



ROYAL COMMISSION  
ON  
LABOUR IN INDIA.

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EVIDENCE.

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and  
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## TERMS OF REFERENCE

"To inquire into and report on the existing conditions of labour in industrial undertakings and plantations in British India, on the health, efficiency and standard of living of the workers, and on the relations between employers and employed, and to make recommendations."

NOTE.—"Industrial undertaking" for the purpose of the Commission is interpreted as in Article I of the Washington Hours Convention, which is as follows :—

"For the purpose of this Convention, the term 'industrial undertaking' includes particularly :—

- "(a) Mines, quarries, and other works for the extraction of minerals from the earth.
- "(b) Industries in which articles are manufactured, altered, cleaned, repaired, ornamented, finished, adapted for sale, broken up or demolished, or in which materials are transformed; including shipbuilding and the generation, transformation and transmission of electricity or motive power of any kind.
- "(c) Construction, reconstruction, maintenance, repair, alteration, or demolition of any building, railway, tramway, harbour, dock, pier, canal, inland waterway, road, tunnel, bridge, viaduct, sewer, drain, well, telegraphic or telephonic installation, electrical undertaking, gaswork, waterwork or other work of construction, as well as the preparation for or laying the foundations of any such work or structure.
- "(d) Transport of passengers or goods by road, rail, sea, or inland waterway, including the handling of goods at docks, quays, wharves or warehouses, but excluding transport by hand."

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The competent authority in each country shall define the line of division which separates industry from commerce and agriculture.

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## LIST OF SUBJECTS.

## I. Recruitment.

- (1) *Origin of Labour.*
  - (i) Extent of migration.
  - (ii) Causes of particular streams of migration.
  - (iii) Changes in recent years.
- (2) *Contact with villages.*
  - (i) Extent and frequency of return.
  - (ii) Extent of permanent labour force.
- (3) *Methods of recruitment.*
  - (i) Existing methods.
  - (ii) Possible improvement.
  - (iii) Public employment agencies.
    - (a) Desirability of establishing.
    - (b) Possibility of practical schemes.
- (4) *Extent and effects of disturbance of family life.*
- (5) *Recruitment of seamen.*
  - (i) Existing practice.
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  - (iii) Suggestions for improvement.
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  - (ii) Administration of present system.
  - (iii) Composition and working of Assam Labour Board.
  - (iv) Defects of existing Act and system.
  - (v) Possible substitutes.
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  - (i) Extent and character.
  - (ii) Extent to which caused by—
    - (a) Retrenchment or dismissals.
    - (b) Voluntary retirement.
    - (c) Other causes.
  - (iii) Possible methods of alleviating and remedying distress.
  - (iv) Unemployment Insurance.
  - (v) Application of International Conventions relating to unemployment.
- (8) *Labour "turnover."\**
  - (i) Average duration of employment.
  - (ii) Extent of casual employment.
  - (iii) Absenteeism.
    - (a) Extent, character and causes.
    - (b) Seasonal or otherwise.
    - (c) Time and wages lost.
- (9) *Apprentices Act, 1850.*  
Value of.

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\* This word should be read as indicating generally the changes in composition of the labour staff of an undertaking.

**II. Staff Organisation.**

- (10) *Details of organisation, administrative and departmental.*
- (11) *Selection of managing staff.*
- (12) *Recruitment and training of supervising staff, superior and subordinate.*
  - (i) *Methods in force.*
  - (ii) *Facilities for training and promotion of workmen.*
- (13) *Relations between staff and rank and file.*
  - (i) *Relations generally.*
  - (ii) *Value and defects of system of employing jobbers.*
  - (iii) *Works Committees : their constitution, extent and achievements.*
  - (iv) *Works Councils and Industrial Councils.*
- (14) *Timekeeping, piecework, contract and attendance registers.*
  - (i) *How and by whom kept and checked.*
  - (ii) *How and by whom wages actually paid to workers.*
- (15) *Contractors as intermediaries.*
  - (i) *Extent and character of work given on contract.*
  - (ii) *Extent of sub-contracting.*
  - (iii) *Control exercised over working conditions.*
  - (iv) *Effects.*

**III. Housing.**

- (16) *Extent to which housing is provided.*
  - (i) *By employers.*
  - (ii) *By Government or other public agency.*
  - (iii) *By private landlords.*
  - (iv) *By workers themselves.*
- (17) *Facilities for acquisition of land for workers' houses.*
- (18) *Nature of accommodation provided in each class.*
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  - (ii) *In relation to best type from health point of view.*
  - (iii) *Provision made for lighting, conservancy and water supply.*
- (19) *Utilisation by workers of accommodation available.*
- (20) *Rent-rates in various classes.*
- (21) *Special problems arising in connection with various classes of housing.*
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  - Occupation of employers' houses by tenants in other employ ;*
  - Eviction.*
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  - Methods of registration.*

- (iii) Working conditions—
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  - (b) at home.
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  - (iii) Possibility of legislation.

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  - (iv) Extent to which used.
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- (39) *Possibility and desirability of a Statutory Miners' Welfare Fund.*

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- (46) *Accident prevention (including "Safety First" propaganda).*
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## **IX. Hours.**

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- (55) *Hours worked per week and per day.*
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  - (ii) Actual, i.e. including overtime.
  - (iii) Spreadover, i.e. relation between hours worked and hours during which worker is on call.
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- (57) *Effect of 60 hours restriction—*
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- (58) *Effect of daily limit.*
- (59) *Possibility of reduction in maxima.*
- (60) *Intervals.*
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  - (iv) Number of holidays given.
- (61) *Day of rest.*
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  - (ii) Suitability of the law.
- (62) *Exempting provisions and the use made of them.*

### **B. Mines.**

- (63) *Hours worked per day and per week.*
  - (i) Normal, i.e. as determined by custom or agreement.
  - (ii) Actual, i.e. including overtime.
  - (iii) Spreadover, i.e. relation between hours worked and hours during which worker is on call.



- (64) *Days worked per week.*
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#### C. Railways.

- (73) *Hours worked per week and per day.*
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  - (ii) Actual, i.e. including overtime.
  - (iii) Spreadover, i.e. relation between hours worked and hours during which worker is on call.
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53	Mr. W. E. Bentley	Manager, Buckingham Mill, Madras.		
54	Dr. G. P. Raghaviah	Medical Officer, Carnatic Mill.	132—154	166—190, G.-1820.
55	Miss M. Sage, M.A.	Joint Principal, The Buckingham and Carnatic School, Madras		
56	Mr. K. O. Anthoni ..	Secretary, The Buckingham & Carnatic Mills Workpeople Welfare Committee.		

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62	Mr. B. Shiv Rao ..	Representatives of the Madras Labour Union.	164—187, 187—203	218—241, G.-2438.
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71	Mr. W. M. Browning	Burma Shell Oil Storage and Distributing Co. of India, Ltd.	203—211	283—206, G.-3088.
72	Mr. C. E. Wood, M.L.C.	of Messrs. Parry & Co., Ltd.		
73	Mr. F. G. Luker ..	of Messrs. Addison & Co., Ltd.		

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75	Col. R. McCarrison, C.I.E.; I.M.S.	Director, Nutritional Research, Pasteur Institute, Coonoor.	225—238	302—307, G.-3305.	
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93	Thangamani ..	Woman worker, Pachamalai Estate (Anamalai Hills).	..	333—334, G.-3638.	

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98	Mr. J. E. Sampson	Manager, Pachamalai Estate, Valparai, (Anamalai Hills).	..	338—351, G.-3680.
99	Mr. J. H. Ireland Jones	} Representatives of the Anamalai Planters' Association.	..	351—373, G.-3689.
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112	Mr. Eric Johnson ..	Group Manager, Mudis Group of Estates.		
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7	Mr. H. D. Sinclair	Chief Transportation Superintendent and Traffic Manager.				
8	Mr. R. D. Thompson	Chief Mechanical Engineer.				
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10	Mr. G. Charlton ..	Deputy Agent.				
11	Mr. W. E. Marsh ..	Press Superintendent.				
12	Mr. N. Grayson ..	Architect.				
13	Mr. Syed Madhar ..	Representatives of the Madras and Southern Mahratta Railway Employees' Union.			549—564	522—536, K.-5292.
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15	Mr. S. M. Sundrachiari					
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17	Mr. Thoman ..					
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21	Mr. P. Rothera ..	Agent.	The South Indian Railway 1—358	537—560, K.-5446.
22	Mr. A. H. Smyth ..	Chief Transportation Superintendent.		
23	Mr. H. A. Reid ..	Deputy Chief Mechanical Engineer.		
24	Dr. C. E. R. Norman	Chief Medical Officer.		
25	Mr. A. Srinivasa Iyer.	Assistant Auditor.		
26	Mr. P. Govindaraj	Assistant Secretary to the Agent.		
27	Mr. T. V. K. Naidu	Representatives of the South Indian Railway Labour Union, Trinopoly.	564—569 582—588	560—564, K.-5736.
28	Mr. S. Mohan Swarna.			
29	Mr. Mudalamuthu Mudaliar			
30	Mr. S. V. Aiyar ..	President, M. S. M. Rly. Non-Workshop Employees' Union, Madras.	569—582	....
31	Mr. Ernest Kirk ..	Representatives of the South Indian Railway Labour Union, Coimbatore.	588—590	565—571, K.-5819.
32	Mr. A. Ekambaram			
33	Mr. P. S. Krishnaswamy Iyer			
34	Mr. A. Sundramurthy			
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39	Mr. Dias ..			
40	Mr. Thomman ..			
41	Mr. S. Hockins ..			
42	Mr. Freeman ..			
43	Mr. French ..	Of the South Indian Railway		
44	Mr. S. Guruswami	Assistant Secretary, All-India Railwaymen's Federation, Berhampore.	634—662	579—592, K.-5995.

# Minutes of Evidence taken before the Royal Commission on Labour in India.

## MADRAS PRESIDENCY.

### Eighty-Fourth Meeting.

#### VIZAGAPATAM.

Wednesday, 26th February 1930.

#### PRESENT :

Sir ALEXANDER MURRAY, Kt., C.B.E. (*Presiding*).

Mr. A. G. CLOW, C.I.E., I.C.S.

Mr. N. M. JOSHI, M.L.A.

Mr. KABIR-UD-DIN AHMED, M.L.A. Dr. (Miss) LAZARUS (*Lady Assessor*).

Mr. A. DIBDIN (*Joint Secretary*).

Mr. T. C. AUSTIN, I.C.S., District Magistrate, Ganjam.

G-1. *Sir Alexander Murray* : What has been your experience as an officer, and as regards labour, both before and after your connection with the Assam Labour Board ?—I had no experience as regards labour before I joined the Board, because I was in Travancore for 2½ years and in Bangalore for 2 or 3 years.

G-2. When you were in the Travancore area were you connected with the recruiting to Ceylon ?—No.

G-3. Since you have left the Assam Labour Board where have you been stationed ?—Ganjam, where I have been since July last year.

G-4. In your memorandum you make a reference to the fact that coolies benefit by going to Assam. What do you actually mean by that ?—They benefit both financially and by the wider outlook they obtain. They get more independent and more sophisticated. Most of the coolies who go from this district are from *Jungli* tribes, and are very simple people. They go to Assam, get into contact with other people, and get a wider knowledge of the world.

G-5. Why does a labourer here seek to leave the district and go elsewhere ? Is it due to economic pressure or to special circumstances in his own country, or is it due to the attractions of Assam as painted by the recruiters who come down here ?—A good deal of it is due to the pictures painted by the recruiters, but it is mainly due to economic factors.

G-6. Sir George Paddison in his memorandum states that wages given in different districts vary a great deal, and that in the agency tracts of Ganjam and Viziz the average for an ordinary unskilled labourer is only about 2 annas a day. Is that the case?—Generally. Wages are going up to a certain extent.

G-7. This was written in 1926. He goes on to say that it is difficult to get at what the actual wages are in view of perquisites and other things, and he makes the statement: "Without vouching for the absolute accuracy of the figures it may be taken that an ordinary labourer gets between 5 and 6 annas, poughmen between 6 and 7 annas, and those engaged in reaping and harvesting about 7 annas". Would you like to express any opinion as to that?—Is that dealing with the agency tracts?

G-8. That is Madras generally. What would you say are the wages in the agency tracts?—Recently there has been a D. P. W. Division opened in the agency, and they have been engaging the coolies on higher wages than Government used to do. In Ganjam there is a system called "*vetti*" labour. The people pay no assessments, in-return for which they must be prepared to do work for Government, such as road work. The general system is to pay a certain sum either per house or per village. It works out at 2 or 3 annas a head.

G-9. The *vetti* system applies to Government work. Is not here another system adopted as far as private employment is concerned, called the "*goti*" system?—I do not know anything about that.

G-10. Sir George Paddison says the only way of escaping from the forms of servitude such as the *vetti*, the *goti* and other systems, is emigration. Do you think that this tied system of labour induces any flow of emigration?—To a certain extent the word "servitude" applies more to the treatment by the headmen of the villages to their own people than it does to Government. If a certain length of road is given to a certain village, the villagers make a kind of gala of it; they enjoy it. But they have a lot of work to do for their headmen which is more in the nature of servitude.

G-11. Does the attraction of steady employment all the year round, instead of more or less casual employment, weigh with the workers in going to Assam or Burma?—Probably. Thousands go on a famine year.

G-12. That would show that economic reasons do weigh considerably?—There is no doubt about that at all.

G-13. Sir George Paddison also makes a reference about the benefits that could be obtained if there was improved water supply, sanitation, housing and other things of that description. I think he is speaking of Madras itself, but do you think the people who come back from the tea gardens return with any improved ideas as regards standards of living or standards of comfort?—I cannot say I have noticed it.

G-14. In your memorandum you say "I can think of nothing than the present system" of recruitment. What do you mean by that?—I mean that the coolie should be recruited by somebody who knows the conditions in the garden to which the coolie is going.

G-15. Would you like to express an opinion as to the relative merits of *sardari* recruiting as against any other form of recruiting?—I think the *sardari* is the best system, but *sardari* recruitment cannot be of any use in opening up new districts.

G-16. What do you suggest should be done in that connection?—The employer should be allowed to engage recruiters who are men of substance, or respectable men—preferably men who have some knowledge of the gardens.

G-17. You can get local agents, men of substance, who would know the conditions obtaining locally; but would you attach importance to the necessity for having, in the case of those recruiters, also knowledge of the conditions in the gardens in order that he might give a fair statement of the position?—I think it is very important.

G-18. For how long were you attached to the Assam Labour Board?—I was Chairman from 1924 to 1928.

G-19. Did you follow up the labour after it got to the gardens?—Yes. I very often went to Assam and stayed on the gardens, and the managers showed me how their labour was treated.

G-20. But that was not part of the administration?—No.

G-21. You did that because you wanted to have a correct understanding of the position in the tea gardens?—So that, when I went to the recruiting countries, I could state that I had been up to Assam and could tell the people of the conditions there.

G-22. One of the objections taken to the present system is that it is too costly. The Indian Tea Association also want more freedom in recruitment. It has been suggested that the recruiting operations of the *sardars* are hampered by the restrictions which have been placed on them in the way of propaganda and in other directions?—I think that is true. The Madras Government will not let any planter go outside the depots without a permit. The Bihar Government are very strict in interpreting the word "assist". They think "assist" goes much further than other people think it does. A missionary who suggested to his congregation that they should go to Assam was held to "assist".

G-23. As a result of your four years' experience, what would you suggest in connection with assistance and propaganda?—I think it should be very much more liberally interpreted, as long as there is nothing underhand; and that can easily be found out by the local agent.

G-24. What is your view with regard to voluntary emigration?—If a man wants to go I do not see why he should be stopped. If a man comes in, and is willing to go, and brings his wife and family, there seems no objection. I do not see why the local agent himself should not recruit and send him up in that case.

G-25. It has been suggested that the Assam Labour Board should be abolished. Mr. King suggests that the Tea Districts Labour Association is too much of a monopoly, and that they have got into their own hands practically all the recruitment to Assam and also to the Docars?—That is true.

G-26. When you were Chairman of the Assam Labour Board did you have applications from other agencies to be allowed to recruit alongside of, if not in

competition with, the Tea Districts Labour Association? Can you recall any instances where you turned down applications?—I have a general impression that we did turn down such applications.

G-27. For what reason?—Because we thought that the Tea Districts Labour Association was the best recruiting agency and that it was better it should be in their hands than in the hands of an agent working by himself.

G-28. Mr. King also took objection to the Assam Labour Board. He said it was too large, and that there was too much of the planter or tea industry element on it?—I agree with that.

G-29. You have suggested that there should be representatives from the recruiting districts on the Board. What is your actual suggestion in that connection?—I have not worked it out. It would probably make it too unwieldy to have one representative from each district.

G-30. It has been suggested that labour ought to be represented?—I looked upon myself as representing labour on the Board as far as possible. I cannot imagine a labourer on the Board. I do not think anybody could be found with sufficient experience.

G-31. Mr. King objected to the local agent serving two masters; that is to say, the local agent represents the Tea District Labour Association and also the interests of the Assam Labour Board, and the Government as far as registration is concerned. What is your opinion about that?—I have always found it work all right, but it might depend on the personality of the local agent.

G-32. Mr. King was prepared to accept the suggestion that the Assam Labour Board might be abolished, but he said that they would have to entrust the registration of the coolies to a staff of registering officers under the Central Government, with a Controller of Supervisors. What is your opinion on that proposal?—I should not like it very much. I would rather have something like the Board continued. This would be an entirely Government affair.

G-33. He makes provision for the Tea Districts Labour Association or other organization continuing the actual recruiting and forwarding. He merely thinks that the functions of the organization he proposes should be the registration. In other words, that the registration should be taken out of the hands of local agents and put into the hands of a Government organization. What is your view on that proposal?—I should not like it. It would make it too impersonal. I would like something in the nature of the Assam Labour Board, which is representative of all the different interests, but a smaller body. I do not see the objection to the present system whereby the local agent serves two masters.

G-34. The main objection to the present system is the expense of recruiting. Do you think that the pooling of the recruiting expenses would help to reduce the expenses in any way? Would it help to reduce the competition between tea gardens?—I doubt if that will ever be done away with.

