

# REPORT

OF THE

Bihar Labour Enquiry Committee

VOLUME IV

PART A.

(Oral evidence by the Officials)



SUPERINTENDENT, GOVERNMENT PRINTING  
BIHAR, PATNA  
1941.

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**METALLURGICAL.**

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**REPORT**  
OF THE  
**Bihar Labour Enquiry Committee**  
**VOLUME IV.**  
**PART C.**

**Oral evidence tendered before the Committee by Employees  
and their Organisations.**

The Committee resumed its sitting in the Tata Institute, Jamshedpur, on the 27th March 1939.

The following members were present :—

- |                            |     |  |
|----------------------------|-----|--|
| 1. Dr. Rajendra Prasad ... | ... | <i>Chairman, Presiding.</i>            |
| 2. Mr. R. R. Bakhale ...   | ... | <i>Deputy Chairman.</i>                |
| 3. Dr. R. K. Mukherjee ... | ... | <i>Member.</i>                         |
| 4. Mr. A. M. Hayman ...    | ... | <i>Member.</i>                         |
| 5. Mr. H. B. Chandra ...   | ... | <i>Member.</i>                         |
| 6. Mr. J. N. Lal ...       | ... | <i>Member.</i>                         |
| 7. Prof. Abdul Bari ...    | ... | <i>Member.</i>                         |
| 8. Prof. R. K. Saran ...   | ... | <i>Secretary.</i>                      |
| 9. Mr. T. H. Clifford ...  | ... | <i>(Co-opted Member,<br/>Capital.)</i> |

Oral evidence of Mr. M. Ghosh, Mr. J. N. Mitra, Mr. M. John, Mr. T. P. Singh, Mr. D. N. Sinha, Mr. Terta Singh, Mr. R. P. Sinha, and Mr. Sheo Prasad Sharma, on behalf of the Tata Workers' Union, Jamshedpur.

*Chairman (to Mr. John).*—Are you the Secretary of the Tata Workers' Union?

A.—Yes, Sir.

Q.—When did your union start?



A.—In April 1938.

Q.—What is the total number of members?

A.—About 20,000.

Q.—Do you take members from all the workshops here or only from Tata's workshop at Jamshedpur?

A.—Only from Tata's Workshop at Jamshedpur?

Q.—For the present we shall confine ourselves to the question of recruitment of labour. You mentioned in your representation that the recruitment of labour for Tatas should not be done by one man, but by a Board or Committee.

A.—Yes. We suggest that a Committee consisting of a few superintendents of departments should attend to the recruitment of labour.

Q.—Do you like that a representative of the labour should be on the Board?

A.—Yes, we do like to give it a trial. This Board should not accept recommendations from the Superintendent, Labour Bureau. The selection should be made by the Board. The Superintendent of the Labour Bureau should be, according to our opinion, a registering officer and beyond that he should have no other function. He should be on the Board. We want that the work of employment should be entrusted to three or four officers. The appointment should be made at the recommendation of the Board by the Superintendent of the Employment Bureau.

Q.—Do you know the present practice?

A.—Yes, the present practice is that the Superintendent, Labour Bureau, receives requisitions for the number of workers required for a particular department. He makes selection from the yard of the Labour Bureau and sends the men so selected to the departments concerned on trial.

Q.—What kinds of recruitment should be done by this Employment Board?

A.—Skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled.

Q.—Up to what salary do they recruit now?

A.—Rs. 2-8-0 per day that is Rs. 75 per month.

Q.—We understood from Sir Ardeshir this morning that requisitions are received from different departments by the Superintendent, Labour Bureau and he is required to make the selection and send the men at a very early date and at times on the same day. How could this be done by a Committee or a Board?

A.—Oh ! This could be done if necessity arose.

Q.—Do you suggest that the Board will meet every day?

A.—Yes, for about an hour in the morning or at any hour of the day. As the turnover is only about 1.4 per cent, an hour every day will be sufficient. If a Board is entrusted with the recruitment of Labour there will be no partiality and there will be no complaints of injustice.

Q.—Do you know how many men are taken on every day?

A.—I do not know; but I think two or three persons a day.

Mr. Hayman.—I have just been informed by Mr. Cunningham, Superintendent of the Labour Bureau, that there are days when he is to recruit as many as 100 persons. Generally he recruits about 300 a month, out of which 30 are skilled and the rest unskilled. This is only a rough estimate, but I shall give you correct figures later on.

In making the suggestion have you in mind that the Board will function for unskilled and semi-skilled labourers?

A.—Yes, it will function for all kinds of workers.

*(The Chairman read out a certain portion from the representation of the Union regarding the recruitment of the 'C' Class apprentices. He explained that Sir Ardeshir stated that morning that 75 'C' Class apprentices were recruited that year and over and above that number 10 seats were reserved for Parsees; but all these seats were not filled up.)*

Mr. John.—It may be, Sir, my objection is and what we meant is that no seats should be reserved for any particular community.

Mr. Hayman.—Not even Biharees.

A.—From the labour point of view we do not like any such reservation for any particular community.

Chairman.—Do you know what percentage of skilled posts these "C" Class apprentices absorb?

A.—I cannot say definitely. But I think about 50 per cent of skilled posts are filled by these "C" Class apprentices.

Q.—How many Parsees were taken on last year?

A.—About 25 Parsees. It is difficult for me to give the exact figure.

Mr. Hayman.—Do you know that the "C" Class apprentices course started about five years back only, and the course of training is for five years?

A.—May be.

Mr. Hayman.—In that case the first batch has just completed their training.

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you not think that the Company has started training these young men for their benefit only so that when they have completed their course, their prospects will be better than persons coming without any training? Do you not think that this is in the interest of the labour?

A.—It cannot be in the interest of the labour. It may be in the interest of the management.

*(Mr. Hayman undertook to submit a statement of " C " Class apprentices taken on from the very beginning province by province and according to religion.)*

Mr. Hayman.—Do you know that not only relations of employees are taken on as " C " Class apprentices, but outsiders also.

Mr. John.—Yes, I know.

Chairman.—You have mentioned that you have received complaints from employees that their relations are not given employment when vacancies occur but some new men are taken on. Can you say how many complaints of this nature you have received?

A.—Yes, about 100, since the establishment of the union.

Q.—Before forwarding these to the Management did you investigate whether the complaints were exaggerated or not?

A.—Not in all cases. But in few cases I investigated.

Q.—Do you know what action, if any, was taken on the applications forwarded by you?

A.—I was neither informed by the Management nor by the party and hence I cannot say. I was informed by the Management that they had to wait till their turn came.

Q.—Did you enquire whether their turn ever came?

A.—No. I was neither informed by the Management nor the parties.

Chairman.—You suggested the establishment of a Labour Exchange as in western countries. Do you think that it will be suitable here? What will be its composition?

A.—I have not given the matter thought myself. I think the Labour Exchange is the thing which we can safely give a trial at Jamshedpur, considering the number of work people here.

Q.—Do you consider the conditions suitable for that here?

A.—If it is not suitable; then we can make it so.

Q.—The labour in the western countries, is taken from the Labour Exchange; do you like it to be introduced here also? Will it work satisfactorily?

A.—I think so.

Q.—What will be the position if the union is given that power.

A.—I cannot say off-hand.

*(The Chairman read out some portion regarding temporary hands from the representation of the Union.)*

A.—I cannot say definitely what will be the percentage of temporary hands in the Works as distinct from the permanent hands. But I can say that the percentage will be very high.

Q.—There is one department by name General Construction?

A.—Though the name implies it to be a construction department but as a matter of fact it does work of a permanent nature. In this department men are working on temporary basis for 4 to 5 years. This might better be described as an operation department. So also there are temporary men in the Brick Department. All the men working in these departments can safely be made permanent. There are some in Bar Mill also who have been working since 3 or 4 years as temporary hands.

Q.—What is the distinction between a temporary and a relieving hand?

A.—A permanent relieving hand gets the benefit of leave, provident fund, profit-sharing bonus, etc., but a temporary hand cannot get all these privileges. For this reason men who are working for the last 4 or 5 years are made to break the continuity of their services by about 40 or 45 days in order that they may not claim the privileges. After the expiry of this period, they get jobs in some other departments, and thus they remain temporary, and are not allowed to complete one year's service.

Q.—My personal opinion is this that an employer has got the right to select the person he required. But the dismissal might be controlled by a Board or a Committee.

Mr. John.—I have found in many cases that some men worked for a few months and were then discharged. Within a few days the same men were taken again. This is done only to deprive the temporary men of the benefits enjoyed by a permanent man. The result is that those who would have been permanent cannot become so. The men who work on temporary basis should be allowed to become permanent instead of taking on a new man and discharging him in the same manner. This is a great hardship to the workers.

Mr. Saran.—You have said that the Labour Superintendent is not good and instead of that system there should be a Recruiting Board. Are you objecting to the person?

A.—No. No. I have objection to the present system. The departmental heads send requisition to him and the labourers are employed by him. A single man is in charge of the employment entirely. There is a general discontent and complaint against that system.

Q.—Referring to temporary employments you say that a labourer is changed from one department to another throughout his period of service and so he is not able to be permanent.

A.—Yes, after that he is dismissed; when that relieving work is over.

Q.—Do they form the temporary gang or the permanent gang?

A.—No, it is not permanent. The work is of permanent nature.

Q.—Is the work continuous?

A.—Yes, the work is continuous.

Q.—What is the total number of labourers who are in this category?

A.—It is very difficult to give figures.

Q.—You mean to say that when there is expansion of work temporary workers are taken and when the work is over, they are discharged?

A.—Yes.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Mr. John, you said just now that because the recruitment is done by one man, it is bound to be abused. Is that your point?

*Mr. John.*—Yes.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Do you question the integrity of the officer or do you put it down to favouritism?

A.—Favouritism, not integrity.

Q.—You expressed an opinion that the Union should be associated with the recruitment of labour?

A.—Yes, that is my opinion.

Q.—Would you please say how a representative of the Union would be helpful in the matter of recruitment of labour when he has no experience about the method of work?

A.—The present Superintendent of Labour Bureau is not a technical man.

Q.—What is your idea for suggesting a Committee for recruitment?

A.—If more than one person has hands in the recruitment, there will be very little chance of favouritism. And it will be more satisfactory to the labourers.

Q.—The Construction Department handles jobs which are of a permanent character and it covers about 45 per cent of the employees of the Construction Department who are on a permanent basis. The other 55 per cent are employed purely on temporary jobs which vary from time to time. For the construction of buildings and plants, temporary employees are taken in.

A.—I know of cases where men have worked for 4 years; then they have been discharged.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Mr. John you stated most definitely that the administration got rid of the temporary employees merely because they may not qualify for the privileges by completing one year's service. Can you prove this? I challenge the statement. Have you read the rules regarding the service conditions of the temporary employees issued by the General Manager of the Company?

A.—Yes, I have seen them.

Q.—Do you know how many employees received this benefit?

A.—I do not know.

Q.—I can tell you that there are several hundreds of men who have been thus benefited.

A.—Might be.

Q.—Mr. John, may I ask you to withdraw your charge?

A.—(No reply.)

Q.—Do you know that selection of 'C' class apprentices is done by a committee consisting of eight officials of the Company?

A.—Yes, I know.

Q.—Do you suggest that only the relatives of employees should be appointed and no one else?

A.—Yes, that is my opinion.

Q.—In that case the inequalities of the past cannot be rectified. Say for instance in the past very few *Biharis* were taken on, and if the relatives of the existing employees only are taken on, then we cannot rectify the inequalities. This will apply to Muhammadans also.

*(Mr. Clifford explained here that the men must be discharged soon after a work was finished and that the Management was the best judge to know whether the work was of a temporary or a permanent character.)*

*Mr. Clifford (Co-opted Member).*—Mr. John, have you got any idea as to how long it will take to re-line a blast furnace?

A.—No.

Q.—I will give you an idea. It will not take less than 10 months. But can you call this work of a permanent character?

A.—(No reply.)

*Dr. Mukerjee.*—Do I understand that there is a floating gang of temporary men in certain departments?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What are the effects of this floating gangs on the general unemployment situation of Jamshedpur?

A.—There is discontentment among the unemployed men.

Q.—You stated that there are some workers who are called temporary after as many as 4 to 5 years' service?

A.—Certainly.

Q.—So you think that such a policy of recruitment will lower the standard of living of a large section of industrial labourers. This is not a forward industrial policy.

A.—Certainly not.

Mr. Chandra.—Who gave evidence before the Royal Commission on Labour?

A.—The General Manager and the Directors.

Q.—What is the result of this floating gang of unemployed men in Jamshedpur.

A.—The result is that the Management is taking advantage of this floating gang of unemployed men. They are taking in temporary men for permanent jobs even, with the result that the cost to the Management is cheaper.

Prof. Bari.—Is this large floating gang of labour dangerous to the Company?

A.—Yes.

Q.—The system of recruitment followed by the Company is responsible for the large floating gang?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you think that this permanently unemployed floating gang is advantageous to the Company?

A.—Yes, it is advantageous to the Company. They can recruit men immediately when they want and also at the time of disturbance, they can have new hands.

Mr. Clifford.—Mr. John, you say higher rated men are discharged and lower rated men are employed in their places. Can you tell me the reason of this?

Mr. John.—The idea is that the Company wants to replace permanent men by temporary men on lower rates of pay.

Q.—Can you give me an instance?

A.—In the Bar Mill, although the nature of job is the same, the semi-skilled and skilled men are employed on 10 annas per day. These men should get more than 10 annas per day.

Q.—Have you any idea that the Construction Department also does maintenance jobs?

A.—I know that.

Q.—Do you know that about 45 per cent of the men in the General Construction Department are permanent men? They do maintenance jobs. 55 per cent of the men are temporary and they do new work and renewals. Now Mr. John, have you any idea as to how long a Blast Furnace is in operation?

A.—No.

Q.—I shall tell you. It is in operation for 4 or 5 years. Then it goes down for re-lining or overhauling, as the case may be, and this work takes about six months to complete. This is the time when we have to employ temporary men both in the Brick as well as in the General Construction Departments. So, you will understand the necessity of having to keep temporary men in the General Construction Department. Then again, overhauling or repair work is not continuous and these men, therefore, cannot be put on a permanent basis.

A.—My point is this. When a man is working for four or five years with a break of 40 or 45 days, annually, can he not be made permanent? It is only a question of providing him with work for these 40 or 45 days in each year.

Q.—There must be a break in the man's service as all repair works require considerable planning. Machineries must be on hand and other things must be considered, all of which take time.

A.—The Company can if it so desires, find work for these men for 40 to 45 days. There is no necessity to discharge these men and re-employ them after this break.

Q.—Another of your points was that the relatives of the employees cannot get employment. You say, you investigate such cases and then bring them to the notice of Management. May I know what is the nature of your investigation?

A.—I get the relevant information from the applicants themselves and satisfy myself about the truth or otherwise of their claim before forwarding their representations to the Management.

Mr. Hayman.—(*Reading from the circular issued by the General Manager regarding temporary employees.*) I want to show you that there is already some provision in the rules framed by the Company to cover break of service up to 30 days. This break is ignored in considering the service of temporary men.

Chairman.—Your demand is that all the employees should have one month's leave with pay whether they are monthly or daily-rated.

A.—Yes, this is our demand. At present monthly-rated employees get one month for every year's service; daily-rated men get only two weeks' leave. The daily-rated men work harder than the monthly-rated. The daily-rated men do manual work.



Q.—There should be no limit as to accumulation of leave. This is your point, is it not?

A.—Yes, at present there is no limit as to accumulation of leave in the case of monthly-rated employees but the daily-rated people cannot accumulate leave for more than six weeks. There is a limit in the case of monthly-rated people as regards furlough leave. We submit that there should be no limit not only in the case of daily-rated but also in the case of sweepers. The sweepers are monthly-rated but they are allowed only 7 days.

Q.—Your point is also that the employees should get sick leave. Is it not?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you agree to a sick leave fund jointly contributed by the Employees and the Employer.

A.—Yes, we can agree to such a proposal.

Q.—In what proportion the contribution should be made?

A.—4 to 1. The Management should contribute 4 while the employees 1.

Q.—Do you suggest any time limit?

A.—For a period of three months.

Mr. Hayman.—Do you suggest three months for each year or during the whole period of an employee's service.

A.—Three months, for every year.

Q.—Have you made any calculation of the effect of the suggestion you have made on the wages bills for the daily-rated men?

A.—I have not made.

Q.—Can you please give me any rough idea.

A.—The additional cost will be about Rs. 7½ lakhs.

Q.—Do you suggest that the *weeklies* should be included also, and what would the additional cost be?

A.—I wish that the *weeklies* should be included also and I do not think the additional cost should exceed Rs. 7 to 7½ lakhs for those who are daily-rated but monthly-paid. This is only a rough estimate.

Q.—What about *weeklies*?

A.—Say, about 2 lakhs for *weeklies*. I think 1 or 1½ will do.

Q.—What would be the cost in connection with the sickness leave?

Mr. Chandra.—We have not got data of sickness leave. Have you got any material of that? Can you give any idea of the percentage?

A.—I cannot give you off-hand. Approximately, regarding the question of sick leave, 50 per cent. I am not in a position to say definitely about it. The Company can supply the figures.

Q.—A complaint has been made to us by the workers that there is no graded scale for the employees. Is it correct?

A.—Yes, it is correct. Excepting a few ministerial staff, fitters, chemists, works-guards and men of the Medical Department no grade has been fixed for others. There are some who are getting the same rate which they used to get 8/9 years back when they were appointed. They have not got increment for 8/9 years. My submission is that the post should be on a graded scale. There is no time-scale and proportionate increment in any case. Take for instance, a Fireman who is getting Rs. 1-4-0 a day. His post should be graded, say starting from Re. 1 to Rs. 1-8-0 a day. The posts should be on a grade system and not on group system. A worker of one year's service gets the same as a worker of 10 years' standing.

Q.—What will happen when the maximum is reached?

A.—On reaching the maximum which will take about 10 years' time they should wait for a chance in the higher grade if they are qualified or continue to remain there if they are not qualified to undertake higher responsibility. If there will be vacancy in higher scale they will get promotion.

Q.—Then the same discontent will continue?

A.—To some extent, but not to the extent as it is at present.

Q.—What is the average period, you think, men should retire after hard work?

A.—I cannot say definitely.

Q.—Unless the maximum is raised the same stagnation will occur after some time when the maximum is reached?

A.—If our suggestion is accepted, it will take about 10/12 years to reach the maximum and the question of stagnation will arise thereafter. What is actually wanted is a grade system and not a group system.

Q.—You say that the minimum period for gratuity should be 12 years and not 20 years and one month's pay instead of 15 days' pay.

A.—Yes. The men should have something at the time of retirement. We submit that instead of 15 days' pay one month's pay should be paid.

Q.—If one month's pay is paid instead of 15 days, do you know that the cost will be increased? To what extent will it increase the wages bills?

