

REPORT
OF THE
GOVERNMENT PRESSES
ENQUIRY COMMITTEE
UNITED PROVINCES

[Appointed by the Government of the United Provinces]



ALLAHABAD:
SUPERINTENDENT, PRINTING AND STATIONERY, UNITED PROVINCES, INDIA
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THE CRAFTSMAN

A man with a trade is a man indeed,
If the man and the trade are one,
And the trade of a man is an honest creed,
When a full day's work is done.

If the trade of a man is the Printing Art,
And his standard is high and clear,
A craftsman he'll be and worthy the post,
In the trade he will rank as a peer.

The worth of a trade is the worth of a man;
The trade but reflects what prevails,
It is lifted on high if he does all he can,
Or is dragged in the mire if he fails.
The man at his best is a craftsman true,
His work is his boast and crown.
No tablet of bronze need be cast as his due;
What he is and he does brings renown.

ALTON B. CARTY.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Government of the United Provinces by their order no. 4012/XVIII, dated Lucknow, the 2nd September, 1938, appointed a Government Presses Enquiry Committee with the following *Tertas* of Reference :

(1) Is the working of the Government Presses satisfactory; what improvements, if any, are required therein?

(2) Is the strength of the staff adequate; what changes, if any, are needed therein?

(3) Are the rates of payment for piece-work and the scales of salary suitable, in the light of the scales and rates prevailing in (i) private Presses and (ii) Government Presses in other neighbouring provinces?

(4) Are the other conditions of service of the staff generally satisfactory, especially in respect of (i) the men who are temporary and (ii) the provident fund benefits admissible to them?

(5) Are the present working hours of the Government Presses satisfactory, or do they need any change, and if so, what?

(6) To what extent should leave and holidays with pay be given to the various classes of employees?

(7) Should apprentices be recruited for work at the Press? If so, how many, and on what terms, and what should their qualifications be?

(8) Should any provision be made for imparting training in Printing at the Government Press and if so, along what lines?

(9) In what way and to what extent can the cost of production of printed matter be reduced?

(10) Do the scales of charges and rates of advertisements in the *United Provinces Gazette* need any modification, and if so, what?

(11) Is the present financial position of the Presses satisfactory?

2. The Committee consisted of the following :

Professor S. K. Rudra, M.A. (Cantab.),

University Professor of Economics, University of Allahabad

Chairman.

Dr. Mahmud Ullah Jung, M.L.C., Parliamentary Secretary

E. M. Souter, Esq., C.I.E., M.L.C., Chairman, Improvement Trust, Ford and Macdonald, Cawnpore

Members.

Harihar Nath Shastri, Esq., M.L.C., Peoples of India Servants' Society, Cawnpore

Lal Bahadur Shastri, Esq., M.L.A., Peoples of India Servants' Society, Allahabad

Pandit Mohan Lal Nehru, Proprietor, The Allahabad Law Journal Press	} <i>Members.</i>
Pandit Vishwanath Prasad, Manager, The Leader Press, Allahabad	
K. B. Bhatia, Esq., I.C.S., Deputy Commis- sioner, Rae Bareilly	
Colonel D. W. Crighton, O.B.E., Superinten- dent, Printing and Stationery, Allahabad, up to 28th April, 1939	} <i>Secretary.</i>
M. G. Shome, Esq., officiating Superinten- dent, Printing and Stationery, Allahabad, from 28th April, 1939	

3. The first Meeting of the Committee was held at Allahabad on the 17th September, 1938, and the final Meeting was held at the Government Central Press, Allahabad, on the 8th August, 1939. In all fifty-three meetings were held. It was not anticipated that the Enquiry would take much time. Actually it dragged on for months. The principal cause of delay lay in the pre-occupation of the Chairman and of some Members. Sittings of the Committee could, at no occasion, be held for more than a few days at a time. Had the personnel of the Committee not been composed of such busy people, its task would have been accomplished sooner.

The Committee issued a Questionnaire, given in Appendix 1. It was sent to Provincial Government Presses and to the Government of India Press at Delhi, and to important private Presses in the Provinces. We desire to acknowledge with gratitude our debt to all those officers of the Government Presses and private Presses who took the trouble to send us their replies. These proved very helpful. The answers from various Government Presses were of particular value.

