

Massachusetts Town Glad To Be Rid of Textile Industry; Doesn't Want It Back

By DICK DEW
UPI Correspondent
Lawrence, Mass. (AP)—The South wanted our textile industry. They got it. I hope they're satisfied.

This statement is heard frequently in Lawrence, a textile town "bred" in the 1920s.



ICE MAN—Marion Myers, found in ice, took an experimental survival suit designed to keep a man alive if he falls into Arctic waters. The suit was tested at the Naval Air Materiel Center in Philadelphia, and is intended to keep a man alive for an hour at temperatures of 50 degrees below zero.

ground" before World War I. In those years, it was the largest woolen and worsted center in the world.

Today, not a major mill is left. Lawrence does not want them back.

This city of 76,000 is close to completing an eight-year recovery program. At a peak, textile mills here employed 60,000 persons. When the last of its major textile mills folded in 1932, the town plunged into a depression.

More than 25,000 were unemployed. What followed was a program of diversification which has brought in more than 70 different firms with more than 20,000 jobs.

Unemployment now is down to 5,000, with many of the unemployed being listed as "chronic jobless."

Other Skills Evident

There are plenty of skilled former textile workers around, doing a variety of jobs. The younger group, many of them women who were highly-skilled menders, have moved into new jobs. The sprawling Westinghouse plants in the area took several thousand and later reported the women menders were "very quick" to pick up the dexterity needed for assembling small parts.

Most of the older textile workers, the veteran loom specialists, retired. The middle age group took anything it could find. They are running elevators, working as janitors, driving taxis.

Mayor Thomas J. Buckley, key figure in the city's amazing "operation bootstrap" recovery program, admits Lawrence might accept new textile industry if it was forthcoming, but with one big qualification.

Buckley, who himself worked in the mills as a boy, said, "We would take any good firm," heavily emphasizing the "good."

Another Official Agrees

John P. O'Malley, full-time director of the city's industrial redevelopment committee, agrees.

"We have a more stable industry now, a more diversified economy. Our economy now overrides strikes and we don't have any of them."

"Our unemployed today are mostly unskilled workers. If a skilled man is walking the streets today, there's something wrong with him."

Ralph D. Arivelle, business agent of the local Textile Workers of America AFL-CIO Union sums up in two expressive words and a shrug:

"What's left?"

"I know what's happening in the South. It happened here. A company gives wage increases. It feels it should get increased production. Southern Manufacturers recognize organized workers have more chance of gaining through organization. They called it 'encroachment' here. The companies feel they should fight unions. They fear them. But the union only goes in for what it feels the worker need and deserve. That's all there is to it."

Union Breeding Ground

Lawrence as a textile union breeding ground before World War I. Workers struck for the first time in 1912, following organization by the Industrial Workers of the World.

One woman was killed when police fired on a mob at the height of a violent seven-month strike. The workers won a major victory and for the first time established collective bargaining in the industry.

The second major Lawrence was in 1919. It lasted six weeks. Workers struck, seeking pay hikes of 12.5 per cent. The mills eventually paid increases of 25 to 35 per cent. Workers won all concessions in a brief 1921 strike.

The biggest walkouts came in 1931. In February, the mill

hands returned after a short strike in which nothing was gained.

Workers Lost Strike

In October, in protest against wage cuts, the workers joined the National Textile Workers Union. Manufacturers, who had agreed to early demands, refused any concessions after the workers demanded even more. The strikers finally returned to work without any concessions at all and soon were given another 10 per cent cut.

Against this backdrop, deterioration of Lawrence's textile industry began. It was gradual, brought on by rising costs and increasing competition, mostly from overseas but also from the South. Competing mills with lower costs were able to undercut the Lawrence mill prices and gradually force them out of business.

Most of the region's largest mills did not transfer to the South. They were liquidated on the spot.

Mill machinery including thousands of looms were left here. Much of the equipment, too old to save, has been pledged to scrap metal—a mute, rusting reminder of what once was the textile industry in Lawrence.

Portland Set for Rose Festival, Centennial Show

Portland—(AP)—The city of Portland was just about all set today for its Rose Festival and this year's added attraction—the 100-day Oregon Centennial Exposition.

Next Wednesday is the key day for both events. That's the day the queen of the 1959 Rose Festival will be crowned and also the day for the opening of the Centennial Exposition in north Portland.

The Rose Festival this year again will feature the South-west Park blocks center. The fun-filled Merrykhana parade will start things off Tuesday night with the grand floral parade on Saturday, June 13. High Noon Opening

But the one they're really talking about is the Centennial Exposition.

At high noon next Wednesday Gov. Mark Hatfield will press a button, a rocket burst will be touched off and there will be a 100-gun salute.

The old P-I building, south of the Interstate bridge was converted into the Centennial center. And officials today pronounced all major construction work completed.

"We're in the clean up stage," said John Hyatt, Exposition operations director. "Not even the weather can stop us now," he said.

Mural Left Alone

They're calling the Centennial Exposition the biggest show on the West Coast since the San Francisco World's Fair.

