment is limited to 60% for five years. Medical expenses are covered up to US \$ 69.23 and funeral expenses up to US \$ 192,30.

In order of frequency, the industries with the most injuries were : manufacturing, construction, wholesale and retail trade, transportation and communication, and services. The industries with the highest fatalities were : transportation and communication, construction and manufacturing. The greatest number of accidents were directly caused by : being struck by object/machine, flying objects, machine, falling objects, craft/vehicle, electricity/heat/explosion, tool, fall from elevation, poison/chemical, overload, occupational disease, attack by human, and noise. Craft/vehicle deaths accounted for 52.3% of all industrial deaths. The part of the body most often affected were : hands/fingers, feet/toes, eyes neck/head/face, legs, multiple, back and shoulders, trunk, and ears.

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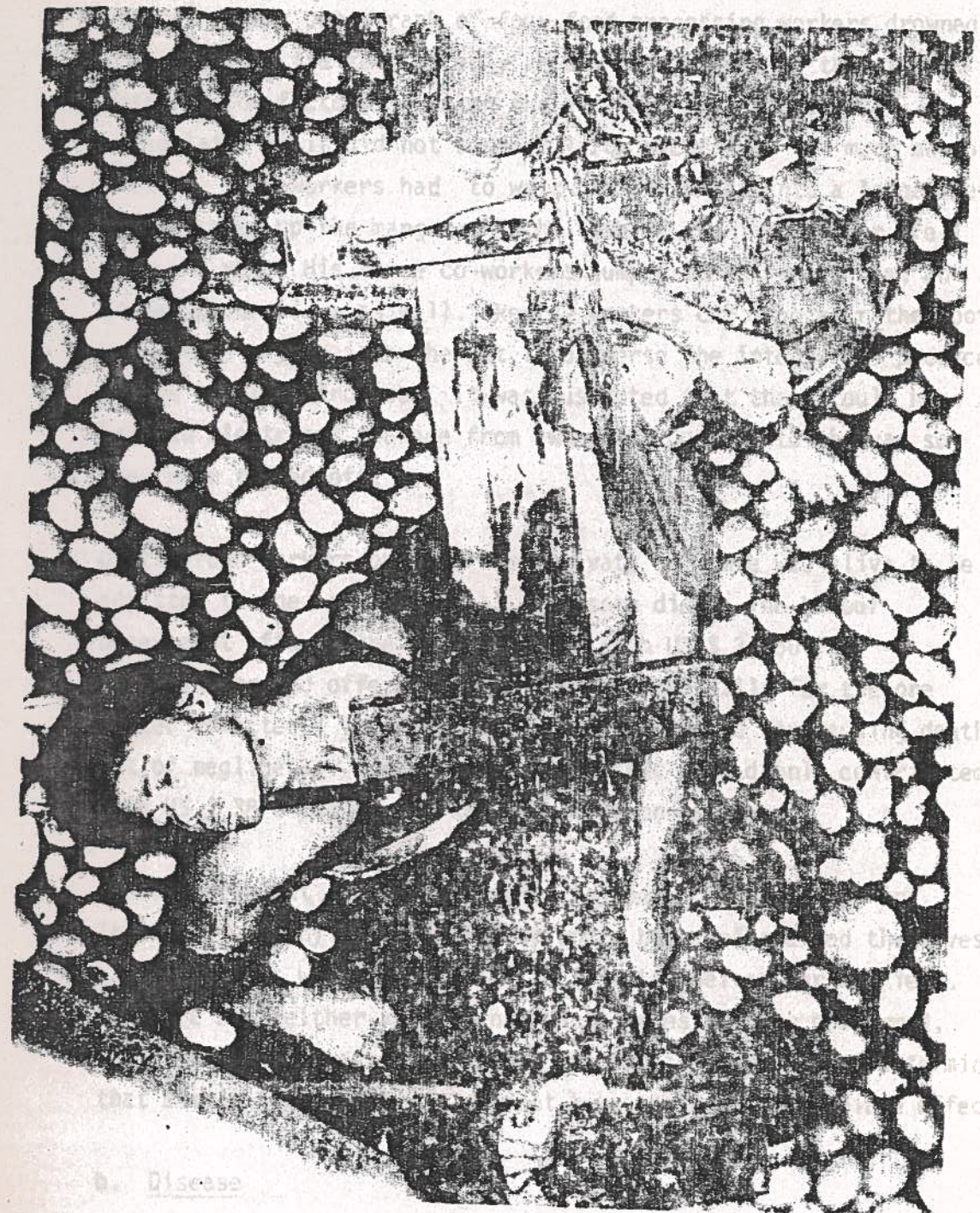
In 1984 there were 272 deaths, and 514 permanent disabling claims. To what extent do claims represent accident? If the accident rate is uniform in frequency both above and below the size of 50 employees at one factory, the number of claims that would be field by 100% coverage of employees outside of agriculture of government service would be the 33,213 current claims multiplied by a factor of five. However, it has been determined that accidents are more frequent in industries of 20 to 49 employees, where there are poor safety conditions with increasing levels of machinery usage.

So, all considered, there are a minimum of 200,000 industrial injuries per year out of a workforce of some 6.5 million in transport, communication, utilities, manufacturing and construction, or a 3% injury rate per year. The fatality rate is 4.13 per 10,000 workers.



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Disease

Where accidents are all too obvious, disease is terribly subtle. In 1984, there were only 305 claims for compensation because of occupational disease, 79% of which were forms of dermatitis. Some 70% of the claims were for periods of three days or less. There



Here is a news photograph of four food processing workers drowned in a vat. Of the fourth, only an arm can be seen at the extreme bottom. The factory in which the accident took place was unregulated as it did not contain large machinery. It made mango pickles. The workers had to walk down a ladder into a large open vat to scoop up the mangoes. Uthai, an 18-year old worker, fell into the vat. His three co-workers jumped in to rescue him, and became unconscious as well. Rescue workers cut a hole in the roof and pumped oxygen into the vat to disperse the intense gas produced in the pickling process. It was suspected that there could have been an electrical leakage from two water pumps into the vat so they were turned off.

Of the four workers pulled from the vat, only one was alive to be admitted to the local hospital. He soon died. The Labour Department offered the four families each US \$ 3,150 for compensation and offered to pay the hospital bills for the one worker admitted. The factory owner was arrested for causing death out of negligence. It was determined that he had only contributed some US \$ 38 a year in Worker Compensation premiums.

An automatic cut out safety device has been on the market in Thailand for many years. Its use would have safeguarded the lives of the workers who were willing to risk themselves for a friend. As there was neither autopsy nor cause investigation performed, the etiology of death is somewhat speculative, but it was determined that simple asphyxiation could not have caused such immediate effects.

b. Disease

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no disease-related losses of organ-or disabilities. There were two deaths, both from malaria. If deaths from accidents were 4 per 10,000 workers, would deaths from industrial disease be only 1 per 500,000? Surely not. on, form the foundation under all that industry, but because of staff and budget limitations Disease is largely unrecognized or if recognized not related in medical minds to working conditions. Disease is a slow process with diffused symptoms and gradual development. For the workers it is impossible for them to tell when it begins and has no immediately identifiable cause. There is also a suppression of activity within the body, where its resources are called up to fight against adverse conditions. This activity would strain the normal equilibrium of the body and leave it vulnerable to other disease agents. This could well account for the high spontaneous abortion among women in textile work. international procedures which tend to come in a package including occupational So the above figure excludes unidentified disease, workers who have been forced out of a job because of undefined health problems and those who sought other work rather than risk their health. One of the continuing problem areas in industrial health is the By circular reasoning, occupational health is denied epidemiological survey because the field is obscure and the field is obscure because no survey has been done. My proposal for a local and later national health review of working, ill and hospitalized industrial employees has been given little consideration. There is no opening at home. Possibly a regional activity would sweep up interest in determining which illness/accident - frequencies occur in working populations. To date as no findings have come forward to show disease incidence there is still an excuse to say that the incidence is just as low as the compensation claims. If there were findings, which would show a much higher incidence rate, it would be more difficult to assign occupational health to its minor status in general public health. Also most of the job applicants have very limited background in training or education.

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c. Welfare

The legal requirements, such as minimum wage, provision of a safe work site, holidays, and so on, form the foundation under all Thai industry, but because of staff and budget limitations tend to be enforced closer to Bangkok and among the larger factories : Registration under the Industrial Works Department is required for factories of 20 and more employees. They must meet standards of light, heat, noise, vibration, dust, safety features, health personnel and others, but again the number of inspectors is vastly inferior to the number of factories. An inspection tour could literally be a once-in-a-lifetime event for most factory owners. It is an event that could be considered an invitation to collision. With factories of above 50 employees, there are more and more areas for application of international procedures which tend to come in a package including occupational safety and health, until factories of 1,000 employees are generally given very good health supports.

One of the continuing problem areas in industrial health is the lack of any concern by factories in the provision of housing, nutrition and recreation facilities for their residential workers. Many factories provide dormitories for their workers. These are often sub-standard, noisy, dirty, fire hazards. Because the workers are in effect a "captive population", their conditions are reduced below any acceptable standard. This gives rise to stress in body and mind that reduces defense against disease and weakens productivity.

When it is considered that 63% of all Thai enterprises have less than five employees, it is obvious that the manager would not have the resources to appoint a personnel officer to screen applicants for correct job placement. Also most of the job applicants have very limited background in training or education.

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This combination of rough workers and resourceless management allow the many inappropriate job assignments, which leads to so many accidents, such as farm girls getting their arms caught in sausage grinders and school boys losing half a hand on die punch machines.

It is not certain how comprehensive the regulations on a pre-employment physical examination are followed. But, in some textile mills, not 60% of the workers had been to a physician. And generally there is not much compliance with the required yearly checkups. Aside from the regulated services, any screening services, for such as weaver deafness, lead body burdens in battery manufacture. When spot checks have been done, these industries have shown serious health problems related to well-known hazards for specific occupations.

Regarding first aid, factory clinic and safety committee, there is reason to believe that in the under 50-worker factories, there are no adequate provisions for workers injured on the job. Reports are frequent that workers are told to continue working if injured and given iodine even for severed fingers. Workers are threatened with dismissal if they claim to be disabled. Factories with 200 workers have to have a full-time nurse, a clinic and access to a physician. But often the nurse has not gotten any degree, the clinic is a medicine cabinet and the physician not trained for occupational health.

Protective devices, such as ear muffs, face shields, hard-toe shoes, respirators, and so on, are not rigorously supplied by managers nor rigorously worn by employees. But the main and most correctable safety hazard is the lack of house keeping standards. Spare parts, broken machinery, finished product, lunch and scrap materials are jumbled between lines of machinery which the workers use for their job and which serve as access to the exits. Lighting is often poor, so the confusion of passageways is increased. There is no separation of stores, maintenance materials and working areas.

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Many of the smaller factories intentionally find the least or capable workers so as to pay below the minimum rate and keep a docile work force. The dormitory system increases the domination of the managers over workers to the exclusion of a healthful and safe environment.

If there is a major difference in the structures, the receiver DISCUSSION for an accommodation so as to accept the technology but leave the social order surrounding it unchanged. For example, Incidentally, technology is not just machinery, it is first in of all knowledge. As the ILO says, "Technology may be defined as the conscious application of knowledge and experience of physical and social phenomena to the development and production of goods and services. "Possibly because technology is intangible in its aspects of knowledge, experience and social phenomena, it is not readily available to transfer.

An alternative case is where the technology, once transferred, is I am reminded of a famous artist in Hong Kong. He studied calligraphy, that is the styles of writing, in all the ages and variations of Chinese history until he was sought after as the foremost authority in the designing of stamps, called chops by the British, which are invaluable to business record authentication. He was asked if he had trained his replacement in this fine art. He had to respond that all the training is self-training. And that just as he had taught himself, he could only be followed by a self-taught artist. So, I tentatively offer that often times the failure for technological transfer is caused by the lack of self-development which was a prerequisite for communication of the technology. The ILO found that transfer of technology comprises two elements, technique and structure. Technique is covered by tools and "know-how". Structure is the social atmosphere of the receiving community, including its cognitive structure within which the "know-how" becomes meaningful. I would think this means both the preparing of the ground before the transfer and acceptance of the results after transfer has occurred.

This combination of rough workers and resourceless management allow the many inappropriate job assignments, which leads to so many accidents, such as farm girls getting their arms caught in sausage grinders and school boys losing half a hand on the punch machines. It is not certain how comprehensive the regulations on a pre-employment physical examination are followed. But, in some textile mills, not 60% of the workers had been to a physician. And generally there is not much compliance with the required yearly checkups. Aside from the regulated services, any screening services, for such as weaver deafness, lead body burdens in battery manufacture. When spot checks have been done, these industries have shown serious health problems related to well-known hazards for specific occupations. Regarding first aid, factory clinic and safety committee, there is reason to believe that in the under 50-worker factories, there are no adequate provisions for workers injured on the job. Reports are frequent that workers are told to continue working if injured and given iodine even for severed fingers. Workers are threatened with dismissal if they claim to be disabled. Factories with 200 workers have to have a full-time nurse, a clinic and access to a physician. But often the nurse has not gotten any degree, the clinic is a medicine cabinet and the physician not trained for occupational health. Protective devices, such as ear muffs, face shields, hard-sole shoes, respirators, and so on, are not rigorously supplied by managers nor rigorously worn by employees. But the main and most correctable safety hazard is the lack of house keeping standards. Spare parts, broken machinery, finished product, lunch and scrap materials are jumbled between lines of machinery which the workers use for their job and which serve as access to the exits. Lighting is often poor, so the confusion of passageways is increased. There is no separation of stores, maintenance materials and working areas.