4. The Committee visited the Government Branch Press at Lucknow (Mr. W. A. C. Howard, Assistant Superintendent, was officer-in-charge) and the Photo-Litho Press at Roorkee (Mr. W. J. Peychers, Assistant Superintendent, was officer-in-charge) and on two occasions the Naini Jail Press (Mr. G. E. Stephens, Assistant Superintendent, was officer-in-charge). Visits were also paid to three well-known private Presses—the Allahabad Law Journal Press, at Allahabad, and the "Pioneer" Press and the Newal Kishore Press at Lucknow. It was a matter of regret that the Committee were unable to avail themselves of the invitation so kindly extended to them to visit the "Leader" and the Indian Presses at Allahabad. The visit to the Allahabad Law Journal Press was an education in itself. We were also much impressed with the fine new buildings that were in course of construction for the installation of the "Pioneer" Press. To the authorities of these Presses we offer our grateful thanks.

The Committee twice visited the Government of India Press at Delhi. To the Controller, and to Mr. H. F. Trousdell, Manager of the Press, in a very particular way, we are greatly indebted. On both visits, he devoted a couple of days to answering questions we had had occasions to ask him. For Mr. Trousdell's courtesy, his patience and his helpful exposition we are much beholden to him. We take this opportunity to offer him our sincere thanks.

5. The Chairman would wish to acknowledge his indebtedness to the authorities of the Government Press, Bengal, the Jail Press, Alipore, and the Bihar Government Press at Patna, for the opportunity

they accorded him to visit their Presses and to interrogate them on several matters. In his personal capacity, he would also wish to acknowledge his thanks to the Managers of the Indian Press at Allahabad and the Mission Press at Lucknow, and to the Superintendent of the Government Press at Madras, for the facilities they extended to him to visit their Presses and for the information they so kindly supplied.

6. To all the officers, heads of departments, foremen, clerks and men, and the Medical Officer of the Government Press at Allahabad, Lucknow, Roorkee and Naini, as well as to the President (Mr. M. M. L. Hajela, B.A., LL.B.) and the Secretaries of the Government Presses Employees' Association, we are greatly beholden for the evidence, both oral and written, that they so unstintingly furnished us with during the course of our Enquiry. But for their ready assistance we could not have been able to probe into the subject of our Enquiry quite so deeply, nor so concretely, as we trust we have been able to do. Our Proceedings bear abundant testimony to the range and the reality of this help. We were particularly struck with the thorough grip and detailed understanding the men displayed of their respective functions. Their dignity and their sense of responsibility filled us with admiration. We desire to take this opportunity to express publicly to all of them our keen sense of appreciation of not only their expert knowledge, but also of the manner and spirit in which they tendered their evidence. Their co-operation went a great way to lighten the burden of our task.

7. While it is invidious to mention anyone by name among us, we cannot refrain from referring to one person in particular, the more so since he is no longer in the country, namely, our able Secretary, Colonel D. W. Crighton, O.B.E., Superintendent of the Government Presses, United Provinces. His invaluable experience and expert knowledge were freely and fully placed at our disposal. It was a matter of great regret that it was not possible for us to have the benefit of his mature advice till the end. To him we would acknowledge our indebtedness and offer our cordial thanks.

8. To Mr. M. G. Shome, acting Superintendent, we would also offer our sincere thanks. He took over his onerous duties from Colonel Crighton at a vital stage of our Enquiry. He spared himself no pains to give us all the assistance we required. His knowledge, of nearly ten years, of the working of the Press and his understanding of the men and of matters relating to the handling of them, were of substantial value to us. To him and the entire staff of the Government Press we would desire to express our high appreciation of all the hard work they willingly endured to assist in the work of the Enquiry. We are conscious of the additional burden our Committee imposed upon them continuously for so many months.

9. From among the rest of the Committee we would express our gratitude to Pandit Mohan Lal Nehru, Mr. Vishwanath Prasad and Mr. K. B. Bhatia, who on different Sub-Committees of our Enquiry rendered valuable services. Pandit Mohan Lal Nehru, in spite of his age, set to all of us a fine example of great devotion to duty and keen sense of punctuality. His expert knowledge helped us at every turn. Mr. K. B. Bhatia worked out some arduous calculations for us with characteristic industry, ability and care. Mr. Vishwanath Prasad applied himself with great diligence and helped the Committee substantially on several technical matters. With them

we would very specially desire to couple the names of Mr. K. P. Dar, Secretary and Manager of the Allahabad Law Journal Press, and Mr. D. P. Verma, of the Leader Press, Allahabad, and Mr. A. G. M. Twinning, Assistant Engineer of the United Provinces Electric Supply Company, who, though not on the Committee, favoured us with their valuable expert help on particular matters referred to them for advice.

