

Indian Labour Commission: Evidence:

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3. Dto: Index. CxM.

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ROYAL COMMISSION
ON
LABOUR IN INDIA.

WRITTEN EVIDENCE.

Vol. VII.—Part 1.

MADRAS.

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1930

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS.

PREFACE.

This memorandum follows the terms of the questionnaire issued by the Royal Commission and therefore does not deal with the conditions of agricultural labour, other than labour employed on plantations. But although an enquiry into the conditions of agricultural labour, other than that employed on plantations, is not included in the terms of reference to the Commission, this Government consider that without such enquiry it is impossible to obtain an accurate idea of the general labour conditions in the province. As some of the succeeding paragraphs of the memorandum indicate, agricultural labour and industrial labour are often so closely inter-related that a man may spend part of the year on agricultural labour and part on industrial labour ; and even a man employed continuously on industrial labour often lives in a village along with the agriculturists, or returns to it whenever he can. If, therefore, attention is concentrated solely on the conditions in industries and on plantations, the appreciation of the general standard of living amongst the labouring classes in the province cannot be anything but imperfect.

Secondly, it is not clear why labour on plantations is regarded differently from other forms of agricultural labour. From the point of view of the labourer the conditions of ordinary agricultural labour merit enquiry as much as, if not more than, the conditions of plantation labour. A general sketch on "Labour and its Movement", by the late Sir George Paddison, is annexed and will serve to illustrate this point which the Government consider to be of considerable importance.

NOTE BY THE LATE SIR GEORGE PADDISON, K.B.E., C.S.I., I.C.S.

Labour and its Movement.

Strength.—Cultivation in this Presidency supports as workers and dependants 30,000,000 out of 43,000,000 inhabitants as enumerated in the census of 1921, or 7 out of every 10 persons. Of these, farm servants and field labourers number 3 out of every 10 as is shown in the following table :—

Class.	Total.	Men.	Women.	Dependants.
Farm servants	2,927,459	961,911	630,055	1,335,493
Field labourers	5,323,686	1,354,260	1,676,339	2,293,087
Total	8,251,145	2,316,171	2,306,394	3,628,580

This gives only one labourer for every four acres of cultivated land, including irrigated land in the Presidency. A very large number of persons, however, classed as cultivating owners and tenants are also labourers, but the exact number cannot be calculated. In a number of typical villages at the recent resettlement in Bellary and Anantapur districts, 28 per cent. of the farmers combined with their own job that of agricultural labourer. In Tanjore district, a typical delta district, there is a regular system of tenancy which is practically a wage contract, the landowner giving his tenants a share of the crop in lieu of the wages but advancing a considerable proportion of the cost of cultivation and often employing other labourers to help them in reaping and transplanting the crop. Often, too, the smaller owners or tenants assist each other without any payment in times of urgency such as transplantation and harvest seasons.

The village workmen who chiefly affect the agriculturists are the blacksmith and the carpenter and the farm labourer proper. The panchangamdar, who predicts the weather and is paid by the farmers, can hardly be considered a labourer. The blacksmith and the carpenter belong to particular castes and their job is generally hereditary. Their pay is sometimes in the shape of a plot of land held free of assessment on condition of service and in addition (if the land is not enough to support him) a percentage of the crop given at harvest time, calculated on the basis of so much for each plough. Sometimes a cash wage is given. These workers are generally well off.

ROYAL COMMISSION

ON

LABOUR IN INDIA

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