A.—It will raise the wages bill by about 4 per cent.

Q.—You have mentioned that on Railways gratuity becomes payable after 15 years' service? Can you please tell us on which Railway this rule is in force to your knowledge?

A.—Bengal Nagpur Railway.

Q.—Do you suggest that a worker should be made to retire compulsorily after a certain period.

A.—No one should be made to retire compulsorily so long as he is able to work satisfactorily. It should be optional for the workers. It will be difficult for a man to work for 20 years under such circumstances.

Q.—Do you agree to a gratuity scheme maturing after 15 years of service like Bengal Nagpur Railway?

A.—The work in the steel industry is far more strenuous than the Railway; that is why we ask for 12 years.

Chairman.—Have you any objection to the existing Provident Fund?

A.—Yes, about the rate of interest on Provident Fund Balance.

(Mr. T. P. Sinha read out Rule 20 of the Works Provident Fund wherein it is stated " It shall be lawful for the Board of Directors to provide for in Rule 2 ". Under the provisions of this Rule the Company distinctly promised to pay interest at 6 per cent per annum.)

Q.—What is the rate allowed?

A.—I think it is 5 or 4 per cent.

The rate of interest as prevalent was 6 per cent. For 2 or 3 years the rate has been reduced.

Q.—What is the present rate?

A.—I cannot say. But it is definitely less than 6 per cent.

Q.—You want provident fund to be invested in some security?

A.—Yes.

Q.—If the money is invested in better security how do you expect the same percentage of interest?

A.—Any way, the Company is going definitely against the Provident Fund Rules. Further, we have objections to certain sections of the New Provident Fund Rules. The period of maturity has been made 15 years instead of 12 years and the period entitling to receive the part of the Company's contributions has been raised to ten years instead of three years.

Q.—Are the workers paid for off days?

A.—No. We feel that compulsory off days, prescribed by the Factory Act, must be paid for. The intention of this Act was to

provide rest to the workers but the rest period, does more harm to the workers than doing any good, because the workers hardly get living wages.

*Dr. Mukerjee.*—I would like you to consider the question of hours of work under the Indian Factories Act. In other countries as the work hours have been reduced the efficiency and intensity of work have also increased. But we have heard complaints from employers here that operatives some times spend their time in smoking or idling during working hours and I would like to give you a statement from Mr. Butler, where it is stated that both employer and worker in India seem to prefer a shorter period of more intensive work. I would like to know whether you can offer us some suggestion with regard to the Factory Act with reference to limitation of 48 hours a week. You know that in these works 8 hours seem to be the general rule. Would you like to extend this maximum weekly hour to other industries in the first place?

*Mr. John.*—Yes, in any industry it should not be more than 48 hours a week.

*Q.*—With reference to the Engineering Industry, especially in the continuous process departments, where workers are sooner exhausted, do you think that they should have more rest than pauses given then at present?

*A.*—Yes, surely.

*Q.*—Among what category of workers should the provision of rest-pauses be necessary in the Iron and Steel Works in the interest of health, safety and efficiency?

*A.*—The Rolling Mills and the Steel Making Plants in general should get more rest and less hours of work.

*Q.*—Have you any idea of the various pauses?

*A.*—It is only in certain categories of work that pauses are given. Generally in all the Rolling Mills and Steel Furnaces pauses are not given.

*Q.*—What other sections would you mention, I would like to know?

*A.*—Besides the Rolling Mills and Steel-making Furnaces, Coke-ovens and Blast Furnaces.

*Q.*—You have also mentioned that the Government should appoint a committee which will carry on experiments in industrial fatigue to find out what would be the best suited working hours for different industries in the Province. Now, from a note which you have given, I understand that you think that under different seasons the hours of work have to be modified?

*Mr. Ghosh.*—We do not want to be unreasonable, we want to have a thorough experiment on this matter and when experimental results are

available, we can find out what working hours will be beneficial both to the industry and the labour.

*Q.*—You think that such limitation is a matter for experiment and you suggest the appointment of a Committee?

*Mr. Ghosh.*—Yes.

*Q.*—With reference to overtime, to what extent is overtime work taken in the Works? Could you give us some idea of the maintenance of the standard needs in some important sections.

*Mr. John.*—I cannot give the exact number. But I think the number of spare hands is not adequate.

*Q.*—In case of overhauling and breakdown to what extent is overtime maintained?

*A.*—I do not quite follow.

*Q.*—In case of overhauling and breakdown to what extent overtime work has been undertaken?

*A.*—Overtime work is not generally done, I think.

*Q.*—Is it a fact that leave was granted instead of paying overtime?

*A.*—Two months ago leave was being given in lieu of overtime but since two months it is being paid for.

*Q.*—Do you think of general shift or continuous shift?

*A.*—In general shift they work overtime.

*Dr. Mukerjee.*—About grades and promotions, you spoke of a kind of stagnation; you said that you preferred stagnation at the top rather than stagnation at the bottom. Now beyond that particular grade, are there chances of promotion to the next higher grade for sections of semi-skilled and skilled workers, after any bar?

*A.*—There is possibility of chances according to vacancy or retirement.

*Q.*—But the employers' point of view with reference to the incremental scale seems to be that the technical work in the shop is very different from the clerical work at the desk. A man who writes with a pen gains experience and efficiency almost automatically, but that would not hold good to a considerable section of the Steel workers.

*A.*—That is incorrect.

*Q.*—Do you think that it is not a correct view from your point of view? Every man when he begins the work does not work with the full knowledge of the work but gradually understands the job and also attains efficiency?

*A.*—With reference to the Iron and Steel works it was mentioned in the previous reports submitted to the Royal Commission on Labour.

*Chairman.*—Is there much room for transfer from one department to other departments so far as higher grades are concerned? Could a man working in the Coke Ovens be transferred when he has reached the highest grade to say, the Rolling Plant and can he do the work there if higher wages are available?

*A.*—That is only for certain categories. Vacancies are also very rare. As regards the departmental work, the nature of work varies and there can be no such transfer.

*Q.*—So, a man has to confine himself all his life more or less to the particular department to which he belongs to.

*A.*—Yes.

*Dr. Mukerjee.*—For instance, if a man rose to a fitter's job in a particular department, can he not transfer himself to a fitter's job in a different department?

*A.*—A fitter working in the steel-making department cannot be good to the Rolling Mills where the machinery is different.

*Q.*—This brings us again to another question. It is connected with the standardisation of jobs. To what extent, do you find similar kinds of jobs on different pays in these works? In the report submitted to the Royal Commission they said that the Company should avoid different rates for the same class of work and endeavour to bring all the rates for similar jobs into a line irrespective of departments.

*A.*—Uniformity of rate is not always adhered to. Suppose for instance, a stamper works in one shift he gets one kind of rate and another stamper coming in the next shift gets less. In the case of number takers there is one number taker getting a daily-rate of Rs. 1-4-0 and another a daily-rate of Rs. 1-8-0 and for a similar job another is getting a monthly rate of Rs. 50. Uniformity of rate is not maintained.

*Q.*—How does it act upon the men?

*A.*—It re-acts very badly on them.

*Mr. Chandra.*—Coming to the question of converting the daily-rated men into *monthlies* it will cost about 10 lakhs of rupees including the *weeklies*. The total cost generally would be one month's wage, i.e., about 8 to 10 lakhs. Will you kindly look at page 34 of the reply of the Management? The last item of the statement showing the proportion of wages-cost to the total cost of production shows 437. That would mean then that the cost of production is  $1\frac{1}{2}$  per cent?

*A.*—Yes that would be so.

*Q.*—Is it your idea that the total cost of production includes very high overhead charges?

A.—Certainly, it does.

Q.—With respect to the group rates and their conversion into standard rates have you any idea what different rates have been laid down for the same kind of job? A man who has put in 10 years' service get Rs. 2 while another man who has put in the same 10 years get Rs. 2-8-0 and the third man also putting in 10 years get Rs. 3. Do you think that this kind of gradation is likely to amount to dissatisfaction.

A.—Yes, it is so. And therefore, we have suggested for a grade system to avoid all these anomalies and dissatisfaction among the workers.

Q.—Can you give an idea, of the basis for adopting such a grade? Is it absolutely without any reference to the efficiency of the man?

A.—Yes, it is so.

Q.—If an incremental rate is adopted do you think that the rates can be so adjusted as not to enhance the total wage cost?

A.—Not very much.

Q.—I think that they can be so adjusted that the total wages need not be affected at all.

A.—That, of course, can be done by careful working.

Q.—I am also suggesting that the gradation is extended to cover the entire period of service, an average period of, say, 20 years or once in two years. Then probably the stagnation at the top may be avoided and as discharges occur at the top, employments at the bottom may be affected.

A.—Yes, it is bound to be.

Q.—Then I would refer to page 24 of the Memorandum. It is suggested that sometimes special scales of rates are paid to special persons on special grounds. Have you any observations to make in this connection?

A.—I do not exactly understand what the personal rates and personal cases are. But in my opinion, I think it is a kind of favouritism that is shown.

Q.—Is it your opinion that although the Company may have done quite a lot for labour, such kind of favouritism involves dissatisfaction?

A.—Yes.

Mr. John.—Yes.

Q.—With the General Production Bonus we have got complaints that for over 50,000 tons monthly production, no bonus is given.

A.—No bonus is given for over 50,000 tons production. I was not here when the scheme came up. But in 1927 or 1928 that scheme

was evolved. Then the amount to be given was Rs. 10 lakhs per annum over a production of 40,000 tons. Now we understand that the average production has increased.

*Prof. Bari.*—Along with the production, the rates also increase. They have limited to 50,000 tons.

*Chairman.*—With reference to the Departmental Production Bonus some suggestions have been made.

*A.*—I want to supplement that those who have not yet been included in the scheme, should also be included.

*Q.*—Departmental Production Bonus, when was this introduced?

*A.*—I think this was introduced in 1927 or 1928.

*Dr. Mukerjee.*—I am coming to the General Production Bonus. To what categories of workers who are now excluded, would you extend the General Production Bonus?

*A.*—I have mentioned the categories of workers in my memorandum.

*Mr. Chandra.*—Coming to the Departmental Production Bonus it appears to me that the rates of Departmental Production Bonus were not introduced in 1928 after the strike.

*A.*—The Departmental Production Bonus came into existence some-time ago. The revised New Scheme came in force in December 1938.

*Q.*—It has been suggested that the rates are also reduced and the bases of production tonnages have also been raised, while it is not applicable to a large number of workers and the system generally adopted is not clear to the workers.

*A.*—It is so.

*Q.*—In this connection I would like to refer to pages 179 and 184—5th item, 104 pies per 100 tons of Plate Mill applicable to electrical crane-drivers, has been reduced from 104 pies to 60 pies. That is an instance of reduction in the rate. Then I would again refer you to page 184 where the bonus basis appears to have been reduced.

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—Then I would refer you to page 188. On this page we find that the rates are based, in many cases, percentage of the salary bonus rate 1 per cent of the salary, bonus rate 2 per cent, 5 per cent and so on. Would you prefer to adopt any such rate so that it may be intelligible to the workers.

*A.*—We are in favour of that.

*Q.*—Can you give us an idea to what categories of workers this scheme of bonus has to be extended? You said just now that this production bonus is not given to a large number of workers.



A.—It would be difficult to draw a line but, in general, I should say that all those who are directly connected with production should be given bonus.

*Dr. Mukerjee.*—Maintenance Staff connected with direct production should get bonus?

A.—There is certain number of maintenance staff who ought to get this Departmental Production Bonus and we can also tell to what categories of workers this production bonus should be extended.

*Mr. Hayman.*—With reasons for your demand?

A.—Yes.

*Mr. Chandra.*—How would you measure that?

A.—As they are connected with certain departments.

Q.—How would you regulate these figures?

A.—That is possible; it has to be worked out.

Q.—Coming to the question of Efficiency Bonus on estimated maximum time for each job. Have you got any suggestions to offer on this.

A.—Yes, we had, at the time of enquiry of the Machine Shop—who have this Efficiency Bonus—complaints that basic rate of this Efficiency Bonus was increased and they had reached a stage where they were not able to get bonus any more. That the Management extracts maximum amount of work and they refuse to pay them—that is what it amounts to.

Q.—I refer to the question of Provident Fund. It appears that Provident Fund is attachable for outside debts and should be protected by legislature?

A.—Certainly so.

Q.—You have no objection to accepting the system that prevails on the railways?

A.—We have to examine the details of the system.

Q.—In this connection I may refer you to the principal recommendation by the Royal Commission. This will meet your requirements?

A.—Yes.

Q.—I go to the question of punishments. I take it that you are entirely opposed to rate-reduction as a measure of punishment.

A.—Yes, certainly.

Q.—I do not know whether you are in favour of suspension as a measure of punishment because suspension in many cases has the same effect as rate-reduction. If the employee is kept under suspension for

a fortnight or a week, it reduces his earnings and is the same as rate-reduction. I am not sure whether you have examined the implications of that fully. For dismissals would you desire to frame rules to include only definite categories of faults?

A.—That is a good proposal.

Q.—In the case of fines, the maximum is 6 pies in the rupee. It has been brought to my notice that Bombay has agreed to a fine in the wages by 2 per cent, even less than half an anna, in the rupee. Would you like such a limit of reduction to be adopted here?

A.—I think that is justifiable.

Chairman.—In respect of dismissal would you include faults of the nature of sabotage or an incitement to strike without sufficient notice?

A.—We just now agreed that for dismissal definite categories of faults must be laid down.

Q.—What kinds of categories?

A.—One of these can be taken.

Q.—How would you define indiscipline? And what kind of punishment would you generally suggest in order to check these things.

A.—We have said that a joint Board can meet and decide the amount of punishment. The settlement of the actual guilt will have to be made by means of certain regulations.

Q.—What kinds of guilts will definitely entail a punishment like dismissal?

Mr. Mitra.—As for the right to strike, the workmen all over the world have been insisting that it should be given to them without limitation. I do not say incitement to strike *without proper notice*. Every strike should have some proper notice.

Chairman.—I am referring to the standing orders under section 28 of the Bombay Act. And if you can go into that and make suggestions, they may be examined.

Mr. Chandra.—Then comes the question of Contract Labour. You will generally agree, I take it, that various categories of work cannot ordinarily be taken up departmentally?

A.—Yes. Generally, but there is certain work which has been taken departmentally, e.g., the loading which was being previously done by the Company.

Q.—What do you think of the main employers and their responsibilities in connection with wages and other conditions of the workers under contractors?

A.—In those categories of work which the Management cannot undertake the workers under contractors should generally be treated as on a par with the temporary workers under Company's service.

*Mr. Saran.*—You have suggested the formation of a Board representing employers and workers to consider disciplinary action. Where you have got more than one union, how would the workers be represented.

*A.*—It is difficult to have that Board where there are more than one union. But we have suggested in our memorandum that under the Indian Trade Unions Act there ought to be one union and the employers should not encourage rival unions or set up one against the popular union.

*Q.*—Would you like to defer this proposal until other things are decided?

*A.*—The employers should not recognise more than one union. There should be an endeavour to eliminate dual unionism. As long as there are more unions there is bound to be difficulty. One Union might agree with the Company and another might not. But even that does not arise. A particular case will be referred by a particular union and certainly that case will be referred to that union. So the other union does not get a chance to represent that particular case and that case, therefore, should be decided by the Board composed of the representatives of that union and the Management.

*Q.*—You will have different Boards for different unions?

*A.*—Yes, because our representation cannot go smoothly so long as there are two unions. The man himself will choose which particular union he would approach.

*Q.*—You think that considering the strenuous character of work, the worker must have adequate rest?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—But at the same time you suggest that the worker should be allowed to accumulate his leave. He should not take his leave every year.

*A.*—We do suggest only in case, if he cannot take leave every year. If a man has to travel a long distance to go to his native place, he has a very little chance of taking rest unless he accumulates his leave which he makes use of. This is from the point of view of health; his circumstances also do not always permit him to go out. We make it a general rule; but in most cases the workers will not be able to accumulate their leave due to sickness, etc. Therefore, the number of workers making use of their leave should be given option to accumulate it for certain years.

*Q.*—If you allow him to accumulate his leave, would he not be ruining his health?

*A.*—We will not encourage this but only for special circumstances we want a general rule like this. No money is given in lieu of leave.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Is this one of your demands?

A.—Yes, in case he has any leave due. Only in case of retirement. In case of retirement, if the monthly-rated people are given this preference, it should be given to the daily-rated people also. The Company has a scheme of paying 10,000 rupees in lieu of leave to the monthly-paid men. We will encourage workers to take leave rather than money in lieu of leave.

Q.—I suppose your attention has been drawn to answer to question 114 in which the Company has said that there were Shop Committees before which used to function. With regard to punishments and other disciplinary measures, etc., what do you think of these Committees if they are revived.

A.—Shop Committees have failed. The members of the Shop Committee are employees and they are influenced. Our experience has been that it was not working satisfactorily due to the influence exerted by officials.

Q.—The Shop Committee members would not be free from influence. Then what procedure would you like to adopt?

A.—I have suggested Central Board with representatives from the Union and the Management.

Mr. Chandra.—Mr. John, what is the attitude of the Management towards your Labour Union?

A.—As stated in our memorandum, the attitude has been only deplorable. Whenever an opportunity arises, it is only by force that the Management have accepted it and the crisis has been averted.

*(The Chairman points to the irrelevancy of this question.)*

Q.—Generally, what are the directions in which you suggest improvements can be made in the relations between the Management and the Trade Union?

Mr. Mitra.—We expect that there should be recognition of the union. We expect that our grievances should be redressed as early as possible, instead of cases being multiplied as at present. There should be some arrangement whereby these disputes could be settled quickly. Provision should be made either by law or in some other way for the quick disposal of these cases. Besides, the Management should cease to encourage people who are known to be *goondas*, whether in times of peace or strike, and should not encourage dual trade unionism. They should not try to buy up Union officials.

Mr. Hayman.—Are you making a suggestion that the Steel Company buys up union officials?

Mr. Mitra.—You understand that well.

Mr. Chandra.—When disputes are settled, what methods would you propose for enforcing that settlement on the employers and the union? Has it been your experience that the Company goes back on the settlement?

*Mr. Mitra.*—Yes, that is so. As soon as the moment slips away, the management try every means in their power to go back on it.

*Q.*—Have you any views to offer in respect of the attitude of the Police and the Magistracy in the event of a strike?

*A.*—Our experience has been very bitter. We have drawn the attention of the Local Government to this. In our view the Police and the Magistracy should remain neutral when recruitment of labour takes place during a strike, but actually the police go in their lorries or buses and give all sorts of help to the employers to recruit black-legs. This extends even to the Magistracy. They stand by when the Management brings black-legs to the factory.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—I would like to draw your attention to an Act in America where it is considered a felony to transport labour in the event of a strike. Do you want a similar provision in the local Act?

*A.*—Yes, certainly.

*Q.*—What picketing do you consider lawful?