G-35. Did you, as Chairman, Assam Labour Board, attempt to controvert the amount that was paid to the recruiting *sardar* when he arrived in the district, or the bonus that was paid to him when he landed on the garden?—It did not come within my province at all. I did notice the differences.

G-36. Can you make a suggestion as to how the expenses of recruitment can be reduced?—I can only suggest that it is a matter in which the industry should combine and agree.

G-37. Have you any views on the question as to how soon a tea garden labourer can become suitable as a *sardar*?—I think a year at least, but I have found cases in which men have been sent down after three days.

G-38. We have had it suggested that a lot of these men who come back so very quickly as *sardars* are in collusion with other recruiting *sardars*; that the bonus which is paid in respect of a man when he gets to the garden is considerable, and that it pays the recruiter and somebody else to enter into collusion to be recruited for several gardens. Did you come in contact with that at all?—I remember one or two cases like that.

G-39. If it were made a standing order that people should not come back as *sardars* inside of a year, would that help to do away with the abuse? Certainly.

G-40. You said, as one of the reasons for supporting the *sardari* system, that the labourer when he gets to the garden works alongside his *sardar*, and therefore the *sardar* cannot paint the picture of the conditions too rosy?—That is not my statement, but I quite agree with it.

G-41. As to the merits of short-term as against long-term recruitment, have you any opinion to express?—I think it is a matter for the industry.

G-42. It has been suggested that many labourers going to tea gardens do not know that the Workmen's Breach of Contract Act (Act XIII of 1859) has been repealed, and still think that there is an agreement in existence. Does your experience bear that out?—I have not made enquiries about that.

G-43. It would be interesting if you would find out whether the average coolie going up to Assam knows anything about the matter. It has also been suggested that if a tea garden labourer had the right of free repatriation at the end of a particular period it would help to make recruiting easier?—I agree with that.

G-44. What is your view as to the period within which a labourer might wish to be repatriated?—I think three years would be a suitable period.

G-45. Have you any views on the question of employment agencies?—I do not like them. I think they would be too impersonal.

G-46. Can you express any view, as the result of your experience here, about the freedom that is given to labour to go to Burma, and the restrictions which are placed upon labour to go to Assam?—Burma labour is entirely free. There are no restrictions.

G-47. Are the conditions in Burma any more favourable than they are in Assam?—They are scarcely comparable. Only men go to Burma. They go for the season and come back after a year or in less than a year.

G-48. You do not think that a comparison can usefully be drawn?—No.

G-49. *Mr. Clow*: You suggest that greater elasticity is needed in legislation. In what direction, apart from the suggestion you made about allowing

the local agents more liberty, would you suggest greater elasticity?—I mentioned just now about the missionaries helping people, giving assistance, and so on.

G-50. When it comes to legislation, what change would you suggest? Would you give the local Government power to license recruiters who had no previous experience of the gardens?—I would give the District Magistrate power.

G-51. To license persons whom he thought suitable?—Yes a person who is suggested by the manager. The manager gives him a good chit, and if he has got a good reputation in the district I would allow the District Magistrate to license him.

G-52. *Prima facie* it would seem that, on the whole, it would be safer to work with recruiters known to the district authorities, rather than with persons who are not under control and who come from Assam?—Yes, but they have come from the district originally.

G-53. We are told that the licensing of recruiters who do not come from Assam would open the door to grave abuses?—Yes, if it were done without proper care.

G-54. Men in the district over whom the district authorities have a certain measure of control could be more easily controlled than men who simply come from Assam, collect the coolies, and disappear?—A *sardar*, you mean?

G-55. Yes?—Yes, that is the present system.

G-56. Do you agree that on the whole men in the district can be effectively controlled?—I agree, as long as he is put up for a certificate by the District Magistrate to start with. He would make enquiries in order to make sure that he is a proper person.

G-57. The recruitment for the Dooars is entirely uncontrolled. Are there any abuses or difficulties in connection with that system?—I have not come across any since I have been here. When I was on the Board there was an occasional complaint about the Dooars recruitment.

G-58. How would you explain the fact that the Dooars have always seemed to be able to get along without control, when most authorities have agreed that control is necessary in the case of Assam?—The Dooars being so much nearer, people can get back quicker. That is the main reason.

G-59. You do not think the fact that there have never been penal contracts in the Dooars has anything to do with it?—Possibly.

G-60. You would agree that the ideal to be aimed at is a system of free recruiting to Assam?—Yes.

G-61. Do you think it is possible now to take any steps in that direction?—Only by making more elasticity in the recruiting methods.

G-62. It would not be feasible to allow relaxation of control in the case of those who go for a very short term?—No. I would not relax for one and not for the other.



G-63. Suppose the system suggested to you, of having the right of repatriation after three years, was introduced how would you enforce that in Assam itself? We were satisfied that in an occasional garden the labourers were not entirely free to leave the garden. Would not there be a danger of a man being kept on after three years?—Yes, unless it was checked by the local magistrate. If there were a register kept of the coolies as they came up, and the local magistrate checked the register when he inspected the garden (he inspects the garden once every year from the health point of view) then he could see if people had been there for more than three years, and he could ask them whether they had been given the choice of returning or not.

G-64. Supposing every one of them had this right of repatriation after three years, would it be exercised even by those who had gone with every intention of settling down in Assam?—I doubt it.

G-65. You do not think they would take the opportunity of a free holiday?—Not if they had taken their families up, and collected their cattle, and so on. I know of cases where people have gone up, and have left nobody in their own country, so that there is no desire to come back.

G-66. We have had memoranda which complain to us of various scandals in connection with free recruiting, of wives absconding from husbands they did not like. I suppose that that is an inevitable concomitant of all emigration?—There seems to be a certain amount, but it is generally discovered.

G-67. How do you account for the fact that emigrants are willing to go from these and other districts, without any great assistance, to places like Burma and Calcutta, while apparently special machinery is necessary in order to induce them to go to Assam? Is that due to the existence of Act VI?—I think it is partly due to the abuses of the past. Assam had a bad name for a long time, and still has a bad name in certain parts of the districts. People say that when their sons go to Assam they do not expect to see them again.

G-68. Do you think that is a question entirely of past history?—I do not think it is justified now.

G-69. Has emigration had any noticeable effect in pushing up wages in your district?—I cannot say.

G-70. *Mr. Joshi*: With regard to this *vetti* system, if the people are not willing to work how are they made to work?—They are willing to work.

G-71. But suppose there are some people who are not willing to work what do you do?—I have not come across any such cases.

G-72. In every day life we find people who are not willing to discharge their obligations. How do you put pressure upon these people?—Some of them hold land and have certain posts. I suppose they would be deprived of those, but I cannot say, as I have not come across any cases.

G-73. Is pressure put upon them by the headman?—The headman is supposed to produce the men.

G-74. Do you not think there will be some cases of people refusing to do the work?—Certainly.

G-75. There must be somebody putting on pressure ?—I believe there are enough to do the work without counting in the recalcitrant people.

G-76. Is there any limit to the extent of the work that is put upon these people ?—It is laid down generally as "Government work".

G-77. How many days in a year ?—When they are called upon they are supposed to come out. It does not amount to much in the end. It does not interfere with their harvest, for instance.

G-78. It all depends upon the individual officer ? One officer may take 10 days' work, and another officer may take a month's work ?—I do not think there is an unlimited amount of work to be done. There are no rules.

G-79. What other kind of work is taken from them ?—Civil works, buildings and roads, thatching bungalows and perterage.

G-80. And digging of tanks and canals ?—No.

G-81. Is there any register kept of the work done by these people ?—Yes. The sub-collector pays these people personally.

G-82. How much do they earn ?—It depends on the amount of work they do.

G-83. This *vetti* work is not all free ?—The road work is paid for.

G-84. At what rate are they paid ?—I cannot say offhand.

G-85. Does the Government fix the rate ?—It works out to 2 or 3 annas a man in the end. I think the rate is fixed by the sub-divisional officer.

G-86. What are the rates obtaining in your areas ? Will you find out and let us know. I want the rates for *vetti* labour in the agency ?—Yes.

G-87. I have estimated that it costs about Rs. 150 to recruit a coolie. That means Rs. 12-8 per month. If that money was allocated to increasing the wages in Assam, would not that be a sufficient inducement to labour to go to Assam free ?

*Sir Alexander Murray* : There would be the transit expenses, but taking off a certain amount for expenses of transit there would still remain a margin. If that margin went towards increasing the wages, would it make recruitment more attractive ?—One cannot say until the experiment is tried.

G-88. *Mr. Joshi* : With regard to repatriation, suppose you gave to each person sent to Assam a return ticket in his pocket, so that if he finds the conditions are not good he may return. If he finds he is getting good wages he will stop there ; if he does not he may return. The total expenditure would not come to as high as Rs. 150 per person. Would that induce people to go there ?—I think they are told they can come back. I do not think a planter would keep a coolie who did not like the conditions.

G-89. Under the present law the planter does not give the coolie a return ticket ?—No, but as a matter of fact it is scarcely business to keep a man who is unwilling to work and who is dissatisfied with the conditions.

G-90. But the present difficulty is that when the coolie finds he does not like the conditions he has not the means to return ?—You would give him the ticket in his hand ?

G-91. Yes ? The whole labour force might walk off one day then.

G-92. Why should they, when in their own district the wages are 2 annas a day and in Assam they are 6 annas a day. Why should they walk off ?—They might not like the climate.

G-93. For a good reason they might walk off, but not otherwise. Would my suggestion enable free recruiting being introduced ?—I do not think it would work.

G-94. When a *sardar* is sent back to his village, his wife is kept back in many cases as a sort of surety for the man's return. Suppose a rule were made that if a *sardar* chooses to take his wife she must be sent with him : would that work a great hardship on the planter ?—I do not think so.

G-95. When the present Act is abolished, and a new Act for recruitment only is enacted, what will there remain for regulating the inspection of plantations ?—There is nothing about that in the present Act.

G-96. The Recruitment Bill proposed by the Government of India does not provide for any inspection ?—The Act itself does not either.

G-97. The Act provides for a certain kind of inspection, of unhealthy gardens for instance. Do you think that some kind of legislation for regular inspection is necessary ?—I think there should be regular inspection, but I do not know that legislation is necessary.

G-98. There is a Factories Act providing for a certain kind of inspection. In the case of plantations the conditions will not be the same, but should not there be some law providing for inspection and other matters, such as water supply, and such things ?—I think the planters have discovered that it is up to them to provide those things. Otherwise they will not get the coolies.

G-99. Laws are generally necessary for those people who take advantage of the reputation of the good planters. If there is a definite law then the bad planters will have to keep their conditions up to the standard of that law ?—I do not see any harm in it.

G-100. As regards labour representation on the Board, you say that the Chairman, or an officer of the Government, represents labour. Would there be any objection to a man from the labour movement in Madras being appointed on the Board as labour representative ? I see the difficulty that at present you have not got a man who knows the conditions either in Assam or in the recruiting area ; but at the same time when you get a district magistrate here, newly transferred from the South of Madras to Vizagapatam, he too may not know the conditions. He learns. All officers of Government learn these things after they are appointed. If you got a good man from Madras in the labour movement, and he is appointed, he will learn the conditions here and in the recruiting area, and, if he is a conscientious man, he will go to Assam to see the conditions. Have you any objection to such a proposal ?—Not if he is willing to learn the conditions in both parts.

G-101. *Mr. Ahmed* : Is there any objection to a public recruiting agency ?—I think it would be too impersonal. You want the personal element in dealing with these people, a local agent who can talk the language. You do not want anything too official.

G-102. But are not the people already familiar with the conditions, having been employed on the gardens for generation after generation?—The Madras people are certainly not familiar with Assam.

G-103. Is not the present system whereby the *sardars* get commission by taking the coolies to the gardens, a vicious system?—It is an expensive system.

G-104. Is it not to the advantage of the *sardar* to paint the conditions as being very attractive?—Yes, but the *sardar* has to give a true picture, because he will be found out otherwise.

G-105. But he paints a very bad picture according to some of the memoranda we have here?—Some *sardars* do, but I do not think the majority do.

G-106. It is to the advantage of a *sardar* to paint the conditions good because then he gets recruits?—Yes, they are sent down for that purpose.

G-107. Since that is so would it not be better to get rid of that system, and get a popular system of recruiting coolies?—No. I think this system is the best.

G-108. But you yourself admit that it is to the advantage of some *sardars* to make misrepresentations, because they get commission. Would you not like to get rid of that system?—I do not agree.

G-109. Why?—I think the bad *sardars* are in a minority. There are a certain number who misrepresent the facts, but they will be found out in course of time, and they will be punished.

G-110. If there is a system which makes it to the interest of people to make misrepresentations, would you not like to get rid of that system?—I still think the present system is the best.

G-111. Is it not one of the reasons of migration to Assam that the debtors see no other way of getting rid of their debts than simply run away to Assam?—It may be a reason in some cases.

G-112. Family quarrels also may be another reason?—Yes, may be.

G-113. There are also some culprits who leave the country and go to Assam in order to avoid punishment. Is that not also another reason for migration to Assam?—Yes, that may be another reason in some cases.

G-114. Does not the *sardar* often misrepresent the state of things in Assam and induce the people to go there?—He might do that sometimes.

G-115. Why then should this vicious system not be abolished and a Public Recruitment Agency be established in its place?—I do not think it would be feasible.

G-116. In spite of all these defects you would stick to the present system?—Yes.

G-117. In the case of the short-term coolies who go to Assam for 6, 9, or 12 months the employer repatriates them at the expense of the garden after the period of engagement is over. Are you in favour of a system under which all coolies will have the right of repatriation at the garden's expense after one or two years?—I think they ought to be given the right of repatriation after a certain period.

G-118. They may be given the right even after one year?—Yes.

G-119. It has been stated by several witnesses that the coolies who go and work in Assam do not get enough for them to live upon and therefore get into debt. They cannot save enough money to pay their return fares even if they want to return home. Have you any idea of the extent of indebtedness of the people who go to Assam and work there?—From what I have seen of Assam a lot of people save a lot of money.

G-120. Only the *sardars*?—Not only the *sardars* but many others also. The *sardar* only starts as a coolie.

G-121. Many people come back here after working in Assam but do not like to return to the gardens and stay here. Have you any figures to show the percentage of people who stay away like this?—I cannot; Captain Steele probably could.

G-122. Do you think that the wages in Assam,—As. 6 and As. 8—are sufficient for the labourers and their families?—They seem to live on it. They get fuel free, rice at concession rates, free medical attendance and things like that.

G-123. What is the cost of living of a family consisting of a man, his wife and two children?—I have no idea.

G-124. Do you think that As. 6 a day for a man is sufficient?—I do not know.

G-125. Have you any provision to bring back people who have been taken to Assam under misrepresentation and false promises?—If they have been taken under misrepresentation, certainly yes. Only last week I sent for two boys who had gone up without the permission of the guardians. Captain Steele wrote to the Manager of the garden to send them back. The law provides for that.

G-126. Some of these culprits and men of bad living who are convicted here and bound over to keep the peace escape to Assam. Do you take any steps to bring them back?—Yes, if they are traced; but it is sometimes very difficult to trace them; they go under false names.

G-127. Do you keep full information about these people?—The Police do that.

G-128. Is it not in the interests of the coolies that the particulars of each and every coolie who goes there should be maintained in order that he can be traced if necessary?—The local agent keeps a register of all coolies sent for each garden. I think this question of persons of bad livelihood arose when I was Chairman of the Assam Labour Board and the Police arranged to send them back.

• G-129. *Miss Lazarus*: In your memorandum you say that greater attention needs to be paid to medical needs. Can you suggest any improvements?—I have seen some hospitals which are not housed in *pucca* buildings. There should be better buildings and more of equipment.

G-130. Is there any provision there for maternity benefit for women labourers?—On most gardens I think they give maternity leave both before and after child-birth.

G-131. Do they make any distinction between women who actually work and those who do not in the matter of giving maternity benefits?—I should imagine they make no distinction whatever; they give the benefit to all women on the estate.

G-132. Some of the men leave their women behind them in the earlier stages of their pregnancy and go to Assam. Could not some arrangement be made by which the man may make some allotment to his wife which will be helpful to her during her confinement?—It would have to be a matter of arrangement with each garden. But I see no reason why the man should not send the money by money order.

G-133. But do they send the money?—I do not think they do, at any rate not to the extent to which they send from Burma.

G-134. To what extent is there a disturbance of family life on account of migration to Assam?—There is a certain amount, but not a great deal. The gardens encourage as far as possible family groups; they discourage single men and women migrating to Assam.

G-135. Is there any provision for the control of morality with regard to single men and women who migrate to Assam?—None whatever.

G-136. Is there any sort of *panchayat* to control the moral and social aspect of the coolies who live in Assam?—None that I know of. In matters like that the coolies look to the manager of the garden for advice.

G-137. Do you know of many cases in which the managers have given such advice?—None have come to my notice.

G-138. You say that the coolies have benefited by going to Assam? I did not say, morally, but I would say, physically.

G-139. Have you heard of cases of husbands returning diseased and communicating their disease to their wives?—No.

*Miss Lazarus*: I have met some cases like that.

G-140. Suppose a family migrates to Assam and the man dies there leaving his wife and two children. Do you know of any provision to help them under the circumstances? It depends on the manager. It is a personal matter really for the manager to look into and make some arrangement.

G-141. Has any such case come to your notice when you were Chairman of the Assam Labour Board?—I do not remember the matter ever cropped up.

G-142. I say this because such cases of disturbance of family life have come to my notice?—I think the manager is always ready to do as much as he can under such circumstances.

G-143. Have you any suggestion to make to put an end to misrepresentation by the *sardar*?—The only thing is if a *sardar* is caught he will be punished. There is provision for that in the Act. He will not be sent down as a *sardar* again.

G-144. How many years do you think a coolie should be on a garden before he should be allowed to come down as a *sardar*?—I think he should be there at least for one year.

G-145. Is it not better if he is allowed to go as a *sardar* only after three years?—I think one year will do to give him a good idea of the conditions of life and work in Assam. If he is there for 3 years he will of course have a much better idea.

G-146. Are there any women recruiters?—Yes.

G-147. Are there any women who interview the new women recruits before they go to Assam?—None that I know of. I do not think it is necessary. The Local Agent sees to it all right.

G-148. Do you think that a certificate from the police as to the name and place from which the recruit is coming is sufficient for identification, especially in view of the fact that several people have the same name and come from the same place. Do you think that a photograph attached to a passport would be of help?—It is not a feasible proposition to do that for every coolie.

