

Threads-Incorporated and District 16 of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, AFL-CIO, Petitioner. Case 11-RC-3280

June 28, 1971

DECISION AND ORDER

**BY CHAIRMAN MILLER AND MEMBERS JENKINS
AND KENNEDY**

Upon a petition duly filed under Section 9(c) of the National Labor Relations Act, as amended, a hearing was held before Hearing Officer Donald L. Dotson.

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 3(b) of the National Labor Relations Act, as amended, the National Labor Relations Board has delegated its powers in connection with this case to a three-member panel.

The Hearing Officer's rulings made at the hearing are free from prejudicial error and are hereby affirmed.

Upon the entire record in this case, the Board finds:

1. The Employer is engaged in commerce within the meaning of the Act.

2. The Petitioner is a labor organization claiming to represent certain employees of the Employer.

3. No question affecting commerce exists concerning the representation of employees of the Employer within the meaning of Section 9(c)(1) and Section 2(6) and (7) of the Act, for the following reasons:

The Petitioner seeks a departmental unit comprised of all production employees of the Employer's wet process department (also known as the dye house) in a thread manufacturing mill at Gastonia, North Carolina. The Employer contends that the requested unit is based purely upon the extent of the Petitioner's present organization, after an unsuccessful attempt to organize the entire plant, and that in any event the requested unit is an inappropriate one for collective bargaining. Neither party has filed a brief. There is no bargaining history.

The exact number of employees employed at the Employer's Gastonia, North Carolina, plant (the only one here involved) is not disclosed by the record. Its operations are organized into a number of departments, including scheduling, storage, wet process (dye house), synthetic, winding, quilling, glazing, inspecting, labeling, wrapping, and shipping, where cotton and synthetic fibers are used primarily to manufacture thread. About 95 percent of all fiber utilized by the Employer goes through its wet process department, while the remaining 5 percent goes to a winding department to be wound in natural form or to the glazing room for polishing and drying. All fiber moving through the plant is accompanied by processing instructions issued by a scheduling department to the storage area, from which the yarn is released for manufacturing. The wet process department operates on three shifts and has

about 85 employees in four main sections, each with its own supervisor: package dyeing; warp dyeing; finishing, mercerizing and bleaching; and a laboratory. It occupies a 35,000 square foot area which is not completely enclosed but which is separated from the quilling and winding departments by a wall. Various classifications of employees work in the wet process department, and such employees regularly interchange with employees in the Employer's other departments. Loaders obtain yarn from a prestorage area, manually load it on trucks and position it near the dye machines. Dye machine operators, supplied by dye weighers or by employees in a mezzanine drug room, put the yarn into the dye machines either in packages or in large steel baskets, where it is dyed, and later dried by drying and vacuum machine operators. The processed yarn is then sent to finishing machines where it is washed and dried by finishing machine operators. Haulers then carry the yarn to the quilling department for further handling.

About half of the wet process department employees have duties which are manual and routine, relating to the repetitive process of placing yarn in racks or holders for the dyeing and drying operation, while most of the remainder are machine operators. Employees in the wet process department and other departments of the Employer's plant achieve proficiency in a period ranging from a few days to about 2 weeks depending upon their classification, the machine operators requiring the longer period. No particular skills or educational qualifications are required of employees in any department. Employees are all hired by the personnel department and, after interview by department heads, assigned where needed. The machines in the wet process department (dye house) are maintained by employees from other departments. Starting rates and vacation benefits in the wet process department are the same as in the Employer's other departments. Yarn originating in the storage area flows through the wet process department on a continuous basis, and a primary function of the department's single supervisor is to coordinate product flow with the other departments. A work stoppage in the wet process department would cause other departments to cease operating in a period ranging from a few hours to a few days depending upon the department and backlog of material there available.

The Petitioner has not produced evidence of the existence of departmental units of wet process (dye house) employees at other industrial thread manufacturing plants, but contends that such a unit should be found to be an appropriate one at the Employer's plant because the employees sought to be included in it constitute a functional and homogeneous grouping of employees in a well defined department which is distinct from the Employer's other departments. Petitioner, while showing that in a number of textile plants it primarily represents units of machine shop employees

in maintenance departments, concedes that it represents no separate unit of wet process (dye house) employees in thread manufacturing mills.

Wet process department (dye house) employees have relatively short training periods. Whether they perform manual or machine work, their duties are repetitive in nature and unskilled. The functions they perform are closely integrated with those of employees in other departments whom Petitioner would exclude from the requested unit, as is evident from the careful scheduling which is required to keep all departments operating on a continuous basis, and the impact upon other departments which a stoppage in the dye house creates. Moreover, no departmental units of wet process employees have been shown to exist in other plants manufacturing industrial thread. In view of the foregoing circum-

stances, we find that the wet process department employees do not constitute a distinct, separate group of employees such as the Board finds appropriate for representation on either a departmental or craft basis. Accordingly, we find that the requested departmental unit of such employees is inappropriate. As the Petitioner does not seek to represent a plantwide unit, or any other appropriate unit, we shall dismiss the petition.¹

ORDER

It is hereby ordered that the petition in Case 11-RC-3280 be, and it hereby is, dismissed.

¹ See *Hanes Hosiery Mills Company*, 133 NLRB 760, 762,