*A.*—As long as the men are not restricted bodily from their free movement, it is peaceful. If they do not encroach on the private property of the loyal workers, picketing should be considered peaceful.

*Chairman.*—Supposing the men lie down on the ground before the gates to prevent people from getting in. Do you consider that peaceful picketing?

*A.*—Yes. That is peaceful picketing.

*Q.*—You will not allow people who want to get in?

*A.*—If they want to get in, they will have to tread on them.

*Q.*—Would you regard being trodden upon as peaceful? Are you not compelling people to commit violence?

*A.*—I do not think it to be violence.

*Q.*—Supposing men stood in a body to prevent people from getting in. Will that be peaceful picketing?

*A.*—No. This will be a little on the excess.

*Q.*—You don't think lying down an excess?

*A.*—No.

*Q.*—In one case, the hand will be used, in the other the feet. You do not object to the feet being used but you object to the hands being used.

*A.*—We do not want them to get in at all.

*Chairman.*—I understand that.

*Mr. John.*—We object to both being used.

Q.—Would you agree to give protection to the strikers who go legitimately on strike?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Similarly, would you agree if Government give protection to those worker who want to go to work? Is it not the duty of the Government to give protection to both? If such labourers are interferred with, is it not the duty of the Government to give protection to them during a strike?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What are the limits that you say should be laid down?

*Mr. Mitra.*—There is provision of protection of life and property under the ordinary law of the land.

*Mr. John.*—The members of the Police are used exclusively to help recruitment of labour but if the strikers want their help, they say that their hands are full. 100 per cent of their attention is given to the recruitment of black-legs. It is our view that the local officials ought to give equal protection to both kinds of labour.

Q.—You are aware of the ordinary law of the land that picketing should be carried on alongside the route without obstructing the passage of those who want to carry on work. Are you in general agreement with this law?

A.—Yes. We are in agreement with this law.

Q.—If you are in agreement with this law, would you say lying down on the road leading to the factory and obstructing the entire road by lying and preventing loyal workers from entering the factory, peaceful?

A.—We would call that peaceful picketing, because it does not amount to preventing loyal workers from getting in.

*Chairman.*—In your opinion it amounts to peaceful persuasion?

A.—Yes, that is so.

Q.—Probably you would also agree that acts of violence should not be indulged in both by the management and labour and it should be the duty of the Government to step in and prevent when such acts are indulged in by either party.

A.—Yes.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Would you admit that when a strike occurs it is due to a serious difference of opinion on serious issues between the management on the one side and the labour on the other?

A.—Yes.

Q.—If a section of the workers takes the opinion that the management are correct and other workers are not correct, are you justified in calling them black-legs?

A.—The majority opinion should prevail. It is the majority that rules the world.

Q.—If a majority of people call the minority black-legs do you think it would promote industrial peace?

Mr. Mitra.—It is not I who call them black-legs; it is the whole trade union movement which calls such labour 'black-legs'.

Q.—'Black-leg' is a very unfortunate term to use. I suggest that 'black-hearts' should be a better term.

Prof. Bari.—Do you think that the promulgation of section 144 is helpful during a strike? Does not this promulgation provoke violence?

Mr. John.—Yes that is so. If section 144 is promulgated, there is more chance of secret violence. Men should have the right to give free expression to their points of view and this right should not be restricted.

Mr. Mitra.—It has been our experience that when a strike is on every police-station becomes a recruiting station for the management and in fact many constables' relatives are recruited.

Q.—Is there any law preventing black-legs labour from being recruited?

A.—No.

Q.—You might suggest one if you like; but so long as it does not exist, the Company proposes to recruit labour and if there is danger of a fight between the Company and the strikers when it is being escorted or there is a danger of its being attacked on the way, it becomes the duty of the Government to give protection. Would you like to draw a line like that?

Mr. Mitra.—We will leave it to the police to give protection if a fight actually takes place.

Q.—When violence is apprehended it becomes the duty of the Government to give protection—not when violence has actually occurred, but before.

A.—We adhere to the view that protection should only be given when violence occurs, not otherwise. We do not think it should be the duty of the Government to go 20 miles for the management to help in the recruitment of labour.

Q.—Is it your opinion that not until actual violence has taken place protection should be given.

A.—Yes.

*Mr. Lal.*—Fresh Labour should be given all possible facilities when there is a likelihood of a disturbance taking place between the management and the strikers.

A.—This should not be until actual violence takes place.

Q.—Don't you think that they should issue section 144 when there is apprehension of a disturbance?

*Mr. Mitra.*—We are of opinion that the right of issuing section 144 should be vested with some higher officer than the local Police and Magistracy because if we leave it to the local officials they will accept the version of the management and be influenced by it. Until there is violence on a large scale, it should not be invoked.

Q.—Would that be in keeping with the meaning of that section?

*Mr. John.*—The issue of section 144 leads to violation of the ordinary rights of labour. Therefore not until violence has actually taken place should it be invoked.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Do you make a charge against the local officials of partiality towards the Management? Do you mean to say that they are in the hands of the Management? I am putting this question in the interests of the local officials only.

A.—There is no question of partiality or of being in the hands of the Management. They are apt to be too much influenced by the version they get from the Management. That is why we suggest that the power to issue section 144 should not be vested with the local authorities.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Do you want it to be issued by the Ministers?

*Chairman.*—According to the Criminal Procedure Code, the Ministers have no power to interfere. It is the Magistracy that must exercise that power.

*Mr. Mitra.*—The Management present a picture that violence is already in the air and when they press the local officials, they are apt to apply section 144. In our view the question is to be left to somebody who can impartially judge on what occasions these special powers should be used. That somebody must be other than the local officials and this section ought to be used as sparingly as possible.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Mr. John, you have made general accusations regarding the conditions of workers, their ill-treatment, their being compelled to work longer hours, etc. Will you support those by concrete instances?

A.—Let me have the particular point on which you want proof.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Will you please support those general accusations that have been made by you? We should get at the facts. This is the only way to test them.



*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Mr. Hayman, these are not accusations but only grievances.

*Mr. Clifford.*—Mr. John, Mr. Chandra asked you what punishment should be imposed for indiscipline. Will you please repeat your answer?

*Mr. John.*—The answer is the same. Before any punishment is given, every offence should be scrutinised by the Board.

*Q.*—But what punishment do you propose?

*Chairman.*—What form of punishment would you like?

*Mr. John.*—That would depend on the nature of the offence.

*Chairman.*—Yes, but what form, warning, fines, suspensions, dismissals, reduction in rate?

*A.*—I am opposed to any reduction of rate.

*Mr. Clifford.*—I take it that you do not approve of the Shop Committees?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—Have you any personal experience of them?

*A.*—I have no personal experience, but only knowledge about them.

*Q.*—Your knowledge is that these Shop Committees do not function properly?

*A.*—Yes. Most of the Shop Committees cannot do justice to the workers because the decision is generally in favour of the management. They are unduly influenced by the management.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Can you support it?

*A.*—I have only knowledge.

*Q.*—You say that there is undue influence by the management. Can you prove it?

*A.*—What proof do you want. It is a general statement. All the proof I can give you is that all the Shop Committees are now defunct. One of the reasons I have given of their being defunct now is that they were doing little good.

*Q.*—You cannot quote even one instance?

*A.*—As I have said, I have only knowledge of them.

*Mr. Clifford.*—In support of your statement that bad influence was exercised by the management over these Committees, can you quote any particular case?

*A.*—I cannot cite you particular instances. This is only my knowledge.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Knowledge based on no knowledge of instances?

*A.*—Knowledge based on the fact that they are now defunct.

*Chairman.*—It is their inference. You may or may not attach any value to it.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Thank you, Sir.

*Mr. Clifford.*—Do you know that we have adopted the regular practice of issuing charge sheets?

*A.*—Yes. It is laid down in the service conditions.

*Q.*—You say we do not issue charge sheets in certain cases. Can you cite any instances.

*A.*—I have done so in my memorandum.

*Q.*—In the arrangement for the new Departmental Bonus, were not the departments included in it approved of by the Union?

*A.*—There is no question of approval by the Union. The Union insisted and the management accepted.

*Q.*—So it is an agreement between both parties. Are you satisfied with the departments included?

*A.*—Yes, Certainly. At the time of the discussion in which Mr. Clifford was present, we came to a compromise as the Company was unwilling to go whole hog. We came to a compromise instead of wrecking the whole thing. We still insist that certain other departments should be included and that there should be revision of bonus for certain other departments.

*Mr. Bakhale.*—There were Shop Committees some years ago. They have now ceased to function. How were they appointed—elected or selected?

*A.*—I do not know. I have only heard of them.

*Q.*—Can you give me some information, Mr. Hayman?

*Mr. Hayman.*—I have been here only a few years. Perhaps there are other people here who can give you the information. We will ask them to draw up a statement of it and send it to you.

*Mr. Bakhale.*—All I want to know is whether the personnel on these Committees were elected by the workers or selected by the management?

(*Mr. Hayman here asked several of the Company's officers present if any of them knew.*)

*Chairman.*—The question is very simple—Were these Shop Committees elected or nominated by the management?

*Mr. Naidu* came forward and said :—The Shop Committees were constituted on the representation of the Labour Federation. The representatives of the workers were elected by the Federation and the Company selected representatives of their own.

*Chairman.*—In many of the plants the number of men have been reduced. You have heard the view of the management that in the beginning they employed a larger number of men than were actually required and so in course of time they had to reduce the number of men because there were too many. What are your views?

*Mr. John.*—It is not correct. It is not because they had larger number of men but it is due to the general principle of industrialists. They gradually intensify to make more profits. This is particularly true of the Steel industry. The number of hands has been gradually reduced, although there has been no change in the machinery.

*Q.*—Can you substantiate your statement by reference to figures?

*A.*—It will be very difficult for us to do so. You may demand that figure from the Management and can be verified.

*Q.*—You state that there has been a large reduction of hands. Is it true?

*A.*—Yes, it is true.

*Q.*—This reduction of hands is not justified by the fact that there were too many hands?

*A.*—That is so.

*Q.*—Is there any scheme of rationalisation? Rationalisation always implies the replacement of old machinery with new and up-to-date ones.

*A.*—In this factory, new plants have been put up from time to time. In some there were replacements put not in many cases.

*Q.*—With regards to older things, is there any replacement of old plants by new ones?

*A.*—Yes. In some places, e.g., old Rolling Mills and in the Sheet Mills.

*Q.*—What happened in the case of the old Rolling Mills?

*A.*—It has been shut down altogether and the new Rolling Mills put up.

*Q.*—It is not a case of replacement. What happened in the case of the Sheet Mills?

*A.*—They have put down additional mills on more up-to-date lines.

*Q.*—Has that happened to a very large extent?

*A.*—No.

Q.—From that point of view, you cannot say that there has been much rationalization.

Mr. Ghosh.—The real complaint is not so much about rationalization as about intensification.

Dr. Mukherjee.—To the extent that this intensification of work through new plants has involved greater expenditure not merely of physical effort but also of mental alertness, will you consider that the increased profits should be equally shared by the Management and the Labour?

A.—Yes. That is our suggestion.

Q.—How would you determine the degree to which the expenditure of capital in the form of up-to-date machinery, of human effort and skill has taken place in tackling this question? What roles do they play in determining the share of both parties?

Mr. Mitra.—Once the principle is accepted, it will not be difficult to find out the share.

Q.—I would like you to give your opinion on a system which is advocated in America. Rationalization, as you know, some times gives rise to unemployment and intensification leads to better output of human effort and energy. In America the time for introducing rationalization or intensification of labour and the degree is not left to be decided by any particular industry or group of industry, but by the American Federation of Labour and the Employer's Association. Do you think that the co-operation of Labour and Management is essential in discussing these points?

Mr. John.—That is worth it.

Q.—With reference to the intensification of labour and introduction of up-to-date machinery accompanied by a reduction in the number of hands, we have got some data. What are your views? For instance, in the Duplex Plant, efficiency has increased very much and the number of hands has been reduced.

A.—From the deposition of the witnesses and the trend of evidence, is it fairly correct. We are unable to contradict them.

Q.—In the Gas Cleaning Plant the number has been reduced from 12 to 5; in the Machine Shops, from 48 to 15; in Merchant Mill, Control Drivers from 3 to 2; in the Mechanical department from 91 to 53.

A.—That was the general complaint of the workers at the time of our enquiry and also from the evidence that they gave before you.

Q.—In Agrico production has tremendously increased but as piece-work system prevails, the basis of bonus has been altered to such an extent that more work is demanded?

A.—That is what generally happens.

Chairman.—Now coming to the question of housing, I find in the memorandum which you have submitted that there has been an increase of rent of the land of the house. What do you say about that?

A.—Yes, from time to time and on several occasions the rent is increased.

Q.—The same house has now to pay higher rent than it had to pay sometime back?

A.—Yes, that is so. I have got a statement regarding the same to submit which will show you how the rent has been increased from time to time.

Q.—Is it correct that the larger number of workers live in the private quarters than in the quarters of the company?

A.—Not larger number.

Q.—What is the proportion of the house of the company to the house of the private persons?

A.—It is very difficult to say that exact figures but I can say that the Company has given quarters to only 30 per cent of them. 70 per cent must be living in *bustees* and villages round about Jamshedpur.

Q.—Have you any idea of the number of workers who are working in the company and living in the private-owned houses?

A.—I have no idea but it is not a large number.

Q.—Can you give an idea of the workers who live in huts erected in the land of the company and living in them?

A.—No, I cannot say the number.

Q.—Some workers complained to us that their huts were removed by the company by force?

A.—Yes, in *Kasidih* there have been some cases of removal but I do not know the number as to how many have been done.

Q.—Were any compensations paid for the removal of the huts?

A.—No compensation.

Q.—You have heard a number of complaints made by the workers regarding the medical department. What have you got to say?

A.—Yes, the complaints made are true. We have explained it in our memorandum.

Mr. Saran.—Is there any case that when the houses were vacant and the workers applied for them, they were not given?

A.—Yes, there are cases like that also.

The Committee resumed its sitting in the Tata Institute, Jamshedpur, at 3 P.M. on the 23rd, 24th, 25th and 26th March 1939.

The following members were present :—

- |                         |     |                                       |
|-------------------------|-----|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Dr. Rajendra Prasad, | ... | <i>Chairman, Presiding.</i>           |
| 2. Dr. R. K. Mukherjee  | ... | <i>Member.</i>                        |
| 3. Prof. Abdul Bari     | ... | <i>Member.</i>                        |
| 4. Mr. A. M. Hayman     | ... | <i>Member.</i>                        |
| 5. Mr. H. B. Chandra    | ... | <i>Member.</i>                        |
| 6. Prof. R. K. Saran    | ... | <i>Secretary.</i>                     |
| 7. Mr. T. H. Clifford   | ... | <i>(Co-opted Member, Management.)</i> |
| 8. Mr. M. John          | ... | <i>(Co-opted Member, Labour.)</i>     |

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**Oral \*evidence of the Workers of the Tata Iron and Steel Company, Limited.**

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(\*The evidence is not corrected by the witness—Vidyabhusan Shukla.)

### I. New Blooming Department :—

- |                    |     |                              |
|--------------------|-----|------------------------------|
| (1) P. A. T. Rajan | ... | T. no. 10072, Asstt. Heater. |
| (2) Farozali       | ... | T. no. 10031.                |
| (3) Matha Dayal    | ... | Crane Driver.                |
| (4) Sharfu Din     | ... | Crane Driver.                |
| (5) I. M. Rao      | ... | Crane Driver.                |
| (6) Abdul Akbar    | ... | Crane Driver.                |

Q.—What is your name?

A.—My name is S. P. A. Rajan.

Q.—In which department are you working?

A.—New Blooming Mill.

Q.—What is the length of your service?

A.—About 15 year.

Q.—What is your designation?

A.—Assistant Heater, Soaking pit.

Q.—Do you work in a place which is very hot?

A.—Yes, it is very hot.

Q.—How many hours a day are you required to work?

A.—Eight hours.

Q.—Have you got any reliever?

A.—I am working alone, no reliever is provided.

Q.—What is your present rate of pay?

A.—Rs. 3-8-0 per day.

Q.—For what length of time have you been drawing this rate?

A.—Previously I used to draw Rs. 3-4-0 a day; about 7 months back I got Rs. 3-8-0 a day.

Q.—What is the minimum rate of pay in your department?

A.—Coolies Re. 0-8-9 a day, Rejas Re. 0-6-0 a day.

Q.—What is the minimum rate for monthly paid employees?

A.—Ten annas a day.

Q.—For how long have they been drawing these rates of pay?

A.—At least for the last ten years. The majority of workers have not had any increase in their pay for the last 10 years.

Q.—How many days leave you are getting in a year?

A.—Fourteen days.

Q.—Do you get any sick leave?

A.—We do not get any sick leave.

Q.—For how long in a year are you sick on an average?

A.—For about 3 to 4 months in a year.

Q.—When sick, do you receive any pay?

A.—No, nothing at all.

Q.—What is the cause of your illness?

A.—We get ill because we are working close to gas and besides the nature of our work is hard and strenuous.

Q.—Do you have to work full 8 hours?

A.—Yes, without any reliever and no rest whatsoever.

Q.—What is the condition of the health of the Soaking Pit Workers?

A.—Absolutely rotten. They absent themselves solely on account of sickness, and for no other reason.

Q.—Do you consider that your working hour should be reduced?

A.—Yes. It must be reduced.

Q.—Are you in a position to maintain yourself and your family on the total remuneration which you receive?

A.—I cannot meet my expenses and therefore, I am always in debt.

Q.—Do you live in a quarter provide by the Company?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What type of quarter?

A.—L—4.

Q.—What is the rent of the quarter?

A.—Rs. 9 per mensem.

Q.—Have you got lights and fans in your quarter?

A.—No lights and fans, nor water inside.

Q.—Are all the men of your department also provided with quarters?

A.—No, most of them have not got Company's quarters.

Q.—Where do they live?

A.—Some of them live with their friends and others in private rented quarters.



Q.—What rent is paid for private quarters?

A.—A very high rent is paid for private quarters.

Q.—How much would you have to pay as rent for a family quarters?

A.—From Rs. 20 to Rs. 30 a month.

Q.—Are there sufficient private quarters?

A.—No and many men live in *bustees* and so fall sick every now and then.

Q.—Are new hands employed on higher rates of pay in preference to old and experienced employees?

A.—Yes.

Q.—In how many cases has this occurred?

A.—In 2 or 3 cases in our department.

Q.—Can you site any specific instances?

A.—One Dastur and another Tata were employed in preference to old experienced hands.

Q.—When did this happen?

A.—After the strike of 1928.

Q.—Was any one suspended?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Was he inefficient?

A.—No, he was fully competent to do the work.

Q.—Are the members of the Tata Workers' Union victimised or intimidated?

A.—Not openly but indirectly they are made to suffer. In fact we fear that as a result of our giving evidence before this Committee we shall be victimised.

