



**LABOUR DISPUTES IN THE
PROVINCE**

**SUCCESSFUL SETTLEMENT BY
GOVERNMENT EFFORTS**

**ISSUED BY THE DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION AND
PUBLICITY, GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS**

**PRINTED BY THE SUPERINTENDENT
GOVERNMENT PRESS
MADRAS**

Labour Disputes in the Province

Successful Settlement by Government Efforts

Settlement of labour disputes is always a knotty problem for any Government and a Government in the shape of a popular Ministry which owes its existence to the overwhelming support of the electorate suffers from a marked disadvantage. A majority of the labourers, who also form a part of the electorate, which has returned the party to power expect that some definite advantages will accrue to them from a popular Government. The Government have no cause for complaint on this aspect of the question. It has always been the considered opinion of the party now in power that the Government exist for the good of the people including the labourers. In fact they look upon themselves as the first servants of the people. But what some people and particularly labourers forget in their love for their own Government is that there is such an important thing in the scheme of affairs as the time factor. Some people want all good to be done to them by the Government in the shortest time. But in administering the various departments of the Government with all their multifarious problems the Government must be given some time to study the situation and do the needful. A little breathing space to enable them to mould the governmental machinery to their own policies is a *sine-qua-non* for the functioning of any Government which means business. And in their haste to secure the redress of the grievances which have existed for long, the labourers have had no proper advice and guidance from their leaders, who have been more importunate in their demands than the rank and file of the labourers.

↳

Strikes the Order of the Day

Thus it was that within a very short time after the present Ministry took up office, various industrial disputes arose in the Province as a result of which strikes and lockouts became almost the order of the day in the industrial world. The Ministry was flooded with countless memorials and sometimes threats that if they failed to intervene on behalf of labour, they would do this and that. In fact a breakdown in the industrial life of the Province was threatened for some time by the strikers and in certain cases questionable methods were employed to create sanction behind the demands of labour.

To clarify the position of the Government and to bring about *esprit-de-corps* among the various employers and the employees in the Province, the Hon'ble Minister for Industries and Labour issued a statement on 1st May 1946 setting out in clear terms the intentions of the Government in so far as industrial troubles were concerned. The following are the relevant extracts from the speech which has been translated into the four languages of the Province, Tamil, Telugu, Kanarese and Malayalam, and printed copies of which have been distributed throughout the Province:—

Appeal by Labour Minister

“ It is the intention of the Government of Madras,” said the Hon'ble Minister for Industries, “ to pass legislation regarding labour conditions at an early stage and appoint, if necessary, a permanent machinery such as industrial courts to ensure industrial peace. The attempt of this Government will be to co-ordinate the policy at the Centre and in the Provinces as far as it is practicable.

“ The industrial workers must realize ” added the Minister “ that they have their rights and privileges both as citizens and workers. They should feel that this Government is their own Government and co-operate with others in helping it to run smoothly.

"Freedom of association, the Government wish to make it clear," said the Minister "is assured to workers and their organizations. They expect the employers of this Province to be ready and willing to give recognition to every bona fide Trade Union organization as a matter of course. It is also likely that the Government may define by legislation in this behalf the conditions under which recognition will be granted."

Referring to the disputes between employees and employers the Hon'ble Minister said that it was preferable that they were settled among themselves without being referred to outside agencies and that all the available methods of representation should be exhausted before resorting to direct action.

It is to be regretted that the reasoned appeal of the Hon'ble Minister for Labour to look upon strikes as the last resort did not have the desired effect. Probably the labourers thought that they stood more to gain by direct action than by negotiations with the result that the Government had to intervene, though reluctantly, in the disputes which arose since the Ministry took up office in the following business concerns and to make the best of a bad job and see that justice was done to both the employees and employers by referring the points at issue for adjudication and conciliation under Rule 81-A of the Defence of India Rules:—

1. Motor Transport Companies in Nellore district.
2. The Madura Mills, Limited, Madura and Vikramasingapuram.
3. The Indian Metal and Metallurgical Corporation, Limited, Mettur.
4. The Buckingham and Carnatic Mills, Limited, Madras.
5. The Suryanarayana Spinning and Weaving Mills and Sri Ramachandra Spinning and Weaving Mills, Limited, Pandalapaka, East Godavari district.
6. The City Motor Service, Limited, Madras.