G-149. Would not that do away with the difficulty of tracing the men if they are wanted?—There are very few who need to be traced. Very rarely do we fail to trace them. I cannot remember more than half a dozen cases like that.

G-150. Is child labour allowed under the *vetti* system?—There are no rules prohibiting child labour under the *vetti* system. I have not seen children work.

G-151. I have seen children work on the roads?—They are there with their parents, I think.

G-152. Would it not be a good thing if we had on the Assam Labour Board representatives from the recruiting areas such as missionaries and social workers who know the people well?—The difficulty is for men to have experience both of the recruiting areas and the plantations. It would be a very good thing if we had men of that experience on the Board.

G-153. Have you come across cases of kidnapping of both sexes?—Cases do occur occasionally and the culprits are punished under the Indian Penal Code.

G-154. *Sir Alexander Murray*: In answer to Dr. Lazarus you said that anyone connected with recruitment to Assam should have a knowledge of the conditions in Assam as well as of the local recruiting areas. Which do you think is more important for a local agent?—It is difficult to say.

G-155. Suppose there is a local recruiter who commands the confidence of the District Magistrate but on the other hand has no knowledge of the conditions in Assam. Would he be in any way a better recruiter than a *sardar* sent down by a garden who has a good knowledge of the conditions in Assam but who does not command the confidence of the District Magistrate to the same extent as the local recruiter does?—I think it is important that the recruit should be told about the conditions in Assam. On the other hand if the *sardar* is not controlled he is liable to misrepresent things. He has got a temptation to do that. It is well that the local recruiter should have some knowledge of the conditions in Assam as well. It is rather difficult to say which is more necessary. For satisfactory recruiting both should go together.

G-156. Mr. Joshi put to you the idea of sending each recruit to Assam with a return ticket in his pocket so that if he was dissatisfied with the conditions in Assam he might return home without any difficulty. I understand that in the case of recruits to the tea gardens in Southern India the railway fare of the recruit is treated as an advance to be recovered from him. But in Assam that is not the case. If a man had a return ticket in his pocket and was under no obligation either to work on the garden or return the money would it not put a premium on free rides to Assam by people who have no intention of going there for work?—I think it would be objectionable from the employer's point of view.

(The witness withdrew.)

**SRIMAN SREE VIKRAMA DEO VARMA MAHASAYA of Vizagapatam.**

G-157. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Will you tell us what your connection with labour has been?—I am the uncle of the present Maharaja of Jeypore.

G-158. Do you yourself own land, or do you come in contact with labour in any way?—I have got a village near Madugula. For the most part I live in Jeypore and as such I know something about emigration of labour to Assam and Rangoon. I am a family member of the Maharaja of Jeypore.

G-159. You are really representing the point of view of *zamindars* like the Maharaja of Jeypore?—Yes.

G-160. We have been told that there are three systems of labour in this part of the country, namely, *khambari* system, *vetti* system and *goti* system. Will you tell us what the *vetti* system actually is?—Formerly the people of the village were given some lands for their use in return for which they had to serve the *zamindar*, the Rajah or the Maharaja of the estate.

G-161. Do they pay rent for the lands?—Yes, a nominal rent.

G-162. What wages do the *zamindars* pay to these people in return for the services?—Generally nothing.

G-163. Can you tell us about the *goti* system?—The *goties* can be employed by any inhabitant of the Agency. If I want a *goti* I will have to pay him an advance according to his requirements, and he and his family will then come to my house. He will be provided with a house and will be paid in kind for the services he would render. If he wants to leave the service he should return the advance taken.

G-164. Do you charge any interest on the advance?—No.

G-165. Suppose you give a man, say, Rs. 50, and there is no interest charged. How do you measure the extent of the services rendered by the man and his family in order that it may be set off against the Rs. 50 advance?—He cannot leave the service unless he pays back the Rs. 50.

G-166. Is the position then that unless the man is able to pay Rs. 50 he and his family are bound to you for all time?—If he wants to leave my service he should seek another master from whom he can get that Rs. 50; he can pay that money and go to some other master.



G-167. Can you tell us what the *khambari* system means?—*Khambari* means a servant. It is the same as the *goti* system. Generally, the *khambaries* are not paid any advance.

G-168. There was an Agricultural Commission which went round the country a year or two ago. Did you meet that Commission at all?—No.

G-169. They recommended that freedom of movement ought to be given as soon as possible to all agricultural and other workers. Do you feel that the labour that work under these systems have got complete freedom of movement?—Yes; there is no restriction placed on them.

G-170. Then why do you object to the Agency labour going to Madras tea gardens, or to the Burma rice fields, or to the Assam tea gardens?—I object to the people from Jeypore Agency going to the Assam tea plantations because they are duped by the *sardars* who come to recruit them. These labourers being very illiterate and simple are carried away by the alluring promises held out by the recruiters. These *sardars* tell them that if they go to Assam they can wear lace turbans; in the case of women labour they tell them that they can get gold bangles and so on. If one goes the others follow him like sheep.

G-171. Are you speaking of *Sowras* in particular?—Yes, and *Porjas*.

G-172. Thousands of them go every year to Assam. Do you suggest that they ought not to be allowed to go to Assam?—Yes.

G-173. You have said that these people are simple and ignorant. Do you not think it will do them a lot of good if they go and see what is happening in some other part of the world?—If they go with the idea of learning something new I would not have any objection. But I am told by people who have returned from Assam—and I fully believe what they have told me—that these people go and die due to heavy work and after their death their flesh and bones are used as manure.

G-174. We have seen the conditions ourselves and we have seen the particular types of labour to which you refer. Supposing the *sardars* do not come to recruit and tell these people about the conditions in Assam, how will these people who are simple and ignorant ever know what to do in order to improve their conditions?—They may know where to go.

G-175. How are they to know where they can go in order to improve their living conditions unless the *sardars* or somebody else come and tell them about the conditions obtaining elsewhere?—If the *sardars* speak the truth then it will be a different thing, but the fact is that they do not speak the truth.

G-176. You yourself have never been to Assam?—No.

G-177. And you cannot therefore say whether the conditions in Assam as represented by the *sardars* are true or not?—I have no personal knowledge, because I have not visited Assam.

G-178. You will agree that a *sardar* or somebody else is quite entitled to come to these *goties* and others and say to them "If you go to Assam you will get better wages and better terms than what you are getting here"?—I have no objection if the things are truly stated.

G-179. If the things are truly stated you would agree that there is no objection to people coming and telling these labourers that there are better conditions elsewhere?—Yes.

G-180. Do many of these labourers go to Burma?—Not many from Jeypore Agency.

G-181. Why?—Because they can live in Jeypore, quite comfortably. There were many famines in Jeypore, and I can assure the Commission that not a single soul died of hunger and starvation. I do not say that our people are taking table rice, but there is no doubt that they can get decent food. I think they are satisfied with what they get; at least formerly they used to be satisfied.

G-182. All of us were satisfied with simple things formerly, but you would agree, do you not, that some raising of the standard of living is necessary for all people?—Yes, but the difficulty is that they are not educated people. What is the use of these people going to Assam and dying there? There are many lands lying vacant.

G-183. Are there lands lying vacant in Jeypore consequent on these people going to Assam?—Yes, there are hundreds of acres of land lying vacant.

G-184. I am not referring to the uncultivated areas. Are there areas that have been cultivated and are lying fallow now due to these people going away to other places?—Yes.

G-185. Do these *goties* get employment all the year round?—Yes.

G-186. We can understand their services being used at the seed time and at the harvesting time; but what do they do during the remaining period?—They will bring fuel from the forest to their masters; they will be engaged on grazing the cattle and on doing some household work.

G-187. *Mr. Clow*: You were saying that the labourer is not as contented as he used to be?—I think he is contented even now. He is a quiet and harmless man, but the thing is he is told by these *sardars* that he could get more money outside.

G-188. Do you not think it would be a good thing if he got more money?—If he gets more money and becomes rich and comes back to Jeypore, then that would be quite a good thing. But that is not what happens. People are going and dying there, vacating their motherland.

G-189. If you gave them more wages in Jeypore then they would not want to go outside?—At present they are getting more wages than what they used to get formerly; they were getting As. 2 to As. 3 before, whereas now they get As. 4. Perhaps in time to come they may get As. 6. The Jeypore *samasthan* is also paying As. 4 now.

G-190. That is a good thing, is it not? Yes. The Jeypore *samasthan* has increased the daily wages to As. 4, and this was due to the kindness of the Maharaja. The present Dewan is an I. C. S. officer and a good administrator, and looks after the welfare of the people.

G-191. If you increase the wages further, they would not want to go to Assam?—The *sardars* tell these people that by going to Assam they can earn Rs. 2 a day, and I do not think you would expect the Jeypore *samasthan* or the P. W. D. to pay Rs. 2 wages here.

G-192. There is a lot of men who have come back from Assam?—There are very few who have come back.

G-193. They do not want to come back?—They cannot come back, I think.

G-194. *Sir Alexander Murray*. Some of them have come back, have they not?—I think they are very very few.

G-195. What do those who have come back say?—They say that they had to work all the day in deep water, and they had great difficulties.

G-196. In spite of their saying this more men are going to Assam?—Yes. They must have told other people as well, but I cannot say why people still go to Assam.

G-197. *Mr. Clow*: Suppose people are taken to Assam and the employer gives the return fare after three years, would you like that system?—There is no objection to that, but as a member of the family of the Maharaja of Jeypore I would object to that also, because if the people were to leave their land and go it would affect the income of the *samasthan*.

G-198. If you pay a high wage at Jeypore they would not want to go elsewhere?—What wages do you want us to give? If they come to Vizagapatam they can get As. 8, but why should we pay As. 8 in Jeypore which is their own home; it is much cheaper for them to live at Jeypore than elsewhere.

G-199. Why do you think so many are emigrating?—As I have already said, the conditions that exist in Assam are overstated to them; they emigrate to Assam without knowing the exact conditions of labour there and the exact wages they would get.

G-200. Those who come back are better clothed than those who do not go?—No.

G-201. You do not agree with Mr. Naidu, late tahsildar of Parlakimedi, who in his memorandum says: "The *Savara* in the Agency tracts is very rude and uncivilized and has only pieces of cloth for his loins and for his head. The Assam returned *Savara* wears pants, coats, etc."?—No, I do not agree. Two years ago I saw some people who came back from Assam, and they were in a miserable condition.

G-202. Did you see the condition of any who returned recently?—No; I do not know what the present day conditions are, because I saw the people only two years ago.

G-203. In the last three years the figures we have show that 8,000 came back to this local agency?—I do not know what the exact figures are.

G-204. *Sir Alexander Murray*: As Mr. Clow pointed out, we have figures from Government and other sources which show that 8,000 people came back

here in the past three years in order to take more men up to Assam. You must have seen some thousands of these moving about. Did they not appear to be more contented than others?—Unfortunately I did not see them.

G-205. *Mr. Clow*: When you say in your memorandum: "Certainly this is nothing short of modern slavery, legalized by modern Acts to enrich the Assam plantations with human manure from the agency tracts," what do you exactly mean by that?—As I said, I was told that if people died in Assam their flesh and bones are used as manure; I was told this and I believed it.

G-206. I think we can assure you that that is not true?—It may be untrue. I was told, and I believed it to be true.

G-207. *Mr. Joshi*: If you say that the *sardars* make misrepresentations and induce people to go to Assam, why you and the Maharaja of Jeypore do not start counter propaganda?—That, in my opinion, is due to the passiveness of we Hindus. If a counter propaganda is started, I am sure that people will not go to Assam.

G-208. Whenever you find any case of misrepresentation, do you write to the District Magistrate and say that this should not be done?—We have had several meetings at which we have passed many resolutions. These resolutions have been sent to the Government of India, the Assam Government and the Bengal Government.

G-209. I am not talking of resolutions. If you find a *sardar* misrepresenting a case, why do you not report it to the District Magistrate? Did you report any such cases?—No, I did not.

G-210. Why?—Because these things are well known to the authorities.

G-211. *Sir Alexander Murray*:—If you meet a *sardar* guilty of misrepresentation, why do you not bring it to the notice of Mr. Bracken or some other officer who can make an enquiry and cancel the licence of the *sardar*, thus preventing him from recruiting under misrepresentation? Have you ever taken steps to do that?—No.

G-212. Do you not think it would be a good thing to do that?—No doubt it would be a good thing, but the *sardars* come here without our knowledge.

G-213. Surely hundreds of *sardars* come every year for the purpose of recruiting men for Assam. But the point is, if you find a *sardar* or anybody else guilty of misrepresentation and imposing upon the simple, illiterate cultivators, why do you not go to Mr. Bracken or to any other officer who is in charge of the district and point out the misrepresentation to him, so that he can immediately cancel the licence of the *sardar*? I take it that if you find any case of misrepresentation in future you will immediately bring it to the notice of the officer concerned?—As I said, I arranged for a number of meetings at which resolutions were passed. I also got a resolution passed in the Madras Legislative Council in regard to this matter, through our representatives in the Council. In spite of all this the Government did not take any action. I therefore thought that there would be no use in troubling the local officers as they would not be able to take any action.

G-214. If you had come to us and said that any officer had refused to enquire into cases of misrepresentation brought to his notice, we might have been able to do something, but then you cannot point to a single case where you have gone to the officer with a case of misrepresentation?—No. I thought there would be no use in troubling him.

G-215. *Mr. Ahmed*: I take it that you know of many cases where the *sardars* have come from Assam and have told many things which are not true?—Yes.

G-216. They tell people that they can earn Rs. 2 a day in Assam, which is not true at all?—Quite.

G-217. You have said that only a very few return back from Assam. Is it not a fact that the reason why a great majority of them do not come back is that they do not get sufficient money to defray their travelling expenses?—That is possible. I am told that many people die of difficulties.

G-218. In view of that you think it would be better for them to live in Jeypore where they can be better off rather than go to Assam?—Yes.

G-219. Your present Diwan is an educated man, I take it?—Yes; he is an M.A., B.Sc., I.C.S.

G-220. What is his name?—Mr. V. Ramakrishna Choudhry.

G-221. Does he know that you are giving evidence before the Commission?—Yes; I have also given him a copy of my memorandum.

G-222. Does he agree with what you say in your memorandum?—Yes.

G-223. You do not think that it is in any way advantageous to the people of Jeypore to go to Assam, and that only on account of misrepresentation by the *sardars* they go there?—Yes.

G-224. Do you not think that a public employment agency is a better method for recruitment than recruitment by *sardars* who misrepresent things?—I think so.

G-225. How do you say that flesh and bones of people who die in Assam are used as manure?—I was told so and I believed it.

G-226. *Miss Lazarus*: In what way is the *goti* system better than emigration to Assam?—In my opinion, Assam labour is compulsory labour. People go to Burma, earn money and come back; that is entirely a different matter. When there are so many vacant lands available in their own home, why should these people go to the tea plantations in Assam?—If they stay here the lands, I think, can be improved.

G-227. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Why do so many people go to Assam in preference to the *goti* system?—*Goti* system is no doubt a little hard, but there is not much difficulty under this system. People are fed, clothed and housed. But the *sardars* and others tell these people that if they go to Assam they can get more money, they can wear lace turban and so on.

G-228. Under the *goti* system the man is not as free as he is under the Assam labour system; under this latter system he is allowed to go and come back whenever he chooses?—Under the *goti* system, if a man wants to leave his master he can do so after getting money from another master.

G-229. Supposing he cannot get another master and has no money in hand, what has he to do?—He must serve his master till he is in a position to repay the advance; he is not bound to serve legally but only morally. These people are so simple and honest that they will not leave the service of their master unless they return the money back.

G-230. *Miss Lazarus*: Are there cases of persons under the *goti* system having been set free?—No.

G-231. *Sir Alexander Murray*: How many cases of actual deception by the *sardars* have you seen?—I cannot say.

G-232. *Miss Lazarus*: Has the Maharaja or his Diwan warned the labourers against the deception of the *sardars* by carrying on anti-recruiting propaganda?—I do not know.

G-233. Is the Maharaja making his territory more habitable?—He is trying his best to do that; he is going to construct a railway line of his own.

G-234. Would that make Jeypore more attractive than Assam?—Certainly. What doubt is there?

G-235. I would like to know whether, in your opinion, this statement which appears in one of the memoranda submitted to the Commission is true: "It is notorious that the lower classes are given no encouragement by the upper classes and no opportunity for economic or social advancement and for a very good reason—the zamindars and other higher castes find it considerably to their interests to exploit the slave mentality of the lower and labouring classes"?—That is not the system in Jeypore. I do not know whether that system prevails in other zamindaries or not.

G-236. You state in your memorandum that two contractors have brought down labour from Cuttack, Sambulpur and other places to the Rayagada section of the railway. Is it cheaper to get labour from these places than to recruit in Jeypore?—No; these contractors are paying the labour more. The coolies recruited are mostly *kachies*.

G-237. Is it because that the *kachies* are more hard working than the Agency labour that they have been recruited?—No doubt the *kachies* are more hard working than the Agency labour, but the reason for recruiting them is due to the scarcity of local labour.

G-238. Do these contractors try to compete with the Assam Labour Association in recruiting?—No.

G-239. *Sir Alexander Murray*: If these contractors are offering good wages why do not the labourers go to the contractors to work instead of going away to Assam and not coming back?—These contractors are working near Rayagada, and people are taken from Malkanagiri. They cannot get people from Nawrangpur to this place because there is no railway communication.

G-240. *Miss Lazarus*: Is it not because the labour is emigrating to Assam?—No.

(The witness withdrew.)

**Captain F. R. STEELE and Mr. L. S. DRIVER, local agents of the Tea Districts Labour Association.**

G-241. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Captain Steele, what is your experience in connection with the tea industry?—(*Captain Steele*): I joined the Tea Districts Labour Association in October 1923. Before that I was in the Army. I was for three years in the Ceded Districts and three years in Ganjam as local agent of the Association.

G-242. Mr. Driver, what is your experience of the industry?—(*Mr. Driver*): I have been 20 years in this Association. I was 12 years in Ganjam 4 years in this Agency, and for some time in Sambalpur, Cuttack and Ranchi.

G-243. The statement that you have submitted refers to Ganjam only, is that so?—(*Captain Steele*): Yes, it refers to Ganjam only.