Many of the smaller factories intentionally find the least capable workers so as to pay below the minimum rate and keep a docile work force. The dormitory system increases the domination of the managers over workers to the exclusion of a healthful and safe environment.

DISCUSSION

Incidentally, technology is not just machinery, it is first of all knowledge. As the ILO says, "Technology may be defined as the conscious application of knowledge and experience of physical and social phenomena to the development and production of goods and services." Possibly because technology is intangible in its aspects of knowledge, experience and social phenomena, it is not readily available to transfer.

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If there is to be a transfer between two similar societies or economies such as say between Taiwan and South Korea, or Singapore and Hong Kong, we could expect that the structure of the receiving country could easily accommodate the new technology.

If there is a major difference in the structures, the receiver will search for an accommodation so as to accept the technology but leave the social order surrounding it unchanged. For example, French food processors were keen to develop frog production in Indonesia to satisfy the Gallic taste for frog legs. Indonesians have a general prohibition about the eating of frogs. The Indonesian authorities determined that the general good would be served if the frogs were raised for export only and the French agreed.

An alternative case is where the technology, once transferred, is recognized as antagonistic to the surroundings and accommodation is not possible. Thailand was the scene of such a rejection. Although the national government accepted and encouraged the establishment of a tantalum processing mill, once the mill reached completion, the local population in a state of panic, rioted, totally destroying the plant. Let me give the details.

Of major impact was the recent radioactive accident in Russia, which followed all too closely the chemical accident in Bhopal India. The local residents were led to believe that with any major industrial project and especially with the refining of tantalum and other rare minerals, there was a health hazard to the nearby residents. Around the plant site there is one of Thailand's most beautiful resorts, an island paradise. The potential threat to the pollution of the atmosphere and the loss of tourist revenue to the island was uppermost in the minds of the residents. The German investors and the big-city Thai investors were looked upon as unfeeling and uncaring outsiders in this small island community.

Many mistakes were made in the presentation of the technological transfer. The local community was the last consulted and the national government was unaware of the depth of disaffection. The industrialists thought they were providing employment opportunities along with increased national development. They did not begin to approach the local people until feeling and over run any chance of accomodation. The joint-venture of Thai and German industrialists is currently working out plans to establish the mill in Thailand's largest industrial estate, the Eastern Seaboard. Hopefully the local residents will be more appreciative of the plant and the investors will do more to prepare them for the new technology.

That process whereby the host culture society is changed by the imported technology is called "modernization". But most of the Third World is sensitive to a national identity and would not want to see itself as colonial, either economically or culturally. The method for becoming modern but retaining local values has not been achieved very often.

In 1977 Edward Lawless tabulated some 45 disastrous events related to technology. They all had a commonality: they started with a near-insignificant accident and ultimately showed catastrophic effects. This pattern is familiar to anyone with field experience in occupational safety. Once a pattern is established everyone becomes complacent until an unexpected emergency challenges the system in a way it was not designed to respond. Then through a series of trial and error efforts the accident become more wide spread until a lucky, and possibly very late, action halts the damage.

In Thailand there are two factors that give rise to the problem. Primarily, the industrial management class sees workers as replaceable raw materials in the factory process. The economics of small business, with narrow profit margins, requires workers to be easily replaceable and does not allow the investment in

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standard goods and services for their well being. The industrial process is supported by a huge class of unemployed, approaching 2 million or over 6% of the labour force. Managers do have justification for withholding facilities because of the lack of governmental support of small factories and the lack of credit from banks. Certain welfare facilities would be quite expensive and not show up with improved productivity. But managers cannot use this excuse when they are unable to give even potable, cool drinking water to their foundry workers for a break.

The second factor is the unconcern of the governmental agency line-staff and even administrative staff. Administration sees occupational health generally in terms of environmental protection and has great difficulty seeing it clearly as an independent problem from the environment. Problems such as work procedure, handling of job assignment cannot be considered from a view point of environment but only in the context of industrial safety and health. The line-staff are not given policy, travel expense or instrumentation with which to adequately evaluate industries. Of course there is still the problem of inadequate numbers of inspectors for the range of national industries, but if it were a certainty that inspectors would close down hazardous factories, there would be a much greater chance of having factory managers upgrade their work sites.

3. Have these procedures been promulgated and tested?  
 In conclusion, I cannot deny what Dr. Julius Morris had stated in his presentation at the International Health Promotion & Disease Prevention Conference in Honolulu, 1985. He pointed out the major contributing factors concerning transfer of technology and the occupational health hazards as follows :-

1. Is there a positive system for the immediate distribution of information to the public and news media?

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- a. Management has not been educated to expect the unexpected. Therefore could not understand the need of expending time and funds.
- b. Management had not utilized the organization people who are trained to anticipate the hazards (such as safety engineers).
- c. Frequently this corps of "anticipation" personnel are in too few numbers and too limited in background to do their job.
- d. Management tends to rest after the applicable occupational health and safety standards are met.
- e. Both the technicians and managers avoid the latest information directly relating to their operations and procedures.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

Dr. Julius Morris developed a checklist to be used in the set-up phase:-

1. Are the areas of major hazard potential identified and assessed ?
2. Are there procedures for dealing with the worst foreseeable contingency ?
3. Have these procedures been promulgated and tested ?
4. Are there adequate arrangements for liaison with other parties who may be affected or those who could help us ?
5. Have the proper and qualified people been designated and assigned for response, action, direction and advice ?
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These vital items are needed in every industry. Of closer interest is what the International Labour Organization thought as necessary in transfer of technology and occupational health and safety :

- the host country should have a viable safety and health programme that operates at the planning stage and everafter.
- both countries must have compulsory consultation together over impacts while in the planning stage.
- equipment and machinery should be screened for safety, ergonomics, comfort, noise abatement and matching local skills.
- the donor should provide routine service and preventive maintenance of machinery.
- the donor country should provide education and training in vocational, safety and hygiene matters for all levels of staff.
- the donor must supply training materials and methods such as audio-visual aids, use of mass media to cement the transition.
- there should be development and recording of the positive effects of mechanisation on the education, safety and health of the workers.
- occupational health and safety personnel should be encouraged to attend and participate in professional conferences and to publish in journals so as to broaden their perspective and share local experiences.
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### CONCLUSION

In Thailand and any other newly industrialized countries with technology transfer from the First World Countries, there are undoubtedly many hazards in both rural and urban living. Accidents in agricultural and industrial settings are related inversely to work experience, that is the most hazardous time is at the beginning of the job. This indicates a lack of appropriate job placement and training as well as supervision. Farming families would be more careful in introducing their children to the different tasks in agriculture and the range of risk factors may be smaller than for industry.

When a young Thai begins work in a factory, he or she is isolated from family and neighbours that have been their sole support since birth. The employer replaces all previous paternal roles, and all too frequently ignores the needs of this vulnerable employee. In the event of illness, accident and even injury on the job, the employee is considered unreliable and is therefore terminated. Employees tend to ignore nutritional standards and avoid medical treatment for ailments. At home, within the family circle, they are given attention and taken to medical practitioners. Any of the health risks of a job, such as heavy metal poisoning in battery manufacture is not made known to the employee and no remedial health activities are provided. Those who develop serious symptoms are terminated.

Illness and accident incidents are recognizable and attributable to certain working conditions. But there is a wider sphere of influence with possibly deeper hazards that goes unrecognized. Industrial workers live in congested areas. Their resources and support services are overwhelmed. Housing facility, food

center, bus transport, drainage, water supply, schools for children and all the other supports for urban living are exhausted by the numbers of citizens. There has not been sufficient study on the long-term health and social impact of such continuing stress. Possibly urban crime, drug addiction, weakening of the family, are related to the crush of humanity and the demands of city living. It is a near-universal consensus in Thailand that the further a person lives from the city, the better the living atmosphere and the better circumstances to raise a family.

This is not just an issue with children, but has impact on women and senior members of the family. On the farm, men and women contribute equally to the work pool. In city life and especially factory work, women are given the least-well paying positions. In city, family life just does not have the flexibility to maintain older non-productive relatives. Often children of working mothers are sent to live with their rural grandparents. This breakdown in family roles represents a departure from centuries of loving tradition.

Lawless, Edward: Technology and Social Shock, Rutgers  
 It might be said that the picture represented here is equally applicable to all agrarian countries who industrialize. They all experience a lag or gap in governmental supervision and in management skills while enterprises are gaining some initial security. But such a philosophic view does not give excuse to the high fatality and other accident rates in industry. As the recording and reporting systems gains expertise, these rates seem to be increasing, and increasing beyond the levels that industrial growth would account for. Also, Thailand makes a poor showing on the recognition of serious hazardous problems caused by technology transfer from the First World Countries. The government welcomes technology transfer as the means to increase productivity. This is

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# Report cites poor conditions in plants

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Inadequate labour legislation and an acute shortage of qualified personnel to enforce regulations have contributed to the neglect of health and safety. Trained medical personnel are in short supply and modern instruments are not available. Workers themselves, reports MICHELLE HIBLER, are also ignorant of safety precautions.

Thursday, September 26, 1985 P 5

LOCAL & REGIONAL NEWS

# Report cites poor conditions in plants

## • '20 workers died in Samut Prakarn'

**MOST workers in industrial plants in Samut Prakarn, one of the country's largest industrial zones, are working under physically and mentally unhealthy conditions, according to a study by Mahidol University.**

The study, conducted by Dr Malinee Wongpanich of the Faculty of Public Health of the university, and her associates said that 20 workers were killed and 208 were maimed while working last year. It also found that another 9,484 workers

of these major industrial plants were also injured and had to temporarily stop working. There are 127,286 workers working in the plants, it said.

Workers of the 433 textile factories in the province are more exposed to dangers from work both physi-

cally and mentally than those in other industries, according to the study. The study added that a considerable number of these workers did not have medical examinations before their admission while some factories do not provide annual health check-ups for their employees at all.

The study found that most textile factories are located in heavily populated areas and are poorly designed with improper ventilation systems. It said the majority of the textile workers are suffering from lung disease caused by dust and particles sent out by old machines.

About 54 per cent of these factory workers also have hearing problems because of excessive noise produced by the machines. It said most chemical factories in the area provide good health care for their employees. However, it found that the temperatures in these plants were too high and there is inadequate control of chemical fumes.

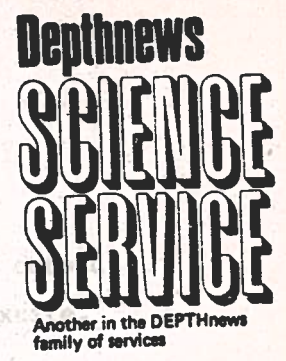
Consequently, the majority of chemical workers have lung problems and also pain in parts of their bodies, it says.

As for the metals industry, the report discovered that 25.5 per cent of its employees have problems with their eyes as well as their sight because of poor lighting in the factories and dusty atmospheres. The study calls for the improvement of the conditions of these factories including a better factory cleaning system, the provision of individual safety equipment, the reduction of dust, noise, and fumes inside the plants, security within factory compounds and periodical medical check-ups for workers.

Meanwhile, provincial authorities said yesterday that the province, in cooperation with other government and private organizations, was planning to establish a service centre for safety and health for industrial workers. The centre will provide free advice and conduct a study on safety and health for both workers and their employers. The construction of the centre is expected to complete in 1987.

DNSS #75-81

Inadequate labour legislation and an acute shortage of qualified personnel to enforce regulations have contributed to the neglect of health and safety. Trained medical personnel are in short supply and modern instruments are not available. Workers themselves, reports MICHELLE HIBLER, are also ignorant of safety precautions.



Occupational Ailments,  
Injuries Rising At A  
Fast Clip In Thailand

BANGKOK (Depthnews) -- Thai workers, like a young woman I saw in a dusty bagging plant, are exposed to unhealthy working conditions. In battery manufacture, face masks are not sufficient to prevent lead poisoning, while steel workers pouring molten ore are often without gloves, masks or eye protectors. The drive to increased productivity in many other enterprises has resulted in high rates of illness and numerous accidents. In 1977, for instance, more than 7,000 metropolitan workers here were hospitalised for work-related injuries, a 20-fold increase since 1960.

An estimated additional 20-30 percent of work injuries went unreported. No statistics are available on occupational diseases resulting from long-term exposure to noise, dusts and hot working places or to various toxic chemicals and physical hazards.

But in a firm boasting of better-than-average working conditions, the staff doctor of a wet-cell battery company has treated 303 respiratory complaints, 117 eye, ear, nose and throat infections, 71 gastrointestinal disorders and 32 cases of skin irritations. Six of the company's 400 workers were hospitalised for lead poisoning.

That was in January, 1981 alone. The firm has a full-time physician and a small dispensary. Accidents are few. As there are no quotas to be met, the pace is relaxed and workers can take frequent breaks in a small garden.