We regret that Mr. Souter was prevented, for various reasons, from attending our meetings, and had finally to tender his resignation. We were thus deprived of his valuable help.

10. Our list of acknowledgments and thanks would be incomplete if we did not place on record our particular appreciation of Mr. H. S. Daniels, who was in charge of the office of the Committee. The heavy and confidential work that devolved upon him he performed with efficiency. We would also desire to associate with him the name of Mrs. H. M. Lucus, who performed the arduous task of typing and re-typing our Report. To her, and Mr. Daniels in a very special manner, we express our cordial thanks.

11. Our Terms of Reference set the limits to our Enquiry. To the best of our endeavour and understanding we have tried to cover the field indicated. We interpreted the Terms of Reference in a liberal spirit. We desire to state that during the course of our Enquiry we kept three outstanding propositions constantly in mind. The first was to see that the Government Press rendered efficient, expeditious and punctual service to the Government. For this is after all the *raison d'être* of the Press. The Press must have officers, staff, machinery and other equipment of such quality and amount as will enable it to serve Government with a constant flow of high grade printed matter. If a Government Press should fail to render such service, it would cease to justify its very existence. The second proposition that we constantly had in mind was to ascertain whether fair wages and humane conditions of work obtained in Government Presses both for officers and for other employees. While we have not been unmindful of market conditions governing the rates of remuneration and other conditions prevailing in the Printing Industry, we have, nevertheless, tried to attain a certain standard in regard to these matters. We believe that the salaries, the wages and the piece-rates and the other privileges that we have proposed, for instance in matters of leave, provident fund, medical and other benefits, will approximate, and in certain directions, even surpass those that prevail in any Government Press elsewhere in the country. Thirdly, we have faithfully kept in view the factor of economy. We have ever been mindful of the ultimate payer, namely, the taxpayer, on whom the burden of our various recommendations must fall. By laying down careful rules for the recruitment and promotion of qualified, efficient and well-trained men (and in time to come, we trust of women too); by indicating processes of rationalization; by suggesting means of better regulation and greater concentration of work; by indicating change of method in account keeping; and in several other ways, we hope we have indicated some directions in which economy may be achieved without loss of efficiency.

12. In the course of our Enquiry, an investigation into the Cost of Living of Press and non-Press workers at Allahabad was conducted and the results separately published. Together with our Proceedings it forms a part of the literature of our Committee.

13. In conclusion, we can only express the hope that the Government of these Provinces as well as the staff of the Government Presses will be helped rather than hindered by the findings of our Committee. If this should happen to be the case we shall remember with pleasure our mutual association in this enterprise. Apart from differences of points of view on certain matters, we have been fundamentally a happy family. For in the performance of the task entrusted to us by Government we were united, everyone of us, by the spirit of service to the Province and its people.

It remains only to touch lightly on the Minutes of Dissent that some of us have felt it necessary to append to this Report. While these Members are in substantial agreement with the bulk of the Recommendations they are not in a position, from various aspects, to sign the Report in its entirety. Their point of view is worthy of careful consideration and cannot lightly be set aside.

14. The Minute of Dissent by Pandit Mohan Lal Nehru covers many topics. His main contention is that wages and conditions prevailing in the Government Press should not deviate from those prevailing in private industry. We are all in agreement with this principle. Ideally this is what it should be. But, it will take time to better wages and conditions in private Presses as a whole. Government, as we have argued, cannot exclusively take the competitive point of view. It has to set the standard. It has to give the lead of being a model employer. This is a point of view that we believe is both commendable and reasonable.

In sanctioning higher rates of wages and maintaining superior conditions of work, within limits of course, we believe we shall attract a superior quality of personnel, which will justify, if not more than justify the higher cost incurred, by putting out more and better quality of service to the Government. We believe in the slogan the "Economy of high wages," apart from the social aspects of the question.