G-244. You have given certain figures regarding the number of *sardars* sent down by the gardens in Assam and the number of recruits you send up every year. Do those figures include Cachar and Sylhet also?—They include Cachar and Sylhet also, but exclude the Dooars.

G-245. You say that 5,299 *sardars* came down in 1926-27, 3,202 in 1927-28 and 2,439 in 1928-29. How many of these returned to the gardens?—The number of *sardars* who returned to the gardens was 2,843 in 1926-27, 1,807 in 1927-28 and 1,418 in 1928-29.

G-246. That shows that during the three years about 11,000 *sardars* have come down and about 6,000 have returned taking with them 8,992 recruits?—Yes.

G-247. That seems to be rather above the average as regards the number of *sardars* who return and the number of recruits taken with them?—Yes.

G-248. What became of the other *sardars* who did not return?—They are still in the district.

G-249. Are you sure that they themselves have not been recruited and sent back?—I am certain about that.

G-250. Could they not have been recruited as ordinary labourers?—A very small percentage of them might have been—about 5 per cent.

G-251. Have you had any experience of men who have been recruited here going to Assam, coming back very soon and then being recruited here to another garden, going to Assam and coming again—in other words a sort of professional recruit?—I have had no experience of such persons. I cannot tell of any case to my knowledge.

G-252. What do you think is a reasonable time for a man to work on a garden before he comes down as a *sardar*?—One to two years will be a reasonable time. At any rate it should not be under one year.

G-253. Do you think that it is enough for a *Sowra* or anybody else to remain for one year on a garden to learn the conditions of life and work there?—Yes

G-254. It was the intention of Government that as far as possible the garden *sardars* should be labourers themselves. Is it for that reason that you suggest that the labourer should work for one year before he comes out as a *sardar*?—Not necessarily that. He should familiarize himself with the conditions of life and work there on the garden.

G-255. Have you had cases of *sardars* misrepresenting the conditions in Assam in order to induce people to migrate?—There is no doubt that the *sardars* do that. But that does not mean that the people who migrate do so under a misapprehension. When the recruits come to the local agent everything is set right.

G-256. In actual practice you say that any coolie who goes to Assam knows what and where he is going to?—Yes.

G-257. He knows the conditions of life, work and wages and so on?—Yes. The *sardar* comes down with a "question sheet" on which the conditions of life and wages on the garden are written.

G-258. What do you give him as an advance?—The advance varies. So far as the *Sowras* are concerned I give them Rs. 20 as first advance. That applies to *Khonds* also. For Indian States I give Rs. 25 and for the rest I give Rs. 15 as first advance. They go out and look about for coolies and come in and report. If I am satisfied with their report that they have actually arranged for coolies I then give them further advances which in the case of the plains does not exceed Rs. 10.

G-259. In your memorandum you give us statistics of family groups, single males and single females who have emigrated through your Agency for the past three years. What do you do to discourage single males going up?—During 1926-27 the majority of gardens stopped taking *Sowra* single males; they required family groups only, hence the low percentage of single males for the past three years.

G-260. Take single females. What steps do you take to see that a woman is not a minor and that she has got the consent of the parent or guardian to emigrate to Assam?—We have a full-time doctor who checks the ages of these people. The age limit is 14 for boys and 16 for girls; within those ages they are considered to be minors.

G-261. How long do you detain your recruits here?—In the case of Agency single females I detain them seven days; in the case of the plains, 3 days. I send out a peon to the headman of the village to verify the statement made by the recruit. The headman of the village in turn gets hold of the relations of the coolie and finds out whether the girl has gone with the consent of the guardian or not.

G-262. Do you send a written communication to the headman?—Yes.

G-263. Do you get a written reply?—Yes.

G-264. Are the headmen always in a position to read and write?—Not all of them. Some of them are not.

G-265. You consider it is not possible that the peon or the messenger should be in collusion with the recruiter?—The recruiter is kept with me and



the peon is sent to the village direct. The recruiter does not know whether a certain peon will be sent out or not.

G-266. You think that the safeguards you take are sufficient?—I do, especially in view of the detention of 7 days which really gives some time to the relations to come in and claim the females. I have had cases of relations coming in and claiming females.

G-267. Could you give us an idea of the number of cases?—Last year 144 single females were brought in, 127 were sent up and 17 were returned. 105 minor children were brought in, 90 were sent up and 15 were returned. In connection with those 15 returned 5 *sardars* were prosecuted and in the case of the females returned three *sardars* were prosecuted. Their licences were cancelled except in one case where there was a difference of opinion as to the age of a minor between our medical officer and the medical officer of Government.

G-268. Do you examine medically all your recruits here?—I have a full-time doctor who examines their physical fitness.

G-269. What is the percentage of rejections?—The total rejections last year for medical and other reasons were 9 per cent. It was 7 per cent. for 1927-28 and 8 per cent. for 1926-27.

G-270. Have you any experience of short term coolies?—We have just started short term recruiting. Till now I have sent about 30 coolies for one year.

G-271. Have you any idea of the indebtedness of the people who come to you and ask to be sent to Assam? Do you pay off their debts in all cases?—We do, but not in all cases. We verify their debts and if we find them to be genuine, we pay them off. My average figures in this connection are Rs. 8-10-0 last year, Rs. 10-6-0 for 1927-28, and Rs. 8-1-0 for 1926-27. Our maximum debt has been Rs. 40.

G-272. Does it represent the average debt of the people you sent?—This is the average debt of people I recruit in Ganjam, and is mostly confined to the *Khonds*. They have this *Gonti* system of marriage under which the bridegroom pays something to the bride who is betrothed to him. If the bride happens to go to Assam as a member of her family group and if the bridegroom cannot accompany her the bride has to return the money given to her. This happens after the betrothal and before the marriage. They also have provision for divorce. Even then some money has to be returned. It is such debts that we pay.

G-273. Do you pay the debts incurred under the *Khambari* system?—No.

G-274. What was that Rs. 40 that you paid?—That was the cost of two buffaloes.

G-275. At any rate when you pass on anybody up to Assam you try as far as possible to pay off his debts?—We do.

G-276. We have heard it suggested that many people run away to Assam in order to escape their liability for debts. What has been your experience in that connection?—I have had no such experience.

G-277. Do you think that some people run away to Assam to escape criminal liability?—I can hardly see how that can be done.

G-278. Have you many cases of false names given to you?—That invariably happens with the *Souras*. It is very characteristic with them; they have two or three names; they give one of them.

G-279. Can you trace them if necessary?—It is very difficult; we can succeed with the help of the village headman.

G-280. Have you ever been asked to trace anyone and failed to get at him?—No, as a rule we have been able to trace them.

G-281. Do these people who go to Assam know full well that they are not bound under any agreement and that Act XIII has been repealed?—They know that full well. I tell them clearly that they go under no contract whatever. I personally tell them that they are at liberty to return whenever they like paying their own fares back.

G-282. Do you find that there is any clash of interest between your responsibility to the Tea Districts Labour Association as local agent in charge of recruitment and that to the District Magistrate as a registering officer under Act VI? On the one hand you may wish to send up somebody and on the other hand you may have to keep him back?—I do not send up anybody unless the requirements of the Act are fulfilled. I should like that the Tea Districts Labour Association be allowed to do propaganda and to assist men to migrate to Assam.

G-283. Have you found any difficulties as regards "assisting" *sardars* to recruit?—We are not permitted to do that under the Act: With the *Souras* for instance the *sardars* should be allowed to obtain the assistance of their relations or friends in the district in recruiting operatives. We should also be permitted to send up voluntarily reported coolies.

G-284. Do you find many cases of men voluntarily offering to be sent?—We had a few cases. We asked them to get in touch with a *sardar*.

G-285. Do you write to the garden to send down a *sardar* in order to recruit those voluntary coolies?—We do that if we have no *sardar* in the district. Generally the *sardar* in the district recruits these coolies.

G-286. What is it that makes the people migrate to Assam? Is it the pressure on the soil or is it the attractive picture painted by the *sardars*?—Undoubtedly it is due to the pressure on the soil. They work here only for part of the year whereas in Assam they can work all the year round. Another reason is: the lower castes want to be free from the caste restrictions. The lower caste people when they return from Assam have an entirely different outlook: He is interested in his social welfare and his outlook on life and society has undergone a tremendous change.

G-287. When he comes back to his family after a stay in Assam his bearing and outlook act as a stimulus to others to migrate?—Undoubtedly it does.

G-288. We have had it stated to us by a gentleman connected with Jeypore this morning that the coolies are enticed by misrepresentation to Assam and that if the truth were told to them they would not go to Assam?—

(*Mr. Driver*). We have two local agencies in Koraput. Every coolie is thoroughly acquainted with the conditions in Assam before he is forwarded. They question him personally and satisfy themselves that he knows the conditions there.

G-289. We have some statistics regarding Koraput. The number of *sardars* sent down to that place was 2,635 in 1928-29; of these, 1,344 returned taking with them 4,158 souls. What is this due to?—The amount of money that they can earn in Koraput is not even half of what they can earn in Assam; it is only one third. That is why recruiting in Koraput has been so successful.

G-290. The picture has not been overdrawn? If it has been overdrawn why did not the people who have returned from Assam stay away here? They might easily have absconded as 50 per cent. of the *Souras* have done.—We could not have traced them. Though we can file a civil suit for the recovery of advances only in very rare cases do we ever do that. (*Captain Steele*.) I have not had even one such case in my time. I have been always against that being done.

G-291. *Mr. Clow*: You said you had experience of the Ceded Districts. Was there any substantial recruitment for Assam from there?—There was. In 1924-25 I sent up 10,000 people. I was in charge of four districts, but now we have closed all of them except Cuddappah. For one thing the labour did not suit us and on account of some political trouble lots of them returned. Managers are not consigning *sardars* to those districts.

G-292. You recruit for the Dooars also?—Yes, so far as Northern Ganjam is concerned.

G-293. Is it the same class of men who go to the Dooars that go to Assam also?—Yes.

G-294. Do men coming back from Assam wish to be sent to the Dooars?—Occasionally this happens.

G-295. Do you discourage men changing the Province in that way?—Certainly. If I discover a Dooars man coming up to me I send him to Mr. Casey who recruits for the Dooars. He has a separate establishment for it.

G-296. But suppose the man wants to go to the Dooars?—If he wants to go we send him up and adjust the expenses between ourselves.

G-297. Is there any preference for the Dooars as against Assam?—So far as I am concerned I have noticed a preference for Assam.

G-298. Why is that?—I cannot say why. The men can earn more in the Dooars but in Assam they get many perquisites and ultimately they are better off there than in the Dooars.

G-299. Are these people whom you recruit sent to any particular part of Assam or are they spread over Assam?—They are spread over Assam.

G-300. They are not concentrated?—No.

G-301. Did I understand you to say to the Chairman that you never paid the *Khambari* debts which the man owes to his zamindar?—I have not paid any *Khambari* debts. I have paid only the ordinary debts.

G-302. Why did you not pay it?—I have had no instances of that kind. I do not mean to say that we do not pay it. I have not paid it till now.

G-303. No man who has got a *Khambari* debt has come forward? No, it is very difficult to get a *Khambari* man.

G-304. We were told by one of the witnesses this morning that one of the reasons why people go to Assam is to escape this bondage?—As I have explained in my memorandum the *Khambari* system is nothing but slavery. Besides before we paid the debts we would have to verify whether the man was working for so and so and how much he owed him and so on. The *Khambari* zamindar would refuse to accept payment of debts and release the man.

G-305. Why should he refuse to accept payment? Is it not a recognized thing that if a man wishes to pay off his debt and be free he can do so?—It is an extraordinary thing but these people do not like the *Khambaris* to migrate.

G-306. It is natural, it is not extraordinary?—Yes.

G-307. One of the memoranda presented to us by a missionary working at Gunupur Taluk states:—

“Probably the worst is the unauthorized trade in coolies for the tea gardens. As stated above *sardars* sometimes employ others, to assist them, and such helpers after a while start business themselves without the authorization of the Tea Districts Labour Association depots and manage to get the coolies duly accepted through the help of one or other of the clerks in the depots. I have personally had to dismiss a mission worker who had become guilty of such an offence.”

Have you had any experience of such things?—No.

G-308. Are there sufficient safeguards to prevent such things occurring?—Yes, I think so.

G-309. What would be the effect on recruiting if all those recruited for Assam were given the right of repatriation after three years?—I think it would denude Assam of its labour force. (*Mr. Driver*): I do not believe it. If you gave the option of accepting the money or returning home you would find that half the people who had gone there with the intention of settling down would take the money and settle there.

G-310. We are told that one factor which militates against recruitment for Assam is the common belief that once a man goes to Assam he cannot come back?—(*Captain Steele*). It might have been the case before, but the belief is dying out especially after the introduction of short-term recruitments.

G-311. Have you any suggestion to make for reducing the cost of recruitment?—If we are permitted to “assist” the *sardar* by propaganda and other means he will be able to get more recruits and the cost per recruit will automatically go down. Of the *sardars* consigned last year only 27 per cent. were successful and the remaining 73 per cent. were unsuccessful; they did not recruit even a single man.

G-312. I suppose a good many of that 73 per cent. came down without any intention of recruiting at all?—If we take *Sowras* into consideration it is likely.

G-313. Does the *sardar* usually travel with the men he recruits?—No, not necessarily. The recruits are sent up through forwarding agencies. We have peons who escort them from point to point till they reach the garden. It sometimes happens that the coolie refuses to go unless the *sardar* goes with him. In such cases the *sardar* accompanies the coolie.

G-314. I suppose a good many *sardars* sent down from the gardens fail to report to you?—They all report unless they are the "name-cut" people. The *sardars* sent on recruiting licence report to me.

G-315. Even if they do not intend to recruit?—(*Mr. Driver*). It is to their interest to come and report to us because we give them bus fares to their village and *Khoraki* till they get to their village.

G-316. Do you notice any increase in the number of men presenting themselves voluntarily?—(*Captain Steele*). Recently there has been an increase.

G-317. Suppose you were given the power of forwarding them, do you think there would be a substantial increase in the number of men presenting themselves voluntarily?—Yes, I do.

G-318. Is it possible that unknown to you the *sardars* pay the *Khambari* debts?—Small debts are paid off by the *sardars*. For instance, a *sardar* getting a first advance of Rs. 25 may pay a debt of Rs. 5. The *Khambari* debts generally run into hundreds of rupees.

G-319. You do not think that the *Khambari* coolies are going to Assam at present?—No.

G-320. There has been an allegation that the coolies are persuaded with the help of intoxicating drinks?—Not at all.

G-321. *Mr. Joshi*: In your memorandum you have given certain rates of wages. In the non-harvesting season it is As. 6 to As. 8 for males in the district and in the non-plucking season it is As. 6 to As. 8 in Assam. What is the inducement for the labourer to go to Assam?—Work is not available in the district all through the year whereas it is available in Assam. Moreover there are other perquisites in Assam such as free housing and so on. The man gets a clothing outfit and an advance of Rs. 10—Rs. 5 here and Rs. 5 on the garden.

G-322. You have described the *vetti* system. Suppose a man refuses to do work for Government under the *vetti* system what will the Government do?—He cannot very well refuse. He will be forced to do it.

G-323. How is he forced? Is he beaten?—The *Bissoyi*s see to it that the men go to work. There are other ways of turning them out for work without beating them. The *Bissoyi* is the headman of the village and he has various ways of influencing the men.

G-324. Is this *Bissoyi* a Government officer?—He is paid a certain amount of allowance by Government.

G-325. In his memorandum Reverend Stacker says: "Besides these there is a good number of those in Assam who have been there for more than four years, who would like to return but are hitherto not allowed." How can this happen?—I cannot tell you either. For instance, an old man wanted his son back and he petitioned my sub-agent at Parlakimedi. I had the son repatriated.

G-326. He goes on to say: "Sometimes this policy seems to be followed, that the husband is kept back when the woman and children go on leave, or the woman is kept back, when the husband returns thereby trying to compel the party on leave to return."? I would not say they are actually kept back. Every coolie who is sent up cannot hope to return as a *sardar*. Any man is at liberty to leave Assam whenever he likes. He is under no indenture, whatever. He can pay his expense and come back.

G-327. You do not pay the expenses of the woman who comes down with the *sardar*?—(*Mr. Driver*): It is in his own interests that he leaves the woman and children in the garden. In connection with his recruiting work he might have to walk 100 or 150 miles and it will be a great handicap to him if he has to drag a woman and two children always with him. I have had many women *sardars* coming to me and telling me: "My children are unfit to walk. I cannot do any more recruiting. Send me back to Assam."

G-328. Do they ever send the *sardar* with his family down here to recruit?—(*Captain Steele*): I have had many *sardars* come down with their wives.

G-329. *Mr. Ahmed*: You give the *sardar* a first advance and a second advance; he gets some money for the recruits he sends. He is given free passage to and fro. These are the things which you give him in order to induce him to recruit. On the other hand as a sort of security you keep his wife and family behind in the gardens when he comes down recruiting?—It is not at all as a security. (*Mr. Driver*): 30 per cent. of them come down with their wives.

G-330. But I see that in 1926-27, 86 per cent. of them were males and 14 per cent. of them females. In 1927 it was 87 per cent. and 13 per cent. and in 1928-29 it was 83 per cent. and 17 per cent., respectively. In the majority of cases they leave the women and children in Assam as a security? (*Captain Steele*): No, it is not as a security.

G-331. You advance money? Yes, that advance is not recovered.

G-332. A large number of these *sardars* do not return to the gardens and the gardens lose a lot of money. Do you not think that a public employment agency can be established to do this work?—No, I do not agree with that at all. It will be purely a financial interest. (*Mr. Driver*): For the matter of that we ourselves fulfil the duties of a public employment agency to a large extent.

G-333. If the money that is now wasted on the *sardars* is saved it can be utilized to better the condition of the workers on the garden. Then naturally people will go to the public employment agencies if they think that the conditions in Assam are to their liking. What objection can you have to a system of that kind?—(Captain Steele): We want the right type of men suitable for our work. A public employment agency may not select the kind of men we want for our work. We want men of strong physique accustomed to agricultural work. We do not want non-agricultural people.

G-334. If a public employment agency satisfies all these conditions have you any objection?—I do not think they will be able to meet the needs of the gardens. What is required is men with knowledge and experience of handling labour.