Q.—How long can you work at your job?

A.—After 10 to 12 years we are useless for further work.

Q.—Are you satisfied with the present Gratuity Scheme?

A.—No. 20 years is too long for many of us to take advantage of it.

Q.—What length of service do you suggest that you should put in to enable you to earn gratuity?

A.—12 years maximum.

Q.—Do you consider half a month's pay for each year of service as sufficient?

A.—No, it should be one month for every year.

Q.—(Mr. Hayman) How many years service you have put in?

A.—15 years.

Q.—On what rate of pay did you start work?

A.—Rs. 35 per mensem.

Q.—What is your present pay?

A.—Rs. 3-8-0 per day.

Q.—Do you not consider that it is a sufficient encouragement to have risen from Rs. 35 a month to Rs. 3-8-0 a day?

(No reply.)

Mr. John.—Have you had any reduction in salary?

A.—Yes. Previously my rate of pay was Rs. 75 per mensem. I was converted into a daily-rated worker on Rs. 2-12-0 some years back. Recently my salary was reduced by 4 annas on account of negligence of work but it was restored after a month and half on the recommendation of my Superintendent.

Mr. Hayman.—You stated it was impossible to continue work after 10 to 12 years at your job but after working for about 15 years you still appear in robust health.

A.—I am not as robust as I appear. I had an attack of colic pain some time back and suffered from other illnesses as well, such as high blood pressure. I was under the treatment of Dr. Dutt and also other doctors but was not completely cured with the result that I had to go to Calcutta for medical treatment.

Chairman.—Do you work on Sundays?

A.—We work on Sundays but we get a day off after 14 days work as factory off.

Q.—Are you paid for "OFF" days?

A.—No. "No work no pay" is the rule.

## II. Sheet Bar and Billet Mill :—(Batch no. I.)

- (1) B. R. Bose.
- (2) C. J. Naidu.
- (3) Dharmu.
- (4) Bandhan Singh.
- (5) Chandradip Singh.
- (6) Sova.

Q.—What is your name?

A.—My name is B. R. Bose.

Q.—What is the minimum rate of pay in your department ?

A.—Eleven annas—monthly paid.

Q.—How long have you been in this department ?

A.—Since the mills started in 1923.

Q.—What is the nature of your work ?

A.—Very hot work.

Q.—Do you think you are paid enough for the work you do ?

A.—No we are lowly paid.

Q.—Is it sufficient to meet all your expenses ?

A.—We cannot meet our expenses on the small salary which we receive.

Q.—Do you get sick leave ?

A.—No.

Q.—Are you in debt ?

A.—Many of us are in debt.

Q.—Why are you in debt ?

A.—Because we get a very low rate of pay.

Q.—How many days leave do you get in the year ?

A.—Fourteen days' privilege leave and 2 days' festival leave.

Q.—Can you enjoy this leave ?

A.—No, most of it is spent on sickness.

Q.—Do you get any sick leave ?

A.—No.

Q.—Is promotion made according to seniority and merit ?

A.—Never but according to the whims of the superior authority.

Q.—What is your designation ?

A.—Assistant Roller.

Q.—What is your pay ?

A.—Rupees 3 per day.

Q.—On what rate you were started ?

A.—Rupees 35 per mensem.

Q.—How long you have been in the service of this Company ?

A.—Fourteen years.

Q.—Are new men promoted in preference to old experience men ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—In how many cases has this happened ?

A.—In three-fourth cases.

Q.—Can you cite an example ?

Mr. Dastur.—He is newly appointed but on a higher rate of pay.

Q.—Are you living in Company's quarters ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—In what type ?

A.—L type.

Q.—How much do you pay ?

A.—Rupees 7 per mensem. Previously the rate was Rs. 6 then Rs. 7 and now Rs. 9.

Q.—Is the number of quarters sufficient ?

A.—Many have not got quarters.

Q.—Those who have not got Company's quarters, where do they live ?

A.—Some in private quarters, some in *bustees*.

Q.—Do you think the limit of 20 years to enable one to get a retiring gratuity quite alright ?

A.—No. It is not alright. It should be after 12 years.

Q.—Now the Company allows 15 days pay per year. Do you think this is enough ?

A.—No, this is not enough. It should be one month for every year.

Mr. Hayman.—Do I understand that many people have to leave their jobs due to bad health ?

A.—Not many but some leave the service of the Company on account of bad health.

Q.—Have the number of men been increased ?

A.—No, it has not been increased but on the other hand, it has been reduced. Previously where three men were working, now two men are working.

Q.—Has the production been increased ?

A.—Production has increased considerably. There was a record production in December 1938.

Q.—Did they reduce any men in other sections of the department ?

A.—The *khalasies* in the Mechanical Section were reduced. There was reduction in other sections also.

Q.—Do you get rest during work period ?

A.—We do not get any rest; we have to work full 8 hours.

Q.—Is there any leave reserve ?

A.—There is no reserve.

Q.—Do you think that more men are necessary ?

A.—Absolutely necessary.

Q.—What other categories of workers do not get rest ?

A.—Rougher *khalasies*. They cannot even find time to go to the latrine.

Q.—What is the pay of a roller ?

A.—Rupees 10 per day. Formerly foreigners used to get Rs. 1,200

P.M.

Q.—Do you get any bonus ?

A.—Under the new scheme, we get departmental bonus.

Q.—Is there any man in your department who is not getting bonus ?

A.—All are getting.

Q.—Do you know the basis of bonus calculation ?

A.—No.

Q.—How much bonus did you get last month ?

A.—Rupees 8 in the last month. I do now know the basis. Some men from the wages section read out the particulars at the time we get our pay.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Are you aware that it is to the advantage of the employees that the standard force of any department is kept at the minimum? If there were more men profit sharing bonus will be less in proportion.

A.—No, we do not know that.

Q.—Has your efficiency increased during these years?

A.—Certainly. (This is evident from the low cost of production.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Is it not due to foreigners being reduced considerably?

A.—(No reply.)

Q.—When any vacancy occurs, is it filled according to seniority and merit?

A.—No.

Q.—Why is it so? Are the men not quite efficient?

A.—Certainly not. It is due to favouritism.

*Mr. John.*—On whom is this favouritism shown?

A.—*Parsees* from Bombay.

Q.—Are there instances in your department where persons doing the same job in different shifts are getting different rates of pay?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Are the jobs interchangeable?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Are vacancies filled according to seniority and merit?

A.—No. Juniors are employed in preference to old men.

Q.—You state that there are instances in your department where workers doing the same kind of work in different shifts get different rates of pay?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Can you cite instances?

A.—Plate-shearing machine men. Some get Rs. 3-4-0, Rs. 3-8-0 and some Rs. 5-0-0.

Q.—Is it due to long service?

A.—No.

Q.—Do you think such a situation is likely to cause dissatisfaction among the workers ?

A.—Yes, this is the only cause.

*Mr. John.*—You mean this is one of the causes ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you get equipment such as boots, goggles, etc ?

A.—Some get, some do not. I think all should get necessary appliances.

Q.—Do you get sick leave ?

A.—No.

Q.—If you require leave for say 8 or 10 days at a time, is it allowed ?

A.—In many cases they say, we cannot spare you.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Can you please cite specific cases?

A.—Yes, but not just now.

*Mr. John.*—Can you submit later on?

A.—I shall submit it later on.

Q.—Is there any kind of punishment due to slackness, inefficiency, etc ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What is the nature of the punishment ?

A.—Fines, suspension and in serious cases reduction of pay.

*Mr. Saran.*—Are you sure fines are inflicted now?

A.—Previously fines used to be inflicted but not now.

Q.—Since when ?

A.—I cannot say.

Q.—What do you prefer, fines or reduction of pay?

A.—Reduction of pay is the worst.

*Mr. Chandra.*—Do you work in a covered or uncovered place ?

A.—In an uncovered place, even during rains. The place is very hot and it should be covered.

Q.—Do you like the hours of work ?

A.—No. The hours of work should be reduced. Eight hours period is too long to work in a hot place. We do not get any rest. Reserve strength is necessary.

*Mr. John.*—How do the management like those workers who are members of the union?

A.—The management do not like any of their men to join the union; if they join they are subjected to ill-treatment.

### III. Sheet Bar and Billet Mill :—(Batch no. 2.)

(1) D. N. Sinha—Roller Helper.

(2) Jagat Singh—Heater.

(3) Dalip Singh—Catcher.

(4) Paras Nath—Doubler.

(5) Gian Das—Doubler.

(6) D. Danial—T. Operator.

*Mr. John.*—What is your name ?

*A.*—Dewan Singh.

*Q.*—Is the place where you work very hot ?

*A.*—Very very hot.

*Q.*—Do you get increments regularly ?

*A.*—No, we are working on the same rates throughout.

*Q.*—What is the minimum wage in your department ?

*A.*—Annas 10 per day.

*Q.*—What is the maximum rate ?

*A.*—Rupees 5 for rollers and Rs. 7 for Foremen.

*Q.*—Is the amount you earn sufficient to defray the expenses of yourself and your family ?

*A.*—Certainly not. What we get is too inadequate. We are required to drink milk in sufficient quantity to enable us to continue our work. We cannot carry on the job unless we drink enough milk. What we earn is practically exhausted on our own expenses and practically nothing is left for our family, with the result that we are always in debt.

*Q.*—Do you get sick very often ?

*A.*—Yes. Because we are required to drink water due to extreme heat there, and we catch cold as a consequence and thus we fall sick and are compelled to absent ourselves frequently.

*Q.*—How many days leave do you get in a year ?

*A.*—Fourteen days in a year. This is very insufficient.

*Q.*—How many days' leave do you get in a year ?

*A.*—Considering the nature of the work we do we should be allowed at least 3 months' leave in a year.

*Q.*—Eight hours' work is alright for you ?



A.—No sir, in a hot place like Sheet Mill no body can work 8 hours. We frequently fall into a swoon while working.

Q.—How many hours do you suggest ?

A.—It should be 6 hours.

Q.—Are you living in a Company's quarter ?

A.—No.

Q.—Why ?

A.—Because I have not been allotted one though I applied on several occasions.

*Another witness.*—Yes, I am living in a L-Type quarter.

Q.—How much rent do you pay there ?

A.—Rupees 9 per month.

Q.—Is there any water inside ?

A.—There is no water inside the quarter.

Q.—Does any man of your department need a quarter ?

A.—Most of us have no quarters and are badly in need of the same.

Q.—If they have got no quarters, where are they living ?

A.—In private quarters where the rent is abnormally high, and in *bustees* where it is very insanitary.

Q.—Are you daily-rated or monthly-rated ?

A.—Almost all are daily-rated. We all want to be monthly-rated.

Q.—Why do you like to be monthly-rated ?

A.—Because of the various privileges the monthly-rated men enjoy.

Q.—Is your post a graded one ?

A.—No, we are on the same rate of pay since the Sheet Mill started work.

Q.—Have you got any spare gangs in your department ?

A.—No, there are no spare gangs.

Q.—Did you get any increase in your pay ?

A.—No sir, most of us did not get any increase since 1931.

Q.—What pay you are getting now ?

A.—Rupees 38.0 per day.

Q.—At what rate of pay were you started ?

A.—Annas 10, then Rs. 1-12-0 as Plate Puller, then Rs. 2-0-0 and then Rs. 3-8-0 as Assistant Roller.

Q.—Has there been any intensification of work ?

A.—Yes, now turnout is more.

Q.—Do you think quarters are allotted according to pay and length of service ?

A.—There is no justice about allotment of quarters; junior men are getting and old men with more pay are not getting. Sometime Company's *dalals* with a few months' service will get quarters.

Q.—Do you know where the men who have had no quarters are livings?

A.—They generally live at distant places; some even come from Haldipur and other distant places.

Q.—Can you say how they come from distant places ?

A.—Some walking and some use cycles, as they cannot afford to pay high rents here.

Q.—So high rent is the only reason for their staying at such a distance ?

A.—Yes. If the rent is low they can stay here.

Q.—Have the number of men been reduced ?

A.—Yes, the number of men has been reduced; the production has increased and the result is that we are to work very hard.

Q.—Do you know that retiring gratuity is payable after 20 years' service ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you think this is quite sufficient

A.—No.

Q.—What do you suggest?

A.—Twelve years' service will be reasonable. No one can work for 20 years in our jobs. We are not even able to get the full amount of Company's contribution in the Provident Fund.

Q.—Are new hands employed even when there are a number of old and efficient hands who deserve promotion?

A.—Yes, new men are appointed. Only recently one man was promoted to a higher post because he would wash and clean the Superintendent's car inspite of the fact that an older hand had been acting in that job.

Q.—Are members of the union ill-treated?

A.—Yes. They are badly treated because they belong to the union and they are also not given acting allowances. Those who are favourites get increments.

Q.—How does your supervising staff behave with you?

A.—The Foreman will frequently abuse us and at times also hit us. If we approach the Superintendent, he does not say anything.

Q.—Why do you not go to the higher authorities?

A.—Those who are literate can go; we cannot go. Some of us went to the General Superintendent but nothing was done.

Q.—What is the nature of your work?

A.—Very hard; the place where we work is very hot. Some of us fall into swoon while working. There is a chance of our falling on hot plates also. When we fall into a swoon, we are taken out and when after sometime we come back to our senses we are asked to work again.

Q.—Are you all in debt?

A.—Yes. We are all involved, except the Foremen.

*Mr. Hayman.*—How much do you earn as bonus?

A.—About Rs. 25-0-0 to Rs. 30-0-0.

Q.—How long have you been working?

A.—I have been working for 7 years.

Q.—How much are you drawing now?

A.—Rs. 3-8-0 per day.

Q.—How many men are there in your section? (Hot Mills).

A.—There are about 700 men working in our Section.

Q.—How many hours you are required to work in a shift?

A.—Eight hours.

Q.—But do you not work for 4 hours actually?

A.—Some of us get rest pauses every alternate hours but most of us are required to work full 8 hours. I am roller and am required to work full 8 hours.

Q.—What percentage of your men work 4 hours?

A.—About 25 per cent only. The balance work for full 8 hours.

Q.—How many men in all work 4 hours?

A.—About 250 to 300 men.

Q.—Are you supplied with clothing and special equipments ?

A.—No clothing is supplied. Some get boots but others do not, such as Heaters and Roughers.

Q.—At what periods are you supplied boots.

A.—We are supplied boots every six months. But they never last so long.

Q.—Are your working conditions injurious to your health ?

A.—Yes. We suffer as a result of gas fumes and variations of temperature.

Q.—Is the work in the Annealing Section difficult ?

A.—Yes. It is very difficult.

Q.—Who work harder ? (The Rougher or the Catcher ?

A.—(The Rougher.

Q.—Are most of the men working in the Sheet Mills skilled ?

A.—Yes. Most of them are skilled.

Q.—Do the Labour Bureau send experienced men or new hands ?

A.—Both kinds are sent.

Q.—How are new men trained to work in the most skilful jobs ?

A.—(They are taught on the Cold Mills at first and then brought on to the Hot Mills.

Q.—At what rate is your bonus paid ?

A.—We do not know the rate.

Q.—How do you know whether your bonus is correctly calculated ?

A.—We understand that it works out to about 10 per cent of our salary.

Q.—Has there been any reduction of staff in your Section ?

A.—Yes. In our Section in place of 6 there are now only 5.

Q.—Any other sections in your department.

A.—Yes, in the Shearing Section there are now 5 in place of 7.

Q.—Has production increased ?

A.—Yes. It has increased considerably.

Q.—Has the number of men increased also ?

A.—No, but on the other hand when some are absent the remaining men are required to do their work also.

Q.—Do you get any acting allowance in place of absentees?

A.—Yes, but the juniors are given preference to senior hands. ' B ' Class apprentices get Rs. 7-0-0 even when they work in a lower rated post.

Q.—Are appliances and equipments supplied to you ?

A.—No.

Q.—If there are vacancies in a higher grade, how are they filled up ?

A.—Here also there is favouritism. Company's *dalals* get preference.

Q.—Are your articles of food dear here ?

A.—Yes, it is very dear.

Q.—Can you tell me the reasons ?

A.—The Company charges high *salami* for plot of lands which is put to auction. For shops built by the Company rate of rent is very high.

**IV. Sheet Bar and Billet Mill :—(Batch no. 3.)**

(1) Puran Singh—Catcher.

(2) Gangotry Singh and others.

Q.—What is the minimum rate of pay in your department ?

A.—Annas 10 per day for monthly paid men.

Q.—How much are you getting now ?

A.—Rs 2-4-0 per day.

Q.—What is your designation ?

A.—Catcher.

Q.—Have you got any rest pauses during your duty hours ?

A.—We work for about 4 hours and get rest for another 4 hours.

Q.—All men working in the Hot Mills are getting rest pauses like that ?

A.—Yes, they also work for half the time and get rest for the other half.

Q.—How does your supervising staff behave with you ?

A.—They behave very nicely. Employees of the Sheet Mills boycotted the Founder's centenary procession, tore away late Mr. J. N. Tata's photograph and used many provocative languages but in spite of that they remained calm. They do not beat anybody.

Q.—Are you satisfied with your rate of wages ?

A.—Oh, yes. (The wage rates are very high and in addition we get good bonuses.

Q.—How accident happens ?

A.—Due to negligence of the men. If they are alert, there can be no accident.

Q.—What about discipline in your department ?

A.—(There is absolutely no discipline.

Q.—Has there been any reduction in the number of men in your department ?

A.—No, previously it was 16 rounds. Now it is only 12 to 13 rounds.

Q.—Do you get boots, clothes, etc. ?

A.—We get boots after every four months.

*(Here the witness gave description of the rates of pay of different categories.)*

Q.—How many years you have been in service ?

A.—Twelve years.

Q.—Have you got a Company's quarter?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What is the type of your quarter?

A.—L. 4.

Q.—How much are you paying as rent?

A.—Rs. 7-0-0.

Mr. John.—Do you know that many with longer services have got no quarter?

A.—I cannot say. They might be in class 22 or 24.

Q.—Were you ever on special leave?

A.—No.

Q.—Do you know that Sheet Mill worked 3 days in a week some time ago?

A.—I heard of it. But I was on leave at that time. When I came back the Mills were running full time. The reason is that the Sheet Mills stock was very heavy.

Q.—Were you a Committee member of the Labour Federation?

A.—No, I was an ordinary member only.

Q.—Were you discharged 16 months ago?

A.—Yes.

Q.—When Mr. Homi was sent to jail you and some other men were also discharged? Are you aware of that?

A.—Yes about 80 men were discharged.

Q.—Have you been paid from the date of your discharge to the date of re-employment?

A.—I have got some money from the Company.

Q.—Have you brought a case against the Tata Workers' Union in the Court?

A.—(The witness does not reply.)

Q.—You have said that now-a-days the production is less. But we find from the record that the production has gone up.

A.—When I joined it was 16 rounds but now it is 11, 12 and 13 rounds. Sometimes the men slow down their work.

Q.—Do you get production bonus?