More

Press Foundation of Asia, 1632 Indiana St., Malate, Manila, Philippines or P.O. Box 1843, Manila, Philippines  
Telephone Numbers: 505026 & 591478. Cables: PRESSASIA MANILA

Thursday, September 26, 1981 LOCAL & REGIONAL NEWS

Report cites poor conditions in plants  
20 workers died in Samut Prakan

MOST workers in industrial plants in Samut Prakan, one of the country's largest industrial zones, are working under physically and mentally unhealthy conditions, according to a study by Mahidol University. The study, conducted by Dr. Mahidol Wannasri, a professor at the Faculty of Public Health of the university, and her associates, found that 20 workers died in the plants in the last year. The study also found that workers in the plants are exposed to dust, noise and other hazards. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without gloves, masks or eye protectors. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety equipment. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without training. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without supervision. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without first aid facilities. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without fire extinguishers. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without emergency exits. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety signs. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety barriers. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety harnesses. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety helmets. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety shoes. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety glasses. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety earplugs. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety earmuffs. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety respirators. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety goggles. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety face shields. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety fall arrest systems. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety ladders. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety scaffolding. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety cranes. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety hoists. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety winches. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety pulleys. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety ropes. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety cables. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety chains. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety slings. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety shackles. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety pins. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety nuts. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety bolts. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety washers. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety spacers. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety sleeves. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety collars. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety flanges. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety gaskets. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety seals. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety O-rings. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety V-rings. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety U-rings. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety E-rings. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety X-rings. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety O-rings. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety V-rings. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety U-rings. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety E-rings. The study also found that workers in the plants are often without safety X-rings.



DNS #75-81

Inadequate labor legislation and an acute shortage of qualified personnel to enforce regulations have contributed to the neglect of health and safety. Trained medical personnel are in short supply and modern instruments are not available. Workers themselves, reports MICHELLE HIBLER, are also ignorant of safety precautions.

Occupational Accidents,  
Injuries Rising At A  
Fast Clip In Thailand

BANGKOK (Deptnews) -- Thai workers, like a young woman I saw in a dusty bagging plant, are exposed to unhealthy working conditions. In battery manufacture, face masks are not sufficient to prevent lead poisoning, while steel workers pouring molten ore are often without gloves, masks or eye protectors. The drive to increase productivity in many other enterprises has resulted in high rates of illness and numerous accidents. In 1977, for instance, more than 7,000 metropolitan workers here were hospitalized for work-related injuries, a 20-fold increase since 1960. An estimated additional 20-30 percent of work injuries went unreported. No statistics are available on occupational diseases resulting from long-term exposure to noise, dusts and hot working places or to various toxic chemicals and physical hazards. But in a firm boasting of better-than-average working conditions, the staff doctor of a wet-cell battery company has treated 303 respiratory complaints, 117 eye, ear, nose and throat infections, 71 gastrointestinal disorders and 32 cases of skin irritations. Six of the company's 400 workers were hospitalized for lead poisoning. That was in January, 1981 alone. The firm has a full-time physician and a small dispensary. Accidents are few. As there are no quotas to be met, the pace is relaxed and workers can take frequent breaks in a small garden.

Note

Thai workers 2

More than 1,000 factories are located in Samutprakarn province, just outside Bangkok, employing some 64,000 workers, 80 percent of whom are in textile, fabricated metal products and chemical industries.

Dr. Malinee Wongpanich, chairperson of the department of occupational health of Mahidol University's School of Public Health, says that working conditions in these factories often resemble those in Europe during the Industrial Revolution in the 1800s.

Living conditions are also inadequate. Many workers, 90 percent of whom are migrants, live in crowded, dirty dormitories, often directly above the shop floor.

Inadequate labor legislation and an acute shortage of qualified personnel to enforce regulations have contributed to the neglect of health and safety for Thai laborers. Trained medical personnel are in short supply and modern instruments are not available. Workers themselves are also ignorant of safety precautions.

Thailand's industrial health activities are limited to pre-employment physical examinations, annual chest X-rays and curative medical care. They are administered by part-time doctors, factory nurses, or -- more often -- first aid attendants, many of whom are untrained.

While recommendations on working conditions are made by institutes like the Ministry of Health, improvements are left to the factories' discretion. Many factory managers are completely ignorant of the few safety standards set by the Government.

As the fast industrialization of Thailand continues, conditions are expected to worsen if present trends continue.

Because scientific research in this area has been scarce, no data exists to convince policy makers of the need for action. Thus, in 1979 Mahidol University looked into the occupational health problems of 600 textile workers in Samutprakarn province.

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The findings proved the need to set up a local industrial health unit in Samutprakarn Provincial Hospital, which was then expanding its facilities. The unit will be the first of its kind in Thailand.

Following the initial study, the Department of Occupational Health launched a larger one. Headed by Dr. Malinee and supported by Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the project will also train and evaluate industrial health personnel at all levels. It will develop a model for industrial health services involved -- the provincial hospital, medical and labour offices, and the Occupational Health Centre of the Ministry of Health.

The industrial health study in Thailand was the first such project supported by IDRC. A second IDRC-supported study, by the Singapore-based Asian Association of Occupational Health, will review occupational health conditions in several Asian countries.

Studies of working conditions, interviews, and physical examinations of workers in three representative medium-sized factories confirmed Dr. Malinee's worst suspicions.

In the foundry, for example, accidents are common: strains from carrying heavy loads; burns from molten ore; eye damage from exposure to ultraviolet and infrared radiation and flying metal chips. Lung and respiratory damage results from exposure to carbon and iron oxide dust, and to toxic and irritating gases. Skin inflammation is common.

The study showed that while 69 percent of workers have abnormal lung functions and hearing impairments, 54 percent have visual abnormalities. A high manganese content was also found in blood and urine samples.

Workers themselves are partly to blame. "We have spent money on safety devices," says one foundry manager, "but the workers won't wear them." More than anything, he wants to know how to motivate them toward safe working practices.

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More

Thai workers 4

For instance, in a dark, noisy smelting section of a foundry, a number of workers are not wearing dust masks or hard hats provided. Some guide the 20-ton bucket of molten ore with wooden sticks and remove the just-poured ingots without gloves.

Because of the intense heat in one section where red-hot metal is made into wire, workers have removed their shirts, increasing the possibility of burns. The sole dust collector is out of order.

Similarly, in the wet-cell battery plant, workers grinding lead into powder are not wearing the gauze face masks provided -- inadequate for the job in any case. Others are mixing acid without gloves.

Shift work further endangers workers in the textile mill. Statistics have shown accidents are more frequent during the night shift when lighting is poor and supervision more lax. Health problems of textile workers include inflammation of the mouth, skin diseases and varicose veins caused by standing for long periods at the machines.

Visual abnormalities were found in 26 percent of textile workers, and hearing losses in 49 percent, particularly those in the weaving section. The noise and dust levels were above legal limits, while lighting was below standards.

Last March, Dr. Malinee and her team revisited the factories to inform managers about the training course offered for first-aid attendants, factory and private doctors and other health workers. By testing trainees after their return to work, the impact of the courses will be evaluated. Meetings with senior management will also be held to increase their awareness of health and safety problems and solutions.

Together with resource persons, representatives of different provincial and national agencies will draw up a feasible basic model of provincial industrial health services -- the first attempt in Thailand to coordinate existing institutions and services at the provincial level. Interest is already growing.

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Thai workers 5

In the factories studied, simply identifying the problems has brought about improvements. The foundry manager wants access to the training materials and audiovisual aids developed in the course of the project for use in teaching factory workers.

One plant supervisor wants further studies of chemical toxicity problems. "I have a right to my life," he says. - Depthnews Science

## 90% of factories have safety problems

ABOUT 90 per cent of industrial plants nationwide still have safety problems and more than 40,000 workers were injured while on the job or became ill because of occupational diseases last year, a senior health official said yesterday.

Deputy Director General of the Health Department, Dr. Uth Leevannana, said most of the injuries and illnesses were reported in small and medium-sized factories where safety standards are normally low.

He said most of the workers at these factories have very little knowledge about safety. These small and medium-sized factories employ 50 to 500 workers each.

He also blamed owners of these factories for their indifference in providing education and training for their workers.

Surveys by the department show that about 90 per cent of the 96,000 industrial plants throughout the country do not have even the most basic safety standards for their workers.

In 1984, a total of 4,956 workers were injured or

either been injured while on the job or contracted occupational diseases. The real figure could be much higher than this, he said.

Dr Uth and a survey by officials of the Occupational Health Division of the department found that food processing factories recorded the highest number of injuries of workers. They were followed by metal factories and textile factories.

They recorded a total of 7,651, 3,346 and 4,147 cases of injuries respectively last year.

Commenting on measures to cope with occupational hazards, Dr Uth said the Health Department has organized the so-called "voluntary public health program" as a series of industrial plants.

He said plant owners should show a commitment and join the program and that the factories and related occupational hazards and related laws and regulations.

The program was introduced in Songkhro, which is one of the country's largest industrial zones and has the highest number of workers, he said.

THE NATION

12 October, 1986

# 90% of factories have safety problems

ABOUT 90 per cent of industrial plants nation-wide still have safety problems and more than 40,000 workers were injured while on the job or became ill because of occupational diseases last year, a senior health official said yesterday.

Deputy Director General of the Health Department Dr Ulit Leeyavanija said most of the injuries and illnesses were reported in small and medium-sized factories where safety standards are normally low.

He said most of the workers at these factories have very little knowledge about safety. These small and medium-sized factories employ no more than 50 workers each.

He also blamed owners of these factories for their indifference in providing education to their workers on safety.

Surveys by the department show that about 90 per cent of the 96,000 industrial plants throughout the country do not have adequate safety measures for their workers.

In 1984, a total of 41,056 workers were reported to have

either been injured while on the job or contracted occupational diseases. "The real figure could be much higher than this," he said.

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He said plant owners voluntarily join the programme in which they are educated on the occupational hazards and related laws and regulations.

The programme was introduced in Samut Prakarn which is one of the country's largest industrial zones and has received an encouraging response, he said.

Workers cry for better

(SMALL INDUSTRIES

Autonomous group of workers

BANGKOK POST 1 AUGUST 1984

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One plant supervisor wants further studies of chemical toxicity problems. "I have a right to my life," he says. - Deephwa Science

(SMALL INDUSTRIES ISSUE)

# Workers cry for better safety, health measures

by **Suporn Pornrisuk**

How do these factories get away with it? According to the survey, more than half of the small workshops are illegally set up and official hands cannot reach them.

And even when they are legal it seems that they are rarely inspected by industry officials.

Why? When government officials claim that they make frequent checks on all factories, why do a great number of these sub-standard factories still exist?

It may be too harsh to accuse government agencies of turning a blind eye to the working and health conditions of the unfortunate workers but it is no exaggeration to say that so far the Government has not paid much attention to them. After all, we must not forget that industrial workers play an important role in developing our country's economy. Without them machines mean nothing.

Some factory owners may argue that physical harm is sometimes due to the ignorance of the workers themselves.

In factories where the noise level exceeds the safety regulation, the owners claim they have provided employees with ear plugs but these are often not used for reasons of inconvenience. That may be true in some cases.

because the survey also shows that only five per cent of workers wear ear plugs while working but it certainly does not apply to all.

Recent strikes held by factory employees have shown that today they are more aware of and concerned about occupational hazards than before.

A list of their demands usually include requests to improve safety measures and the working condition within the factory.

Unfortunately, most strike ends up with workers not getting what they have asked for.

In a period of tight economy such as this, employers and workers should both make an effort to come to a compromise. And one would like to urge workers, if they are staging a protest, to change their strategy from demanding more pay to asking for more security. That would be to their better benefit in the long run.

As for the government agencies concerned, the results of the survey also point to a need to develop proper safety and health care programmes for factory workers and improve their working environment.

Lost productivity arising from accidents and unsanitary condition in workplaces must now be taken into account if the Government wants to develop the country's economy effectively.

WHILE medium and small industries are being promoted by the Government, safety and health condition of the industrial workers seemed to have been forgotten, if not ignored.

A large number of small industries have failed to implement their factories with equipment that can ensure the safety of workers and prevent any health hazards. Some because of ignorance while others are intentional on the part of the factory owners.

Health academicians agree that it is high time the Government intervenes and reaches some kind of understanding with owners of the factories to set up a proper health care system for the sake of the employees.

There are so many kinds of health hazards which stem from the working condition in the factory. Bad ventilation, noise level and long working hours are some of the more obvious examples.

Dr Malinee Wongpanich of Mahidol University's Faculty of Public Health reports after conducting an extensive factory survey that workers in small workshops are more exposed to physical harm than their counterparts in medium and large factories.

According to Dr Malinee's report, most small factories have a single owner, often a Thai-Chinese na-

tional. And by nature the owner usually wants to get the maximum return out of the minimum expense possible. The result is that small factories often have inadequate equipment and are lacking in any safety and health care measures altogether.

The survey shows that a large number of workers in small textile factories suffer from chronic cough, chest tightness and other respiratory problems associated with high dust concentrations, especially in the blowing and carding sections.

A clear example is in the case of some small textile factories where workers have to put up with cotton dust particles all day long and everyday.