Gulf Bridged

The main points at issue with regard to motor transport companies in Nellore district which were referred to adjudication related to termination of service, payment of dearness allowance and batta, grant of leave with pay, introduction of scales of pay for workshop employees and introduction of scales for running staff.

The recommendations of the adjudicator on these points, which were approved *in toto* by the Government, were: (1) Standing orders of the United Bus Service on termination of service can be adopted; (2) demand for dearness allowance be conceded; (3) the United Bus Service to give a minimum batta of 12 annas; (4) employees with one year's continuous service to be given leave with pay for 15 days; (5) workers to be classified as in the case of the United Bus Service and a minimum pay ranging from Rs. 11-8-0 to Rs. 57-8-0 to be given to persons under each of the groups A to L; minimum pay to be Rs. 15 for cleaners and Rs. 30 for drivers and an annual increment of Re. 1 and 8 annas to be given with effect from 1st August 1946 to the drivers and others subject to a maximum of Rs. 55.

Madura Mill strike.—In the case of the strike in the Madura Mills, Limited, Madura and Vikramasingapuram, the demands made by the workers which were referred to adjudication were the cancellation of standing orders penalizing active support of the rival union and reinstatement of the alleged dismissed labourers. On the first issue the adjudicator suggested the cancellation of the existing standing order and a new one suggested by the Adjudicator be incorporated and on the second issue he gave the award that 35 workers who were dismissed should be reinstated. The Government accepted the award of the adjudicator.

The workers of the Indian Metal and Metallurgical Corporation, Limited, Mettur, Salem district, had differences with their employers on the following main points:—

Reinstatement of the dismissed workers; increase in the payment of basic wages; and payment of dearness allowance.

The Adjudicator recommended that all the persons who were working on 6th March 1946 and who were still on strike should be reinstated, except those against whom there were cases pending before the criminal courts for acts of violence. Those who were convicted should not be reinstated. Those who were discharged or acquitted would be reinstated.

The Adjudicator also recommended that 30 workers against whom complaints of violence against loyal workers had been received by the management be reinstated.

On the question of increase in the payment of basic wages and dearness allowance the Adjudicator's recommendations were—

The minimum basic wages in the case of unskilled adult male workers should be fixed for the future at the rate of 6 annas per head per day with a dearness allowance to be paid in accordance with the cost of living index rates adopted by the South Indian Mill Owners' Association.

As regards skilled male workers it was recommended that two-fifths of the rates at which they were then paid should be treated as basic wages and that dearness allowance should be added to these wages according to the cost of living index rates of the South Indian Mill Owners' Association.

In the case of adult women workers who were permanent workers it was recommended that they should be paid at the rate of 4 annas per head per day as their basic wages (two-fifths of 10 annas which they were then getting) with a dearness allowance in addition at the rate referred to above. No change in the wages of adult women workers who were not permanent workers was recommended.

The workers of the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills, Limited, Madras, were on strike for the period between 8th June 1946 to 24th July 1946. The demands of the workers were the grant of wages and dearness allowances for the period of the strike. The Adjudicator found that the workers were not entitled to wages and dearness allowance for the strike period, as there was no justification, moral or legal, for the strike.

As regards the disputes that arose between the employers and employees of Suryanarayana Spinning and Weaving Mills and Ramachandra Spinning and Weaving Mills, Pandalapaka, East Godavari district, the labourers demanded reinstatement of carpenter Kuppusami with back pay; dearness allowance on the basis of the points of cost of living with effect from February 1946; 10 days' casual leave and 14 days' festival holidays; double wages for those who worked on holidays; immediate payment of two months' pay as bonus; and reinstatement of 72 workers.