A.—Yes, I get general bonus and departmental bonus both.

### Y. Electric Repair Shop :—

- (1) Treta Singh—Armature Winder.
- (2) Sheo Prasad Sharma—Armature Winder.
- (3) C. C. Dutta—Armature Winder.
- (4) D. M. Thakurta—Tester.
- (5) J. N. Biswas—Main Recorder.
- (6) Dwarka Singh—Machine Man.

*Mr. John.*—Are all the jobs graded in your department ?

*A.*—No.

*Q.*—What is your present rate of pay ?

*A.*—Rupees 2-4-0 per day.

*Q.*—How long have you been getting Rs. 2-4-0 ?

*A.*—From last September. Previous to that I was getting Rs. 2-2-0.

*Q.*—Did all the men in your department get an increment in September last ?

*A.*—No. Out of 250 men only about 52 men received increments of annas 2 after 10 years working.

*Q.*—What is the nature of your work ?

*A.*—It is very hard in the sense that it requires technical, and practical knowledge. It also requires skill of the highest degree.

*Q.*—Do you think you are getting sufficient rate for the skilled work you are doing ?

*A.*—Never. Persons doing the same kind of jobs in other concerns are getting far better rates of pay. In the subsidiary companies they are getting Rs. 2-6-0 for this kind of work.

*Q.*—What is the minimum rate of pay in your department ?

*A.*—Only recently it has been made Re. 0-8-9 but previously it was annas 6-0, annas 5-6 only.

*Q.*—What is the minimum rate of pay for the monthly paid workers.

*A.*—Annas 10-0 per day.

*Q.*—Are they getting regular increments ?

*A.*—For the last 9 or 10 years they are working on the same rate of pay.



Q.—When vacancies occur are promotions given according to seniority and efficiency ?

A.—Never. Senior men are superseded by junior men. When any permanent vacancy occurs new men are brought from outside without considering cases of temporary men already in service who are quite efficient for the vacant posts.

Q.—Do you get the full pay of the higher post as acting allowance when you work there ?

A.—Not at all. A man acting in a post carrying a pay of Rs. 3-10-0 cannot get more than Rs. 3-2-0 if his pay is Rs. 2-4-0 per day.

Q.—Are the promotions always justified, i.e., do those who deserve promotion actually get it ?

A.—No. Promotions are given according to the sweet will of the departmental heads.

Q.—Are you living in Company's quarters ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What rent are you charged ?

A.—I am living in a L-4 type quarters at a rent of Rs. 9-0-0 per month.

Q.—Have all the men in your department got Company's quarters ?

A.—Only a very small percentage have got Company's quarters.

Q.—Do those who have not got Company's quarters need it ?

A.—Certainly. They are paying a very high rent in privately owned quarters.

Q.—What do you think is the rent for a privately owned quarter sufficient to accommodate a small family ?

A.—It is between Rs. 20-0-0 to Rs. 30-0-0 per month.

Q.—Are you in debt ?

A.—Yes, not only I; almost everybody is in debt.

Q.—Can you tell me the reason of your being in debt ?

A.—It is only due to the low rates of pay which we are getting.

Q.—Do you think that the prices of cloths, foodstuff, etc., are very high here ?

A.—Yes. They are too high.

Q.—What is the reason for this ?

A.—This is entirely due to the high rent and market toll the Company is collecting from the shopkeepers and vendors. Formerly a man with a basket of vegetable had to pay pies 3 only, whereas now they are required to pay annas 4.

*Professor Saran.*—Who are the owners of these shop buildings?

A.—The Company.

Q.—How many days' leave do you get in a year?

A.—Fourteen days' leave in a year.

Q.—How many days' leave do monthly rated men get in a year?

A.—They get 30 days in a year.

Q.—Do you think the leave you get in a year is sufficient for you?

A.—Certainly not.

Q.—How many days' leave in a year ought you to get?

A.—At least a month and a half.

Q.—Do you get any sick-leave?

A.—No.

Q.—What kind of treatment does an employee receive if he becomes a member of the Labour Union?

A.—They get very bad treatment from the Company.

Q.—Do you know how many men were discharged on account of being members of the Labour Federation?

A.—Yes, 90 men were discharged.

Q.—What used to happen to the Labour Meetings?

A.—In the year 1930, when Subash Babu was presiding *goondas* were sent to create some sort of trouble and thereby disperse the meeting. Every time a meeting is held *goondas* are sent to create trouble in this way.

*Mr. Chandra.*—Why do these *goondas* go to every meeting and disperse the workers?

A.—This is due to indirect action.

Q.—Is any such thing happening now?

A.—No.

Q.—Have you any grievances against the medical department?

A.—Yes. It takes a very long time to get a prescription written out by a doctor and still longer time to get the medicine. We cannot get it before 4 hours.

*Professor Saran.*—When you are very ill, do the doctors visit your house ?

A.—Yes. But we cannot get them whenever we want them. If they are sent for in the morning they will only come at about 12 noon.

Q.—Do you pay any fees to the doctors ?

A.—Yes. We pay them Rs. 2.

Q.—What is your suggestion for prompt dispensing of prescription ?

A.—The compounders should remain there upto 8 P.M.

Q.—What is the reason for this delay ?

A.—More compounders and doctors are needed. The number of patients are too numerous as compared with the number of doctors available. There is no nurse in the Burma Mines dispensary. If any female members of our family get sick we are required to come to the Main Hospital.

Q.—Do you think that the period of 20 years service to enable one to earn retiring gratuity is satisfactory ?

A.—No, in a steel works it should not be more than 12 years.

*Professor Saran.*—After 12 years service what will you do ? How will you earn your bread ? You will get only one year's pay as gratuity ?

A.—(No answer).

Q.—Do you think favouritism is going on in respect of the recruitment of labour ?

A.—Yes, favouritism is going on. In many cases new men are sent, but the Employment Bureau do not send men whose names have been registered some years back.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Here pointed out that there are 57 armature winders, of which—

					Rs.	a.	p.
20 are @	...	...	...	...	1	6	0
14 are @	...	...	...	...	1	12	0
12 are @	...	...	...	...	2	2	0
11 are @	...	...	...	...	2	6	0

and vacancies are filled usually by promotion.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Do you think unskilled coolies can work as armature winders ?

A.—Yes, coolie drawing Re. 0-8-9 a day can work if he gets training and if he is clever, he can manage the work, after training.

Q.—After 20 years' work is efficiency decreased ?

A.—If one gets good food and good wages, his efficiency will not be decreased.

Q.—Do you think that a man is fit for further work after 20 years' work ?

A.—Yes, but not all.

Q.—The dispensary opens at 7-30-A.M. and if people begin to take their medicine from 7-30-A.M. then the people will not have to wait for long hours.

A.—I do not admit this. The number of compounders is less.

Q.—Is it not a fact that as the men arrive at the dispensary they will get a token and their prescription is served accordingly ?

A.—This system has been introduced only recently but even then we are required to wait for 3 to 4 hours under this system.

Q.—Do you suggest that people after completion of 12 years' service should be discharged ?

A.—I do not suggest that men should be made to retire compulsorily after 12 years' service but that they should be eligible to the gratuity after this period.

Chairman.—You mentioned that many are in debt. To whom they are indebted ?

A.—To the Credit Society, Provident Fund, *Kabulis* and *Mahajans*.

Chairman.—Can you please let me know the proportion of loans taken from each of the above ?

A.—More from the *kabulis* and *mahajans*, and less from the Credit Society and Provident Fund.

Q.—What are the rates of interest ?

A.—*Kabulis* charge two annas a rupee per month, *mahajans* 12% per annum, Credit Societies 5, 6, 7½ and at varying rates. In the case of Provident Fund we lose our own interest, i.e., no interest is charged to us and no interest is allowed on our own contribution.

(The Chairman then enquired about individual debts of the witnesses, which they gave.)

Q.—To what extent you can get loans from your Credit Societies ?

A.—About four or five times of our salary from the society.

Q.—From the Provident Fund ?

A.—About half of our own contribution to the Provident Fund.

Q.—What security do you give for loans from the Provident Fund and Credit society ?

A.—No security for the Provident Fund loan, but for the credit society loan, only personal security from other members is necessary. *Kabulis* and *Mahajans* require no security.

Q.—How do the *Kabulis* and *Mahajans* recover their dues ?

A.—They attach our pay and Provident Fund.

*Professor Saran.*—Is Provident Fund attachable ?

A.—Yes, our Provident Fund money is attached.

(*Mr. Hayman explained that the old provident fund is not recognised by Government and therefore is attachable, but the new provident fund is not attachable.*)

Q.—Why do you take loans from *Kabulis* and *Mahajans* when you get loans from the Credit Society and Provident Fund ?

A.—Societies pay limited amounts and also the Provident Fund ; we take as much as possible from these sources and then we go to *Kabulis* and *Mahajans*.

*Chairman.*—You said that the foodstuffs are dear as the Company's charges are high. What charges are made by the Company form shopkeepers and vendors ?

A.—The Company charges high shop rent, *bazar*-tolls, etc.

Q.—Do they charge any toll on the sale of articles ?

A.—I do not exactly know. Tolls are charged at the rate of anna 1 annas 2, 3, 4, 8 from people who come to sell articles. I do not know what tolls are charged on sales.

Q.—Can you say whether vegetable sellers pay tolls (*Chungi*) ?

A.—Yes, any one bringing vegetables, eggs, *murgis* and other things will have to pay, according to the number of baskets, etc. On week days the charge for tolls is less but on Sundays it is more.

(*Here Mr. Hayman suggested to the Secretary to start Co-operative stores and reduce the cost of foodstuffs. He also pointed out that the Company offered to lend out Rs. 25,000 at a nominal rate of interest, build houses at suitable centres, and pay Rs. 3,000 per annum for three years for expenses.*)

*Mr. Saran explained this to the witness and asked him if they would purchase things from such stores. Witness replied in the affirmative.*

Q.—All must purchase on cash basis. Do you agree to this ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Who should run such stores ?

A.—We like such stores to be run by the Union.

Q.—Do you get bonus ?

A.—We get only general production bonus and no departmental bonus.

Q.—Are you daily-rated or monthly-rated ?

A.—Most of us are daily-rated.

Q.—Any body gets Rs. 3?

A.—No.

Q.—There are a few whose rates of pay are Rs. 3-8-0, Rs. 4-8-0, Rs. 5-8-0 ?

A.—They are not in our section but in other sections of our departments.

Q.—Is there any difference of work ?

A.—No difference in work.

Q.—Can untrained men do the work ?

A.—Commutator work can be done even by *coolies* drawing Re. 0-8-9 a day.

Q.—Do you think favouritism is going on as regards the giving of increments ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—In how many cases ?

A.—Four such cases.

Q.—Do you think that the number of men has been reduced?

A.—If there are any breakdowns, men are taken away and the rest have to do the work. If there are five and two are taken, the remaining three will have to do the work of five.

Q.—Can you suggest what is the reason for this heavy indebtedness ? Is it for meeting daily expenses ?

A.—Debt is incurred mostly for marriage and other social ceremonies.

Q.—Do you send money to your native place ?

Q.—Yes, occasionally. Some send, but most cannot, as they have not enough to meet their own expenses. How can they remit money then ?

Q.—You say you work overtime. Do you get paid for it ?

A.—We do not get pay for overtime work.

Q.—Is your department a continuous or a non-continuous department?

A.—It is a continuous department. We work three shifts and in a month we get four offs and sometimes five.

Q.—You say your rate is Rs. 2-6-0 a day, but you get only Rs. 17-0-0 in the month. Can you please let me know the deductions made ?

A.—For credit society Rs. 45-0-0, Rs. 5-4-0 for Provident Fund and for house rent Rs. 2-8-0.

Q.—How much did you borrow from the Credit Society ?

A.—I took Rs. 500 for a marriage ceremony.

Q.—What is the balance due ?

A.—About Rs. 300.

Q.—How can you pay your *Mahajan* with Rs. 17 ?

A.—I pay only interest and something to the *Mahajans* and when the credit society loan is cleared, I take a further loan and pay my creditors to some extent. To overcome this trouble, our pay should be increased.

Q.—Your starting pay was low and you are getting more pay now, but your family has increased also. How will you improve your position and standard of living ?

A.—(Silence.)

Q.—Has your efficiency increased ?

A.—Certainly increased and to a considerable extent.

Q.—Let me have an idea as to how your efficiency has increased.

A.—What I was doing in 8 hours previously I am now doing in 4 hours.

Q.—If piece rate is introduced do you think that will help you in any way ?

A.—Yes, it will.

**VI and VII. Machine Shops :—(Batch nos. 1 and 2.)**

(1) N. S. Mukherjee	...	...	<i>Fitter.</i>
(2) Asleboy Sen	...	...	<i>Turner.</i>
(3) Kali Charan	...	...	<i>Machine Man.</i>
(4) Sajhu Singh	...	...	<i>Machine Man.</i>
(5) Brij Mohan	...	...	<i>Fitter.</i>
(6) N. C. Sen	...	...	<i>Turner.</i>
(7) Hari Ran	...	...	<i>Turner.</i>
(8) Santa Singh	...	...	<i>Turner.</i>
(9) Govind Singh	...	...	<i>Turner.</i>
(10) Jiwan Singh	...	...	<i>Turner.</i>

Q.—From what department are you coming?

A.—Machine Shop, nos. 1 and 2.

Q.—Is there one rate for all the turners or are the turners paid differently?

A.—There are different rates.

Q.—To what cause do you attribute this difference?

A.—The difference is due to the differential treatment by the General Foreman.

Q.—There is a general complaint in the Machine Shop that men with lesser service get more pay than men with longer service. Is this true?

A.—Yes. There are men who have served for 10 or 12 years and they have got no increment but men who have been in nearly two or three years' service have got annual increments.

Q.—Do you know if they are the foremen's men?

A.—There are many foremen's men, e.g., relations, friends, admirers, etc.

Q.—Are the *khalasis* put as helpers?

A.—Yes. *Khalasis* are also made to work as helpers.

Q.—Do such *khalasis* get the rate of the helper?

A.—No. They get only the *khalasi's* rate even though they do the work of the Machine-men. These *khalasis* do not also get chances when there are vacancies in higher grade and these men are made to work as machine-man generally in the evening when the foremen are away.



Q.—How many days' leave do they get?

A.—14 days' leave but we demand more than 14 days' leave just like the monthly-rated men. The daily-rated men work more than the monthly-rated men.

Q.—Do you get sick leave with pay?

A.—No.

Q.—How many men in your department have got quarters?

A.—Not all the men have got quarters. The rent of H/6 quarter was Rs. 8 in the beginning. Then the rent was increased to Rs. 12. Then the rent was fixed at Rs. 15 and the present rent is Rs. 18. The new tenants have to pay at the present rate while the old tenants pay at the old rates then prevailing.

Q.—What complaints have you got regarding recruitment of labour through the Labour Bureau? Is the present system of recruitment alright?

A.—We want employment through the Union. At present the apprentices whether 'C' Class or our sons and dependants are made to go through an examination but *Parsi* apprentices from Bombay are employed without examination.

Q.—Have you increased your efficiency?

A.—Yes. What we could do in an hour when we were first employed, we can do now in 10 minutes.

Chairman.—Do you get overtime?

A.—We only get offs against overtime. We want to be paid for overtime.

Q.—Why do you like pay in preference to offs?

A.—Pay will help us financially.

Q.—What is the nature of your work?

A.—Our work is skilled work. Some people have got training here; others got trained outside.

*(Witness Kalicharan complained that he was getting Rs. 1-8-0 per day but he got payment from February 1939 at Rs. 1-6-0 per day. He made a complaint to Mr. Varma but got no favourable reply.)*

Mr. Hayman.—(To Kalicharan.) Have you got any warnings, or charge sheets?

A.—No.

Q.—How do rates of pay in Jamshedpur compare with rates paid elsewhere for similar jobs?

(Witnesses gave conflicting replies. Some said rates paid elsewhere were higher, while other said rates paid here are higher.)

Q.—Have you got any debts?

A.—90 per cent of us are in debts. These are from Credit Society, Provident Fund, outside money-lenders and *Marwaris*.

Q.—What are the rates of interest paid by you?

A.—Nothing on Provident Fund loans.  $5\frac{1}{2}$  to 12 per cent on Co-operative loans; 6 per cent to 9 per cent *per month* on *Kabuli* loans.

Q.—How would you like to have a common place for taking your food?

A.—We want a place where we can take our food inside the works and near to our place of work.

(In reply to Professor Saran, Kalicharan said that he applied to the General Manager as to why he was paid at the rate of Rs. 1-6-0 instead of Rs. 1-8-0 and till then he had not received any reply.)

Q.—Is gratuity paid to you?

A.—Nobody has till now got gratuity and we cannot say anything definite.

Q.—After how many years' service would you like the gratuity to be paid?

A.—After 10 or 12 years.

Q.—As regards efficiency bonus, do you get this alright?

A.—No.

Q.—How?

A.—For 8 hours the Company has fixed a certain output and if the output is more than this minimum, they are paid efficiency bonus. But the next day, the minimum which was say, 16 is raised to 24, the maximum of the previous day. So we do not get efficiency bonus for the next day as the minimum output for that day is fixed at the maximum output of the previous day.

Q.—Is the Machine hour recorded then on too high a level?

A.—Yes. That is so. If we produce less than the maximum output, we get charge-sheets.

Q.—Are you in favour of standardising the output both in respect of time and in respect of work?

A.—Yes. The standard should be fixed.

Chairman.—What deductions are made from your salaries towards loan instalment, house rent, Provident Fund, etc.?

*One witness said that he actually got Rs. 15 although his salary was Rs. 51. He paid Rs. 28 for Society loan, Rs. 5 for Provident Fund loan and Rs. 2-8-0 as house rent.*

*Another witness said that his salary was Rs. 82 but he actually got Rs. 56. He gave details.*

Q.—Do you pay any subscription for the Tata Workers' Union?

A.—Yes. As. 8.

Q.—Are you in favour of deducting this amount from your salary?

A.—Yes. We are prepared to give this in writing also.

*Professor Bari.*—Do you want grade salaries?

A.—Yes. This will lead to harmony between the Management and labour. Lack of it will lead to estrangement. If there is graded system, there will be no favouritism in granting increments.

*In reply to Mr. Hayman, Kalicharan said that he was working in Ishapore factory previously.*

*Asked what leave they used to get there, he said that in Ishapore they got one month's leave.*

Q.—Did you get profit sharing bonus?

*On this point, one said that there was profit sharing bonus and another said that there was bonus in the shape of overtime.*

Q.—Is the cost of living in Jamshedpur dearer?

A.—Yes.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Do you not think that the Company has stopped overtime in the interests of the workers?

A.—No. We produce in 8 hours as much as we produced in 12 hours previously, but we get payment only for 8 hours.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Is it not the other way about that the men were not working to their full capacity for the first eight hours in the hope that they will get overtime?

A.—No.