Female weavers and male mechanics invariably suffer some degrees of deafness with both groups showing a decline in the mean hearing level.

Irritations caused by fine dust particles on the skin and eyes are also found among workers in leather and battery factories.

Most workers complain of working long hours with very little rest in between. Many people suffer from backache, dizziness and fatigue.

ABOUT 90 per cent of industrial plants nationwide still have safety problems and more than 40,000 workers were injured while on the job or became ill because of occupational diseases last year, a senior health official said yesterday.

Deputy Director General of the Health Department Dr Utt Leevannas said most of the injuries and illnesses were reported in small and medium-sized factories where safety standards are normally low.

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LIFE, SOCIAL AND HEALTH CONDITIONS  
OF THAI INDUSTRIAL WOMEN WORKERS

by

Malinee Wongphanich, M.D.

Occupational Health Department

Faculty of Public Health, Mahidol University

Bangkok, Thailand

Presented in the seminar on anthropotechnology  
at Ergonomie et Neurophysiologie du Travail, Paris

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INTRODUCTION

A BORN-TO-BE THAI GIRL

The following are some of the international trade names

words to be kept right Brief history

An eleven year old girl, born to a family of wet-cell battery repairment occupation, shows specific toxic lead symptoms with irregular convulsion and mental retardation. All 7 children born to this family are exposed to lead fume and have demonstrated certain symptoms of lead poisoning.



The access of women to special technical training programmes should be increased and women should be helped to obtain the necessary skills. Legislative measures should be taken to ensure that women are provided to participate in the same sectors as men. In addition, special measures should be taken to improve the status of women in the household and in the community. The government should be encouraged to provide special services for women, particularly in the areas of health, education and training. It is essential that women are given the opportunity to participate in the development of their country. The government should be encouraged to provide special services for women, particularly in the areas of health, education and training. It is essential that women are given the opportunity to participate in the development of their country.

INTRODUCTION

The following are some of the international touchstones worth to be kept sight of :-

In 1975, the United Nations General Assembly began its "Decade for Women : Equality, Development and Peace. The Program for Action, on the second half of the decade in 1980, lists with great clarity the recommendations<sup>(1)</sup> to be achieved in this remaining five-year period. Among them are :

The access of women to special technical training programmes should be increased and women so qualified should be helped to obtain job suited to their individual skills; legislative measures should be enacted and appropriate legal assistance provided to prevent exploitation based on sex, race, age, marital status or motherhood in both the traditional and modern sectors. In addition, measures should be taken to ensure that women are introduced, on the same footing as men, to new types of training in the advanced technologies which are now being widely developed.

The access of women workers to recreation and culture should be increased since their double workload prevents them from having enough necessary free time; it is therefore essential that household chores and family care should be shared by men and special emphasis should be placed on the obligation of couples to share household tasks with a view to facilitating the access of women to gainful employment.

Develop policies to ensure a safe working environment both in the home and the work place and provide adequate technology to relieve the workload of women. Carry out specific studies on labour hygiene and safety, particularly in branches of activity in which the health of women might be affected.



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Early history

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Legislation should be enacted to ensure a safe working environment both in the home and the work place and provide adequate technology to relieve the workload of women. Carry out specific studies on labour hygiene and safety, particularly in branches of activity in which the health of women might be affected.

Introduce legislation aimed at eliminating occupational health hazards likely to affect reproductive functions, reducing environmental pollution, and controlling disposal of toxic chemicals and radioactive waste.

Promote extensive health education programmes, including special efforts to encourage positive traditional practices, especially breast-feeding, and to combat negative practices detrimental to women's health.

"Provide new formal and extracurricular education to enable women to combine their household duties with the opportunity to improve their educational level."

All women, whatever their status, are important as human beings. The woman who is in the labour force has the additional description as: child bearer and home-maker as well as industrial-economic participant. Women in textiles are also artisans, with an in-put into national heritage.

The American Medical Association, in its document, "Occupational Health Services for Women Employees". Points out that the working conditions favorable to men are also favorable to women and that the working conditions unfavorable to men are also unfavorable to women. That women then have additional health-related problems is due to sexual function: menstruation, pregnancy and child bearing. That occupational diseases and accidents are not partial nor more frequent with one sex over the other, although with married women, there is the added burden of family and home, which gives them more frequent absence, but men when sick take leave for a longer duration.

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The International Labour Organization, in its report, "Making Work More Human," began with what we discussed earlier, "Mesmerised as we often are by short-term considerations, unaware at times of the connections between the various elements above ( employment, remuneration, working conditions, environment, education, health and leisure), we are tempted in times of stagnation of orisis to put off to a better tomorrow the solving of issues that appear less urgent : the conditions of work has until now been one of them."

It then goes on to define its own objectives and in truth the objectives of the act of labour itself :

- that work should respect the worker's life and health; this is the problem of safety and healthiness in the workplace ;
- that it should leave him free time for rest and leisure ; this is the question of hours of work and their adaptation to an improved pattern of life outside of work ;
- it should enable him to serve society and achieve self-fulfilment by developing his personal capacities; this is the problem of the content and organization of work.

The International Labour Organization, in its report, "Making Work More Human," began with what we discussed earlier, "Measured as we often are by short-term considerations, unions at times of the connections between the various elements above (employment, remuneration, working conditions, environment, education, health and leisure), we are tempted in times of stagnation of orders to put off to a better tomorrow the solving of issues that appear less urgent; the conditions of work has until now been one of them."

If then goes on to define its own objectives and in truth the objectives of the act of labour itself.

- that work should respect the worker's life and health; this is the problem of safety and healthness in the workplace;

- that it should leave him free time for rest and leisure; this is the question of hours of work and their adaptation to an improved pattern of life outside of work;

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### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There is a constant over-hang of some one million rural workers who would absorb any opening in the industrial-manufacturing sector.

Thailand is a newly industrialized country, meaning that its recording and reporting systems have not caught up with current practices and conditions. Industry is scattered and largely not inspected by the government. Regulations permit the smallest shops to operate without any standards so as to be an entry-point for unskilled labour. Such shops are hidden among narrow back lanes among slum housing or empty lands behind bushes and tree far from the main roads.

The production of such minor enterprises is for domestic consumption, the machinery is second hand or repaired junk. Because of these characteristics, the enterprises are invisible to the national economy, they account for no imports, exports or balance of trade. In the older days most textile enterprises were of this nature. The production was in cotton for sarongs, casual shirts, mosquito net. Very few textile companies had the capacity to accept and fulfill foreign orders. In the modern days, there are many bigger enterprises turning out jeans with international labels and other lines that gain ready export. But these companies are largely foreign joint-ventures and although they can individually have a large work force, the number of technically-developed garment factories is quite small to the number of traditional textile factories.

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GENERAL IDENTIFICATION AND ATTITUDES OF WOMEN TEXTILE WORKERS

There is a constant over-hang of some one million rural workers who would absorb any opening in the industrial-manufacturing sector. This competition keeps the price of labour depressed.

Of particular interest is the use of women in manufacturing. While in their farming families, women are given near equal responsibilities and opportunities as the men, once in the job market their value is drastically reduced. The largest employer of migrant women is in textile manufacturing, with its traditional business practices, which includes subsistence wages. This follows a pattern where jobs identified as "domestic" such as food preparation, child caring, sewing, are reserved for women at salaries that seldom attract men. Another factor in women's employment is their classification as short-term. Women are expected, and by large show, a higher turnover and shorter career life than men. Women are assumed to have a man somewhere who will provide them with a home if unemployed. To bring this picture into focus: women are accepted to marginal employment by manufacturers in marginal industries.



GENERAL IDENTIFICATION AND ATTITUDES OF WOMEN TEXTILE WORKERS

a. A Statistical Entity

When we talk about Thai textile mills, we are talking about their location and the nationality of the workers. They are in fact an international institution: the capital and planning are often Chinese in traditional trade and Japanese in modern trade. The management is often Taiwanese (and some Japanese) and the market is in exports. It is disappointing to note that the standards of worker health, job-site conditions and terms of employment are below international level. It is very obviously seen here the double standard, meaning one standard in one country of mother company is not similarly applied to another country that the daughter company is transferred to. Usually it is lower in transnational corporations.

The three following pages are the result of the study to simply define and identify the characteristics of the women textile workers in Thailand. Please note that the complement of alternatives must add to one-hundred percent, that the predominant characteristic is first and the balance is in units comparable to the first proceeding until 100%. Of course not all information elicited from the workers is in so discrete a form, such as answering questions with multiple responses totalling more than 100%. In such a case, as with other comments, the information is given as an interpolation in the general structure. That general structure is "Chantana".

Please picture one young lady, she is Thai, works in a textile mill, and is a composite representative of all other female Thai textile mill workers. We will call her "Chantana" as that is a name associated with girl-weavers in common Thai parlance.

GENERAL IDENTIFICATION AND ATTITUDES OF WOMEN TEXTILE WORKERS

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Please picture one young lady, she is Thai, works in a textile mill, and is a composite representative of all other female Thai textile mill workers. We will call her "Chantana" as that is a name associated with girl-weavers in certain Thai parlance.

Chantana completed her compulsory four years of schooling, so she can read and write, but has difficulty with some newspaper articles and would never own a book. She enjoys reading and looking at the picture in movie fan magazines. Although she wants to eventually get married, so far she has not and does not feel being 26 - her current age - is too old yet to begin married life. She lives with seven or ten other girls in one room of the factory-provided dormitory, which makes it convenient to get to work, just a short walk. Free cooked rice is provided by the management and there is a factory canteen, but the girls prefer to cook their own food - which of course they purchase - in the dormitory or otherwise buy the cooked food sold in plastic bags from the food vendors nearby. This is to keep their own style of meals, from the north-east, rather than indulge in the central-Thai cooking offered by the factory. The room (even electricity and water!) are figured as part of her wage, which gives her a net income, including earnings from overtime, of about ฿ 2,000 per month, something a bit around US\$ 75. (If Chantana were married, her combined income with that of her husband would double, but then the average family is with four persons, reducing the per capita income by half). Like the majority of workers, Chantana feels her income is poor compensation for the fatiguing hours of manual labour she puts in.

She came to work in town from her family rural farm so that she might supplement their terribly low income or no income at all. She got her first and only wage-paying job at this mill. (Any of her friends who have changed jobs have had waits of six months or longer, a big loss of income). Hardly any of her workmates are over 35, but some are as young as 15. They develop close feelings for each other, especially if they migrated from the same area. This close confinement has the risk of friction when the workers have disagreements as in the rivalry for a boyfriend.

and she would want to continue to work when married. Her desire is to be the owner of a small business, such as a

The accomodation is strictly utilitarian, with over-crowdedness a serious problem. There is a lack of clean drinking water, water for utility purposes and sufficient toilets. Some dormitories (but not Chantana's) have their residents sleep in three shifts as to use the same bed space for three employees. There is little in the way of recreation facilities provided.

In a general survey of working conditions for all of the labour force of Thailand in every type of industry, it was reported that 44% of the workers do not have enough drinking water or water for other uses, that 50% had no clean drinking water.

The management does provide some form of nurse supervision for employees who become ill, dispense common medicine and refer cases to a visiting doctor if need be. In the event of a long-term illness or disability from accident, the woman's employment is frequently terminated, leaving her not only without income but also without food and lodging if she were a dormitory resident.

Chantana remembers her farm work with nostalgia. She misses the easy freedom, fresh environment and living with her family. She feels that agricultural work is of great benefit to the country, more so than producing consumer goods in textiles. She sees any hardships in her job situation as being impossible to change for the most part and she half-heartedly looks toward the union to give her some support. She would not think of looking for another job as that would require a loss of income during the waiting period for the new job and she has a fear that she might find herself in a job situation worse than the present one. So it is a case of, 'Better the devil you know...' She hopes to save up enough money, or buy a house, so that she can quit mill work. Marriage is not an escape from work - many of her workmates are married - and she would want to continue to work when married. Her real desire is to be the owner of a small business, such as a

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dress-making establishment or a little beauty parlour. After that in choice, she would not mind being a low-level government worker, such as a postal clerk. Chantana is realistic though, knowing how small her savings are now and her own fear of losing even a month's income in looking for a new job, so she can see herself working at this mill for an indefinite period, even until retirement - not a very happy thought for her. Retirement for her would mean loss of income and relying on the support of her hopefully generous children.

She works in the weaving department. Once given a job assignment no one is ever transferred to other slots. And factory owners make no provision to retain, develop or advance skilled workers, knowing there is a relatively unlimited pool of farm girls ever-willing to take the place of those who drop out from exhaustion and boredom. Her job entails standing and walking eight hours a day, six days a week, which she has done for the past three years (excluding holidays and times she went back to her family to help on the farm). She infrequently does overtime work, unlike her friends in inspection who do it all the time, but she welcomes the double pay it brings in. She works on a weekly rotating shift from mornings to afternoons, but living in the dormitory (and without a family) makes it nearly convenient. Her job requires moderate lifting. But not being able to sit bothers her the most. Supervisors think that girls that sit are lazy.

