

30,000 jobless or under-employed ^{30 Dec 1974}

About 30,000 plastics workers in the Colony are now either unemployed or under-employed, according to the findings of a survey conducted this month by the Hongkong and Kowloon Rubber and Plastics Workers General Union.

The union's chairman, Mr Fung Kam-sui, in reporting the results of the survey to a meeting yesterday, said the income of regularly-employed workers had declined by 23.99 per cent while that of the under-employed had dropped by 56 per cent.

He added that in a survey of 52 plastics factories, it was found that the number of workers employed by them had dropped from 10,114 at the end of 1973 to only 6,446 this month.

The factories were now

operating at only 30 per cent capacity, and the average number of working days per month for those still employed came to only 16.5 each.

Mr Fung said union officials had also contacted 1,161 workers in industry individually and found 311 of them unemployed, 475 under-employed and 375 regularly employed.

He said that under such unfavourable economic conditions, the Government's move to increase rents at housing estates was an untimely one.

Several unionists also urged the Government to improve the efficiency of the Public Assistance Scheme administration to aid needy workers.

One official cited the case of a Kowloon worker who had yet to receive a cent although he had applied for aid under the scheme more than a month ago. He said the worker's family was on the "brink of starvation." Also, his wife was in hospital and his children were unable to attend school.

The Hongkong and Kowloon Machine Sewing Workers General Union, on its part, said that 50 families of textile workers had already asked for public assistance as well as a reduction of rents for their housing estate flats.

The union estimated that 30 per cent of apparel workers were now unemployed or under-employed, with their income reduced by about 35 per cent. However, the union did not explain how it arrived at these figures.

Meanwhile, textile industry sources reported that despite the depressed state of the American economy, U.S. orders for Hongkong-made garments had begun to pick up in the last quarter of the year.

Their remarks are supported by figures obtained from official sources which show that Hongkong exported 27,910,192 sq yds of cotton garments and 20,861,105 sq yds of man-made fibre apparel to the U.S. in October-November this year compared with 24,947,355 sq yds and 19,868,017 sq yds respectively for the same period last year.