Q.—(To Jewan Singh.) How long are you working as a turner?

A.—For the last 20 years.

Q.—What is your present rate?

A.—Rs. 2-12-0.

Q.—What was your initial pay?

A.—Rs. 0-12-0.

Q.—Are you getting general bonus?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Are you satisfied with your present rate?

A.—I want more. This is not sufficient for our needs.

Q.—Is the treatment of your superior alright?

A.—Yes. They have behaved well with us.

Q.—Are you satisfied with the gratuity rules?

A.—We are not satisfied. We want one month's gratuity per year of service.

Q.—Do you want gratuity after 10 years or 15 years?

*(One said after 10 years, another said after 15 years.)*

Q.—Is there any graded system in your department?

A.—No. We want the graded system. At present increments are given according to the whims of the Foremen.

Q.—Is the house rent high?

A.—Yes. Also, there should be more quarters for the men because there are many now without quarters.

*(The witness suggested that their sons and dependants should be employed without examination as they were not able to teach them to a high standard. They also wanted production bonus. They all were in debt.)*

**VIII. Loco and Traffic Department :—**

- (1) E. N. S. Iyer ... *Assistant Yard Foreman, T. no. 16041.*
- (2) C. D. Satpatty ... *Number Taker, T. no. 16096.*
- (3) B. N. Mukherjee ... *Number Taker, T. no. 161000.*
- (4) Saquir Uddin ... *J. Clerk, T. no. 16108.*
- (5) Balram Singh.

*Mr. John.*—What is the grade of your department?

*A.*—Points-men's grade is from Rs. 15 to Rs. 20, Coupling Porters from Rs. 20 to Rs. 25, *Jamadars* Rs. 20 to Rs. 25, Foremen-guard Rs. 40 to Rs. 60, Guard Foremen Rs. 60 to Rs. 100.

*Q.*—How many men should there be on each engine?

*A.*—There should be one *Jamadar* and two coupling porters in each engine.

*Q.*—Previously how many coupling porters were there?

*A.*—There were two.

*Q.*—How many are there now?

*A.*—There is only one now, because there is not full standard force.

*Q.*—Is there any acting allowance paid for higher posts?

*A.*—Nothing is paid for acting allowance when acting in higher posts.

*Q.*—Is there any difference in work between these men and any uniformity in the rate?

*A.*—There is no uniformity in the rate among these men; their work is the same.

*Q.*—Is the work the same as before, or has it been increased?

*A.*—Work has increased in the Loco Department but the number of men have not been increased correspondingly.

*Q.*—What was the rate before and what is the present rate?

*A.*—For Loco Drivers Rs. 6 was the rate. It was reduced to Rs. 5-8-0 and then to Rs. 4-8-0 which is the present rate. The work of the drivers has increased more than double.

*Q.*—How has the work increased now?

*A.*—Previously there were 15 engines; now the number has gone up to 27. Hence there is more work.

Q.—What was the previous and what is the present rate of Firemen?

A.—The grade of the Firemen was Rs. 1-12-0. Then it was reduced to Rs. 1-8-0 and now it is Rs. 1-4-0.

Q.—For how many years have you been working?

A.—I have been working for 6 years. I started on Re. 1 as a Fireman and it has been since increased to Rs. 1-4-0 only.

Q.—Are cleaners getting acting allowance?

A.—Cleaners were getting acting allowance before but do not get it now.

Q.—Are the Traffic Staff monthly or daily-rated?

A.—Traffic men are getting monthly rate, whereas Loco men are getting daily rate. Loco men demand to be monthly rated.

Q.—Are the men getting free quarters?

A.—In the receiving section half the men get free quarters and the other half do not.

Q.—Are you getting water?

A.—Some time we do not get sufficient water.

Q.—Do you get clothing?

A.—We do not get winter clothing.

Q.—Do you get annual increments?

A.—Many people have not got increment for the past 5 or 6 years.

Q.—What is the treatment of your superiors?

A.—The treatment of the Supervisory Staff with the men is very bad.

Q.—Do Drivers get overtime?

A.—Drivers work for 10 hours and do not get any overtime.

Q.—Are people working on the Sand Line getting bonus?

A.—The people working in the Sand Line do not get any bonus at all. All are heavily in debt.

Q.—Why do you not take loans from the Credit Society?

A.—We do not get any share in the General Co-operative Society and so have got to take loan from outside, i.e., from *Kabulis*, etc.

Q.—Do you take loans from your Provident Fund? And at what interest?

A.—We take loan from the Provident Fund; there is no interest charged on loans from Provident Fund.

Q.—What interest does the Company give on Provident Fund?

A.—Company gives  $6\frac{1}{2}$  per cent interest on our Provident Fund money.

Q.—What interest do you pay for loans taken from outside?

A.—For loans taken from *Kabulis*, we have to pay interest at the rate of annas 2 per rupee per month. We can only pay the interest month by month, but do not know when and how we will be able to pay the principal.

Q.—Do Loco Drivers get time for having their meals?

A.—They do not get any time to take food during working hours because they cannot stop the engine.

Q.—Are men given overtime?

A.—Men have to work overtime for 40 to 50 minutes every day or else they cannot get their pay; the reason for this is that they are held up.

Q.—Do doctors press for spectacles to be purchased?

A.—Doctors press us to purchase spectacles from their shops. (*Dr. Khan's name was mentioned as an instance. Mr. Kawaji said that he was once forced to buy spectacles and in the following year his eye-sight was passed as sound and was told that he did not require any spectacles.*)

Q.—Why did you not get credit from the Society?

A.—The men said shares were available but the Secretary did not give them any.

Q.—Are accidents less or more now?

A.—Accidents are less now, because people have become safety-minded. But now there is more chance of getting accidents because there is only one coupling porter instead of two to work on each engine.

Q.—What is the grade of fitters?

A.—There are fitters on Rs. 1-4-0 to Rs. 3.

Q.—Are fitters appointed on Rs. 3?

A.—New fitters are now appointed on Rs. 3. Men drawing Rs. 1-4-0 can do the work of men drawing Rs. 3, i.e., fitters.

Q.—Is there any bribery?

A.—There is corruption and bribery; once two Foremen were discharged for corruption.

Q.—Do you complain about the Foremen?

A.—We have nothing to complain about the present Foreman, because he is a native. (*This is about the Loco Department.*)

Q.—Why was the bribe given?

A.—It was given for security of service and for promotions.

Q.—Do drivers get warnings?

A.—They get warning almost every day. They are given charge sheets.

Q.—Who is responsible when accidents occur?

A.—When accidents occur, we are held responsible and brought up before the courts.

### IX. Women Workers :—(Contractors).

(1) Bulbul.

(2) Pranamani.

*Chairman.*—What are your daily wages?

*A.*—We get from As. 2 to As. 6 per day, according to age. The contractors promised 5 to 6 annas, but actually paid only 2 annas to 5 annas.

*Q.*—Is payment correctly made?

*A.*—There are always mistakes in calculation; the *Munshi*, who distributes payment also makes deduction.

*Q.*—How many hours do you work daily?

*A.*—We are asked to work from 7 A.M. to 6-30 P.M. daily and only get half an hour at 1 P.M. for meals.

*Q.*—What wages do the Company pay to their *rejas*?

*A.*—They get 7½ annas per day.

*Q.*—Can you get a job in the Company?

*A.*—We cannot get a job in the Company; hence we have to do work under the contractor on whatever we get. (*One Reja said that when she went to Mr. Cunningham, he sent her out saying that there was no vacancy. They had to work even with their children.*)

*Q.*—Is that girl working?—(*pointing out to a girl of about 14 years.*)

*A.*—Yes. She is working; from 7 A.M. to 6 P.M. under the contractor and is paid only annas 2 and 6 pies per day.

*Q.*—Under which contractor are you working?

*A.*—We are working under Upen Babu who has the contract for metalling roads.

*Q.*—Is there any arrangement with the contractor that he should pay the same rate as the Company?

*A.*—We do not know anything about it.

*Q.*—Is the rate under all contractors the same?

*A.*—Yes. The conditions of service and rate are the same.

*Q.*—Have you got lands and houses? Do you pay rent for houses?

*A.*—We have no lands; we live in jungle villages; we do not pay rents.

*Q.*—How do you live? Have you got debts?

*A.*—We live by our labour. We have no debts.



**X. Bar Mill Department :—**

- |                       |     |     |                       |
|-----------------------|-----|-----|-----------------------|
| (1) R. N. Prasad      | ... | ... | <i>Fitter.</i>        |
| (2) S. C. Sarkar      | ... | ... | <i>Guide Setters.</i> |
| (3) K. C. Remo        | ... | ... | <i>Painter.</i>       |
| (4) D. S. Shukla      | ... | ... | <i>Bank checker.</i>  |
| (5) P. B. Bose        | ... | ... |                       |
| (6) K. B. Chakrawarti |     | ... | <i>Coal Unloader.</i> |

Q.—How many men are working in Bar Mill?

A.—About 550 men.

Q.—How many are permanent?

A.—Nearly 380.

Q.—How many men are there drawing ten annas?

A.—They number 300.

Q.—How many are getting nine annas?

A.—About 35.

Q.—Do the men drawing 9 and 10 annas do skilled work?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How is the behaviour of the superior staff towards you?

A.—Very bad. There is lot of favouritism.

Q.—Are the new men appointed on ten annas when there are old hands already getting nine annas?

A.—Yes. New men are appointed on annas ten and they are trained for higher posts but the claims of old men who are getting nine annas and who can do higher jobs are overlooked.

Q.—How many of your men are members of the Union?

A.—Almost all. Mr. Lahiri is angry with us for having joined the Union.

Q.—Is the pay that you get commensurate with your work?

A.—No.

Q.—How many days' leave do you get?

A.—14 days' leave.

Q.—Do you consider 14 years' leave sufficient?

A.—No. We should get at least one month.

Q.—What is your opinion about the gratuity scheme?

A.—Gratuity should be paid after 12 years at the rate of one month per year of service.

Q.—Are there among you any men who are involved in debts?

A.—Yes. There are many.

Q.—Do you all live in Company's quarters?

A.—No. Many of us live in private quarters but we would all like to live in Company's quarters.

*The witness complained that the grievances reported to the Foreman are not listened to. As an instance, he quoted one, namely, boots.*

Q.—Is this a general case or purely a personal one?

A.—This is a general case.

Q.—After how many months' representation of your grievances through the Union did you get a reply?

A.—Our demands were met after six months. The supply of boots was one of our demands and this was agreed to be given. Yet the people have not as yet received their supply of boots. We require boots for the reason that we do hot work.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Why do you want one month's gratuity for each completed year of service?

A.—The more we can get the better.

Q.—Do you know of any place where gratuity is paid on this scale?

A.—Our work is very hard work and should not be compared with work elsewhere. Gratuity is paid on this scale in the Railways.

Q.—Have you got work for all the 12 months in a year?

A.—No.

*Chairman.*—Do the mills run all the 12 months in a year?

A.—No.

Q.—How many mills are there?

A.—There are three mills in the department.

Q.—In how many shifts do you have work in these mills?

A.—In one mill, only one shift is run. This particular mill generally runs for three to four months and is shut down for the rest of the year. There is another mill where two shifts are run and still a third mill where three shifts are run. In the first mill where only one shift is run, the rate varies from 15 annas to three rupees per day

and about 60 to 70 men work there. When these mills are shut down the permanent men are transferred here and there and the temporary men are discharged. Again when the mill is restarted, fresh employments are made of temporary men. Mill no. 2 where two shifts are run, the work is the same and the rates are also the same. In Mill no. 3 where three shifts are run, the rate varies from annas ten to one rupee eight annas per day. The work here is very heavy and has to be done standing in winter. We are of the opinion that the rate here also should be the same as in Mill nos. 1 and 2 above.

Q.—What production bonus do you get?

A.—2 to 3-8-0 per month we get. Before December 1938, we got no bonus at all.

Q.—Are there men in your department who are in debt?

A.—Yes, there are many.

Q.—Where all you have debts?

A.—Society, Provident Fund loans, and outside money-lenders.

Q.—What rats of interest do you pay?

A.—To outside money-lenders 6 per cent per mensem and two annas per rupee per month; Society 9 per cent per annum, etc.

Q.—Why do you borrow?

A.—Due to sickness of the family members and also due to children.

*(Here another man said that the cost of living in Jamshedpur is the reason of his borrowing.)*

Q.—Give us the details of your expenses.

A.—House rent eight rupees, vegetables eight rupees, *Marwaris* 35 to 40 rupees for provisions, Rs. 5 washing expenses, etc. He also said that he does not take *ghee*, milk, etc.

Q.—Have you got to pay school fees?

A.—Yes. I have got two brothers who are studying and I teach them myself at home.

Q.—How much do you actually get?

A.—20 to 30 rupees per month for over 3 or 4 months.

Q.—How do you manage to pull on with this amount?

A.—I got 75 rupees for two months from home and thus made my two ends meet. When I was with my wife alone, I used to send ten or twelve rupees home.

Q.—You say the treatment of supervisory staff towards you is very bad and there is favouritism. What is the nature of the favouritism?

A.—I have been working here for about 20 years. If there is any vacancy in the higher grade, I do not get it but this vacancy goes to the man who flatters and is a favourite or relative or admirer of the foreman. The old men are rotting on nine annas but new men are appointed on annas ten.

Q.—Does this system still prevail?

A.—Yes. In August 1938, 95 men and in December 35 men were appointed on ten annas.

Q.—What is the advantage of employing the new men on annas ten?

A.—We do not know.

Q.—Is there any difference in rate for the same work in different shifts?

A.—Yes, I am getting Re. 1-4-0 but another man working in the next shift gets Re. 1-6-0 although the work that he does is just the same.

Q.—What is your complaint against the Assistant Superintendent whose treatment you say is very bad?

A.—He has got no sympathy with us and he does not listen to our grievances and he makes us do very hard work.

Q.—Have you got to say anything about the medical help by the Company's hospital?

A.—The doctor has to be paid Rs. 2-0-0 per visit. (*Another man said that no fees were charged for employees but for members of the family they had to pay.*)

Q.—Have you had to pay fees for yourself also?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What will happen if you do not pay the doctor the fees?

A.—Next time I send for him, he will not come.

Q.—Have you made a complaint of this to the Medical Officer?

A.—No. Never.

Q.—Why not?

A.—The doctors will get angry with us.

(*Another man said that he had to pay at the rate of Re. 1 for four consecutive days for the doctor who attended him.*)

Q.—Do you know the Company's rules that no fees are payable by the employees?

A.—I do not know. The doctor said this is his due and asked me to pay.

(Dr. Satyanarayan's name was mentioned here specifically. Mr. Hyman said that he would make an investigation.)

Q.—How many men are there whose services have been broken by being discharged due to the shutting down of the mill?

A.—About 75 men.

Q.—Supposing a man drawing 10 annas is acting in place of a man getting Re. 1-8-0. What acting allowance will he get?

A.—He will get never more than double his salary, namely, Re. 1-4-0.

Q.—Do the *rejas* in the Hot Mill get boots?

A.—Yes, they get in summer but not in winter.

Q.—Are there men working in permanent night shift?

A.—About 18 to 20 men are working in the night shift permanently. These men are given two days work in B shift and have to work again as previously in the night shift.

Q.—Can the men working in the day shift do the work in the night shift?

A.—Yes. There are many men who were in the night shift before but whose shifts have since been changed. Now there are about 17 left.

Q.—Does the night shift tell on the health?

A.—Permanent night shift has told on the health and we have made several representations through the Union.

Q.—Are men only discharged when the mills are idle?

A.—Yes. The mills were re-started this time from August 1938 and are still running. No man has been discharged during this period. Previously, the mills were idle for about six months. Men are discharged when the mills are idle.

## XI. Merchant Mills. Batch no. I.

(1) S. Bhuna Rao	...	...	<i>Billet Recorder.</i>
(2) Ramsukul Tiwary	...	...	<i>Fitter.</i>
(3) Satyanarayan Raju	...	...	<i>Driver.</i>
(4) B. B. Dalal	...	...	<i>Assistant Shear Man.</i>
(5) Timbal Stamper	...	...	<i>Khalasi.</i>
(6) R. Bahadur	...	...	<i>Shear Man.</i>
(7) Rambachan	...	...	<i>Tongs Man.</i>

Q.—What is the number of men in your department?

A.—More than 300 in my section, the total number in the Merchant Mill will be about 700.

Q.—What is the minimum rate in your department?

A.—As. 12/ As. 14.

Q.—How many men are getting these rates?

A.—About 100/150.

Q.—Do you think *khalasis* can do your work?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What other work can they do?

A.—Shear Mill, straightening machine work. Also the work of Control Drivers.

Q.—For how many years have you not had any increment?

A.—For about 8/10 years. Some have not had any increase for 13/14 years.

Q.—Is there any grade system in your department?

A.—No.

Q.—What is the pay of control drivers?

A.—Rs. 1-3-0/Rs. 1-4-0.

Q.—When vacancies occur how is promotion made?

A.—Junior men are given preference over senior and experienced men.

Q.—What is the behaviour of your Foreman, General Foreman and other supervisory staff?

A.—Very bad.

Q.—Give a brief description of their behaviour.

A.—They say God damn, *gadha* (ass), clear out and some times push us about.

Q.—How many years are you working?

A.—About 17 years.

Q.—Are you Member of the Labour Association?

A.—Yes. After that I became a member of the Labour Federation also and later on of the Metal Workers Union.

Q.—Are the Metal Workers Union on good terms with the Company?

A.—Yes. They are called Company's *dalals*.

Q.—Is it a fact that some members of the Metal Workers Union were on special duty?

A.—Yes, about 150 were on special duty and the Company paid them.

Q.—Is it a fact that when Mr. Homi was sent to jail, some members of the Federation were discharged?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Can you please say how many?

A.—About 80/85. They were taken back and they were paid for 9 years.

Q.—Do you know there are non-employees and *goondas* whose only job is to break up meetings?

A.—Yes. I know. The Company is backing Labour Federation since the Tata Workers' Union has been organised.

Q.—Do you think that Labour Federation can break our Union?

A.—No. It cannot. Tata Workers' Union is very strongly formed.

Q.—When the Tata Workers Union was first formed, did you see the police support them?

A.—Yes. The Police came in lorries.

Q.—Do you see various pamphlets and circulars distributed supported by the Company?

A.—Yes, I know they are distributed.

Q.—Are they sold or distributed in crowds?

A.—No. They are distributed gratis in crowds.

Q.—When were these papers distributed?

A.—All these papers, etc., were distributed when the Tata Workers' Union was established.

Q.—Are you a member of the Union?

A.—Yes. I am a member of the Union. I am its member from April, 1938.

Q.—Have the Company's officers behaved badly since you became member of the Union?

A.—Yes. My acting allowance in 3 shifts has been stopped; and my brother's rate has been reduced. I am not given acting allowance in the place where I should get it. My brother has not been given the post which he should get. I have also received a warning, which was due not to my fault, but the mistakes of some one else.