In the weaving department, Chantana thinks the noise is terrible and talking with friends is all but impossible. In measuring the noise level of all departments the average level was just under the legal level of 90 decibels (A) per eight hours of exposure. Worse than the noise is the dust, everyone reported it as nearly intolerable. The research group obtained readings of 3.8 to 7.17 mgs. per cubic meter of air when the legal level is below 1 mg. This situation gives rise to chronic lung problems in many workers. Chantana's department is not

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as hot as in dying, but she thinks that some summer afternoons are difficult to bear, especially as they are not provided drinking water on the job. The legal standard is below 38° celcius. The research team found dying at 42°, weaving (with over-heated Chantana), mixing and spinning at 39° celcius. Then again, during the few cool months, the job-site seems awfully cold some mornings. This shows a lack of regulating the work environment, it is exposed to the extremes of the outside temperature. Chantana thinks that who ever designed the factory did so only for the protection of the machines and materials and did not consider the people who looked after the operations. The research group sees a direct relationship between the hazardously high noise levels and "weavers deafness", where older workers have hearing problems and also the dense cotton dust and "brown lung", which looks like asthma and results in total disability, even after all mill work has stopped. Labour regulations, an employee can take 30 days of sick leave per year without medical certification and

Because of the job pressures on her, Chantana does not feel especially well. She has adjusted to the long hours of standing and feels no fatigue after a nights rest, but she seldom sleeps soundly. She goes to bed by 10 every night she is not working (the afternoon shift is from 3 to 11). And she regularly gets eight hours of sleep. Because of family responsibilities, her married friends sleep less than she. She gets sick most often during the rainy season - from June to September. No one avoid their responsibilities in dealing with an

Another study done by the same research team found nine common illness symptoms among textile workers: stomachache, diarrhea, pains in the joints, backache, sleepiness during work, depression, dizziness, vomiting and fatigue due to work. Each of these symptoms has a correlation to sex, age, work-site conditions, lodging and marital status. However the most pronounced variations are that women are dying and spinning. Less than 1% of all the accidents reported were serious, but obviously the disabled and critically

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suffered more than men and that married women suffered more than single. This clearly reflects conditions detrimental to the health of the Thai working women. As human beings, a valuable resource in industry, as well as home-makers, women should take better care of themselves than this and should be under better care by both the factory management and their national government.

Luckily Chantana has few problems with menstruation which cannot be said for many of her friends, who suffer a great deal once a month and have to take one or two days off.

Of the total number of workers questioned, 84% responded that they did not know about their legal sick-leave rights under the labour law. And those who thought they knew, actually were incorrect in their answer. Under the labour regulations, an employee can take three days of sick leave per year without medical certification and seven days with. This is not adequate for Chantana's workmates with their lunar lament.

There was equal confusion on the part of the workers when asked about the rights for maternity leave. The law allows one full month leave at regular pay and an additional thirty days of unpaid leave. Obviously this ignorance works to the benefit of the mill managers who can avoid their responsibilities in dealing with unsophisticated workers.

Chantana has also been lucky in having suffered only one accident, a minor one at that. She was able to bandage up her cut hand and continue work without requiring leave. The longer the time spent on the job the more sure an accident will happen, rising to 87% for those who had an age of 40. The most accidents happened in weaving, then dying and spinning. Less than 1% of all the accident reported were serious, but obviously the disabled and critically

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Most of those that are married have either one or two  
children that were born in a hospital. Unfortunately most of these  
children are raised on commercial milk products rather than the best  
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as a correlary, 50% of these children get day care out of the home.  
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Those that are married but not yet mothers, seem to want sons and daughters equally. They would appreciate a daughter to help with the house work and take care of them when they are too old to work

(a dark hour if you have spent most of your life in a textile mill). But sons have their value too. The majority hope for a son in anticipation that he will enter the priesthood and assign the religious merit gained to his parents (i.e., allow the parents to pull themselves up to heaven on the saffron robes of their son). Those that look for a daughter hope that she will become a nurse, a doctor or a teacher in that order. Teachers have high respect in the community. Having a daughter in the medical profession is not only economically pleasurable but so convenient to those who have experienced medical neglect all their lives. Those that look for a son overwhelmingly expect him to grow into a soldier or policeman. You can alternately think that either they are expressing a desire for (vicarious) power that is so lacking in their own lives, or that they are just being realistic and see these secure professions as readily obtainable for their not-to-be-well-educated sons.

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47	do not want to lose income
48	do not want to lose income
49	do not want to lose income
50	do not want to lose income





bed time	8:31	to 10 pm	10 pm to midnight	before 8:30	12
duration of sleep	six to eight hours	necessary in life	19 to 24 years old	not necessary	over 30
attitude toward marriage	25 to 29 years old	once or more	full term	hospital	two
best age for marriage	one child	commercial products	day care out of home	child not in school	four years old
pregnancy if married	can help out in the home	make merit for parents in priesthood	nurse	husband should help wife around the house	weaving
termination of pregnancy	2,000 to 4,000	not sufficient	six day week	eight hour day	
number of children born					
birth place					
infant feeding					
child care					
education					
reason not in school					
age of child in school					
want daughters because					
want sons because					
hoped for daughter's vocation					
hoped for son's vocation					
domestic chores					
work department					
monthly family wage					
wage satisfaction					
work week					
work day					

THAI TEXTILE MILL WORKERS' POPULATION IDENTIFICATION

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years on the job	one to three years	four to six years	seven to ten years	eleven to fifteen years	more than fifteen years
overtime	do overtime work	never do overtime work	do it infrequently	do it frequently	do it very frequently
if do overtime	twice the normal rate	weekly rotation of two shifts	do not like it	like it	love it
overtime salary	stand and walk	no lifting	some lifting	moderate	heavy
shift	sufficient	good	too much	too little	just right
like shift rotation	too much	moderate	too much	too little	just right
work posture	too not	very cold	can chat some or all the time while at work	not healthy	one-day recovery
weight	feel healthy	normal one-day recovery	regular	little	occasionally
work environment : light	regular	moderate	occasionally	restless sleep	slight
noise	little	moderate	restless sleep	slight	rainy season
dust	once or more	rainy season	once or more	rainy season	rainy season
heat	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season
cold	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season
socializing on the job	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season
feel healthy	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season
work fatigue	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season
menstruation	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season
pain with menstruation	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season
pain with menstruation	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season
sleep	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season
accidents on the job	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season
severity of accident	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season
most sick in which season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season

THAI TEXTILE WOMEN WORKERS POPULATION IDENTIFICATION

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years on the job	one to three years	four to six years	seven to ten years	eleven to fifteen years	more than fifteen years
overtime	do overtime work	never do overtime work	do it infrequently	do it frequently	do it very frequently
if do overtime	twice the normal rate	weekly rotation of two shifts	do not like it	like it	love it
overtime salary	stand and walk	no lifting	some lifting	moderate	heavy
shift	sufficient	good	too much	too little	just right
like shift rotation	too much	moderate	too much	too little	just right
work posture	too not	very cold	can chat some or all the time while at work	not healthy	one-day recovery
weight	feel healthy	normal one-day recovery	regular	little	occasionally
work environment : light	regular	moderate	occasionally	restless sleep	slight
noise	little	moderate	restless sleep	slight	rainy season
dust	once or more	rainy season	once or more	rainy season	rainy season
heat	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season
cold	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season
socializing on the job	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season
feel healthy	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season
work fatigue	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season
menstruation	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season
pain with menstruation	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season
pain with menstruation	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season
sleep	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season	rainy season
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An Autobiography

You have already been introduced to Chantana, a statistical  
entirely, now please meet Mrs. P., a real Thai textile worker, who was  
generous enough to share her articulate autobiography.

Her higher level of education, brings her thoughts and  
desires into sharp focus. She is in the union and is not complacent  
with current work conditions. Her omisias (such as her marriage)  
are tantalizing, but the reader will be satisfied in her lucid  
picturing of the family's background and the hardships endured over  
poor personnel relationships at the mill. She works as a shift  
forewoman in a textile mill in Bangkok, the capital city of Thailand.

MY LIFE AND MY HOPE AS A WOMAN

My name is P. My birthdate is January 1, 1954.  
My father was N. My mother was H. I come from the north-east,  
which is a cursed land. Most of the land is on a high plain. The  
people live off their crops and rice but the yield is very low,  
because it depends on the rains, which are unreliable. When there is  
a drought the crops die. When there are floods the crops also die.  
The people are very poor and everyone struggles all of their lives.  
Any year the crops are good, they have a chance to make merit. When  
the storage bins are full, everyone is happy. But this seldom happens  
from the lack of crops and general poverty. The people must eat  
everything available from the land. There are no other roads, even  
lanes of the dragon fly. These things are not appearing but we eat  
them out of necessity. They are not known as food items in other parts  
of the country.

We are loyal to our King and Queen and possessive of our  
land. And we have good faith in our religion, not less than other  
Thais. Because of poverty, we are sympathetic to and help each  
other. We are proud of our kindness and honesty. When I was  
little, my parents let me go to a school near by; when I finished  
grade 4, my father brought me to Bangkok to further my education. The  
first time I saw it, it was powerfully exciting with all the modern  
buildings. I thought that everyone was rich because they all dressed  
so well. The vehicles crowded the road and the roads were strong. The  
people everywhere were cheerful. There were so many shop in which  
to buy things or get something to eat, which was totally different  
from my hometown. I lived in Bangkok with my brother for three  
years. He married later and my father, worried that I would be a  
burden to him, came and took me back to our hometown. At home about  
a year later, my father died of a heart attack. All of us children  
were very distressed. We felt that we had lost our shelter. He had  
always cared so much for us. He was interested in our getting an  
education. My mother had no income. I used funds from my father's  
life insurance to further my education. And I was able to finish  
grade 7. I felt that I was then grown up enough to earn an income  
and help my family. So I left school and looked for a job. I came  
to live again with my brother. My brother wanted me to continue  
school. But I had to be considerate of him, especially now that he  
had two children. I myself am the sixth child of eight.

I have been working at a textile factory off of Sukumvit  
Road in Bangkok. I was introduced to it by a cousin. I have been  
here since 1963. I receive a net wage of B 12 per day. At first I  
worked a day shift, but as I got more experience I worked overtime.  
After eight years of work I was promoted to shift-forewoman. This  
was about seven years ago. Now I have been married one year.

I want to train them to get rid of their bad habits and  
get their cooperation.

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I have been working at a textile factory off of Sammit Road in Bangkok. I was introduced to it by a cousin. I have been here since 1963. I receive a net wage of 8 1/2 per day. At first I worked a day shift, but as I got more experience I worked overtime. After eight years of work I was promoted to shift-forewoman. This was about seven years ago. When I have been married one year,

Speaking of working, I think it is a part of our lives. Everyone must be sincere and diligent. I work in the finished product section. The work is measuring, stamping, wrapping and packing for delivery. I do all stages of work at the same time and also my control, so I can communicate and coordinate with all my workers. We change shift times once a week. Mornings are 7 to 3. Afternoons are 3 to 11. Both times get a 30 minute break long for meals. After work, I use my time to do my laundry, or have conversation with co-workers or dormitory mates. The factory has arranged the roommates for efficiency. I have four roommates. We don't have a chance to choose our own roommates. I wish I did, that way I could stay with my relatives or friends. I have had many experiences now in living with people who came from backgrounds and families far different than mine. Away from their families they sometimes live so free as to get into difficulties. A female worker here committed suicide after a sexual affair with a policeman, when he took no responsibility for her. Those who are very mean can save their money and become a capitalist, by being a money lender and charging 20% interest per month. Those who can't save money but still want to get rich quick choose gambling, but often get arrested and then fined (this is both men and women). Some workers do well but others get very bored. And in the past the bonus was larger for the long-term workers, but this year

I am a middle-level worker as shift forewoman, which I find comfortable. My friends and subordinates have a whole range of characteristics ranking from good to not very good. Socially they are good. By nature women tend to become talkative even the gossipy. For me personally everyone is acceptable because I am not intolerant. My subordinates that take responsibility are valuable because they make less mistakes, they accept advice and follow in warnings. But some are irresponsible, inactive and get angry easily. I want to train them to get rid of their bad habits and get their cooperation.

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But sometimes it cannot be done. I just think that it is my karma (fate). So I have to make my mind patient and have to forgive and forget. In this manner, I find my subordinates acceptable, and I can look for a further solution. I am pleased with my subordinates. But I cry alone about the situation with the superiors. I am not jealous or biased. I have two supervisors - a man and woman who are brother and sister. They have worked for the company a long time. And the owners promoted them to be supervisors. They are unbearable to us. The man is sly and does not treat either workers or owners fairly. He is demanding and unreasonable in getting his special work done at the expense of the regular work. He is terribly boastful even if he does only a little of the work. The other supervisors don't like him. At meetings he orders the workers like they were in the army. If anyone argues with him, he will lose his wage increase that year. Many good workers have been destroyed by him. His sister is very dominating and can never accept suggestions eventhough she is a careless and poor worker. She enjoys talking sharply to her subordinates. I think that the owners are fair and promote economic development in the country. They give us work and a place to live. When we are sick, we can pay hospital bills. I think we owe them a debt. But there is room for improvement. Every year but this one there has been a raise. And in the past the bonus payments were larger for the long-term workers, but this year some older workers got less than the newer ones. In this last Chinese New Years, old workers got ¥ 80, and new workers got ¥ 400. I would want a commitment from the owners that they will continue to employ workers until retirement age and that they would give medical care to the workers and their family. Also the provision of a residence and food for retired workers, so they won't be a burden on their children. Could the government also help? We hope that changes will come in our life time.