G-335. You have no objection?—Personally I have objection. The Act should be modified, and the *sardar* ought to get the assistance of his friends and relations in a district and the local agent ought to be able to go out and do propaganda work and be able to send up any coolie.

G-336. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Do many of the *sardars* who come back take their wives and families with them when they return?—Yes.

G-337. *Mr. Ahmed*: 40 per cent. of them do not return and they run away with your money?—Yes.

G-338. These *sardars* who come for recruiting misrepresent things, do they not? For instance, we were told this morning by one of the witnesses that these *sardars* tell the men that by going to Assam they can earn Rs. 2 a day, which is not a fact?—I do not think the *sardars* tell people that they can earn Rs. 2 a day in Assam.

G-339. There is much trouble in the *sardari* system of recruitment and it is a bad reputed system. Why should you not agree to the popular system of recruitment, that is to say, recruitment through a public employment agency?—I do not think that will meet the needs of tea garden labour at all.

G-340. The centres of recruitment are in Madras and in the Central Provinces. We find from one of the reports that certain Indian princes are taking serious objection to recruitment within their territory?

*Sir Alexander Murray*: You have no knowledge of that?—No.

G-341. *Mr. Ahmed*: In any case it is evident that the *sardari* system is not very popular, and as such I put it to you again whether it would be better to get your labour through a public employment agency which will be for the benefit of both the workers and the employers?—I do not think that we can do away with the *sardari* system.

G-342. *Miss Lazarus*: Have you found any *sardars* misrepresenting conditions?—No.

G-343. Does the *sardar* get a bonus in proportion to the number of recruits he secures?—I believe so. I cannot give you any figures, because the bonus is paid on the garden.

G-344. Because he gets a bonus in proportion to the number of recruits he secures it gives him a greater inducement to recruit more ?—So far as the bonus on the garden is concerned, yes.

G-345. You have recently started the system of short-term recruitment. Do you find that the proportion of women is less under this system than under the old system ?—I have only sent up 30 coolies so far. We started this system only 2 months before. I have not got here the exact number of women who went with those 30 coolies but there were some in the batch.

G-346. Generally speaking, can you say whether the proportion of women is more or less ?—It is a bit below.

G-347. With regard to single women that are recruited, what kind of protection have they in your lines ?—We have separate accommodation for single women.

G-348. Is there any sort of *panchayat* representing heads of different communities who see to their social and moral relationships ?—So far as the recruiting districts are concerned, we have none.

G-349. Do you think it to be necessary ?—We have *chowkidars* on the lines. The detention of a single female, in the case of the Agencies, is 7 days and 3 days in the case of other tracts. Each morning these people come before me and if they have any complaints to make they can always make them to me. Personally I have had no trouble in that respect.

G-350. In tracing a certain number of these recruits from their original villages back to their destination some could not be correctly traced back. Do you think it would help if a photograph were taken of every coolie that was recruited ?—I am afraid not, because we will have thousands of photographs and it will be practically impossible to trace them even in that case.

G-351. Would it not be worth a trial ?—I do not think the cost would justify it.

G-352. The people that you recruit are chiefly of the agricultural types ?—Yes, we want agriculturists for our gardens.

G-353. Do you think this is affecting the local agriculture ?—It tends to put up the price of the local market.

G-354. In one of the memoranda we are told that the labour left behind is not sufficient to carry on because they are taken away chiefly during the agricultural season ?—I think we still leave a sufficient number. So far as the Agency tracts are concerned, it is a matter of opinion ; some of the district officials maintain that we are denuding the tracts while others maintain that there are far more people than the soil can support.

G-355. Any one working in the garden can choose to come back whenever he wishes, can he ?—Yes, he can if he pays his way back.

G-356. You said that if one wants to come back as a *sardar* he has to get round his manager. Is it easy for him or for her to get round the manager ?—As a rule, yes. It may interest you to know the figures of *sardars* who came down last year. Of the *sardars* sent, roughly 150 were on the garden for 6



months, 400 were from 7 to 12 months, 600 from 1 to 2 years, 440 from 2 to 3 years, 300 from 3 to 5 years and 690 for 5 years and above.

G-357. You say in your memorandum that the *Sowra* after a spell on a tea garden returns not only physically improved but also in his bearing and social status?—Yes.

G-358. What about the family disturbance?—We want their families to go with them, but the *Sowras* go alone in the first instance with a view to coming back as *sardars* to recruit their wives.

G-359. Could I have the proportion of *sardars* that come back with their wives and families?—I have not got that figure here. I can get that later on.

G-360. I want to know whether it disturbs their family relationship?—From the figures given in my memorandum you will see that the family groups predominate.

G-361. You think that the Assam Labour Board is superfluous?—I do.

G-362. The President of the Board tells us that he feels that he is the representative of the labourers on the Board. If the Board is removed, who will represent the labourers? In what way does he represent the labour?—I cannot see that he represents the labour in any way.

G-363. I mean their interests? (*Mr. Driver*): We do, and not the Board.

G-364. You do with an interest in the plantations. You want the labourers for your own pecuniary gain?—Naturally.

G-365. *Sir Alexander Murray*: What Miss Lazarus means is this. The *ex-Chairman* of the Labour Board who appeared before us this morning told us that the constitution of the Board is such that excepting the Chairman the other members represent chiefly the tea planting interests. He considered, therefore, that his particular duty was to see that the interests of the labourers were protected?—(*Captain Steele*): If the Assam Labour Board can point out any case in which they have championed the cause of labour I would be very grateful to hear of it. I think we champion the cause of labour more than they do.

G-366. *Miss Lazarus*: There is the other side too, the side of the labourer?—I think that the control of the District Magistrate will meet all that is necessary from that point of view. If the labour did not like Assam they would not go to it.

G-367. You have said that the lower classes emigrate to escape the difficulties put in their way by the high castes. You say: "the labour which emigrates is of the lower classes" and that the caste question and the status of the untouchable in the Madras Presidency has a particular bearing on migration. You also say that the higher castes find it considerably to their interests to exploit the slave mentality of the lower and labouring classes. Which part of the Presidency have you been referring to?—Mostly in the Sowra Agency tracts, and also to some extent in the southern portions of the Ganjam district.

G-368. Do you find that the relationship between the lower and the higher castes in the Sowra districts to be the same as in the ceded districts or is it more relaxed in the case of the former?—It is more pronounced if anything in the ceded districts.

G-369. You mean it is more relaxed in the Sowra districts?—Yes.

G-370. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Do you do any recruiting specially of the criminal tribes?—(*Mr. Driver*): I have sent a certain number of *Kondadoras* from this district, who are a criminal tribe. (*Captain Steele*): Occasionally we get some of them going to the gardens. (*Mr. Driver*): As a matter of fact, I was offered by a Deputy Superintendent of Police and a former Collector of Vizagapatam to try to get a large number of these *Kondadoras* sent to the tea gardens, but the gardens would not have them.

G-371. Why?—Because they said that they were afraid to have hundreds of these *Kondadoras* on one or two estates.

G-372. Are they agriculturists?—Yes, but they are rowdies like the *Moplahs*.

G-373. We have particulars of the number of coolies who emigrated from Vizagapatam and Bimlipatam to Rangoon. Take, for instance, the last year 1928-29. There were 24,438 who went from Vizagapatam to Rangoon and 2,199 from Bimlipatam. These people go to Rangoon without any special recruiting, do they not?—(*Captain Steele*): As far as I know, *Kangannies* come across and take them in big batches.

G-374. Can you speak from personal knowledge?—Yes, I have seen these *Kangannies* accompanying these people. I have given you figures of the number of those shipped from the three ports in the Ganjam district.

G-375. Your figures come to only 20,000 from the three ports whereas from Vizagapatam alone 24,000 went last year?—I have no information as to the number who went from Vizagapatam.

G-376. Can you give us from your experience any idea as to the relative merits of the system of recruitment for Assam and Rangoon? How is it that such a large number go to Rangoon while you have such difficulty in recruiting for Assam?—(*Mr. Driver*): In Rangoon it is all seasonal work. These people go for 6—9 months chiefly for rice cutting season. The fare to Rangoon is also very cheap. They earn Re. 1 to Rs. 1-8-0 a day for that short period. The majority of the labourers who go are single males.

G-377. It has been put to us repeatedly as to why it should be necessary for the tea gardens in Assam to maintain such an elaborate organization to recruit labour from all corners of India, while the labour from the same area go to Rangoon without any special form of recruitment? (*Captain Steele*):—As Mr. Driver pointed out, the work is only seasonal, and the labour that go are single males. (*Mr. Driver*): A labourer who goes to the rice fields at Rangoon can earn Rs. 1-8-0 a day, while on the tea plantation he cannot: you can seldom find persons on the tea plantations in Assam working for over 6 hours a day and their average earning for such a short period as 6 months cannot come to Rs. 1-8-0 a day.

G-378. *Mr. Joshi* : So the difference is in the rate of wages paid ?—It does not pay us to take labour to Assam for 6 months in a year, because the time that you require them in Assam is not the time when they will go from their district. (*Captain Steele*) : If we wanted only single males, we can get them in large numbers.

G-379. *Sir Alexander Murray* : Do you mean to say that the time when these people are required in Burma fits in with their seasons ; that is to say, these people have their own seed time and harvesting time which do not clash with the season at Rangoon ?—(*Captain Steele*) : A part of it overlaps, but it is the surplus population that goes to Rangoon.

G-380. Do you have any recruitment for the Southern India tea gardens from these parts ?—(*Mr. Driver*) : None at all. A few years ago they tried it, but it did not pay.

G-381. Do you know the practice that is prevalent there ? As I understand it, when a labourer is recruited for South Indian gardens, the advance money that is given to him is treated as a regular advance and is recovered from his wages ?—I believe it is so. Practically all their labour is recruited round about, and they are not required to meet recruiting expenses to any extent that we have to here. I do not know what our actual recruiting expenses come to, but I think on an average it comes to Rs. 150 to land a coolie from these areas in Assam.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

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**Mr. G. T. H. BRACKEN, I.C.S., District Magistrate and Agent to the Governor, Vizagapatam.**

G-382. *Sir Alexander Murray* : Have you had much experience of the recruitment either for Assam or for Rangoon ? Can you tell us anything about the relative attractions of the two places to the people ?—Yes. I have served in Godavari from which there is very great migration. I have also served in Ganjam, and now I am serving in Vizagapatam, which are also centres of emigration.

G-383. Could you explain what are the special attractions of Burma to the cultivator from here and what are the attractions of Assam, if there are any ?—As regards Burma, a man can go over there and keep his land here going with the aid of his family. For the short period that he goes he earns a very high wage. It is all seasonal work there.

G-384. Who comes and recruits these people ? Do they go voluntarily or are they recruited by *mistris* ?—They go voluntarily. This has been going on for a very long time, and it has become so to say an established business. One member of a family goes while the others keep the bits of land going on.

G-385. From the figures you have given us we find that in 1926-27 there were 27,286 people who went from Vizagapatam alone to Rangoon, in 1927-28 there were 27,396 and in 1928-29 there were 24,438. From Bimlipatam the number of people who went to Rangoon in 1927-28 was 1,697 and in 1928-29 it

was 2,199. In addition to these there are many who go from Gopalpur, Baruva, Kalingapatam and Cocanada ?—Yes. The figures for Cocanada, I think, would probably be round about 30,000.

G-386. That is so far as Burma is concerned, but what is it that takes them to Assam ?—It depends to a considerable extent on the different tribes who go, their methods of life and so on. Take, for instance, the *Sowras*. The amount of forest country available for their shifting cultivation is very limited. In the case of these people I made some enquiries when I was Collector and Agent in Ganjam. There is a definite economic pressure, and there is not enough land.

G-387. In one of the memoranda we have received it is stated: "The good results obtained with regard to the *Sowra* migration during the year 1926-27 were due almost entirely to the action of Government during that and the previous year in enforcing their forest protection policy . . . The new policy was regarded as interference and roused considerable resentment, and the *Sowra* was forced to seek a means of subsistence and migrated to tea which presented itself as a solution of his difficulties." Can you tell us what is the change of policy referred to here ?—Reserving various forest tracts and prohibiting this shifting cultivation.

G-388. This refers to the *Sowras* who are the principal people who emigrate from Ganjam ?—Yes.

G-389. Can you tell us about the conditions in Jeypore ?—There the conditions are very different. There it is mostly open country and very fertile country; there is good rainfall and there is enough land to go round. In fact, the country is crying out for more cultivators.

G-390. According to the figures that have been given to us by the Indian Tea Association we find that in the year 1928-29 there were over 4,500 souls sent up to Assam from Koraput, which I understand is practically in Jeypore. What is the attraction that takes these people to Assam, thus preventing them from staying on their land ?—To my mind there are two or three causes to that. The villagers are very conservative and they would not let in other villagers as a rule; there are separate villages, and they will not encourage emigrants. If the pressure of the population in a village gets too great, there is an economic inducement to go. But I think that is rather a minor cause. The second cause, I think, is the *goti* system.

G-391. We have been told that there are three different systems, and I am not quite sure that we have really caught their implications. Will you, in the first place, explain what is the *vetti* system? That is purely a Government system ?—It is Government and the Estate as well. According to the tenure of land in Jeypore, and in the other Agencies too, some people hold their land on condition of doing a certain amount of work without any payment. But in recent years the Maharaja of Jeypore has issued an edict that they are to be paid annas 4.

G-392. What has Government done ?—Government also pay annas 4 for doing the work.

G-393. To all male and female adults ?—Yes.

G-394. Do they employ children too?—They work in families. In this district all the Government works are done on definite estimates, and we try to employ piece-workers as far as possible, and families turn up and work.

G-395. We asked your colleague from Ganjam, Mr. Austin, if he would be good enough to tell us when the rates were last revised for the *vetti* system and how often they have been revised. Could you please send us a note for the Vizagapatam area?—This annas 4 rate was introduced by the Estate, I should think, 10 years ago.

G-396. Does that mean that every man gets annas 4?—Yes.

G-397. How much is a woman paid?—Annas 2 or 2½ annas I think.

G-398. And the children?—As. 2 or something of that kind. Each village is called upon to furnish so many people for 10 days at a time as a rule, and they send out so many men from that village and they are supposed to be paid annas 4 a day for those 10 days.

G-399. Have you reasons to believe that they are paid?—It is my constant endeavour to try and see that they are paid.

G-400. Do they work longer than 10 days?—Not generally.

G-401. How often in a year will they be called?—They may be called either for Government work or for State work, and it depends upon the proximity of the village. Some villages are called out more often than other remote villages from which it is not easy to get hold of people.

G-402. Will you explain what the *goti* system is?—Under the *goti* system the average sum that a man borrows is Rs. 30 which is principally for marriage, and he engages to work for the landowner to work that off. Not always but quite frequently he executes a pronote for Rs. 30 or whatever the sum is, and he works for his landlord, receiving certain customary fees every year. The usual thing is he gets 12 measures of paddy which has an estimated value of Rs. 24, and after harvesting he gets another donation of paddy estimated at Rs. 5; one cloth a year estimated at Re. 1 and miscellaneous items estimated at Rs. 5.

G-403. All that is in kind?—Yes.

G-404. Is there any cash paid at all?—Very rarely. It is not customary; the custom is to give it in kind.

G-405. Do they ever repay the advance?—In theory they are supposed to work off in about 5 years.

G-406. Is it your experience that the landowner keeps the man even after 5 years?—Yes, in some cases. There are all sorts of ways in getting the man round. The man may borrow 1 or 2 Rs. occasionally, or if the man does not turn up to work the landlord may fine him annas 2. Somehow or other he keeps the debt going indefinitely.

G-407. Do they add interest?—No, that is not the practice.

G-408. In your memorandum you have given us an extract from the *District Gazetteer*. May I know what is the date of the *Gazetteer*?—It was written by Sir George Paddison about 20 years ago.

G-409. He says : " The rate of interest on loans extorted by these *Sondis* is 100 per cent. " ?—If you take the value of the labour that the man puts in, I think it will work out to several 100 per cent.

G-410. The return given in kind by the man against the cash advance that he receives for his marriage works out to more than 100 per cent ?—Yes, if you take the value of the work to be annas 4 a day.

G-411. What about the *khambari* system ?—That is more applicable in the plains. It is a similar system to the *goti* system.

G-412. Do you think that these systems have an influence in causing the people in the Agencies to go away to Assam or Rangoon or somewhere else ?—Practically to Assam or to the Dooars ; they do not go to Rangoon.

G-413. Why ?—Because the conditions in Assam are more similar to what they are used to ; Assam is also a hilly country. There is also no organization for taking them to Burma. If there was some organization, I fancy that a lot of them would eventually go to Burma. They are very simple people and they do not know how to go to Burma.

G-414. Do you find that they are imposed upon to any extent by the *sardars* who recruit on behalf of the Assam tea gardens ?—I think they definitely know what they are in for, and what they are going to earn. They very well know that they cannot earn Rs. 2 a day, and the local agents explain to them the conditions fully before they are sent.

G-415. You say in your memorandum : " Care is taken that, as far as possible, undesirable persons should not act as *sardars*. When any matter against a *sardar* comes to light, steps are taken to have his licence cancelled ; but, as already stated, offences are the exception." Have you got any figures to show how often the licences had to be cancelled in recent years for offences ?—I think I have given that in my note.

G-416. Yes, you say : " The Act has worked satisfactorily and there have been very few complaints of illegalities. There were two cases of kidnapping by *sardars* in 1926-27 ; in 1927-28 no offences were reported ; and in 1928-29, one only." Do you think that the system in force is such as to prevent illegal offences ?—I think the local agents try to work the thing honestly, because they know that if illegal practices come in recruiting would be stopped. I think they generally do their best to prevent any illegalities. If they are doubtful about any case they send it on to me for examination and decision. I have had several cases like that. In some cases I have allowed the persons to go and in some cases I have not allowed them. When I examine these people they seem to know exactly what they are going in for in Assam ; I have taken the trouble to find it out. When I tell them that they are not going to get Rs. 2 a day or anything like that, they say : " We know what we will be getting ; we will get As. 6 or something like that."

G-417. The Linlithgow Commission recommended that as soon as possible free movement of labour should be encouraged all over India. I think I gather from your statement that recruitment in the Agency should continue to be most strictly controlled. You think that it would be a mistake to have free recruiting when you have such simple and unsophisticated people ?—I think they would be imposed upon.