Mr. Hayman.—Why did you not explain when charge sheet was given to you?

A.—Yes. I explained that it was not my fault.

Q.—When you work in some righer post, do you get acting allowance?

A.—Yes, I receive acting allowance.

Q.—Is there any section in your department where the standard force has been reduced?

A.—Yes. There were 3 Control Drivers previously, but they were reduced to 2 and after the strike there is only one in charge of 2 Controls. There was a spare Slingman; but after the strike the spare man has been taken away.

Q.—Was there any reduction of staff in other sections?

A.—Yes. In Mechanical section there were 91 men. After the strike there were only 46 men. For the last one year or so, the practice of giving help from General Construction has also been stopped. 3 Fitters and 3 *khalasis* from General Construction used to come to our department every Sunday to help us; but this has been stopped for one year or so. On Sundays we have got very heavy work. We have got to finish all our work on Sundays; otherwise the mill will not work on Mondays; if it does not work, we have to give explanations.

Q.—Did you get any overtime?

A.—Yes. Previous to 1928. But now, although the number of men has been reduced to 46, there is no overtime. Now we have got to work 2 to 3 hours overtime, but are not paid for this, because we have to finish our daily allocation of work.

Q.—Has your work increased?

A.—Yes. It has increased very considerably.

Q.—How has your work increased?



A.—One new Mill has been added. The previous production was 8,000 to 10,000 tons. Now the production is 15,000 tons.

*The witness explains how the work has increased :—If the production in ' A ' shift is 3,000, we have to produce 3,300 tons in ' B ' shift and 3,600 in ' C ' shift; naturally the mill has no respite for a moment to be cooled and we have also not even a moments respite at our disposal.*

Q.—Is any account given by the Company for the Bonus paid to you?

A.—No. We simply get a cover, containing Name, T. no. and amount. There is no calculation given on the cover.

Q.—Do you know on what basis the bonus is given?

A.—No. We do not know it; it is entirely up the Management.

Q.—What rate are you getting?

A.—I am getting Rs. 2-6-0 per day from 1929.

Q.—Did you get any increment?

A.—No. In October 1938, 3 men were given increment, but I was excluded.

Q.—Is there any rule by which increments were given?

A.—I do not know of any.

Q.—How did you spend your profit-sharing bonus?

A.—Some men spent it in building houses, some in paying old debts and some others in sending the money to their homes.

Q.—In America there is a law that no company can either encourage or discourage any Labour Union. Do you think that such a legislation would be beneficial in India.

A.—Yes. Such a rule would be very good for Jamshedpur also.

Q.—Have you any difficulty in the supply of boots?

A.—In the mechanical section, one used to get boots once in 3 or 4 months previously; but now we get once a year. In Merchant Mill also boots are given once in 6 months and once in a year.

Q.—Have you got any *khalasis*?

A.—There should be some *khalasis*.

Q.—What is the rate of stampers in Merchant Mill?

A.—The rate in Merchant Mill is Rs. 1-2-0 but in Sheet Bar and Billet Mill it is Rs. 1-10-0 per day.

Q.—Is there any other designation where the rate is dissimilar?

A.—We do not know.

Q.—How many men during the past 8 or 10 years have received increments?

A.—Only about 10 to 15 men got increments and that also at the sweet will of the foreman.

Q.—Was there any promotion given to *khalasis*?

A.—No. They have been working on the same salary of As. 14.

Q.—Have you sent in a representation to the Company that previously there were 91 men and now only 46 men?

A.—Yes; we did so through the Union.

Q.—Have you any complaints regarding the Medical department?

A.—Yes; the doctors do not know how to treat properly; the Company is not to blame, but the doctors are to blame.

Q.—Have you got to pay fees for doctors attending to you?

A.—Yes; we have to pay Re. 1 or 2; if we do not pay then we will not get good medicine.

Q.—If doctors go to your place outside the town, do they charge?

A.—If we live outside the town, we have to pay Rs. 3.

Q.—Do you know the rule that Company's servants need not pay any doctor's fees?

A.—We know that is the rule for people living in Company's Quarters and not for those living outside.

Q.—Is there any special bad treatment meted out to the members of the Union.

A.—No. But the treatment of the Supervisory Staff is generally bad irrespective of the fact whether a man is a member of the Union or not.

Q.—What is the incidence of expenditure on liquor?

A.—We are people of lower rates of pay and cannot afford to pay money for women and liquor.

Q.—Did you get a warning letter for any fault of yours?

A.—Yes. I got one, because I am a member of the Union.

Q.—Was there any trouble about the post of an Assistant Foreman?

A.—Yes. Mr. John saw Mr. Kutar and this was stopped. The Superintendent merely dittoes what the foreman says. The Superintendent has no free will of his own.

Q.—When are you getting departmental bonus in the Mechanical Section?

A.—I have been getting bonus for the last 3 months.

Q.—Is there any indication, how much is Departmental bonus and how much is Production bonus?

A.—No.

Q.—Why have you joined the Union?

A.—We want just to strengthen the organisation. The Union has saved our prestige.

## XII. Merchant Mill—(Batch no. II.)

- |                          |     |                         |
|--------------------------|-----|-------------------------|
| (1) Sheikh Ekbāl Hossain | ... | Asstt. S. Machine.      |
| (2) S. N. R. Haidar      | ... | Scrape <i>Khalasi</i> . |
| (3) K. M. Singh          | ... | ...                     |
| (4) A. Chaudhury.        |     |                         |

*Mr. Hayman.*—What was your initial rate?

*A.*—Eight annas per day.

*Q.*—What is your present rate?

*A.*—Seven rupees per day.

*Q.*—How long is your service?

*A.*—I have put in 20 years' service.

*Q.*—(*To another witness*). What was your initial pay?

*A.*—Annas twelve. Employed temporarily and confirmed on Re. 0-12-0.

*Q.*—What is your length of service?

*A.*—Five years.

*Q.*—What is your rate?

*A.*—Eleven annas.

*Q.*—Do you all get production and general bonus?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—Have you got anything to complain regarding the treatment to you by your superiors?

*A.*—No.

*Q.*—Have you got any debts?

*A.*—No.

*Q.*—Do you send money home?

*A.*—Yes. Some do, some do not and some save and put the money in Savings Bank.

*Q.*—Did the Doctor charge you any fees when he attended to you?

*A.*—No. Even when I gave him, he refused.

*Q.*—When the doctor attends to your family, have you got to pay anything?

*A.*—Yes. One rupee.

(One man said that he did not pay even when the doctors attended the members of his family.)

Mr. John.—What is your rate?

A.—I am getting rupees seven per day.

Q.—How much is your brother getting?

A.—He gets Rs. 3-8-0.

Q.—Was your brother giving tuition in Mr. Palamcote's House?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is that not the reason why you are on quite good terms with your Superintendent?

A.—No.

Q.—Do you get special leave when taking part in games?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Did not every man call you a Company's *dalal*?

A.—No.

Q.—Did you come to our Union?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Have you approached us when you are in difficulty?

A.—No.

Q.—Do you know Mr. John?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Did not Mr. John meet Mr. Kutar and Palamcote and ask them not to give you trouble?

A.—No.

Q.—Do you live in private quarters?

A.—Yes.

Q.—When the doctor visits your house, does he take fees?

A.—No.

Q.—Did you send for Dr. Guha?

A.—Yes. He took no fees. Not only once but several times.

Q.—Do you know of other cases who have to pay doctors' fees when paid a visit?

A.—No. I only know that three days ago I sent for the doctor but he took no fees though I offered him one rupee.

Q.—Did not Dr. Mukherjee visit you?

A.—Yes. But he took no fees.

Q.—Is it true that the Company gave you no increments?

A.—I did not get general bonus when I was temporary. I was working temporarily for 1½ years. After that I am getting general bonus.

Q.—How much are you getting as general bonus?

A.—Four to five rupees.

Q.—Do you live in Company's quarters?

A.—No. I live in Dhatkidih in private quarters.

Q.—How much do you pay as house rent?

A.—Rupees ten. My brother also lives.

Q.—How many sons have you?

A.—Two sons.

Q.—How much do you get?

A.—Rupees thirty-eight.

Q.—How much the bonus amounted to?

A.—Rupees seven or eight.

Q.—How much are you actually getting?

A.—Rupees twenty-nine.

Q.—Do you think 14 days' leave sufficient?

A.—14 days' leave is not sufficient.

Q.—Gratuity is given at the rate of 15 days per year of completed service and after 20 years? Is it sufficient?

A.—We are poor men and the more we get the better. Mr. K. M. Singh said that 15 days is sufficient.

Q.—Do you think membership of the Union good or bad?

A.—I am not prepared to give you an answer.

Q.—What subscription do you pay for being a member of the Union?

A.—Annas eight. My rate of pay is Rs. 1-14-0.

Q.—Do you agree to deduction of this amount from your salary?

A.—Yes. I have no objection to it.

Q.—Do you know the Company's rules in respect of payment of fees?

A.—(Mr. K. M. Singh.) Yes.

Q.—Do you know if the doctors are to be paid for visits outside the town?

A.—I have no knowledge. I took Dr. Guha to Kasidih to attend to my brother at night but he took no fees. I only know that fees are not payable when attending employees.

Q.—Do you like to become a member of any Union?

A.—No.

Q.—Do you consider membership of any Union bad?

A.—I do not know. I do not wish to express an opinion on this.

Q.—‘ Fees are not charged according to rules ’ say some. What is your view?

A.—I do not know. I told you what I am actually doing. I only know that no fees are payable when the doctor attends employees.

### XIII. Loco Driver Department. (Electric.)

- (1) Mr. H. R. Bose ... E. Loco Driver.  
 (2) Gaya Prasad.  
 (3) Dasdu.  
 (4) Farubapte.  
 (5) Ramnaresh.  
 (6) Abdul Jabbar.  
 (7) G. K. Patnayak ... P. S. C. Cheaps.

*Mr. John.*—All of you please give your names and department of the work.

*A.*—Yes, all of us have given that.

*Q.*—At what rate you started your work?

*A.*—10 annas or 12 annas per day.

*Q.*—In your department the work is much but there are few men?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—How many men in all are there in the department?

*A.*—About 2,000, in all.

*Q.*—What are your departments?

*A.*—Gas Attender, Supply *Khalasi*, P. S. Locter, Oil men, P. S. C. Charger, etc., quencher, mechanical *Khalasi*.

*Q.*—You all tell your rates separately?

*A.*—10 annas per day, 14 annas, Re. 1-3-0, 10 annas, Re. 1, Re. 1-4-0, 15 annas, Rs. 2-2-0 per day.

*Q.*—Since how many years you are working in the factory; have you got any increment in the period of work?

*A.*—I am working since 10 years and I am getting only 10 annas per day since my appointment and I have not got any increment since then. (*The other man said that he is working since 13 years and is getting Rs. 1-3-0 only. In all these years he has got only 1 Rupee increment.*)

*Q.*—(*To the oil man*) how much you get and on what you were appointed?

*A.*—I am getting Rs. 1-6-0, and was appointed on Re. 1.

*Q.*—Formerly how many oil men were there and how many are there now?

*A.*—Formerly there were 4 men but now only one.



Q.—Is it a fact that the work has increased and there are less number of men?

A.—Yes, in the E. Loco department, there is much work but less men. Formerly there were more loco drivers but now only one.

Q.—(Pointing to another man). What do you do?

A.—I am Door Man.

Q.—How many men are there in that department?

A.—Formerly there were three men but now reduced to two.

Q.—You are working in the oven from Germany which is very difficult?

A.—Yes.

Q.—(Pointing to the third). What do you do?

A.—I am a P. S. C. Charger.

Q.—How many men were there and how many are now?

A.—Formerly there were four but now two. Besides that, I have got to do the applying of the clay.

Q.—How many are there in the Carbon Cheaper and what is the work?

A.—There are eight. I have got to sweep with the stick and to lift the bamboo.

Q.—Is there any officer above you?

A.—Yes, he is the fitter.

Q.—Is he your superior officer?

A.—Yes.

Q.—When that post falls vacant, do you get it?

A.—No, I do not get.

Q.—Do you get acting post for that fitter's job?

A.—Yes, I get the acting post but not the acting allowance of the fitter. I get my original rate of pay. Sometimes men are taken from outside.

Q.—(To the quencher).—How much do you get and since how many years you are working?

A.—Since 12 years, I am getting 12 annas a day.

Q.—Has there been any reduction of wages rates?

A.—Yes, formerly there was 14 annas but now there is only 12 annas.

Q.—Do you pour water in the oven?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is there any hope of increment?

A.—No.

Q.—What do you do (*pointing to another man*)?

A.—I am a fitter.

Q.—What do you get?

A.—I am getting Re. 1-4-0 a day.

Q.—What did you get before?

A.—I was getting before Rs. 2-8-0.

Q.—Is the work same compared with before or it has increased?

A.—The work has doubled compared with before. Formerly there were 15 ovens but now there are 20 ovens, and the men have been reduced from 30 to 15.

Q.—Formerly did you fell ill and whether your falling ill has increased or decreased due to the increase of work as time passes?

A.—Formerly I fell ill less but now I fall ill frequently. In six months 16 weeks I remained ill.

*Mr. Chandra.*—Out of your earnings can you save?

A.—Not at all.

Q.—When you are absent, do you get your wage and bonus?

A.—No.

Q.—Did you get general Bonus?

A.—No, nothing.

Q.—How much do you get and are daily-rated or monthly-rated?

A.—I get 14 annas a day and am paid monthly. I am daily-rated but monthly-paid.

Q.—Do you want that you should be monthly-rated and monthly-paid?

A.—Yes, we want that. In that there is great benefit.

Q.—Do you get sick leave in the case of daily-rated men or any allowance?

A.—No, in the case of daily-rated men, we do not get leave or allowance.

*Mr. John.*—Do you get general leave and if so how many days in the year?

A.—Yes, I get leave for 14 days in the year and that is called general leave.

Q.—What is the hours of work?

A.—We work for full eight hours.

Q.—Is there no proper arrangement for supplying air to the workers?

A.—Yes, our clothes take one hour to dry.

Q.—Is there proper arrangement for supply of water in the factory?

A.—No, we do not get fresh water and cool air.

Q.—Do you require 15 minutes time to cool yourself?

A.—Yes.

Q.—If any workers faint due to the excess of heat in the work, do the authorities give proper care to them and give medical aid? How do they behave during that time?

A.—They do not take care at all. A man after fainting remains lying on the ground for hours. Then he is sent to the hospital. If he gains consciousness, he will again start work.

Q.—Do you get off times?

A.—Yes, after 14 days, for rest.

Q.—Do you get pay for that rest period?

A.—Yes.

Q.—For how many days you get leave in the year?

A.—14 days.

Q.—Do you want more?

A.—Yes, we want at least one month. Our work is so strenuous that the blood dries.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Do you get shoes?

A.—No, sir, nō shoes.

Q.—Do the women workers get shoes?

A.—No, no body gets shoes.

Q.—Do you want that shoes should be given to the workers of alley?

A.—Yes, by all means.

*Mr. Chandra.*—About shoes you say that no body gets shoes, is it correct?

A.—Yes, we get one pair of shoes in 6 months but that is inefficient because it is worn out in two months only and we do not get shoes before 6 months. The result is that we have to buy our own shoes for the remaining period. What you have seen are our shoes.

Q.—Do you get work whenever you like?

A.—No.

Q.—In how many days the shoes are worn out?

A.—In only two months. The remaining four months we have to manage with our own shoes. Even if we say to the company, they don't supply. Before the said time we cannot get shoes however we may try or however there may be necessity.

Q.—After the shoes are worn out have you got to return the worn shoes and then you get new shoes?

A.—Yes, that is the case.

Q.—The work has increased or decreased since a few years ?

A.—It has increased.

Q.—What is the rate?

A.—It is 14 annas.

Q.—Since how many years this rate is prevalent?

A.—Since I am in the service.

Q.—Is there any man of the Wire Catcher?

A.—Yes, I am. I am getting 14 annas only. I am getting this from 20 years.

Q.—Is there any shade to protect the workers from rain or sun?

A.—No.

Q.—You have said that the work has increased. In what proportion the work has increased, whether by one-half or twice?

A.—From 18 or 20 ovens they have increased to 24. So it has increased by  $1\frac{1}{2}$ .

Q.—You have said that there are in all 2,000 workers in this department. Out of 2,000 how many get the rates of 8 annas, 9 annas and 10 annas.

A.—About 75 per cent.

Q.—For how many years they are working? Have they got promotion?

A.—Since 8 or 9 or 11 years. There is no promotion.

Q.—How many of them are in this category?

A.—It is about 75 per cent. There are about 50 per cent of the people who have not got increment since 10 or 12 years.

Q.—At how much were you appointed and how much are you getting now?

A.—I was appointed at 12 annas and am now getting Rs. 1-8-0 in 13 years. But that is not an increment. The post has been changed and I am now working at the post of the latter rate.

Mr. Saran.—Do you want shade in the charging place?

A.—Yes, near the battery.

Q.—Where there is steam, there also you want shade?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Where you work over gas, there also there is no shade?

A.—Yes.

Mr. Gandhi.—You do not get soda water. The officers say that there is ample arrangement for water?

A.—No, there is no arrangement. Whenever we go to ask for soda, they do not give. The arrangement is not sufficient.

Q.—Is there arrangement for latrine?

A.—No, there is no arrangement for either latrine or urinals.

Mr. Hayman.—Is your work of skilled nature or unskilled nature?

A.—No, it is of skilled nature, no ordinary *coolie* can do the work of this kind.

Q.—You say that there is no arrangement for hanging clothes in the factory? In the new ones or the old ones?

A.—In the old ones; in the Copper ovens.

Q.—Is it not a fact that the work is of a very easy nature?

A.—No, it is not so.

Q.—Is it not a fact that after every one hour or so you take rest for 7, 10 or even 15 minutes?

A.—No, we always get constant work. There is no rest for 15 minutes. Sometimes there may be one or two minutes' rest. It is almost nil.

Q.—Can you quote a case in which outsiders get posts in preference to the old workers?

A.—Yes, in 1936 there was a man who was in the grade of Rs. 2-4-0 who was a driver; but when there was a place for charge man, he was not given. Some other man got it. A man came from outside and became the driver.

Prof. Bari.—What wages you ought to get in which you can maintain yourself comfortably with proper food and clothing with your family?

A.—Not less than Re. 1 a day.

Mr. Chandra.—How many in the month?

A.—At least Rs. 30 per month.

Q.—How many men you want per oven to work?

A.—We want two men for 20 ovens, and 15 minutes' rest.

