Midwest was estimated at $223. But in New England it was $166. In the 1920's, Boston ranked in the top three cities in the U.S. in family income. Today it is lucky to be in the top thirty -- yet it has the highest cost of living of any major city in the continental U.S.

But in the South, the Southwest, and Puerto Rico, especially for unskilled workers, wages are even lower. And the indirect benefits, paid the workers in the form of education, housing, hospitals, parks, are lower still.

THE FLIGHT OF TEXTILES

The flight of the textile industry from New England is the best example of the devastation the capitalists have wrought upon Massachusetts by running away.

When Massachusetts was booming, textiles was its biggest industry. At the time of the great Lawrence strike of 1912, there were 250,000 textile workers in New England. With 35,000 workers Lawrence was the biggest mill town in the world. After the victory of the Lawrence workers and the unionization of the Northern mills, capitalist development of the Southern mills began in earnest. But as late as 1947 there were still 280,000 textile workers here in New England. By 1973 there were only 78,000. Today there are fewer.

As unionization of the mills raised the standard of living of the Northern workers -- and raised labor costs to the capitalists -- the banks and brokers simply moved their money into Southern mills, and the Northern mills closed or moved South themselves. The J.P. Stevens Company is a good example. The oldest textile firm in the country, Stevens started in North Andover. But now it has 82 plants and 45,000 workers in the South and no significant plants here. In 1951, when the textile workers union struck a Stevens mill in eastern Connecticut, Stevens simply closed the mill. After decades of such closures, eastern Connecticut is now a depressed area with one of the country's highest unemployment rates -- a little bit of Appalachia in New England.

Labor in the South isn't docile. From the 1930's there have been long and bloody attempts to organize unions and pry contracts out of the companies. But aided by repressive anti-labor laws such as the so-called "right-to-work" laws, the capitalists have used the long arm of the state to forcefully and effectively kill the unions. And when that didn't work, they have used their illegal gangs like the KKK to harass and sometimes kill the unionists.

Additionally, unhampered by a strong labor movement demanding the kind of social benefits achieved in the North, Southern politicians have delivered tax rebates, tax holidays, paid-for factories, and other "inducements" to industry locating in their areas.

TREND INCREASING

What is true of textiles is also true of shoes, though the shoe industry has left Massachusetts much more recently. It not only went South, but to the neo-colonial countries under the domination of U.S. capital like Korea and Taiwan. The capitalists have moved their apparel industry, too, to such countries and to the South, Southwest, and Puerto Rico. They are doing the same with electronics. Even the machine industry, long thought to be one of the most stable of New England industries, is feeling the pull of runaway shops.

The trend has been increasing since WWII. In 1958, Massachusetts had the third highest proportion of people working in manufacturing of any state in the country. Only twelve years later, in 1970, it had dropped to fourteenth. Between 1950 and 1959, Lawrence, once the woollen and worsted center of the world, lost 15,000 jobs in textiles, 80 percent. Now Lawrence, Lowell, Brockton, New Bedford are factory ghost-towns.

Boston's economic makeup reflects this flight, too. One third of the people working in Boston now work in the service industries, and wholesale-retail trade is the second largest Boston employer. These kinds of jobs are generally low-paying and non-unionized. In industry, jobs are scarce.