G-418. Do you hold any strong views as to the relative merits of *sardari* recruiting, that is, recruiting from the gardens, as against an open system of recruiting under which some person of good character recommended by the magistrate should be allowed to recruit on the spot as a local agent?—I would not like to have a lot of independent *sardars* working unless they were under the control of some central body which will be a distinct check on them. It is rather difficult to tell the character of these *sardars*. Some of them are of bad character, and I have to cancel the licence occasionally. For instance, the other day we traced a *sardar* who was a known criminal with a lot of previous convictions, and I cancelled his licence straight away. He was a registered member of a criminal tribe.

G-419. We were trying to find out something about the criminal tribes. We understand that the Tea Districts Labour Association do not encourage the recruitment to Assam of that particular class whereas we understood that the police and the local magistrate are encouraged to get them in to Assam?—There are quite a number of *Doms* who go to Assam. Mr. Driver was referring to *Kondadoras* who live more in the plains. Quite a number of *Doms* have gone to Assam. I had a case only the other day of a man who had committed an offence some 3 or 4 years ago and had run away to Assam. He was eventually traced and brought before me. He had a good certificate from the manager. The case was one of petty theft. He appeared before me and said: "I want to go back to Assam." I said: "Very well", and sentenced him to imprisonment till the rising of the court.

G-420. Do you think they are a suitable type to be sent up to Assam?—Some of these *Doms* are good workers. They are outcastes in the Agency; you can call them under-dogs; they are like pariahs, and they have rather bad times in some cases. They are definitely a criminal tribe and given to thieving and dacoity.

G-421. Will you give us the benefit of your long experience? Do you find that as a result of going to Assam and coming back as *sardars* or otherwise there is a definite raising in the standard of what you call these under-dogs?—I think so. I think a good deal of their thieving activities are due to the bad time they get in the Agency. When they go up to the gardens they are well treated. Many of them have become very self-respecting and have been testified by the managers to be of good character.

G-422. To your knowledge many of them come back as *sardars*?—Some of them come back as *sardars*, but I cannot give you any exact figures.

G-423. *Mr. Clow*: You have heard Captain Steele's evidence?—Yes.

G-424. Was he correct in stating that the *goti* system is confined to marriage debts?—The most common way of contracting debts is for marriages.

G-425. It is also applied to this form of agricultural servitude?—They become agricultural serfs by borrowing money in connection with marriages.

G-426. Captain Steele seemed to be under the impression, or at any rate he gave me the impression, that the *goti* debt was merely the debt due to the bride or to the bride's parents?—That is the bride price.

G-427. But it covers both kinds of debt?—It is all in connection with marriages. The customs in different tribes are different. For instance, the marriage custom of *Khonds* is different from that of *Porjas*. But the money is most probably borrowed in connection with marriages either to get married or to compensate the husband.

G-428. It is money due to a zamindar and not to the bride's parents?—He borrows from the landowner to pay this price.

G-429. Is there any distinction between what you call the *goti* system and what Captain Steele called the *khambari* system?—There is not any great difference between the two. One term is used more in the plains while the other is used in the Agency.

G-430. Do you know, in actual practice, if those who are bound by these bonds to landlords are actually recruited for Assam?—I cannot tell you of definite cases, because they do not come to my knowledge. But I know that sometimes they get so fed up with the things that they go away. There is a point when things become so intolerable that they cannot stick to it any longer. Although they are very conservative and do not want to go away, yet seeing that the conditions in their own village are not good enough they think that on the whole it would be better for them to go away.

G-431. Has emigration to Assam or elsewhere had a visible effect in raising the rate of agricultural wages?—I do not think so, but it has had this effect that people have learned that in other parts better wages can be earned. Of course, the road works done by the Public Works Department are on piece-work and the workers easily earn As. 8 a day.

G-432. Are not the complaints made by some zamindars that recruitment to Assam and other areas should be stopped due to the fact that wages in agricultural areas are rising in consequence thereof?—Yes, undoubtedly. That applies still more in South India where I had long experience in my early days both in Tinnevelly and Tanjore. The landowners of Tinnevelly wanted to stop all emigration to Ceylon, because the Ceylon emigration definitely raised the wages.

G-433. The same effect, if it has not already arrived, might be anticipated here?—Yes.

G-434. You do not think it has already had an effect?—Not on any large scale as to definitely affect, but it has that tendency I would say.

G-435. *Sir Alexander Murray*: The evidence tendered by the uncle of the Maharaja of Jeypore seemed to indicate that families were leaving uncultivated lands in order to go to Assam, and that there was a restriction put on the transfer of land from the present cultivator to somebody. Could you enlighten us on that point?—There is an Act called the Land Transfer and Interest Act which applies to the Agency only. No member of a hill tribe can transfer his land to a member of the non-hill tribe without the permission of the Agent. That is the position in regard to that.

G-436. You indicated to us that some of them wanted to go away to Assam. Do they go as a family, leaving the land vacant, or do they dispose of their land?—Probably some members of the family carry on the cultivation, but it is



undoubtedly true that there is a lot of cultivable land which ought to be cultivated, and in my opinion there is undoubtedly a shortage of labour in the Agency.

G-437. *Mr. Clow*: With regard to emigration to Burma, how does the man get his fare to Burma?—More or less it is a family business. One member of the family comes back and he probably lends to another member of the family.

G-438. Do contractors take any part in this affair?—I do not think so, because it is an established family business.

G-439. Have you seen the two jute mills in this district?—Yes, I have seen them.

G-440. Do they recruit their labour entirely locally?—Practically locally, except skilled labour like fitters.

G-441. Are they more or less permanent, or do they still retain agricultural interests?—Nearly all of them retain agricultural interests to some extent.

G-442. *Mr. Joshi*: Why do these *Sowras* shift their cultivation? What is the object?—Their method of cultivation is to cut down, say, 2 or 3 acres of forest, burn the wood and then grow crops. They grow crops mostly on the slopes of hills, and they go right to the top. They cultivate for 3 years and the land becomes unfertile and they go on to another bit if they like to do cultivation.

G-443. Do you think that people go to Burma without any special recruitment and do not go to Assam, because the wages in Burma are comparatively higher than those in Assam?—Yes.

G-444. The wages really have an effect in the case of Burma in securing labour, while in the case of Assam there is the difficulty in getting labour?—The Burma terms of course are much more attractive and fit in with their habits; the wages are much better undoubtedly.

G-445. *Sir Alexander Murray*: The people who go to Burma are mostly from the plains; the *Sowras* do not go to Burma.

G-446. *Mr. Joshi*: Those people who go to Burma may go to Assam if they find the same attractive conditions in Assam?—The plains people find it much easier to go to Burma.

G-447. With regard to the *vetti* system I want to get details. You said that at a time Government take work from the people who are under this system for 10 days. How many times in a year will these people be called in?—That is rather a difficult thing to say. It depends upon the proximity of the village from the place of work. If a village is nearer to the place the people of that village will be called up more frequently than the people of the village which is farther to the place.

G-448. Who fixes all these; is there any one who controls it?—The State arranges, as a rule.

G-449. Does the State mean the British Government?—No. It means the Maharaja of Jeypore. By the way, I might explain that Mr. Mahasaya was

not representing the views of the Maharaja of Jeypore ; he was representing his own personal views.

G-450. Is he a ruling prince ?—No ; but the land is held from him on condition of labour.

G-451. He is a zamindar ?—Yes. In order to assist in the development of the country he has been arranging for the supply of labour to Government to some extent.

G-452. I want to know whether the Government take this labour through the zamindar or whether they get it direct ?—It is generally arranged through the State.

G-453. What do you mean when you say ' it is arranged through the State ' ?—The State officials send messages to the villages and tell them that it is their turn to supply labour.

G-454. When he is not a ruling prince what kind of authority has he to order these people to supply labour ?—These people recognize their liability to do his work. I do not say they like it.

G-455. Do you as a District Magistrate consider that these ignorant people should not be made to work under the wrong impression that they are bound to obey the Maharaja's servants ?—There is no question of their being bound to obey the Maharaja's servants, but the condition of their land tenure is that they should do this work.

G-456. Do the civil courts recognize the debts incurred by a man under the *goti* system ?—Very often it is only a question of custom, but if there is a regular pronote then the landlord can recover his money through the court.

G-457. Suppose a landlord has taken a pronote from a man 50 years ago and the son of the debtor is still paying his debts according to the *goti* system. Suppose the landlord goes to the court for recovering the debt, will the court recognize the debt ?—I think in that case statutory limitations would come in the way.

G-458. Are these pronotes renewed from time to time ?—They sometimes renew them, I suppose.

G-459. *Sir Alexander Murray* : Does the court in recognizing the debt take into consideration the value of the services rendered by the man ?—That is a question that I am just now taking up to see whether these bonds are not contrary to public policy.

G-460. *Mr. Joshi* : Do cases under this system go to courts ?—Not very often. As a rule these people are very honest, and they recognize their liabilities. I know that in quite a number of cases there is no document whatever.

G-461. *Mr. Clow* : Have you ever heard of a single case ?—There have been a few cases.

G-462. *Sir Alexander Murray* : How does the court assess the value of the service given in kind towards the payment ?—That is a question that I am just now taking up. It has never been really raised so far. I have just issued a circular to the court to see whether the question of the service will not infringe the provisions of the Act limiting the interest at 24 per cent.

G-463. There is an Act in Madras applied to the Agency that limits the rate of interest to 24 per cent. per annum. I think that would stop a good deal of the debts?—I think it probably will; that is my hope.

G-464. *Mr. Joshi*: Who fixes the rates to be paid to these *vetti* labourers?—It is fixed at As. 4.

G-465. If it is to be changed, who has got the authority to change it?—Has the District Magistrate the authority?—I suppose the District Magistrate in his capacity as Agent to the Governor can advise the Maharaja to raise the rate for *vetti* labour.

G-466. Do you think that this system amounts to a forced labour system?—Of course, in some cases it is inconvenient to the people, but on the other hand they do recognize that this is a condition on which they hold their land.

G-467. I quite admit that people recognize that, but I want to know whether in your judgment, after having seen the working of this system, it is a forced labour system?—It is rather difficult to define forced labour. I think I have explained the position fully. They are bound, according to the system of land tenure, to provide labour when called upon to do so.

G-468. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Though there is no obligation to pay anything, they are paid now As. 4 a day?—It is due to the generosity of the Maharaja that they are paid As. 4.

G-469. *Mr. Joshi*: Who pays this As. 4?—If it is Public Works Department work the contractors are supposed to pay the labour.

G-470. *Sir Alexander Murray*: You told us that when Government want something to be done in the Public Works Department they apply to the Maharaja who makes the necessary arrangements for the supply of labour. When it comes to a question of payment to these labourers do you pay through the Maharaja?—No; it is paid direct by the contractors to the coolies.

G-471. Without the intervention of the Maharaja?—Yes.

G-472. *Mr. Joshi*: Suppose the man refuses to work, how is he made to work?—The village headman is responsible to see that the men turn out for work.

G-473. I want to know whether the men use physical force; otherwise in what way can they compel them to work?—I have never seen it used. I think it is not inconceivable.

G-474. *Mr. Ahmed*: Have there been any cases of assault of men forced to work for As. 4 a day?—I do not think there have been any.

G-475. Is it not open to them to go elsewhere if they get higher wages?—They do not get more than As. 4 from anyone else. Others pay less.

G-476. Therefore it is not the fault of the zamindar or the Public Works Department?—I would say definitely they are better off than they were 10 years ago when the new rates were introduced.

G-477. In piece-work they can earn much more if they work hard?—Yes.

G-478. Do they as a matter of fact earn more?—They like turning up for work late in the morning and going away very early in the evening. They do not earn very much. They can certainly earn As. 8 and even more.

G-479. Is there any tenancy law in this Province governing the relations between landlord and tenant?—We have the Estates Land Act.

G-480. Is there any law under which this sort of servitude known as the *vetti* system is allowed?—It is an immemorial custom but it is not recognised by law. It could not be enforced in a court.

G-481. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Is there any difference between the landlord and tenant law applicable to the Presidency and that applicable to the Agency?—The same Act applies to both.

G-482. *Mr. Ahmed*: Is there any legal basis for the *goti* and the *khambari* systems or are they merely immemorial customs?—They take the form of a pronote which can be enforced in a court. That is the basis of it at any rate in some cases. They do occasionally sue on it.

G-483. It is an understanding between the people and they stick to it?—Yes, they are a very honest people as a rule.

G-484. Do they get any educational facilities from Government?—Yes, Government are opening schools constantly.

G-485. What percentage of them are literate?—Only a very small per cent. among the hill tribes, certainly not more than 10 per cent. at most. They do not take to education readily.

G-486. They are kept in that condition by Government and the zamindars?—Government are doing everything to encourage education among them. We have an Agency District Board looking after education of which I am president. The number of schools is increasing every year.

G-487. *Sir Alexander Murray*: We had one of the representatives of the Tea Districts Labour Association this morning and asked him what he did in the case of single women recruits and others who, he thought, might have been kidnapped from the villages. He said that he detained them for a certain number of days—in the case of single women it was 7 days—and sent a peon to the village with a letter to the village headman with a view to ascertaining the family antecedents of the recruits. In your experience have you found the average headman to be literate enough to receive and reply to letters?—Very few of them are literate. I am very doubtful of it.

G-488. As a District Magistrate has it ever occurred to you to find out the actual machinery which they put into operation in cases of that kind?—In cases of doubt I have made a practice of sending for the recruit myself and examining him personally.

G-489. *Mr. Ahmed*: You referred to a case where a man who was prosecuted escaped to Assam; he was brought back by the Police and on his giving an undertaking to go to Assam you sentenced him to imprisonment till the rising of the Court?—The man said he was earning his honest livelihood in Assam and begged to be allowed to go there. I thought there was no use of standing in his way and sentenced him to imprisonment till the rising of the court and gave him a chance to go to Assam and earn an honest livelihood.

G-490. If he had said that he would not go to Assam would you have sentenced him to three months' imprisonment?—No.

G-491. What would you have done ?—I would not have done anything. Even now I do not know where he has gone. Probably he may be here.

G-492. Do the Courts help the people in this way to migrate to Assam ?—Certainly not. He was perfectly free to go or not as he chose. What I did was just to give him a chance to earn an honest livelihood.

G-493. You say that the *sardar* does not entice the people. How do you know that he does not ?—I do not think I committed myself to the statement that the *sardar* does not entice the people. I said I had no experience of the *sardar* doing it.

G-494. Is not a *sardar* interested in getting more and more recruits ?—I believe the estate pays him for the recruits he takes with him.

G-495. Does he not get something from the recruits themselves ?—I doubt whether he does ; I do not think so.

G-496. When he comes down to recruit does he not generally leave his family in Assam and come alone ?—Sometimes he comes down with his wife and family. But the majority of them come down alone leaving their families in Assam.

G-497. All this is done in the interests of the tea garden. Instead of this vicious system of *sardari* recruiting why should not a Public Recruiting Agency be established ?—I do not know whether the State should become a recruiter of labour.

G-498. The Labour Department may appoint a recognized recruiting officer ?—The Agency people would not go to a recruiting bureau unless somebody went to their villages and told them clearly of the conditions in Assam.

G-499. You want that somebody should go and misrepresent the conditions in Assam to the people of the Agency so that they might be induced to go there ?—No, certainly not. The responsible agents of the Tea Districts Labour Association who carry on the business of recruiting for the tea gardens do not misrepresent the conditions in Assam.

G-500. But we have had many witnesses before us who said that the *sardari* system was a vicious and costly system and had led to a great deal of corruption ?—The *sardari* system like any other system would be liable to abuse if it was not strictly controlled.

G-501. They say that 40 per cent. of the *sardars* do not return and thereby cause a heavy loss to the gardens which send them down ?—Yes, there is a loss of 40 per cent. of *sardars*.

G-502. Can they recover the amount advanced to the *sardars* ?—They can recover the amount through courts, but they never do it.

G-503. What is the reason ?—I do not know.

G-504. *Miss Lazarus* : Do you agree that the *khambari* and *vetti* systems are contributing factors for emigration ?—I think the *goti* system is one of the contributing factors.

G-505. What about the *vetti* system ?—I do not think that affects the question.

G-506. Do you have any cases where the employer of a *goti* who has gone away to Assam has brought a case in court for the recovery of the *goti* debt ?—I have never actually seen a case.

G-507. If a man who is under the *vetti* system wants to go to Assam, what does he do? Is he bound to repay to Government anything before he can go?—No. The Government do not make any advance to him. He is only paid a daily wage of As. 4.

G-508. Does he or his family forfeit the land?—No.

G-509. If the whole family migrates to Assam?—He may lose his land.

G-510. What is the period of absence that makes him liable to lose his land?—In practice, somebody else would occupy it if the whole family would want to go.

G-511. Do you know of any case where a man has forfeited his land on account of permanent emigration?—I cannot say that I do know of any case, but the practice, I think, is for the rest of the village to divide the land amongst themselves if one family go away permanently.

G-512. Has no family come back after a lapse of, say, about 5 years to claim the land?—Cases of that nature have come up.

G-513. Is it difficult for them to get back their land?—It is not easy. If a man is in possession naturally he would not like to give it up.

G-514. What do they do then?—We have cases in court about that.

*The witness.*—I want to make my position clear, if I might, with regard to the recruitment of labour from the Agency. I do think there is a definite shortage of labour both for Public Works and for bringing this extraordinarily fertile country under cultivation. Until the country is better cultivated, we can never tackle the malarial problem. In that respect, I think I should say that I am against the labour being taken away from the Agency. But, on the other hand, from the point of view of the actual labourers, this emigration does raise the standard of living and is an ultimate means of escape against some forms of oppression.

There is one other point, and that is with regard to the Criminal Tribes Act. Under that Act the registered members are put under definite restrictions; they have got to report themselves to the police on certain days at certain hours, and occasionally in the middle of the night. I suppose there is a distinct inducement to them to go to Assam.

G-515. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Do you encourage them to go; or do you find that they disappear?—They disappear very often.

G-516. Much to your satisfaction?—Yes, if they are bad criminals I will only be too glad to get rid of them. I think there is no doubt that the Criminal Tribes Act has some effect on emigration. The three factors which contribute to emigration are, economic pressure, various forms of oppression of the *goti* system, and the Criminal Tribes Act.