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DISCUSSION OF THE OVERALL VIEWS

Thai textile mills are of two categories : labour-intensive and capital-intensive. Those that are labour-intensive draw employees from rural-farming areas to work as unskilled or semi-skilled labourers on older and often poorly repaired machines. They are marginally profitable and suffer from the competition of those mills that are capital-intensive, that use more modern technology and have a higher level of machine operator with a higher production capacity per worker.

Most of the milling is cotton, followed by silk and synthetics. There is no co-operative venture in production, so each plant has every other plant as a competitor. There is international competition also from Japan and Korea's large exports. All this leads to cutting profit margins to the least favourable to the mills. The capital-intensive plants work their machines longer and the labour-intensive plants work their women longer to increase production.

Conclusion :

Textiles done in the small and medium-sized mill are a "sundown industry" : if current marketing practice continues, the business failure rate will continue to rise. This will force the remaining operations to merge in order to survive. And as the emphasis will be on survival, no thought of worker conditions will be taken.



a. The Factory Owners

Factory owners have voiced their cooperation with the government in its support of small and medium-sized mills to boost employment. But they feel under pressure from business factors outside their immediate control. The two most apparent are : uncertainty of the export market and quality competition.

The presently produced textile products depend on foreign markets rather than local markets, with the requirement that the government must think about expansion of trade in foreign countries. Since 1973, Thai textile products have been met with tariff charges and suffered under heavy exchange losses. There is heavy competition with the neighbouring producers such as Hong Kong, Singapore and Korea, who have more expertise in marketing and also get government protectionism.

One solution for the support of the textile industry is for the factory owners to keep on joining together as an association to set common goals for production to meet exports and domestic needs by defining a quota of production among themselves. Such an association should have close government co-operation in the public interest, also to provide mutual guide-lines, marketing data, supervision of production and readily available controls. Rice, sugar and coffee industries enjoy such support currently.

The quality of production of the above mentioned association would need to be under some form of governmental control, supervision maintained over the standards. The most important factor in upgrading the sales of Thai textile products in the international market despite the competition is the raising of the quality of handiwork.

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b. Textile management background

The ethnic background for the overwhelming majority of textile mill owners is Chinese. The Chinese form a top-echelon of bankers, physicians and business owners. They have all had a relatively new immigrant status (second generation or so) and by sheer force of personal ambition made a success of themselves against great odds: lack of formal education, no initial economic base, isolation from family.

Through exertion of great diligence, these people were able to over-employ themselves, getting income beyond their immediate needs. Through force of will they were able to reduce expenses to a minimum and save capital for future investment. When they began a family business, they drove themselves tirelessly to get the highest production without regard for any comforts. Working conditions were meaningless to them, as was break-time, nutrition and leisure. Their children were incorporated into the enterprise, working as helpers, assistants and being absorbed into the management level when their commercial education was completed. University education was avoided due to its creating a gap between parents and children. The children are bond tightly to the parents in the family owned - but parent controlled - business.

In general, the women do not feel oppressed, disadvantaged or legislated against to restrict their expansion of financial power, Thailand lays no restrictions against ethnic groups. In Thailand, by the third generation, Chinese are virtually assimilated into Thai culture and are no longer distinguishable. So Chinese are admired and respected even though their manners seem abrasive and the business techniques lack charity.

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Unlike in Malaysia and Indonesia, where Chinese are legislated against to restrict their expansion of financial power, Thailand lays no restrictions against ethnic groups. In Thailand, by the third generation, Chinese are virtually assimilated into Thai culture and are no longer distinguishable. So Chinese are admired and respected even though their numbers seem to be declining. The business techniques lack diversity.

Conclusion : regard how their husband drinks or gambles too

The owner-managers of textile mills see life as a problem in personal achievement, whereby hard work, over long hours with thrift will result in economic security. Life and work conditions are of secondary importance to productivity. Education is not necessary for productivity. And if an employee is not able to save and advance their security, that shows a lack of self-control.

c. Textile workers mentality

What could not be measured on any questionnaire and was latent in the biographical material offered by the women is their mentality: what they are interested in, how they feel about their lives and future. Such information is highly subjective, likely to be misinterpreted and not subject to either validity or reliability measurement, but is most important in determining the ability of women in textiles to improve their own living and working conditions. The following personal insights came from women labour representatives and others who have lived in close association with women textile workers.

In general the women do not feel oppressed, disadvantaged or exploited by their jobs. They have a desire to keep on with their current employment, do not want to change employers out of fear that their next would be worse than this one. They are interested most in the wage received, far more than any long-term benefits or existing work conditions. If there was a choice between improvements, they would wish to neglect all conditions and only increase wages. Many prefer night work and overtime to boost their pay. As for interests beyond work, they are rather narrow. The women seem totally involved in family ties : their parents, husband or current boy-friend. Their

conversation revolves around how their husband drinks or gambles too much. They retain strong loyalty to their parents and offer support of labour in their fields and money for fertilizer or other reasons upon request. They see their lives as a short-term situation, living only weeks at a time and not considering overall plans or goals.

Conclusion : often expresses what a bother the women are, with their problems and lack of responsibility. This benevolent

These women are not only inarticulate in expressing life-views, but are essentially without a life-view. Goals are short-term and interests mostly self - or family - centered. They would not be willing to participate in a self-help program as they do not see themselves as disadvantaged, only needing more money - which they would most likely spend on their families. They reflect a "poor class" mentality, of those who have experienced life as only a series of hand-to-mouth operations.

d. Textile management and labour relations

Hiring practices in the labour-intensive mills seem to be for seeking the least sophisticated workers : young farm girls. And they are given as little training as necessary to perform their job. There is no orientation to their general responsibilities for labour performance, safety, rights (such as sick and maternity leave). Also many of the women workers are hired and kept at a "temporary worker" status, paid a daily-rate and not covered under any rules for fair labour compensation in case of accident or injury.

They are given accomodations that are often substandard, disregarding comfort and even health.

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They are given accommodations that are often shoddy, and regarding comfort and even health.

From the outset and throughout their factory work life, the management will look upon the women workers as irresponsible children, to be cared for - within reason - to be variously ignored or indulged in their requests, but having no real contribution to the family business.

Management often expresses what a bother the women are, with all their personal problems and lack of responsibility. This benevolent paternalism insures the subservience of female workers to an owner-manager who has an education level not especially higher than their own. It keeps his responsibility limited, as a father is not obligated to his children. When any financial problems arise in the women's lives, he can show a magnanimous nature by allowing them to indebted themselves to him for months of work in advance. No doubt that there is some altruism, but in balance the freedom lost seems to have been sold cheaply.

Conclusion:

The paternalism of a mill operator insulates him from providing equitable wages and good living conditions to female workers, it keeps the women docile and disorganized. The sons of the owners, having a different background than their fathers, will carry a different attitude toward labour relations, but still are under the control of their parents.

Another factor discouraging women's participation in union activities is that women as a class have a lower education level, have had less opportunity to use their organizing skills. planning and developing projects. Therefore, when women are introduced into a mixed group, they tend to quietly sink to the bottom, leaving the men to carry out the activities. That cultural habits - with men as the supporters of men - reinforce this.

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e. Unions and women workers

Thai unions are under a severe handicap by the general public image of political activism bordering on insurrection. Reactionary forces, including the government sector, do much to suppress union enrollment. The business people do all in their means to cripple union growth and power. Union representatives are routinely frozen in their job position by hostile employers, singled out for harsh work schedules, dismissed on unreasonable or false grounds, even killed by "person or persons unknown."

Thai political structure rests on "influential people", who have enormous personal discretion in complying with laws. They are insulated by money and political debts owed them by local and higher governmental officers. This very class of people include mill owners that are antagonistic to the unions.

The union's biggest problem is huge unemployment, with new men entering the labour market faster than they can be absorbed by new industrial expansion - some 0.5 million persons a year - and the closure of old factories - some 30 this year, especially in the small and medium sized textile mills - that dumps blocks of 1,000s of workers into the pool of the unemployed, currently 1.2 million. Men, and jobs for men are the bread and butter of unions. Problems of child care, housework, nutrition, menstruation leave are not on the agenda of problems to be tackled by the union.

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Conclusion :

Due to political antagonism against unions, the bias of unions to center on male-worker problems and the seeming lack of qualified female-unionists, women are under-represented by Thai unions, have no executive authority and no voice in expressing their problems as a class. Would this be true outside of Thailand? Yes.

f. Women's organizations in Thailand

Thailand has several women's groups who are committed to social justice and work to improve the lives of women. However these groups' activities are restricted to local and current issues, with no long-term programs. Also there is no coordination among themselves or with other sectors, giving a hit-and-miss cast to their contributions. These groups tend to be loosely associated around a dominant personality and have no real infrastructure to support projects of any duration. But they can be most effective in giving quick one-shot programs, such as in fund raising.

Although women's groups are most interested to assist in raising the standards of women's lives, they can do little beyond provide funding to a worker-group to enact short-term projects.

Remarks Mrs. P. and many other workers have wondered aloud why the government could not intervene. It cannot do so under current circumstances as will be identified in the next section. But it has

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There should be a distinction made by the government as to great responsibility to its citizens including all the women textile workers in giving adequate life conditions.

Let us fill-in the reasons for that responsibility and briefly offer where remedial actions could be taken to the benefit of the community of women textile workers.

g. The Government

Many research projects have referred to the pattern that textile mills are important places for employment of the labour force that is flowing from the agricultural sector. Government should arrange that small mills must register under law in order to enforce legislated standards of labour administration in all aspects, such as wages, welfare and safety, as well as supervision of the work-site.

It would be an error to support the setting up of large modernized mills in Thailand with the expectation that this type of facility will provide ready employment for large blocks of people and give them additional skills. In Thailand, the emphasis of any industry either on capital-intensive or labour-intensive depends not on the type but rather on the size of the factory. The bigger the factory the greater investment toward machines.

Since the purpose of the present National Plan of Thailand is to generate employment opportunity, therefore the government should encourage and support small factories rather than large factories. But the workers in small factories tend to have more problems and ask for less work with machines.



There should be a distinction made by the government as to the requirements between the small and the medium sized factories. For the small factories, the emphasis should be on artfulness and quality of the craft, and for the medium sized the emphasis should be on the industrial usage of the production and the quantity demanded by the market. Such a differentiation of emphasis will be useful in determining the qualifications of the labour needed, the training and the adjusting of different wages for different kinds of work.

Work Organization

Along with the re-grouping of the sectors in the textile industry to increase export and domestic use through governmental support of production in small and medium sized mills, there are areas for improvement to effect conditions of the employees directly: shift work, overtime work, rotation in different departments, work machines.

Shift Work

There is a good body of literature which shows that shift work adds too much stress to the working conditions and is therefore detrimental to the health. Shift work should be phased out and replaced by a regular straight schedule.

Overtime Work

Although overtime is popular with the workers as supplemental income, it has been shown that it is detrimental to health in the long term and of course it is a way of avoiding hiring additional personnel. Overtime should have proper limits. And wages and welfare services should be increased to compensate for loss of overtime income.

Rotation in Different Departments

Initiative and job attractiveness over the long term are slowly destroyed by doing monotonous work. Thus the workers' recommendation that departmental rotation be scheduled, should be given consideration. This is especially important with a labour force having a higher education.

Work with Machines

The time working with machines should be reduced. This could easily be done in the medium and small-sized factories, for it will partly help in reducing capital investment. It also helps worker morale in fulfilling their desire to avoid machine-regulated tasks. But of course it should not lessen quality standards of production.

Welfare Services

Improved welfare services help much in boosting the well-being of the workers as well as decreasing the call for pay increases. Data collected show that welfare services should be instituted/improved in the following areas : housing, education.

Housing

The level of housing and utilities, such as drinking water and water for other uses, also toilet facilities is dismal. Improvement in these facilities can be done with a relatively low cost in relation to the benefits and done in a short period of time. This will surely bring a more efficient work force where ever the factory provides housing.

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Education

Until the 20th Century, education was for only two classes of Thai society: royalty and priests. Monastery schools still offer educational opportunities. But with the modern era the need for educated men (and women) to staff the growing governmental bureaucracy. Since 1950, when farming communities saw the first real governmental commitment to rural education, and as farming methods became more technologically oriented, education was more important in the lives of upcountry people.

By 1960 only 4 million children were in school, in the 1980s fully 8 million are enrolled. Adult literacy is 85%. 90% of the children aged seven to ten attend school.

The level of the workers' basic education creates differences between themselves and makes an unbridgable gap between employees and the management. Education is the only way for the women workers to have an understanding of their legal rights and to avoid becoming the victims of those who may ill-use their labour for their own benefit. It is a way to open new job opportunities and for self-development in their current mill.

As for factory managers who have previously taken advantage of poorly educated employees, the solution presents itself in the problem: higher education. This will cause factory owners and managers to provide increasing social benefits to their employees. It will result in managers and employees being able to bargain more reasonably. This will help block political intervention, which only use labour unions as a pretext. Factory owners and managers fear more from strikes than paying higher wages, because the strikes are always (in Thailand)

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interlocked with political motivations beyond the scope of company action, whereas wage demands can be negotiated successfully. Education will ease labour negotiations just as well as introducing more machinery.