On the other hand, Pandit Mohan Lal Nehru would be thoroughly right and sound, if even after higher wages and better conditions the Government Press were unable to turn out sufficient amount and satisfactory type of work. It would then amount to a definite drain upon the revenues of the State, without any justification. It is well that the Panditji has taken upon himself to remind us of the burden to the taxpayer, and the unfairness of it to the private Presses. He is no less keen to secure proper wages and conditions for the Government Press employees than the rest of us. Only he sounds a strong note of caution. For this we cannot but feel much beholden to him. He wished it to be impressed upon us that his was more a Note of Caution than one of Dissent.

15. Mr. Vishwanath Prasad has contented himself by writing a very brief Note of Dissent. He has gone a very long way in accommodating himself to the view of the majority. His central point of difference is that the minimum wage should not be raised artificially above a reasonable figure. Pandit Mohan Lal Nehru also agrees with him in this matter. Our position is that we desire to give the workers, in Government employment, at any rate a living wage. We have shown that in cities like Cawnpore, Allahabad and Lucknow, with prevailing price level, habits and customs, Rs.15 per month, may

be regarded as a minimum wage for an adult male worker, who is supposed to have the burden of bringing up a family apart from supporting himself as well. We admit with Mr. Vishwanath Prasad that the supply of labour is abundant, and that workers, and even skilled workers, can be secured for less than Rs.15. But we find little justification in Government determining its wage rates according to the ups and downs of the labour market conditions exclusively, whatever we may have to say with reference to private industry. Minimum wages are determined in many countries, for private industry, and are artificially raised slightly above the market rate for that class of labourers for other than economic reasons. Therefore in prescribing a minimum rate for a Government concern, in two of the leading cities of the Province, where cost of living is admittedly high, we believe we are not imposing impossible conditions on Government. In Cawnpore a similar rate has been determined for a private industry.

16. Mr. Harihar Nath Shastri's Note of Dissent touches upon several important matters. It is commendable that he has been able to agree with the majority on a wide range of vital matters. His difference is due mainly to his angle of approach to the subject. His ideological point of view is considerably different from those of the majority, though in substance the divergence is not so great as it may at first appear. We can refer briefly to some of his main points.

With regard to fixing the grade of the piece-compositors permanently, we feel that on the one hand it will be unfair to the young and other hard working men, and on the other hand it would be a continuous loss to Government, when men have reached a certain age, and begin to turn out less amount of work, and yet continue to receive a higher rate of remuneration. Our recommendation for revision of grades we regard as on the whole fair to all parties concerned.

We believe that we have provided sufficient scope for promotion of men to the higher grades in the cadre. To make a provision for 70 per cent. of the staff in the higher grades, would place a severe strain on the finances of the Press. Besides, apart from offices of small cadre or highly technical departments, in no large-scale offices or establishments, are higher posts provided in anything like the proportion suggested. As it is we are of opinion that sufficient and adequate opportunity will be available for much of average ability to reach to satisfactory grades of pay and position.

Mr. Harihar Nath Shastri is correct when he points out that we have failed to give the exact numbers that will be effected by the scheme of mechanization that we have advocated, especially in the Bindery Department. We could not do anything else. We can only give approximations. We also do not see how the two years that he wishes to prescribe for completing mechanization can be seriously regarded as a feasible time limit.

We feel that our recommendation of a 5-year period from the date of acceptance of the Report by Government to be a more reasonable one.

We regret that he cannot see eye to eye with us in prescribing a three years' period as a necessary interval, before industrial workers can be made permanent, if there should be vacancies in the Press. In other countries the period of apprenticeship is much longer, usually being a seven years' process.

We believe that in the matter of promotion our recommendations are not far different from what he has to suggest. Only in respect to *ex-cadre* posts we insist exclusively on merit as against mere factor of seniority of service.

In the matter of holidays and leave Mr. Shastri is partly voicing the sentiments of the majority.

We, however, feel that as compared to such provision in private industry, and indeed in some Government establishments, our provision for privilege, sick and casual leave are not inadequate. Even the reference to Railways that he makes applies only in regard to special sections of Railway workers. Otherwise the general system prevails that those categories of workers who are entitled to earn overtime are not eligible for casual leave.