G-517. Practically all the recruitment done in these parts is done through the Tea Districts Labour Association, which appears to have a monopoly. Have you ever had applications from other outside agencies for appointing local agents, and if so, did you turn them down?—I have never had any application.

(The witness withdrew.)

## MADRAS PRESIDENCY.

## Eighty-Fifth Meeting.

## VIZAGAPATAM.

Thursday, 27th February 1930.

## PRESENT :

SIR ALEXANDER MURRAY, Kt., C.B.E. (*Presiding*).

MR. A. G. CLOW, C.I.E., I.C.S.

MR. N. M. JOSHI, M.L.A.

MR. KABIR-UD-DIN AHMED, M.L.A.

DR. MISS LAZARUS (*Lady Assessor*).MR. A. DIBDIN (*Joint Secretary*).

**ABDUR RAHMAN**, a storeman at the Vizagapatam Harbour Works, examined on board the Dredger Vizagapatam.

G-517a. I belong to Chittagong. I came here two months ago. I came *via* Calcutta. The shipping master sent the pass to the *serang* and the *serang* gave it to me. I earn Rs. 35 a month. I draw my pay on the 15th of every month. My work is to mix paints and to look after the lights in the dredger. I come at 6 in the morning, work till 9 and go for meals; I come back at 10 and work till 1 when I get again 1 hour's rest; I return at 2 and work till 4-30 P.M. I have left my family behind. I have my wife, my mother and two brothers. I sleep on the dredger.

(The witness withdrew.)

**NOOR MUHAMMAD**, a khalasi working at the Vizagapatam Harbour Works.

G-517b. I belong to Chittagong. Three of us came together from Chittagong to Calcutta, and from Calcutta to here we came with a railway pass. I am a deck *khalasi*. I came only yesterday. My salary is Rs. 28 per month. I was working as a *khalasi* in one of the British India Steam Navigation Co.'s ships. I was getting Rs. 22 there. I gave nothing to the *serang*. The *serang* and I lived together and belonged to the same village.

(The witness withdrew.)

**ABDUL NABI**, a tindal working at the Vizagapatam Harbour Works.

G-517c. I come from Chittagong. I came here 1½ years ago as a winchman. I have been a tindal for the last two months. The *serang* gave me the pass, and I came. I was getting Rs. 35 before, and I am getting Rs. 38 now. I did not give anything to the *serang*. I came in the morning at 6 and will work

till 3 P. M. I get 10 minutes off now and again for meals, etc. We have a common mess for 30 of us, and 2 cooks prepare our food. Each of us give Rs. 15 to the *serang* who provides us with food. We do not get anything from the Works for food. I have left my family in my country. I have a wife and 2 children. I was working in a number of vessels belonging to the British India Steam Navigation Co. and also the Peninsular and Oriental Co. I was a deck seaman and was getting Rs. 25 a month. After paying my mess charges of Rs. 15, I send the balance to my family. I did not give any *bakshis* to the *serang* of the British India Steam Navigation Co. or the Peninsular and Oriental Co.

(The witness withdrew.)

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**KAKI GURRAPPA, a coolie working at the Vizagapatam Harbour Works.**

G-517d. I am employed by contractor Rambabu. We have 5 boats belonging to the contractor, and 16 of us work together. We unload the coal from the boats and load it on to the dredger. We are paid Rs. 10 a day. I came to-day at 8 o'clock. Some days I come at 6 in the morning. Generally we finish our work at 4 in the evening, but sometimes we stay till 5 o'clock. We may start work at any time. It does not matter what time we come. If the dredger works regularly, we get Rs. 300 a month; that is, Rs. 18-12-0 for each man. We do not work on Sundays because the dredger does not work on Sundays. Sometimes we do not also work on Saturdays and festival days. I am a *Reddi* by caste, and am a cultivator. I live in Pillakodipalayam, which is 4 miles from here. All the 16 who work in my batch belong to the same place. We can choose a *mistri* amongst ourselves, but we have not chosen any. We do not know what the contractor gets. I did not pay anything to the contractor for getting me the job, nor did I pay anything to anybody. The contractor gives us fruits or anything for any festival. My wife and children live with me in Pillakodipalayam. I go home every night. I have some land which is being looked after by my father and his 4 brothers. I do not know what cess they pay. We are a joint family. I have 10 buffaloes and no cows.

(The witness withdrew.)

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**SUKANNA UKKANNA, a coolie working at the Vizagapatam Harbour Works.**

G-517e. I work with Kaki Gurrappa, and live in Pillakodipalayam. I have a wife and 4 children of whom 2 are boys. The youngest is 2 months old and the eldest 6 years. I go to my home every night. I have 6 acres of land, 20 buffaloes, one bullock cart and two bulls. We sell ghee. I have 6 brothers who look after the land. I earn As. 10 a day. None of us have gone to school. Our children also do not go to school. There is a school which is far away from where I live. We pay an annual cess of Rs. 60 to the harbour authorities. We are a joint family.

(The witness withdrew.)



**FAZUL RAHMAN**, an oilman working at the Vizagapatam Harbour Works.

G-517f. I have been here for the last 7 months. I belong to Neokali. The Sahib gave the pass to the *serang*, and the *serang* gave it to me. I earn Rs. 30 a month. I was a fireman but now I am an oilman. I work two shifts of 4 hours each, the interval between the shifts being 8 hours. I have 3 children of 1½, 5 and 7 years. I pay Rs. 12 for my meals here, and keep Rs. 4 for other expenses, like soda water during hot weather. I send the balance Rs. 14 to my home by money order. I have no land at home. I have worked on the British India Steam Navigation Co. and Peninsular and Oriental ships. I left my job because I waited for 6 months to get a post but could not get one.

(The witness withdrew.)

**ANNAPATHERAKIMMA**, a woman coal carrier, working at the Vizagapatam Harbour Works examined on the coal stage.

G-517g. I am employed by contractor Rambabu. I am a widow, and have two children. One of my daughters is working with me here; the other is 7 years old and is at home. There is no one to look after my 7 years' old daughter at home. I get As. 6 a day, and my daughter also gets the same amount. Our *mistri* is Baralapuswami. The contractor pays the *mistri* in a lump sum and the *mistri* distributes it to us all. I earn Rs. 11-4-0 a month. I come from Malkapur, which is 3 miles from here. I am a shoe-maker by caste. My daughter who works with me is below 12 years of age.

(The witness withdrew.)

**APPALLAM**, a woman coal carrier, working at the Vizagapatam Harbour Works.

G-517h. I am a Golla by caste. I come from Malkapur, which is 3 miles from here. I am a *mistri*. We work in a squad of 32. My husband is also a *mistri* and is working in our squad. I get As. 9 a day, while my husband gets As. 10 a day. A few minutes back somebody came to vaccinate us, and seeing him some who were working in our squad have run away.

(The witness withdrew.)

**Mr. W. C. ASH**, Engineer-in-Chief, Harbour Works, Vizagapatam; **Mr. C. J. Smith**, Mechanical Superintendent; **Major F. J. Anderson**, Principal, Medical College, Vizagapatam and Chief Medical Officer; **Mr. P. A. M. Welchman**, Office Superintendent; **Dr. K. Satyanarayana**, Medical Officer.

G-518. *Sir Alexander Murray*: What is your experience in connection with dock work?—I was employed on dock work by the Admiralty at Portsmouth before I came out here. I came out here in 1909 with the Port Commissioners. I was with them when they started the Port extensions in Calcutta before the War. These were continued after the War. King George's Dock was added from 1920 to 1928. I was in charge. In 1928, just as the new Docks were completed there, I was transferred here for three years in connection with the harbour.

G-519. I understand that the work on the harbour has been going on from 1925 and that it is expected to be finished in 1932 ?—Yes.

G-520. Do you look upon your labour force as permanent or temporary ?—Everybody on the job is temporary. Nobody has any security of tenure at all. Nobody has any guarantee that he will be kept in employment after the construction period is over.

G-521. I understand there are two types of labour on the works, departmental labour and contract labour. The departmental labour is engaged chiefly on the dredging and reclamation work ?—Yes. There are 1,448 departmental workers, and the contract labour amounts to about 1,500, making 3,000 workers employed.

G-522. Do you exercise any control over your contract labour ? Do you see that the contractor pays fair wages, or that he provides suitable housing accommodation for his workers ?—No.

G-523. Outside of the dock area you have no interest in what wages are paid to the contractor's labour ?—No. The only control is an indirect control ; that is to say, we pay certain rates which react on the rates which the contractor must pay for his labour.

G-524. So far as the employment by the contractor of women and children is concerned, you do not concern yourself in any way ?—We do not.

G-525. Do you ever feel justified in saying that no children should be employed in particular jobs ?—Ever since I have been out here I have been in charge of works on which children have been employed. It would raise a very big question for me to take up such an attitude. I do not know to what extent the Government of India would back up such a change of policy. It would react on the rates. I might have to pay more rates. I am not certain as to whether the Government of India would support me in such a step.

G-526. On any of the public works on which you have been engaged have you ever had occasion to differ from the policy of a contractor ? Have you ever had to say to him that he ought not to employ so many women and children ?—No.

G-527. Have you ever had to say to any contractor " You are not paying sufficient wages " ?—No.

G-528. Do you think it is possible to introduce what is called a " fair wages clause " into contracts for public works ?—I see difficulties in the way of doing so. I have not given the matter very great thought except within the last few days. I can see no means of settling the matter except by the intervention of the local Government. It would be no use my putting fair wage clauses into my contracts if everybody else round about could pay what wages they pleased.

G-529. A moment ago you told us that the rate you pay to your departmental workers reacted on the contractor's rates. If it were said, in connection with any contract connected with public works, that certain rates ought to be paid, that might react on public opinion and on public rates ?—

Yes, but that is rather extending the scope of the enquiry. I say that my departmental rates affect the contract rates on my work ; but it is a much bigger thing to say that my rates on a job will affect the whole of the rates in the district.

G-530. You say that the rate at which you are working on the whole job is conditioned by the speed at which your dredger can do the work ; in other words, you could put more men on to the job if you wanted to, and finish the job quicker, but you have to keep in view the speed at which the dredger can complete what is required of it, and therefore you are working accordingly ?  
—Yes.

G-531. Where do your workers come from ?—The villages within 4 or 5 miles of the harbour supply 420 people. The floating staff, other than that on the big dredger, are largely recruited from among the fishermen and boatmen on the coast. They account for several hundreds. All the lascars on the “ Vizagapatam ” come from Chittagong or that district. They are recruited from Calcutta, and are mostly from the Eastern Bengal side. The remainder come in from time to time from these villages at distances of from 20 to 30 miles.

G-532. You have not found it necessary to provide dwellings for your labour, except a few houses in Waltair, which are for the superior staff ?—There are a few huts of a temporary nature, which are very intermittently occupied. When I came here 18 months ago I condemned them, and a good number have since been demolished. For the rest of the construction period I should like to carry on as we are, but in the event of our having to house labour I propose to house them on a site on the eastern side of the harbour.

G-533. When the time comes you are going to house your dock labour on the reclaimed land ?—Yes.

G-534. Within easy reach of the dock ?—Yes. The only ground which the harbour had available was at a considerable distance. The experiment of housing certain grades was not by any means very successful, and I think it is a wise policy to wait now until we have more suitable ground, which has to be reclaimed, before embarking on any further scheme of building operations for quarters.

G-535. Have you made up your mind where you propose to house the dock labour eventually ?—Yes. (The witness indicated the spot on a map.)

G-536. Do you think that is the best place from the health point of view ?—I asked the Malaria Advisory Committee, which sits in this place, to discuss this point and to give me advice, and they said “ It is at least as healthy as it possibly can be until there is proper control in the town area ”. The only healthier site we can get is on the far side of the harbour.

G-537. We understood that that is very malarious ?—It was, but we have put in an anti-malarial drain at the cost of half a lakh, which has completely altered the conditions on that site. Reclamation will be begun this year, and after that the site will be available for quarters.

G-538. How will the people get to and from the town and market ?—That is the trouble. They would have to go backwards and forwards across the ferry. I shall have to take opinions at the time and see what sit ethey prefer.

G-539. We understand that the people on board the "Vizagapatam" sleep on board ship. Is that because of the lack of housing accommodation or because they like it?—They like to stay there.

G-540. In asking them about their wages, they told us nothing about this Rs. 10 allowance which you say they get. They said they knew nothing about it?—It is paid in the wage. Probably they do not themselves differentiate between the wage and the allowance.

G-541. Who pays them?—Mr. Smith, the mechanical superintendent, is always present when the staff are paid. They are paid by the pay clerk.

G-542. Do you pay the *sardar* for a batch of men, or do you pay the men individually?—Every man is paid individually.

G-543. We were told that the men paid so much for their food to the *sardar* and that he undertook to supply it to them. We wondered whether you paid the *sardar* for a batch of men, or whether you paid the men their wages into their own hands?—(Mr. Smith): The wages are inclusive of the Rs. 10 allowance. They all mess together, and they usually nominate the *sardar* to look after their mess. They pay so much to him, and he feeds them for the month. Take a man on Rs. 28; that would be made up of wages Rs. 18, plus the allowance of Rs. 10.

G-544. You talk of a bonus of about 10%. What is this bonus, and how is it arrived at?—(Mr. Ash): Every fortnight a task figure for the dredger is fixed by me personally. I say to the men "You have got to do so many lakhs of cubic feet of material dredged and deposited before you are eligible for bonus". For every thousand cubic feet that they do in excess of that they are paid Rs. 2. Each man according to his grade gets a certain number of shares varying from 50 downwards. Then this Rs. 2 per thousand cubic feet (which may come to several thousand rupees) is divided up in the ratio of the shares held.

G-545. What does that actually add to the pay of the lascars?—They benefit to the extent, on the average, of about 10% of their pay.

G-546. In talking to them this morning they did not tell us that they got anything over and above their pay?—I can give you every guarantee that they do get it.

G-547. Is it paid to the labourer himself?—Yes, it is paid to him individually.

G-548. You speak of a provident fund. Evidently it is a non-contributory provident fund. Have you started it?—It has been in operation since the first.

G-549. There are only 23 subscribers. Why are there so few?—For one thing it is necessary to certify that they will serve for three years on the work, and one cannot certify that in every case. Further it is optional.

G-550. There does not seem to be much attraction to a man to subscribe. You do not contribute anything, except interest?—We do not contribute cent per cent.

G-551. Have you thought of doing so?—It is a matter for the Government of India.

G-552. You say that the basis is Rs. 20 per mensem. On the Bengal-Nagpur Railway we find it is as low as Rs. 15. Why should you have it up to Rs. 20?—It has been the rule ever since I have been here.

G-553. Do you ever give anything in the nature of a gratuity? There are no leaving gratuities.

G-554. You look upon your workers as temporary workers?—Yes. Under the Government of India rules, a man has to serve 15 years before he is eligible for a gratuity, and that would not apply here.

G-555. How many women have you on the job?—About 360.

G-556. I see you pay your women from 3 to 4 annas a day. We learn that some of the contractors' women, loading coal, get 6 annas?—They work longer hours.

G-557. What are the hours of your women workers?—From 7-30 to 12 and from 1-30 to 5.

G-558. How long do the women loading coal work?—They usually come on at day-break, about 6 o'clock, and work hard till 12, and then again from 2 to 6 o'clock. There is another circumstance. Many of the contractors have to take them on for intermittent work, and they have to pay a little more.

G-559. It surprised us to find that you were only paying from 3 to 4 annas to your women whereas the contractors were paying 6 annas to their women?—These rates are mostly distributed among the family. You generally take on a man and his wife and children.

G-560. Can you tell us anything about the working of the Workmen's Compensation Act?—As far as I can gather, we do not legally come under the Workmen's Compensation Act. The crew of the "Vizagapatam" do not come under it because they are not on a "registered" ship.

G-561. Have you seen the latest notifications from the Government of India in that connection?—I have seen no recent ones.

G-562. It has been suggested to us that there was a recent notification which covered loading and unloading on board all ships. That would cover the coolies, but whether it would cover the people employed on the ship I do not know. You are not a railway; you are not a dock, because you are not a dock in being yet; your vessels are not ships because they are not registered ships. As I read the information which we have in front of us, the coal-loading coolies and other people who load the dredger, would come under the Workmen's Compensation Act, the dredger being a ship, but the people working on the ship would not. Would you have any objection to the law being made applicable to all the types of workers?—No; on the contrary when a case comes up to which the Act might apply, but does not, we use discretion as to what recommendation we send up to the Railway Board about it.

G-563. In that connection I notice in your memorandum the figures of 60 or 70 major accidents and over 2,000 minor accidents. In how many of these cases did you think it advisable to write up and recommend that they should

get some compensation?—Only one compensation has been paid since I have been here, and another one is under recommendation now.

G-564. All these accidents would not come under the Workmen's Compensation Act?—I must refer that question to Major Anderson.

G-565. While the men are off work ill, as the result of these major or minor accidents, do you go on paying their wages?—In most cases, I think. (*Major Anderson*): If they are injured on duty on account not of their own carelessness.

G-566. You differentiate between what is due to a man's own carelessness and what is due to the carelessness of somebody else?—Yes.

G-567. Have you seen the figures I have just mentioned, Major Anderson?—Yes. One reason for the large figure of minor accidents is that if a workman scratches his finger he comes along to have iodine put on, and that is put down as an accident—the same as small bruises and cuts.

G-568. What weighs with you in deciding whether you will do a job departmentally or whether you will do it by contract?—(*Mr. Ash*): The cost at which it can be executed, and the reliability of the contractor. If a contractor is a reliable man, with a good control of labour, and if the class of work is such that it can conveniently be put out to contract, in 9 cases out of 10 it is preferable to put it out to contract.

G-569. Under the heading of "Workmen" in the dredging division you show that your male coolies get 7 to 8 annas. Under the heading of "Workmen" in the works division you show that your male coolies get from 4 to 8 annas?—That is a clerical error. It should be from 7 to 8 annas.

G-570. Do you start them at from 7 to 8 annas?—Yes.

G-571. Do any of them rise beyond 8 annas?—Not as coolies, but if any of them should qualify for other work, then they go into higher grades on monthly pay.