Heavy responsibility falls on the state to assume a realistic attitude toward education of those who will in all likelihood join in factory work, those who need an education in accord with their job needs. Also the Thai government should follow the Japanese in providing continuation school for low-level citizens to improve their working status. This should be done through both formal and non-formal education. The state has the responsibility to provide non-formal education to those who have completed the required courses in formal education. This would also provide the textile workers to judge their own handicraft and skills against those of recognized occupational standards.

The government could well stimulate the large mills to open training centers or provide courses for the benefit of raising the skills of the employees. These centers should also give formal education to the children of the workers in that industry. It is also possible in the industrially-dense areas, that several factories could use the same learning center, which would be set up under regular government authority or jointly with non-profit organizations, societies or foundations. With proper planning educational courses would be geared to channel the young people of the community into learning various aspects of textile manufacture. This would lessen the training costs of factories and can be regarded as welfare service generally while increasing the efficiency of new workers in particular. Research is needed to set up guidelines to maximize benefits to all concerned without disrupting the current beneficial programs.

h. Transferability of work-living conditions in textile mills to other industries

Due to the confines of the initial study project, only women in the textile mills of a general class (labour-intensive) were sampled. But there is no reason to suspect that their life conditions are especially different than other female workers in industrial settings throughout Thailand. The job conditions, standard of nutrition, health care, general welfare, are nearly similar in all industrial areas where women are employed. This is related closely to the fact that more than 95% of the employees come from rural-farming families, who have common economic and education opportunities. Their future is also similar because there is a ceiling to their advancement. For the majority there is no step up beyond their current job. They can quit. They cannot move up.

The situation is non-transferable to the men workers who 1) have a richer educational background, 2) are culturally prepared to strive and achieve, 3) have women help them in home caretaking and provide money for further education and self-promotion.

Conclusion :

Women workers in labour-intensive industries form a distinct class that has highly select problems and living conditions which are not known, understood or interesting to labour, employers or other organizations that have a view on more general fields of labour, business and economics.

Remarks And so the pattern is set, the web is spun. And the women that fall into it are caught as surely as any butterfly that fed a spider.

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RECOMMENDATIONS ON IN-PUT CONDUITS

Apparently, the women who work in textiles suffer a handicap in managing their own affairs and cannot conjoin to form an effective force to further their living and working conditions. If these circumstances are to be changed in a way to relieve the most oppressive features, they will have to be under some direction from outside, the women will need an in-put.

In looking for an organization outside the women themselves, we must note two requirements: interest in their problem and authority to change them. Let us review the possible groups:

- government, through education,
- overview of labour,
- media, to raise awareness of the participants involved in women labour,
- unions, which try to represent all the workers,
- employers, who are directly responsible for employees and their productivity.

Government

Of all the above resource groups, the government is the weakest in both interest and authority. Governments are a compromise among vast and conflicting segments of a total society. Governmental bodies tend to move glacially if at all and are far more interested in keeping a steady status quo than in changing factors that could cause additional problems. The need to avoid problems rather than

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tackle them has layered governmental organizations with personnel that are both incapable of action and incompetent to perform. This is not a situation unique to Thailand and with the general improvement in education levels and a more progressive personnel, undoubtedly the bureaucracy will lurch forward more often than before.

Education

The poor (with emphasis on the low wage level) teachers have enough to do just to get all the school-age children through an education where they can read, write and do some mathematics. It would be so nice if they could set up a continuation school system, giving adults in rural communities the basic (if they missed it as children) or advanced education, increasing their understanding in subjects as: crop rotation, financing and agriculture, maintenance of basic farm machinery, craftsmanship, handicrafts, nutrition, weaving, knitting and textile making process. This would accomplish two things, first it would raise local standards of awareness producing better citizens who are more self-sufficient, and second, keeping people out of the resource-taxed urban areas and utilizing and building on rural resources. But in the real world, it seems that educational programs are aimed at accomplishing the lowest standard, with neither the interest nor funding to set higher sights.

Labour

The governmental policy toward labour is: the greatest service to the most people. It is looking at migration from the rural to urban areas and is currently setting up industrial zones to siphon off the excess from the labour pool. It battles for foreign

investment and against trade protectionism. It would be especially helpful if a woman's and minor's labour division could be effected to stop the gross exploitation of these two groups of workers.

One very necessary in-put that needs no exhausting planning or huge budget is to have female employees recognize their legal rights regarding employment. The study clearly showed that few of the women, at any educational level, knew how long paid/unpaid maternity leave was, about sick leave, number of toilets required per so many workers, duration of breaks, maximum hours of work, definition of temporary, part-time and regular employment, responsibility of employers for the health and safety of their workers. This information should be written out in simple language on one small poster with the addition of a telephone number and address of a labour representative to contact in case of questions or complaints.

This poster would then be delivered to each employer of women and minors, and he should be required by law to have it posted in a predominate place at the work site for all his employees to read.

The benefits would be enormous : education of the employee, the employer, the raising of standards for the state labour organization, and a positive sign that government wants to support labourers and will be available when needed.

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In a far distant future, it would be expected that the emphasis would be placed on preventative controls, tightening restrictions for the uses of toxic substances, reducing overtime and banishing night-shifts, requiring the use of protective devices, but at present, operations are geared to a "body count" (fatalities, etc.) of the effects of ignored health and safety requirements.

Media

The media in-put is attractive in that it reaches directly into the lives of all parties concerned, and has a vested interest in exposing social problems. Although newspapers have little circulation among working women, the factory managers, governmental officials and general public are avid readers of Bangkok papers that have national circulation. Television is highly valued in getting into all levels of society with hard-hitting visual presentations that stick in memories and so effectively announce changes in living patterns. But these announcements are events, not programs. They have no follow-up, and like advertising, there has to be repeated exposure and reinforcement through several sources: mail outs, radio spot advertisements, as well as articles and television exposure. Even with all this, there can be no long-term sustained benefits without an actual re-alignment of underlying causes.

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Media would be most effective as an "ice breaker", to announce a major change or new policy in dealing with women workers by one of the other in-put conduits. In short, media needs the news of another sector's activity.

Unions

As mentioned previously, unions are male organizations for male problems. To the effect that women share a problem with the men, they are helped by the union. Unions are locked in a violent struggle against fierce combatants on all sides and would not be about to avoid their deadly adversary by helping women get essentially a more comfortable life-style.

A far-seeing union leadership will hedge its bets through by, 1) cultivating as many women representatives as show themselves, 2) soliciting more women to become representatives, 3) setting up training programs run by women for raising women's awareness to their potential power in union organizing, 4) giving out-right scholarships to improve the education level of women who are likely to remain in their general job class and assist other women of the same class. These programs would not show "profit" under current circumstances, but as the labour field matures, it will allow women a full partnership. Many of these women will then out to form a separate but equal union and that is no block to unionism but would heighten awareness in all labour sectors that women can take care of themselves when given half an opportunity.

Employer

As you will remember, the premise in selecting a champion for the women textile workers was fulfilling two requirements :

interest and authority. This apparently excludes : the workers themselves, the union, the government, current women's organizations, media, and we are left with the employers, who at first sight seem to be more dragon than champion. But it meets both qualifications : the employer is vitally interested in the industry, as it belongs to him and the women are a primary, indispensable resource. Although the interest is self-centered, it provides a motivation that is lacking in the other groups. And secondly, surely no organization has more authority over the working conditions, the very lives of these women. Therefore we have discovered champions, although reluctant ones. Suppose they are not to be worked with but against, they would be a powerful advisory. Would it not be much better to gain a partner than an obstruction?

Conclusion :

The linch-pin to the working conditions of female textile workers is their employer. With his cooperation all would be possible, without it nothing can be accomplished. A common ground must be discovered to the mutual benefit of employer and textile worker, and an avenue to direct the employer's attention to sharing those benefits with the workers.

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FINAL CONCLUSION

We who have been given educational experiences under Western methods and have come under the influence of an international culture promising economic development, social evolution and expansion of personal opportunity, tend to look at our native country as in social transition for the better. But when we examine that transition, we see not just a gap between the present situation and the hope for future, but forces in total opposition to that goal. This antagonism is across the board in social, economic, domestic and industrial relations. Inflation, devaluation and rising costs of imports have robbed the earning value from those who have earned the least. Women, who would otherwise be home-makers, have been pushed into the labour force to make up for the decline in the earning power of their husbands. Industrial growth has resulted in more jobs for machines and their technicians than for the industrial labour force. Textile mill is the very first industry that absorbed the women workers. This true to all industrialized countries including Thailand.

But nowadays textiles have been called a "sundown" industry, meaning that the technology has advanced to a point that no one would invest in labour-intensive mills if they could purchase the latest equipment, which use technicians not line workers. Therefore the market shows a squeeze and bias against the traditional methods, forcing them to be less and less productive. Workers are in turn squeezed by employers to make up the loss in market share. The government can consider regulating marginal mills out of existence or, as it has already decided, it can encourage the current arrangement as providing relief from unemployment of excess rural populations.

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As has often been stated, "The more things change, the more they are the same". Just because we are alert and involved in the development plans, does not overpower the negative influence. Intentions have never been enough to accomplish change. In this particular case, in-put conduit is recommended for serious attention of all concerned, i.e., government, employers and workers themselves. Different actions are urged to be cooperatively implemented. But most of all, sincerity, commitment and continuity are the heart of this work.

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# Seminar on labour wants better working conditions

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# Seminar on labour wants better working conditions

By Tulsathit Tuptim

WORKING conditions in general must be improved and tripartite cooperation among employers, workers and the government is needed to prevent health hazards at workplaces, participants at a seminar on labour on Wednesday said.

The call was made after the presentation of a study on "The Humanization of Working Conditions: The Cooperative Effort of the Government, Industry and Labour" conducted by a team of labour experts of the Mahidol University led by Assoc Prof Dr Malinee Wongpanich.

According to the study, improvement of working conditions in Thailand was obstructed by official red tape and lack of expertise on the part of the authorities. These authorities are required to take an active role in dealing with the increasing occupational illnesses but the government's unclear policy has caused poor cooperation between them and employers and workers.

Figures from the Labour Compensation Fund show a sharp increase in the rate of accidents at workplaces in the ten-year period ending 1983.

About 4 out of one million workers died from the accidents in 1983 and more than 34,000 received compensations totalling about 205 million baht from the fund as a result of accidents in factories. In 1974, the fund paid compensations for only 3,200 workers injured while on duty, according to the statistics.

Dr Malinee said during the one-day seminar held at the Imperial Hotel, jointly by the university and the West German Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation, that moves to improve working conditions have faced opposition "because changes mean increasing or declining benefits of groups concerned."

Her study, based on a two-year research project in Samut Prakan, one of the country's largest industrial provinces, also pointed out that many accidents at workplaces were a result of the lack of information made available to authorities and a shortage of experienced labour inspectors.

She said the cooperation between the public and private sectors is minimal and inconsistent. She said the managements of private firms should be allowed to directly deal with the issue because they are closer to the problem than the government.

She suggested that employers and workers set



FEMALE workers at a factory in Phra Pradaeng display their disfigured hands ... a result of the lack of work safety.

up a self-help organization comprising education, information and health service units with assistance from the government.

However, she said high-level cooperation should be continued and the government should improve efficiency of its networks responsible for the matter. "A coordinating committee is needed to solve problems of negligence of authorities and at the same time to stimulate employers to pay more attention to their workers," she said.

The seminar was attended by over 150 representatives of workers and employers as well as academics and government officials, who agreed on the call for more cooperative effort to

cope with the problem of occupational safety. Dr Nikom Chandaravithoon, a former director general of the Labour Department, meanwhile, said workers should start campaigning to seek a more active role in the matter so that the government can better realize their importance. "After considering labour policy of the Prem V administration, I feel that workers will have to work harder to achieve this goal," he said. Dr Nikom said the problem directly concerned the economy because if health hazards at workplaces were reduced, the production cost would certainly be cheaper because companies would not have to pay compensation.

NATIONPHOTO



# Seminar on labour wants better working conditions



FEMALE workers in a factory in Phra Pradaeng display their damaged hands as a result of the lack of work safety.

Dr. Niran Chandrasekhar, a former director general of the Labour Department, mentioned that workers should start campaigning to seek a more active role in the matter so that the government can better realize their importance. After considering labour policy of the Prem Vajiravudh administration, I feel that workers will have to work harder to achieve this goal," he said.

Dr. Niran said the problem directly concerned the economy because if health hazards at workplaces were reduced, the production cost would certainly be cheaper because companies would not have to pay compensation.

WORKING conditions in general must be improved and regular cooperation among employers, workers and the government is needed to prevent health hazards in workplaces, according to a seminar on labour on Wednesday.

The call was made after the presentation of a study on "The Humanization of Working Conditions: The Cooperative Effort of the Government, Industry and Labour," conducted by a team of labour experts of the Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University led by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Manissorn Wongsawatana.

According to the study, improvement of working conditions in Thailand was obstructed by the lack of legal and technical support of the authorities. These authorities are required to take an active role in dealing with the increasing occupational illnesses by the government's unclear policy and the poor cooperation between them and employers and workers.

