

THE INDUSTRIAL SAFETY MOVEMENT

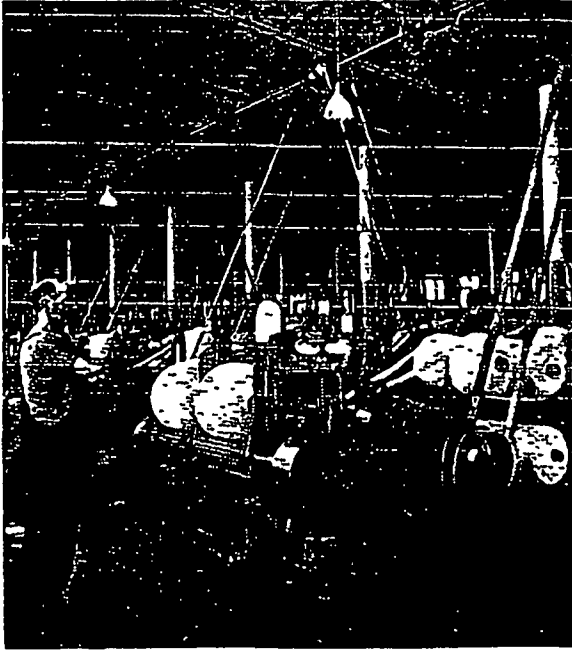


Fig. 1-4. 1912 photo in a woolen mill shows guarded gears, but drive belts from line shafts are left unguarded. First law in U.S. compelling guarding of dangerous machinery was passed in Massachusetts in 1877. Inspection force with authority behind it was also created.

booming ahead into new fields and into new and unimagined production. The factories were almost unbelievably superior productive instruments as compared to the small handicraft shops which had preceded them.

But they were often inferior to their predecessors in terms of human values—contentment, health, and safety.

These deficiencies were not the result of management villainy. They were probably inevitable. The tools of mass production had to be invented and applied before anyone could begin to imagine the problems they would create, and the problems had to be known before corrective measures could be considered, tested, and proved.

In the meantime, public opinion, management thinking, and the law all reflected conditions of the past when the worker was an independent craftsman, or else worked almost as a member of the family of the owner of a small shop.

In large industrial centers, the ugly results of industrial accidents and poor industrial health conditions became more and more obvious. Voices of protest were raised.

Though there were employers who hid their heads in the sand and denied the existence of the problem, wiser management men began to try to meet specific aspects of it.

As early as 1867, Massachusetts had begun to use factory inspectors, and ten years later that state had a law requiring the guarding of dangerous machinery.

From 1898 on, there were various efforts to make the employer financially liable for accidents. In 1911, the first effective workmen's compensation act was passed in Wisconsin^{*}—to be followed by a rush of similar laws in many other states.

There had also been progress on the technical side of the problem. The railroads, which, perhaps, had suffered the most adverse publicity from accidents, adopted the air brake and the automatic coupler well before the turn of the century. Some progress was also made in such matters as guarding and fire prevention.

^{*} Authorities differ as to the first legally acceptable compensation law, some giving this credit to New Jersey.