The Centennial Commission has decided to leave a 500-foot mural done by a local artist as it is. Some had objected that it was too drab; but others preferred the subdued colors. It's located on the east end of the main building.

As for rain, the Commission is prepared. It brought \$30,000 worth of rain insurance Wednesday. If one-tenth of an inch of rain should fall in Portland between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. either Friday, Saturday or Sunday of the opening week the state would get \$10,000 for each day it happened.

Portland—(AP)—The Bureau of Land Management said today a weed for which there are no known methods of control has invaded Malheur and Baker counties in eastern Oregon. The weed is called Medusa-head tyegrass.

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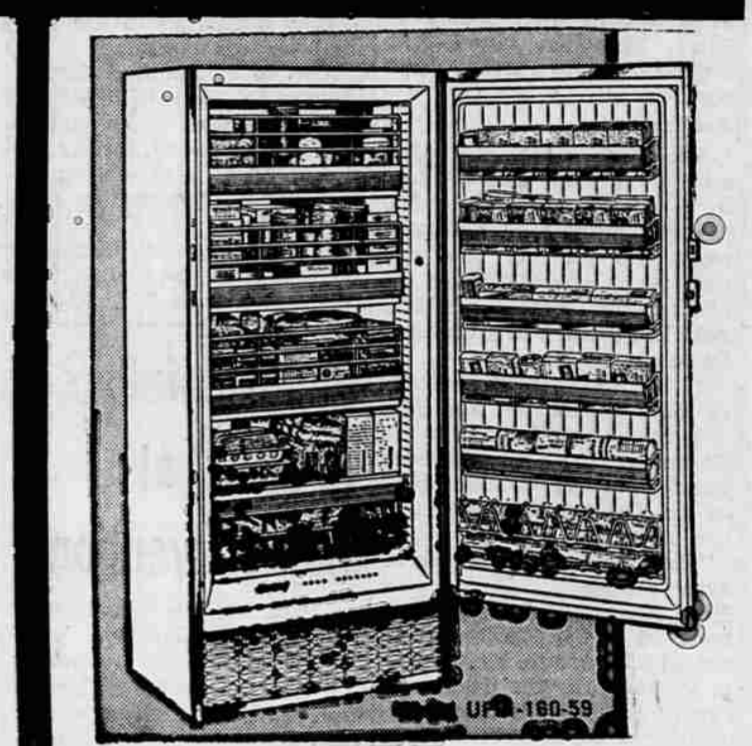
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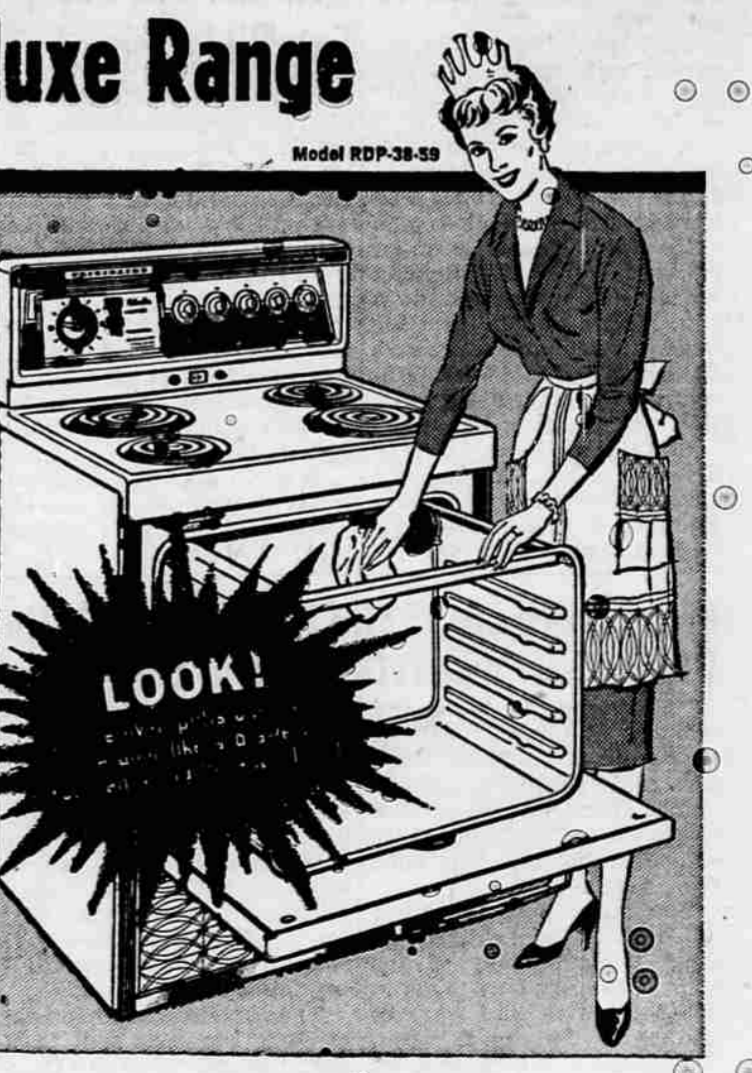
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