G-572. Reverting to the question of the provident fund, I see it says: "No employee whose salary is less than Rs. 15 per mensem is allowed to subscribe to the fund. An employee whose emoluments are more than Rs. 15 but less than Rs. 20 is allowed the option of subscribing". The State Provident Fund Rule makes that provision?—(*Mr. Welchman*): There are two distinct funds. There is the General Provident Fund and the Railway Provident Fund.

G-573. *Mr. Clow*: The schedule supplied to us showing the incidence of sickness relates not merely to employees, but is based on the number of all persons attending the dispensary?—(*Major Anderson*): Yes.

G-574. You cannot say how many men-days are lost through sickness on the total staff in the year?—No.

G-575. I notice that the figures rise every year. Is that due to the increasing popularity of the dispensary, or is it due to the increasing unhealthiness of conditions?—It is due to the increasing popularity of the dispensary. The conditions are better now than they were a few years ago.

G-576. *Mr. Joshi*: How many people do you employ on the dredger?  
—(*Mr. Ash*): 80 or 90.

G-577. Can you tell me the difference between a dredger and a factory as regards the necessity of having some regulation of the work?—Of the class of work, do you mean?

G-578. Everything. There is an Act applying to a factory, because factory work is considered to be somewhat dangerous and requires regulation. A factory is defined as any place where some machinery is used, and where 20 people are employed in any process of manufacturing. In your case there is no actual manufacturing. There is transference of material. You may call it manufacturing or not. But as regards danger, accidents or exhaustion, is not a dredger the same as a factory? There is machinery there, and there is a number of people working?—I should think that the chance of accident is far greater in the average factory than with the class of machinery on a dredger.

G-579. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Factory covers manufacturing process and in the Factories Act manufacturing process covers pumping or filtering water. A dredger pumps water. Therefore, according to the definition of "manufacturing", if it were fixed on dry land a dredger would be a factory; but because it happens to be in the water it is not a factory?—Is a pumping station a factory?

G-580. Yes?—I did not know that.

*Mr. Joshi*: What is necessary, according to the definition, is that there should be power used for a particular object at a particular place, and so many persons employed. Why should not a dredger be regarded as a floating factory? Why should not the regulations be applied not only to a dredger but to a ship in inland waters?—A ship when it goes to sea ceases to be within a country, but so long as it is in a harbour or in an inland waterway, in my judgment it should be regarded as a factory—a floating factory, it is true.

G-581. *Sir Alexander Murray*: For the purposes of the Workmen's Compensation Act and for the purposes of the Factories Act, do you see any reasonable difference that would justify us in not including a dredger as a factory?—There is far less danger to life and limb on a dredger, because such a large proportion of the machinery is protected. The impeller of the pump is not free in the open air like the wheels of a lathe; but I do not see any reason at the moment why the same set of rules should not apply. I agree with you to that extent. I agree that if a man is injured on our dredger, for instance, he should get the same benefit under the Workmen's Compensation Act.

G-582. *Mr. Joshi*: I am thinking not only of compensation, but of other regulations as well?—I should have to consider them one by one before I could give a full answer to your question.

G-583. As regards housing and leave, I find there is a distinction made between three classes of workers. There is provision made for the superior staff; less provision made for the subordinate staff, and no provision made for the coolies. Is the sympathy of the Railway Board in proportion to the people being superior, subordinate and workers?—I am afraid you must ask the Railway Board. That is a matter of policy.

G-584. *Mr. Ahmed*: You have said that a considerable number of your coolies come from villages 4 or 5 miles away. That means two long journeys, backwards and forwards, in addition to which the women coolies have to prepare the food for their husbands and children after they have returned from their work. Therefore is not the necessity of providing accommodation for these people far greater than it is in the case of the superior staff?—I think it is very difficult to compare the necessities of the two.

G-585. This morning we saw two boys in the workshops who appeared to be 10 years old. Do you employ children under 12 years in your works?—No, we do not.

G-586. One of them said he was getting annas 5 a day?—(*Mr. Smith*): Some boys are employed outside the works division and they get annas 5 a day. They do not come under the Factories Act. They ply bellows and perhaps carry their own coal but they do not do any heavy manual work.

G-587. You have men working here who have come from Chittagong?—Yes.

G-588. One of them said this morning that he got Rs. 28 a month?—He belongs to the trimmer class, the lowest of the ratings. Besides Rs. 28 he gets a bonus of Rs. 2-8-0 or Rs. 3 for four weeks. That brings his total wages to Rs. 31. All the rest get more than this. We give them all free coal and free water supply.

G-589. Out of this Rs. 28—I do not want to take the bonus into consideration because the man did not say he was getting it this morning—he spends Rs. 12 for his food in the mess, Rs. 5 for water and tea on the shore and has only Rs. 11 left?—We give him free water and free coal and he need not spend anything for water.

G-590. Out of this Rs. 11 if he spends Rs. 4 or 5 for clothing he has only Rs. 7 left. Will Rs. 7 be enough to maintain his wife and two children?—I do not think Rs. 5 a month is necessary for clothing. If he has got expensive habits it is a matter for himself. I think Rs. 5 or Rs. 6 a year is quite enough.

G-591. It would cost Rs. 5 for a pair of trousers and a coat. How can you say that Rs. 5 is enough for one year? Can he get on with one coat and trousers all the year round?—(*Mr. Ash*): All that I can say is that the wages we give compare favourably with the wages given to similar class of men on the Indian merchant ships on the Indian coast.

G-592. Because these lascars are available at these low wages you appoint them?—They come to us because the terms are attractive to them. Our wages are based on the law of supply and demand.

G-593. Then do you not want to pay fair wages? Did you not say to the Chairman that fair wage is a living wage?—No, I did not say anything like that. I only pointed out the difficulties of applying a fair wage clause.

G-594. These men come from Chittagong. They pay their own expenses from Chittagong to Howrah and you only pay them from Howrah to Vizagapatam?—Yes.

G-595. Their service begins only after reaching this place?—Yes.



G-596. You do not give them any allowances to meet their food and other expenses during the journey?—No.

G-597. When he is repatriated do you pay him his travelling expenses?—He gets a free pass back to Howrah.

G-598. These men and women coolies who come from distances of 4 or 5 miles every day earn only annas 6 a day?—Yes.

G-599. Can a man getting annas 6 a day maintain himself and his family on that amount?—He does not maintain himself on that alone. He has got his fields where he works part of the year and gets an additional income.

G-600. Why does he not work all the year round on your works? Is it because he gets less here than what he gets by working on his fields? Have you any figures to show the relative incomes?—No, I have no figures.

G-601. What is the cost of living of a man with his wife and two children?—I do not know.

G-602. It must be much more than annas 6 or whatever he gets here; otherwise why should the man bring his wife and children to work here?—I have no information.

G-603. *Miss Lazarus*: You propose to provide coolie lines later on. Will the coolies construct their own houses or will you construct them for them?—I have it in view to try the experiment of giving them plots of ground and letting them construct their own houses on the model of the fishermen village near the hospital here. I notice that Professor Geddes commends this system in his report.

G-604. What about drainage?—Conservancy, sanitation and water supply would be in our charge.

G-605. Is there any provision made for schools for the labourers' children?—I do not think it is the function of the Port Authorities to provide schools. It is quite different on a railway. It is surely the function of the Municipality to provide schools.

G-606. Is that area under the Municipality?—No. They have asked to have that included within municipal jurisdiction.

G-607. Do you extend your medical facilities to labour under the control of the contractors?—Yes.

G-608. Do you grant medical certificates to those people also?—Yes, we grant medical certificates to everybody.

G-609. Do the contractors pay their men while they are sick?—I doubt if they do. If the coolies are injured on duty we pay them for days of absence, but we do not pay them for ordinary sickness.

G-610. You give certain figures regarding malaria. Do they include the wives and children of labourers?—(*Dr. Satyanarayana*): Yes.

G-611. At what age do you employ boy or girl coolies?—(*Mr. Ash*): The age limit is 12 for boys employed outside the works section. In the case of the factory the doctor gives a certificate regarding age. We have no age limit for contractor's coolies.

G-612. Who allots the work for the boys and girls?—Their own *sardars* in the coolie gangs.

G-613. With regard to the women and children employed by you who sees to it that they get the work which is suitable to them?—The work is allotted by the *sardar*, the *maistri* as he is called in this District.

G-614. Is there any officer to see that these women and children are not given work in excess of their capacity?—We do not exercise any control in the case of contractor's labour. It is a matter for the contractor entirely.

G-615. I refer to people employed by you directly?—This note will give you an idea of the distribution of work among the labourers. [A note handed in to Dr. (Miss) Lazarus.]

G-616. Are these women and children given smaller baskets to carry?—No, but they carry smaller loads.

G-617. What are the various bodies concerned in this anti-malarial work?—The Bengal Nagpur Railway, the Municipality and the District Board. The Municipality do nothing at all. They have a great number of wells many of which are not in use. They are not filled in. They should be.

G-618. *Sir Alexander Murray*: I see from your chart that Kancharipalen is the most malarious area. Are you taking steps to eliminate malaria as far as possible right through every month of the year?—(*Major Anderson*): Steps are being taken in that direction. We do a little work and the Bengal Nagpur Railway sanitary staff do a little.

G-619. It is so far away from the dock?—We have left that out for the moment. When the railway work starts on the new line round the oil depot a portion of that area will be taken under our control.

G-620. The next bad area according to your chart is Malkapuram. With the exception of these particularly bad areas can you say that you have reduced malaria to a minimum?—We have reduced it considerably. The number of malarial patients has come down greatly.

G-621. So that you may congratulate yourself on having reduced the incidence of malaria to as low as it can be?—We have reduced it to a very reasonable limit.

G-622. It was stated that the Municipality was not co-operating with you in this anti-malarial work. How can you carry on effective work if you have a Municipality by your side which does not co-operate with you in your anti-malarial measures?—We have an advisory committee for this anti-malarial work. There is a proposal that the Bengal Nagpur Railway, the Municipality, the District Board and the Harbour should contribute towards the appointment of a full-time malariologist who would take over the existing staff under his control. Then there will be effective supervision and rapid elimination of malaria. We are awaiting the sanction of the Government of India.

G-623. Are the other authorities agreed?—Yes, more or less. They are all represented on the committee.

G-624. You have sanitary staff under one of the assistant engineers. Do you find it a suitable allocation of work. We have heard differences of opinion as to the advisability of having the sanitary staff under the engineering department or the medical department?—We have it here under the Construction Engineer so that he may put up the necessary temporary works as the work proceeds from place to place.

G-625. For your purposes you think it better to have it under the engineering department?—It is quite satisfactory. It was at first under the Medical Officer of the Harbour, but for departmental reasons it was thought advisable to transfer it to the Engineer. This arrangement appears to be working quite well.

G-626. *Miss Lazarus*: You give some statistics regarding "diseases of women and labour and puerperium"; do they relate to the women labourers or the wives of the clerical staff?—(*Dr. Satyanarayana*): They relate to the wives of the clerical staff; they do not include the labourers.

G-627. Why is the crèche not in use now?—The women prefer to put their children in their homes under the care of their own relations. For sentimental reasons they do not like to bring their children out here.

G-628. How is it at the beginning it was popular and later on it has not come to be used so much?—It was attractive to the women in the first year of its existence but later on they did not take to it.

G-629. May it be due to the fact that the crèche was not moved with the works as they progressed from place to place so that it may be very near the works for women to come and go easily, but was left in its original place far away from the works?—(*Mr. Ash*): The nature of the works has changed a good deal since the time when the crèche was started. In the early phase it was dangerous to take the children with them and the mothers were glad to leave them in the crèche. But now that phase has passed and the working place is not dangerous at all.

G-630. *Sir Alexander Murray*: With regard to leave rules you say: leave admissible to temporary subordinates is granted "provided that the grant of leave involves no expense to Government". Does this apply to everybody noted against rule 1?—Yes, to everybody noted against that rule.

G-631. All the rules contained in Annexure II to your memorandum are qualified by this proviso?—Yes, there is no provision to pay a substitute in addition to the leave salary of the person going on leave.

G-632. You say: "As the proviso under Supplementary Rule 285 quoted above puts the superior dredging staff to a considerable loss, it has been proposed to the Railway Board to waive the same in their case only. Sanction is awaited." What is the loss to which you refer?—I can only pay the man going on leave the difference between his salary and the salary of his substitute. It is more easy to provide a substitute among the numerous low-paid staff than among the superior staff. We do not keep stand-by people in great numbers.

G-633. You have actually applied to the Railway Board for amending that rule?—We sent that up six months ago; we have not had a reply.

G-634. Take the question of provident fund. You work under the Railway Board and why have you not been brought under the State Railway Provident Fund scheme which will enable you to include workers drawing down to Rs. 15 a month?—(*Mr. Welchman*): The State Railway Provident Fund scheme applies only to permanent men on the railways. Our employees here are not permanent. (*Mr. Ash*): All our workers are holding temporary posts as would naturally be the case on construction works.

G-635. Why have you not a contributory provident fund?—We cannot take any action at all; it is the Government that has to do this.

G-636. You have applied to the Government to modify certain leave rules. Why have you not applied to Government to have a contributory provident fund and include all persons under that scheme? We applied and they did not agree to it.

*Mr. Joshi*: How can they do a thing for temporary men which they do not do for even permanent men?

*The witness (Mr. Welchman)*: With regard to casual leave we have to follow the Madras Government rules. With regard to privilege and medical leave for long periods we come under the Fundamental Rules.

*Sir Alexander Murray*: This is a question to be enquired into.

(The witnesses withdrew and the Commission adjourned to Madras.)

## MADRAS PRESIDENCY.

Eighty-Seventh Meeting.

MADURA.

Friday, 28th February 1930.

PRESENT :

SIR VICTOR SASSOON, Bart. (*Presiding*).

MR. JOHN CLIFF.

Lieut.-Colonel A. J. H. RUSSELL,  
C.B.E., I.M.S. (*Medical Assessor*).

Miss B. M. LE POER POWER.

Mr. B. SHIVA RAO, M.A., *Assistant  
Commissioner*.Mr. S. LALL, I.C.S., *Joint Secretary*.

SUBBAMMAL, woman worker, KANDALLAMMAL, woman worker, MUTHAMMAL, woman worker, KALIAMMAL, woman worker, and two other women workers of the Madura Mills.

G.-637. *Sir Victor Sassoon* : You need not be afraid of telling us everything. There is nobody here except ourselves ?—Our payment is not sufficient. (Subbammal) : I am 28 years old. I am a widow ; I have no children. I make Rs. 3-4-0 or Rs. 3-8-0 a week ; that is without commission ; we do not get commission. (Kandallammal) : I am married and have two children, one aged 6 and one 8. I get the same wages as Subbammal. My children are ill. My husband is a peon in the Court and he earns Rs. 14 a month. (Muthammal) : I am a widow, and I have a son 8 years old. (Kalliammal) : I am married and have a daughter aged 16. My husband is also working here. He earns Rs. 15 a month ; he is in the bundling department.

G-638. *Miss Power* : How did you get your job here ?—Four of us have been here from our childhood. I came here several times and at last the Manager kept me. I wanted work. I did not pay anything for my job. There are tickets for admission ; if we lose our ticket we have to pay As. 4 and get another one. We do not pay anything when we come. I have never heard of any one having paid anything. Within the last 18 months to two years the Manager has not allowed us to bring our children into the mills. When a woman who is working in the mill wants to nurse her baby the head clerk of the department gives her a chit to go out. We are allowed to go out at 9 o'clock in the morning and 3 o'clock in the afternoon. We have never been refused. We are given half an hour or 15 minutes. By the time I have given the child a good feed and come back the man here says " why have you been so long over it ? " We all nurse our children under the trees on the road. Some one from the house brings the children to the place. At meal time some of us have to run to our homes and swallow our food and come back lest we should be late, but if the houses are too far away when they come in the morning the women bring a little rice with them ; they keep the food in the dyeing

room, but they eat it anywhere. While we are eating our food we are often driven away by the watchmen because the European officer must not see us eating all over the place. There is no shed in which to eat. About a thousand people, men and women, eat here. All of us feed inside. We have no dining shed. When we give birth to a child we have no leave with pay. When we are going to have a baby we are stopped from working at the sixth month and we can start working again when the baby is three months' old. The *mistri* stops us. When the *mistri* sees that the women are obviously pregnant he stops them. We have to sell our property to live; we pawn our vessels. The interest charged is a quarter anna per rupee per week. We do not leave our babies in the Swedish Mission crèche. None of us 6 women have small children. We should very much like to have a crèche at which the women could leave their children and visit them frequently. If we have no one in the house to look after our baby we pay Rs. 2 to a woman to look after the baby while we work here. When we come back to work after having a child we do not pay anything to the headman to get a job, but they keep us hanging about the mill for a month. We do not pay anything to get the job. If we spoil the work we are suspended for a week and sometimes for a month. Even if we are ill and do not produce as much as we do normally we are punished through the head *mistri*, but apparently the extent of the punishment is decided by the management. It is all piece-work. When we are sick we ask the permission of the head writer to go to the dispensary. If the head writer permits us to go to the dispensary then we go to the dispensary. If the head clerk says "you had better go home" we go back home. The medicines do not seem to be effective. The English Doctor never sees us. We do not know that there is an English Doctor. The Doctor does not come to our houses. One of us pays Rs. 3-4-0 rent, another Rs. 4, another Rs. 4-8-0, another Rs. 3, and another Rs. 2-8-0. I have a mother, a sister and a brother and I pay Rs. 3-12-0. We never represent our grievances to anybody. The head *mistri* and head writer come to examine our production and if it has gone down below a certain amount we are sent out. We never go to the Manager.

G-639. You have men *mistris* over you; does the *mistri* show favouritism to certain women or give them easier work or is there any unpleasantness with the foreman at all?—We do not feel that he makes any distinction between one and the other. In case our production goes down he punishes us.

G-640. Is his treatment of you quite decent?—Except when production goes down.

G-641. Is there anything you want to say to us?—We want a crèche and higher wages. When we are given holidays we are not paid; we are not even given wages for Sundays. When we are sick we are not paid. If I take one day's leave and then happen to stay away the next day, on the third day when I come back there is no work for me. When we are sick we do not go to the mill Doctor; we take anything we can. We have to go into the mill and come out of the mill at the same time as the men and it is very hard to get in with the crowd. We are fined one or two annas if we are a little late. Sometimes we are fined As. 3 to As. 4.

(The witnesses withdrew.)