We are sorry that we cannot carry Mr. Shastri along with us in the matter of holidays. The need for more work, by all, in all departments of Government is so great, that we cannot see our way to modify our recommendation in this regard. Abolition of communal holidays may be a serious policy, but we cannot, under present circumstances, deem it feasible. To give each community the religious holidays of all the other communities would be a highly costly gesture, and would not, in our judgment, be particularly helpful in producing the much needed communal harmony, for that alas depends on far more deep-seated factors than the celebration of holidays in common.

We, ourselves, have stated that a reduction of hours of work need not necessarily reduce output. Indeed that is precisely the reason why we suggest that our hours of work should remain at 7½ hours instead of being raised to 8 hours as at Delhi and other places.

In the matter of Trade Unions, we have already stated that we do not wish, in the least degree, to dismember the unity of the working classes. We definitely believe in the solidarity of the Trade Union movement. But here we are concerned with a very particular problem, namely, of State employees. Under our present social system, we cannot view with equanimity, Government workers waging war against the State, should orders be issued for a General Strike either by the Provincial or the All-India Trade Union Congress. We do not regard it as advisable, for the present, that the Government Press Workers should be given the right to join the Private Presses Workers' Union. It is correct that in Great Britain, as well as in Geneva, no such distinction is made between Government and non-Government Workers' Unions. But obviously, very many essential factors are absent in the labour situation in India. The comparison is not on all fours. For instance, the Trade Union officials in Great Britain are all themselves workers and labourers of the respective trades and crafts. No so-called non-workers are office-bearers. It is not easy to estimate the value of such leadership in trade union policy and methods as against Unions controlled and led by non-worker officers. In foreign countries, in the matter of wages and conditions, workers in Government employment are not treated in any preferential or artificial manner. Rates of wages, hours of work and other conditions are similar to those in private industry. But we do not desire to put back the special advantages we wish to secure for the Government Press employees. We are of the opinion that all public utility organization, such as referred to by Mr. Harihar Nath Shastri, should be specially

treated. The service of the nation, indeed its very life, may be seriously jeopardized if public utility, industries and services are permitted to get enmeshed in the general conflict between labour and capital. Workers in Government and Municipal industrial and commercial concerns can continue to help and assist their fellow workers in other substantial and concrete ways than being merely linked with them in one common organization. In regard to Railways in India we maintain that wholesome traditions have been built up from the past, and their instance cannot be sustained in reference to our particular case. We are of opinion that when the general policy, circumstances, traditions, conventions, methods of negotiation, principles of conciliation and arbitration have been more clearly and more securely evolved that this problem of the amalgamation or affiliation of the Government Press Workers' Association with private Trade Unions may be reconsidered. For the present, we would allow the organization to grow and develop. We have said it elsewhere, and we may repeat it here, that we have felt well satisfied with the manner and the sense of responsibility with which the affairs of the Union have been controlled and directed by its present officers. It augurs well on the future.

With regard to Mr. Shastri's observations, in regard to Pensions and Provident Fund question, we would suggest waiting upon experience before extending further the provisions we have recommended.

With regard to private Presses we have contented ourselves by saying that we cannot impose upon them the same rates of wages and conditions that we have been led to suggest for the Government Presses, for obvious reasons. We express the hope that there would be approximation, as far as some large and well-equipped Presses are concerned, to Government Presses conditions.

We regret we have not the actual text of Mr. Lal Bahadur Shastri's Minute of Dissent. We have had, however, the benefit of discussing his main points with him. It is a matter of great satisfaction that a leader of his undoubted concern for the cause of labour, should have been able to assent to much that has been proposed in the Report.

He feels that in the matter of leave our recommendations have not been adequate. He is of opinion that greater provision should be made for casual leave. He is one with Mr. Harihar Nath Shastri in this respect. In the matter of holidays he is in agreement with the majority.

He is also of the view that a two years' period for apprenticeship should be sufficient even for the industrial staff to be tried out and then made permanent.

S. K. RUDRA.
M. MAHMUD ULLAH JUNG.
MOHAN LAL NEHRU.
VISHWANATH PRASAD.
HARIHAR NATH SHASTRI.
LAL BAHADUR.
M. G. SHOME.
K. B. BHATIA.

Dated the 30th July, 1939.