Figures from the Labour Compensation Fund show a sharp increase in the rate of accidents at workplaces in the last year period ending 1983. About a out of one million workers had been involved in accidents in 1983 and more than 34,000 workers were injured. The number of occupational diseases has also increased from 1974 to 1983. In 1974, the fund paid compensation for only 3,200 workers injured on duty, according to the statistics.

Dr. Manissorn said during the one-day seminar held at the Imperial Hotel last night by the Ministry of Labour and the West German Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation, that moves to improve working conditions have been opposition because changes mean increasing or declining the status of groups concerned.

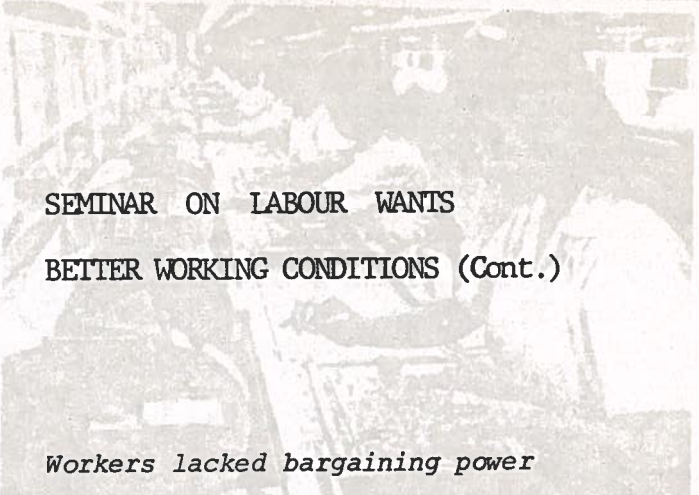
The study, based on a two-year research project in Samut Prakan, one of the country's largest industrial provinces, also pointed out that many accidents at workplaces were a result of the lack of information made available to workers and a shortage of experienced labour inspectors.

He said the cooperation between the public and private sectors is minimal and inconsistent. He said the management of private firms should be allowed to directly deal with the issue because they are closer to the problem than the government.

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TEXTILE worker Miss Sang was making ends meet as a problem for most workers here.



## SEMINAR ON LABOUR WANTS BETTER WORKING CONDITIONS (Cont.)

Workers lacked bargaining power said President of Labour Congress



LABOUR leader Ben Violation of labour laws is

# Industrial accidents remain a

A TOTAL of 5,746 workers in Phra Pradaeng industrial town reported accidents on duty last year and about 16 million baht in workers' compensation was paid out. Ten workers died as a result of the accident.

Safety is one of the factors that is not up to the standard, a survey of January 21, 1984, of which Phra Pradaeng is a province, of which Phra Pradaeng is a town that most of the 55,816 workers employed in a poll said their employers generally ignored the labour laws and, sometimes, measures laid down. But violations of other problems, especially in terms of working hours, breaks, holidays, overtime payments, minimum wage rates, as well as physical che-

Even where physical checkups are offered, they were considered too general for the kind of health hazards that have plagued the industrial town, which is heavily polluted. A total of 87,184 workers in 1,242 textile, weaving and metal plants in Phra Pradaeng continue to suffer from severe noise and pollution.

A total of 114 factories, with 7,565 workers, produce plastics, chemicals, water batteries, aluminium and other poisonous chemicals. They have not yet installed appropriate or adequate safety facilities. Old machines with out-of-date safety devices have been responsible for many accidents.

Some workers use up to 30,000 baht to buy a plot of land in the area. Most of us here are poor. We have to live in shacks, the

His view was shared by the president of the Employers Confederation of Thailand, Chamnien Chuangtrakul, who said the way-out of the problem was to convince employers they would benefit in the long run if working conditions were improved.

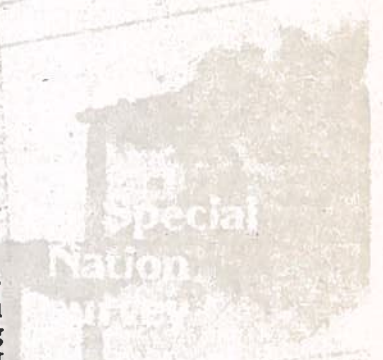
"Under the current economic situation, there are no 'ideal employers' who think of workers' welfare first. We, therefore, have to make them believe that it will be beneficial if their employees work in a better and safer environment," he said. Chamnien said workers must be cooperative and the government must have a significant role in the issue.

"The concept of a good working life should be built with cooperation between parties concerned and the government policy must be clearer. I feel hopeless after looking at the Sixth Economic and Social Development Plan. But we all cannot lose hopes," he said.

Thanong Po-arn, president of the Labour Congress of Thailand, said workers lacked bargaining power to fight for better working conditions mainly due to the unemployment problem. "If workers protested about conditions, they would have to find a new job. The employers won't care because the labour market is glutted with new work force," he said.

He called for tax reduction on imports of new machines to replace old ones widely used at workplaces and the use of proper protective coverings to prevent accidents as the way to "humanize conditions for Thai workers."

### Phra Pradaeng Industrial saturation



what with. Their personal health can be restored by getting a long rest in the open air or at least sitting on the grass for a few days. The average monthly wage here is 500 baht for the 100,000 workers. The larger the works here, the more the workers are paid. The workers are paid 100-150 baht a month. The workers are paid 100-150 baht a month. The workers are paid 100-150 baht a month.

This year alone, we have submitted 100,000 complaints of wages and benefits. The workers are paid 100-150 baht a month. The workers are paid 100-150 baht a month. The workers are paid 100-150 baht a month.



TEXTILE worker Miss Sangwan: Making ends meet is a problem for most workers here.



FEMALE workers at a television set factory in Phrapradaeng: Larger plants offer more benefits.



LABOUR leader Boonluek: Violation of labour laws a problem.

# Industrial accidents remain a major problem

A TOTAL of 5,746 workers in Phrapradaeng industrial town reported accidents on duty last year and about 16 million baht in workmen's compensation was paid out. Ten workers died as a result of the accident.

Safety in most of the factories isn't always up to the standard. A survey of Samut Prakarn province, of which Phrapradaeng is a part, found that most of the 65,816 workers questioned in a poll said their employers generally followed the labour laws and, minimum safety measures laid down. But violations remain a problem, especially in terms of working hours, breaks, holidays, overtime payments and minimum wage rates, as well as physical check-ups.

Even where physical checkups are offered, they were considered too general for the kind of health hazards that have plagued the industrial town, which is heavily polluted. A total of 87,184 workers in 1,242 textile, weaving and metal plants in Phrapradaeng continue to suffer from severe noise and pollution.

A total of 214 factories, with 7,665 workers, produce plastics, chemicals, water batteries, aluminium acid and other poisonous chemicals. They have not yet installed appropriate or effective safety facilities. Old machines with outdated or obsolete safety features have been responsible for maiming many workers.

Local labour officials predict a more vocal call will be made for effective safety measures. Last year, 145 more plants were set up with an additional 3,031 workers. This year, it is expected that Phrapradaeng will continue to grow despite the congestion and the negative factors that have gone from bad to worse.

For the average worker, however, employment at this industrial centre doesn't necessarily

mean more financial security.

Miss Sangwan Klaisomboon, 27, who has worked for 13 years in a textile factory here, said the longer she works here, the more heavily indebted she becomes.

Where she works, there are 1,150 employees, 90 per cent of whom are female.

"I get 73 baht a day but we don't have too good a welfare system, although the factory does provide living quarters. But then, each room is jammed with 12 persons. And that's for singles only. Married workers have to rent houses outside at about 700 baht a month..."

She said that since the machines operate around the clock, there are cases of workers' hands being cut off every year. A doctor comes to the factory once every three days, two hours each time.

"A new worker is told in no uncertain terms that she can't get pregnant, until she has passed the probation period. She is paid 54 baht a day the first six months. The average annual pay increase is from 1.50 baht to three baht per day," she reported.

Because of the low wages, most workers live from hand to mouth. It has become a common practice for them to borrow money from better paid employees, who charge exorbitant interest rates of 20 baht per month. The rates go up during the high-demand season, especially when schools are open.

"Some workers owe up to 30,000 baht because of the financial squeeze. Most of us here come from Nakhon Ratchasima province," she said.

Miss Sangwan herself is about 4,000 baht in debt. "I got that loan to enable my brother to go to school," she said.

Many workers join chit-fund pools for about

## Phrapradaeng Industrial saturation



500 baht each. Their personal cash-flow problems can be resolved by getting a lump sum from the pools in time of need, although interest can be as high as 500 baht for the right take the pooled funds out.

"The longer one works here, the more one piles up - or so it seems," she complained. Mr Boonsong Vicharana, 61, leader of metal workers union in Phrapradaeng, said two most important problems affecting workers here are the wages and violations of the labour protection law.

"This year alone, we have submitted requests for improvement of wages and benefits at 42 factories. More than 100 cases of nature have been brought to court. We have only about 10 cases. The average minimum wage rates here are between 60 to 65 baht a day, but those working in small textile cookie factories may be paid only 35 baht a day," he said.

SETUP ON LABOUR WANTS  
BETTER WORKING CONDITIONS (Cont.)

Workers lacked bargaining power  
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His view was shared by the president of the Employers' Confederation of Thailand, Chairman Chuanpraditkul, who said the way-out of the problem was to convince employers they would benefit in the long run if working conditions were improved.

"Under the current economic situation, there are no ideal employers who think of workers' welfare first. We therefore have to make them believe that it will be beneficial if their employees work in a better and safer environment," he said.

Chuanpraditkul said workers must be cooperative and the government must have a significant role in the issue.

"The concept of a good working life should be built with cooperation between parties concerned and the government policy must be clearer. I feel hopeful after looking at the Sixth Economic and Social Development Plan. But we all cannot lose hope," he said.

Thannong Pong-arn, president of the Labour Congress of Thailand, said workers lacked bargaining power to fight for better working conditions mainly due to the unemployment problem. "If workers protested about conditions they would have to find a new job. The employers won't care because the labour market is glutted with new work force," he said.

He called for tax reduction on imports of new machines to replace old ones widely used at workplaces and the use of proper protective coverings to prevent accidents as the way to "humanize conditions for Thai workers."

"THE WEAVERS"

Your work-hardened and perspiring hands  
 contain soft flesh still,  
 Your delightful smile is touched with  
 its beads of sweat,  
 Your beauty contains simpleness  
 and shows an open heart.

What determination and constructive influence  
 you exemplify to us.

You are not only cloth weaving,  
 my loves,

You weave life itself - you produce and  
 you intertwine lives,

You weave the pattern of the world, of human fortitude,  
 its history,

You are living streams that feed  
 our parched earth.

Until evening breezes your work remains,  
 with fibers and lives, raw and tough,  
 Lengthening, binding, entwining the fibers of society  
 Echoing your contributions in our remembrance.

Do weave on that long and widening strand of lives,  
 From earth to the twilight stars.  
 Do enbind it with freedom and pride,  
 Making it your and our flag of victory.

Thai Version : Nawarata Pongpaibool,  
 The Book World Gazette, 25 February 1979

English Version : Malinee Wongphanich, M.D., 1983.



LABOUR leader 830  
Violation of labor laws a  
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FEMALE workers at a textile factory in Phrayabang. Labor  
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Safety in most of the factories isn't always up to the standard. A survey of 24 small Phrayabang plants, of which Phrayabang is a part, found that most of the 62,816 workers questioned in a poll said their employers generally followed the labor laws and minimum safety measures laid down. But violations remain a problem, especially in terms of working hours, breaks, holidays, overtime payments and minimum wage rates, as well as physical check-ups.

Even where physical check-ups are offered, they were considered too general for the kind of health hazards that beset the industrial town, which is heavily polluted. A total of 87,184 workers in 1,747 textile, weaving and metal plants in Phrayabang continue to suffer from severe noise and pollution.

A total of 114 factories, with 7,662 workers, produce plastic chemicals, water batteries, aluminum acid and other poisonous chemicals. They have not yet installed appropriate or effective safety facilities. Old machines with outdated or obsolete safety features have been responsible for maiming many workers.

Local labor officials predict a more vocal call will be made for effective safety measures. Last year, 142 more plants were set up with an additional 3,021 workers. This year, it is expected that Phrayabang will continue to grow despite the congestion and the negative factors that have long been hindering work.

For the weaving worker, however, employment in the industrial center doesn't necessarily mean a better life. Miss Sangpaibool, 4,000 baht in debt, "I got that loan to enable my brother to go to school," she said.

Many workers join the fund pools for about 200 baht each. Their personal cash-flow items can be resolved by getting a lump sum from the pool in time of need, although the rate can be as high as 200 baht for the first 200 baht and then 100 baht for the next 200 baht.

"The longer one works here, the more one dies up - or so it seems," she complains.

Mr. Boonrong Vicharn, 61, leader of metal workers union in Phrayabang, said two most important problems affecting workers here are the wages and violations of the protection law.

"This year alone, we have submitted requests for improvement of wages and for at 42 factories. More than 100 cases of nature have been brought to court. We have only about 10 cases. The average minimum wage rate here is between 60 to 65 baht a day, but those working in small textile plants may be paid only 75 baht a day."

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Phrayabang Industrial Saturation  
 Special Nation