The adjudication enquiry into these issues is in progress.

The main points at issue in the labour trouble in the City Motor Service, Madras, were the following:—

Whether the dearness allowance paid should be based on the points of cost of living index as in S.R.V.S. Co., Ltd., and if so, whether arrears of dearness allowance should be paid to those who were not paid any dearness allowance; whether 14 festival holidays should be given; whether the discharge of 12 workers of the body building section was justified and if not what was the remedy.

The recommendations of the Adjudicator were—

Dearness allowance to be increased from Rs. 16 a month to Rs. 17-8-0 a month; no arrears of dearness allowance to be paid. The dearness allowance at 2 annas per point of cost of living index number above 100 should be paid with effect from 1st November 1946.

All Workers Found Employment

The hotel workers of Madras City who were on strike for a few days demanded the reinstatement of those workers who were dismissed for their absence on 1st May 1946. The demands which were referred by the Government for conciliation ended in almost all the workers being re-employed excepting 60 workers, who were later employed in hotels other than those in which they were originally employed.

The Public Health menials of the Municipalities and Local Boards in the Province demanded betterment of conditions of service and wages and dearness allowance, etc. The Conciliation Board recommended compulsory institution of provident fund and 25 per cent increase in basic wages. The Government accepted these findings.

The workers of Coimbatore Cement Workers, Madukkarai, demanded increase of wages, promotions, dearness allowance, bonus, abolition of work by contractors, recognition of workers' union and pay and allowance for the strike period. The points at issue were referred for adjudication and the main points in the award of the Adjudicator were: Men workers and women workers are to get a minimum wage of 9 annas and 6 annas per day; an increase of 2 annas for those getting a wage of 7 to 9 annas and of 1 anna for those getting 10 to 15 annas; promotions to be on the basis of efficiency; a dearness allowance of 2 annas for every point above 100 points in the cost of living index; bonus to be paid annual proportionately to earned wages and bonus for 1944-45 equivalent to two-fifths of earned wages to be paid; seven days sick leave to be granted in addition to the leave being granted; the system of work by contractors to be abolished; the Union to be recognized after amendment of rules as proposed by the management, and half wages and dearness allowance for actual working days during the strike period to be paid.

The workers of the Madras Electric Supply Corporation and the Madras Electric Tramways, Madras, had, differences with their employers on the issues of wages, promotion, leave, additional bonus for 1945-46, rates of gratuity, overtime ratio, absenteeism on circular days, deposit by traffic workers and dismissal. The Adjudicator's award on the abovementioned points respectively were—

Coolies with As. 12 to As. 14 wages to be paid according to B or A class with annual increase of $\frac{1}{4}$ anna; semi-skilled workers to be paid Re. 1 to Rs. 1-8-0 with an annual increment of 1 anna; skilled workers to be paid from Re. 1-4-0 to Rs. 1-8-0, from Rs. 1-8-0 to Rs. 2, from Rs. 2 to Rs. 3 and from Rs. 3 to Rs. 3-8-0 for the four classes with annual increments from 1 anna to 4 annas; conductors and motor-men to be paid in the scale of Rs. 30-1-50; paid men in the traffic and Engineering sections and in the M.E.S.C. to get 3 to 10 per cent increase in pay; promotion to be on the basis of seniority and annually; all employees with a year's service to be eligible for 15 days sick leave with half pay and dearness allowance and pay for certain holidays to be given; an additional bonus of half a month's pay is to be granted for 1945; present system of rates of gratuity to continue but in a clearly defined way; one and a half rates of overtime to be paid for work over ten hours; number of circular days to be reduced and Sundays not to be declared as circular days; deposit to continue and the dismissed worker, Subbiah, is to be reinstated.

On the disputes between the Raja Mills, Madura, and their workers the adjudicator gave the following main decisions: Seven workers to be re-instated;

retrenched men to be taken back in fresh vacancies; no compensation for the breakdown of the machinery is to be given and no interference necessary with the proposal to close the night shift.

Strike Legal

In the matter of the strike in Sri Rama Vilas Motor Service, Limited, Madura, the adjudicator's award decided in main that the strike was legal; that dearness allowance should be raised from As. 2 to As. 3; and that 12½ per cent allowance to be paid on basic wages for continuous night work.

With regard to the strike in Spencer and Company, Madras, the adjudicator found that the strike was illegal and that the lockout though legal, was vindictive. He recommended that all the strikers were to be reinstated or paid wages for the strike period up to the date of the award and that two months' wages as bonus should be paid to the workers.

Work of Conciliation Boards

The disputes between the employers and workmen in Chrome Leather Company, Chromepet, were referred for conciliation and the decisions of the Conciliation Board were that an additional bonus of half month's wages to be paid to the workers for the half-year ending 30th September 1945. One month's pay to be paid as bonus to staff for the same period. These bonus are special for 1945.

The Conciliation Board set up for enquiry into the disputes between the workers in the Aaron Spinning and Weaving Mills, Pappinisseri, and their employees, suggested to the company to re-employ the workmen who had been thrown out of employment after 26th February 1946 up to 5th June 1946 within one month from 13th June 1946 and that in view of the undertaking given by the workers to abide by the by-laws of the company, the company might grant the bonus to the workers for past service. The Managing Director agreed to their suggestion. The Conciliation Board decided that the workmen were not entitled to any pay, dearness allowance or bonus during the period they were out of service.

On the joint representation of the workers and the management of the Jayalakshmi Mills, Coimbatore, the Government appointed a special committee to settle the rates of wages of the different classes of workers in the mills. The rates fixed by the court have been approved by the Government.

Settlement by Discussion

Besides the above major industrial disputes there were several strikes all over the Presidency which were settled by direct negotiations and by Labour Officers, and the Commissioner of Labour by conciliation. Notices of strikes were received from Labour Unions of 19 business concerns and prompt action was taken to settle the disputes even before the expiry of notices. In some cases the Labour department took urgent action on the memoranda of grievances received from the employees and the demands were settled by joint discussions with the employers and employees.

As there were frequent disputes between the employees and employers in the Textile Mills in Coimbatore and Madura, the Government have appointed a Court of Inquiry to examine the conditions of labour in these mills. The Government have also appointed another Court of Inquiry to examine the conditions of workers in such unregulated individual establishments as the beedi and cigar factories and tanneries in the province.

Altogether the record of work of the Industries and Labour Department in the settlement of labour disputes in this province is extremely creditable. Besides the settlement of disputes the Government have undertaken legislation

about labour matters, with the idea of improving conditions of the workers. In both points, therefore, the points of legislation and executive action, Madras has been steadily advancing ever since the present ministry took up office.

Legislation Proposed

The Government propose to introduce in the ensuing session of the Legislative Assembly a Bill known as the Shop Assistants' Bill which is intended to be applied in the first instance to municipal areas in the province. The Bill will cover persons employed in commercial and trading establishments, the office sections of factories, restaurants, eating houses, theatres and other places of public amusement. The provisions of the Bill seek to regulate hours of work, intervals and rest periods, opening and closing hours, weekly holidays with pay, payment of wages, cleanliness of premises and lighting facilities. An important feature of the Bill is its provisions in regard to the employment of juveniles.

The other Bill which the Government propose to introduce in the Legislative Assembly is called the Non-Power Factories Bill. The object of the Bill is to control such unregulated non-power establishments which do not come under the purview of the Factories Act. Most of these business establishments are housed in low-roofed and ill-ventilated buildings which are unsuitable for carrying on any industry. They are not generally provided with latrines, urinals, drinking water and washing places. The legislation proposed to be enacted is expected to check such abuses as referred to above.