**XIV. Blast Furnace Department :—**

(1) Mr. R. N. Dass	...	...	<i>M. L. Foreman.</i>
(2) Mr. Narsingh	...	...	<i>Fitter, P. C. M.</i>
(3) Mr. Ramdhin Singh	...	...	<i>Gas Cleaning Plant.</i>
(4) Mr. Dharam Singh	...	...	<i>Fitter.</i>
(5) Mr. Joimangal Singh	...	...	<i>Khalasi.</i>
(6) Mr. Shivaratan Singh	...	...	<i>Cinders Snapper.</i>
(7) Mr. Jagat Ram	...	...	<i>Helper, P. C. M.</i>
(8) Mr. Mohammad Afzal	...	...	<i>Khalasi.</i>
(9) Mr. S. M. Mukherjee	...	...	<i>Khalasi.</i>

*Prof. Bari.*—In what department do you work and what is the nature of work?

*A.*—I am working in the Blast Furnace Department and the work there is very hard.

*Q.*—Is the work the same or it has been increased and what is the condition of the men employed?

*A.*—Since some time the work has increased much and the number of men working has been reduced. Formerly there were 12 fitters but now they have been reduced to 8.

*Q.*—What are the works, please name some of them?

*A.*—Gas Cleaning Plant, Machine Shop, Fitters, *Khalasis*, etc.

*Q.*—Since how many years you are working?

*A.*—Since 11 years.

*Q.*—Has the plant increased or it is the same as before?

*A.*—No, the plant has increased much.

*Q.*—How many fitters were before?

*A.*—15 or 16 and *Khalasis* were 45.

*Q.*—How much each fitter gets?

*A.*—Rs. 2-12-0, Rs. 1-8-0. We are getting this amount since 1928.

*Q.*—Have you been given any increment since you have joined your post?

*A.*—No, we have got no increment. Since 1928 when we were appointed, we are getting the same rate.

*Q.*—Majority of the workers remain temporary and they are not made permanent?

A.—Yes, in the Gas Cleaning Plant.

Q.—Since how many years men are temporary?

A.—Since about 4 or 5 years.

Q.—Is it a fact that after serving for some years, they are turned out?

A.—Yes; if not, the rate is reduced to 12 annas or 14 annas.

Q.—Does the work of gas cleaning tell adversely upon the health and as a consequence the workers fall ill?

A.—Yes, after working for say 10 months, one has to sit down for 5 months by falling ill.

Q.—During the course of work, do the workers get fits?

A.—Yes, after a man gets fit, he is not cared for but is left on the hot platform. The fit is caused by the poisonous gas. Such cases always occur.

Q.—In the Rail Mill and the Loading Department, there is great danger?

A.—Yes. Where ore is loaded a man is almost blinded by the dust of the ores. While charging the Iron Ore, great amount of dust comes out and gets into the eyes. There is also great danger in that work.

Q.—Has there been any case of death due to over-working in this department?

A.—Yes, there has been two or three cases of death also.

Q.—What is the nature of the disease that takes place in the work?

A.—Diseases like pthisis, etc., and other serious lung diseases.

Q.—Do you get money for the absence caused by injuries?

A.—No.

Q.—Due to what disease absenteeism is very common?

A.—Due to the attack of faces. When a man is attacked by the gas, he is not in a position to come the next day.

Q.—How many days in the month you are absent?

A.—4 or 5 days.

Q.—What are your general grievances which you want to be redressed?

A.—We want that there should be grade system. We do not get sufficient to keep our body and soul together. So the pay should be increased. We want that our grievances be redressed without resorting to strikes.

Q.—Have you got any increment after the strike of 1929?

A.—Yes, we got something. After the strike of 1928 we got a bonus of 2 annas.

Q.—Is it a fact that after the strike of 1928, several persons were victimised?

A.—Yes. After that about 2,000 workers were kept in the gangs. The management became very angry with some of the workers.

Q.—Is it a fact that those workers who join the union and take active part are victimised?

A.—Yes, it is a fact.

Q.—Is it a fact that the management try utmost to break the union?

A.—Yes, they do utmost so that they may have a command on the workers. They are very much against the union of the workers and they also spend money to break the union.

Q.—Do you get leave when you fall ill?

A.—No.

Q.—Do you want that the company should give sick-leave?

A.—Yes, it is very essential. It is our right.

Q.—In the Railways and the Tinsplate Company, there is bonus system?

A.—Yes, the profit-sharing bonus is in vogue in all these factories. It is also available in the company of Sardar Inder Singh.

Mr. Chandra.—You have said that there were certain people who were given the red ticket. What do you mean by that?

A.—It means that they are temporary hands. Sometimes they are in this department and sometimes in another.

Q.—In the boiler, how many men are there per boiler?

A.—2 or 3.

Q.—Is there arrangement for urinals or latrines?

A.—No, there is no arrangement.

Q.—In all the departments such as Furnace, Running Department there is great difference in the grades of the workers?

A.—I do not know.

Mr. Saran.—Has there been any accident?

A.—Yes, some woman was run over sometime ago.



Q.—Do you know that there is medical examination in the railway department every three years?

A.—Not in the Loco department.

Q.—At the time of accident does the medical officer attend upon them?

A.—There is a medical officer but he does not attend at the time of accident.

Q.—You have said that your eyes become bad in the work of the furnace; did you go to the doctor for treatment?

A.—Yes, when we go to the doctor, he asks us to purchase spectacles. He has got his own shop from which he directs us to buy spectacles in order to make money. If one takes spectacles from other shops, he says that the spectacles do not fit.

Q.—For how many days in the month you are absent?

A.—8 or 6 days.

Q.—In the month how much you earn?

A.—About Rs. 50 or Rs. 60.

Q.—Is there any arrangement for drinking water or taking food?

A.—No, there is absolutely no arrangement. If we want to drink water we have to come down the stairs; no latrine or urinals are there.

Q.—Is the work for 4 hours or for 8 hours?

A.—Always 8 hours.

Q.—How much do you get?

A.—Rs. 1-4-0 after a service of 10 years. I was appointed in 1929, at the rate of 5 annas.

Q.—What is the disease you get from gas?

A.—Once in 1938 I got pneumonia. For 4 days I was senseless. The effect of gas remains for 7 or 8 days.

Q.—How many times you have been to the hospital?

A.—2 times.

Q.—What is the maximum or the minimum rate? Is Rs. 2-4-0 maximum and 12 annas minimum?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is the work in the Blast Furnace technical?

A.—Yes.

Q.—In the course of the service how many times you have fallen ill and gone to the hospital?

A.—In 11 years, I have been in hospital for 8 months.

Q.—For this hard work do you require some extra food and drink?

A.—Yes, while we are in work we drink 1 or  $1\frac{1}{2}$  seers of milk.

Q.—What is the method of promotion? After how many years you get promotion?

A.—For 15 years or 10 years we are working without promotion.

Q.—Please tell me the percentage of the workers who have not received promotion since 10 years?

A.—About 75 per cent.

Q.—Since how many years your health has become bad?

A.—Since two years. The disease is cough.

Q.—What is the least wage for a *khalasi*?

A.—It is 10 annas, 9 annas, 12 annas.

Chairman.—Have you got loan also?

A.—Yes, all of us have got loan.

Q.—From whom you have taken loan?

A.—From the Company and from outsiders also.

Q.—What is the rate of interest?

A.—Anna one per rupee per month, i.e.,  $6\frac{1}{4}$  per cent per month.

Q.—All of you got loan at this interest? In this case the interest becomes about 75 per cent per year, and this is an exorbitant rate?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Please state the amount of the loan individually.

A.—Rs. 250, Rs. 100, Rs. 150, Rs. 200, and so on.

Q.—You all took these loans from the Company or from some other place?

A.—From the *Marwaris* at the rate of anna one per month per rupee.

Q.—The loan of the company is deducted from the wage?

A.—Yes, in every month. We have deductions of the society, provident fund loan deductions, etc.; and all taken together amount so much that we get very small sum which is not sufficient for our maintenance. We get only Rs. 12 after all deductions.

Q.—Do you send any money to your homes or have you got any deposit?

A.—No, not at all. We cannot even manage our affairs. We pay 3 or 4 rupees as rent for the house.

Q.—How much bonus you got last year and how did you spend?

A.—I got Rs. 85 and I had to pay to the *mahajan* for the loan. The creditor is always on the head. (*Some said that the bonus received was spent on illness.*)

Q.—The *Khalasi* is getting the same rate and is in the temporary cadre since 3 years?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How many days in the month you fall ill?

A.—Sometimes 2 days, sometimes 3 days in the month.

Q.—(To the Peshwaris) Do you like this kind of work here or do you like to go back?

A.—The life is so dull that I want to go back. Life is spoiled.

*Mr. Saran.*—You have to work in hot water?

A.—Yes, we have to work in hot water for one or two hours.

*Mr. Gandhi.*—When you get acting work for any man, do you get allowance for that?

A.—No. or if we get we do not get the same allowance which the man was getting before. When we act we get our own wage *plus* some very small amount extra.

**XY. Open Hearth Department :—**

- |                      |     |     |                            |
|----------------------|-----|-----|----------------------------|
| (1) Mr. Ali Sayed    | ... | ... | <i>P. S. Khalasi.</i>      |
| (2) Mr. Md. Khan     | ... | ... | <i>Furnace Khalasi.</i>    |
| (3) Mr. Lochan       | ... | ... | <i>Furnace Forth Hand.</i> |
| (4) Mr. Kunj Behari  | ... | ... | <i>Furnace Forth Hand.</i> |
| (5) Mr. Abdul Waheed | ... | ... | <i>Furnace Forth Hand.</i> |
| (6) Babu Lal Singh   | ... | ... | <i>Furnace Forth Hand.</i> |
| (7) Mr. Halim        | ... | ... | <i>Break-man.</i>          |

*Prof. Bari.*—What is your rate of wage?

*A.*—Re. 1 daily; (*another man*) annas 12 daily.

*Q.*—What is the daily rate of the *coolie*?

*A.*—Annas 10 per day.

*Q.*—How many are there?

*A.*—There are 200 on the pit side. There are 63 in the furnace. In another department there are 36; so about 100 more.

*Q.*—What are the different rates in different work?

*A.*—Annas 10, annas 12, Re. 1, but mostly annas 12 or annas 10.

*Q.*—What is the percentage of those who get annas 10 or annas 12?

*A.*—It must be about 60 per cent. In the pit side there are more *khalasis* who get low wages.

*Q.*—Since how many years you are getting this scale of wage?

*A.*—I was appointed temporarily at first. The general practice is to appoint on temporary scale first and if there is any vacancy in the lower scale then we get permanent post.

*Q.*—At first you are appointed on weekly basis?

*A.*—Yes, then we get one anna as increase. In a period of 8 or 9 years the *khalasis* are getting Re. 1 only. There is a few higher grade service. Only few people are in the grades of Rs. 2-8-0, Rs. 1-10-0 or Rs. 1-6-0. Since 10 years men are getting Re. 1. There is no increment.

*Q.*—What is your duty?

*A.*—My work is very hard. My work is near the gas producer. It is very dangerous work. Our health is destroyed by the poisonous fumes of the gas.

*Q.*—What troubles and diseases you get from the gas of the work?

*A.*—From these we get cough and vomit blood.

*Q.*—The amount of work has increased but the number of men has decreased; how?

A.—Formerly there were nine men for the furnace but there are only five men for the same furnace work. The number of furnace has also increased. The production is going in rapid strides. Where there were 18 men there are only 9 men now.

Q.—Since how many years you have been working ?

A.—I have been working since 8 or 9 years.

Q.—(To the break-man). How long you have been working ?

A.—Since 10 years.

Q.—At what rate you started ?

A.—At Re. 1-0-0 and at present I am getting Re. 1-10-0 in the break department.

Q.—How many men are there in the break department ?

A.—Ninety men.

Q.—What is the minimum rate in this department ?

A.—Annas 12 only.

Q.—How many get annas 12.

A.—There are many *Pathans* who get. The work is very hot.

Q.—Do men faint often ?

A.—Yes, many times. When we come out of the furnace, we feel almost dead.

Q.—Have you got any increment ?

A.—I am working since 10 years but I am getting the same rate.

Q.—Did you apply to the management for increment ?

A.—Yes, we applied to the management but they told us to go to the Superintendent of this department. I also sent the application through the union but there was no effect, and no reply.

Q.—When you wanted to go on a strike on this fact, is not correct that I prevented you from going on strike ?

A.—Yes, you did not give orders for the strike.

Mr. Chandra.—In the strikes you sometimes commit violence and indiscipline and also apply force ?

A.—No, we never do that. We are always peaceful and obey the orders of the union. So long as there is no order of the union, we do not do anything and do not take direct action. Nothing is done without the consent of the union.

Q.—Is there harassment too ?

A.—No, not at all.

Q.—It is said that there are many *Dalals* of the Company who do mischief ?

A.—Yes, there are many *Dalals* of the Company.

Q.—How do they get money ?

A.—They get wages for doing *Dalali*. They do not work in the factory. But they always keep eye on the workers and inform the management. They act as spy of the management. They also get more wages than the workers.

Q.—You have not got any increment since you are working ?

A.—Yes, I am working since 10 years but no increment.

Q.—Have you got quarters to live in ?

A.—We are working since 10 years but we have no quarters. All the *Dalals* have got quarters. It is said that the work of the *Dalals* is to create friction between the management and the workers. They spread misunderstanding between them. The *Dalals* are generally after the Biharee workers.

Q.—They are among the workers ?

A.—Yes. But they do not care for the work at all. They are so indifferent. They eat, drink and make merry. The company also pays them for drinking wine.

Dr. Mukherjee.—How many men are there and how many were before ?

A.—At present there are 90 and formerly there were 120.

Q.—How much do you get ?

A.—Rupee 1-10-0.

Q.—How much money you send to your home in the month ?

A.—We get only Re. 1-10-0 and there are four or five days off in the month for which we do not get pay. The expense also is so great that it is not possible to save and send.

Q.—You want that the wages should be increased so that your troubles may end ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How much you spend on diseases ?

A.—About Rs 500 in the year.

Chairman.—Have you got loans and if so, from whom you have taken and what is the rate of interest ?

A.—Yes, all of us have got debts. We take from the *Marwaris*, the *Kabulis* and other *mahajans*. The rate of interest is four pice, i.e.,  $6\frac{1}{4}$  per cent generally. The *Kabuli* takes annas 2 per rupee per month.

Q.—Do you send money to Peshawar ?

A.—Not always; sometimes I send.

Q.—In your department how many men are there who have not got promotion or who have got late promotion ?

A.—Ninety per cent of us are like that who have no increment since 10 years.

Q.—Is there any place for taking food ?

A.—No, there is no place for food. There is no place even to sit, what to speak of taking food.

Q.—You want that there should be some place for food ?

A.—Yes, there is very good arrangement for Foreman; for us also there ought to be.

Q.—Have you got house for you to live in ?

A.—No, we have got trouble in that also. Some have got quarters but the rent is very high. It is Rs. 7-0-0. Some people went to jail for the sake of the company.

*Professor Bari.*—They went to jail for the company and one of them committed theft ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Everyone has got trouble for quarters?

A.—Yes, there is no proper arrangement for quarters. Some have got quarters but they are damp and insanitary.

Q.—Many are living in private quarters ? And the rent is also high ?

A.—Yes, the rent is Rs. 5-0-0 monthly.

Q.—You get Re. 1-10-0 daily and pay Rs. 5-0-0 per month as the rent of the house?

A.—Yes, since 22 years I am working and whenever I apply for quarters, they say that the quarter is not vacant.

Q.—What percentage of people live in quarters. Is it 75 per cent ?

A.—No, only 25 per cent live in *Kholis* ?

Q.—What is the maximum amount of the rent of the company's quarters ?

A.—It varies from Rs. 4-0-0 minimum to Rs. 10-0-0 maximum.

Q.—What is the condition of the rooms ?

A.—One quarter has got two rooms, 10' × 10' each.

Q.—You have got much trouble about medicines and medical treatment ?

A.—When we got to the hospital we have to wait there for more than 5½ hours. When we go we cannot meet the doctors. Medicine is distributed according to the number.

Q.—Have you also got to pay fees to the doctors when you call him at your house ?

A.—Yes, labourers have got to pay Rs. 2-0-0 as fees to the doctors.

Q.—Tell clearly whether you have got to pay the fees when you are ill or when your relatives are ill ?

A.—Even when the workers themselves are ill, we have to pay fees of Rs. 2-0-0. In the case of relatives there is compulsion to pay. In the rules there is provision that the doctors should not take fees from the labourers themselves; but even then they take. There is one doctor named Dr. Khan who takes Rs. 3-0-0.

Q.—Why don't you refuse to pay and tell them that there is no rule to pay fees ?

A.—Then they refuse to treat. We have to pay as treatment is essential.

Q.—Did you apply to the management complaining about this ?

A.—Yes, we apply but no one pays heed and no one replies.

Q.—Is it a fact that work has increased and men have decreased ?

A.—Yes in all works that is so.

Q.—Before, in Open Hearth Department, in the Pit head, how many were there and how many are now ?

A.—Formerly there were 90 but now 55.

Q.—On the furnace ?

A.—One furnace for nine men. In the whole department 120. Now 25 or 24, at first 40.

Q.—What are other troubles ?

A.—There is no arrangement for a place to take food. Our health has been destroyed. The number of diseases have increased. In the year we fell ill for more than four or five times.

Q.—What the *Dalals* get ? Is there any benefit to the Company by them ?

A.—They get good pay, they get easy and quick increment. They also get pocket expenses and also money for drinking wine.

Q.—How many *Dalals* are there in the department ?



A.—There are about 10 or 15 *Dalals* in my department. They also get good quarters.

*Professor Saran.*—We know that there is one hotel of the Company in the area of the factory for the workers to take food and you get two hours to eat. Is it not so ?

A.—Yes, there is one hotel but it does not keep good stuff and whenever you go to eat, naturally it takes some time. But when one comes back he is scolded and charge-sheet is prepared against him. There is no two hours' leave for eating.

Q.—The things of the hotel are dear or cheap ?

A.—It is dear. They keep cold food stuff. In the night there is great trouble.

*Mr. Gandhi.*—How a man is made *Dalal* of the Company ?

A.—It depends upon the officer to appoint *Dalal*. Generally the foreman appoints *Dalal*. Those who work as spy and those who are in the good books of the Company and are favourites are made *Dalals* by the foreman. They are generally from the *Khalasis*.

Q.—From where they get money ?

A.—Management pays them money. (One of the workers said that his father was one of the *Dalals* of the Company since long.)

*Mr. Hayman.*—When were you appointed in the service ?

A.—In 1935 or 1936.

Q.—What pay did you get ?

A.—Annas 8 per day.

Q.—What are you getting now ?

A.—Re. 1 per day.

Q.—So you have got increment of annas eight in the course of 3 years and even then you say that there is no increment ?

A.—This is the only case. I alone have got this increment and no other man.

Q.—I think you are not a *Dalal* of the Company ?

A.—No, not at all.

## XVI. Harijans :—

- (1) Mr. Kartikeshwar—*Jamadar*.
- (2) Mr. Biseswar.
- (3) Mr. Nayak—*Secretary of the Harijan Sewak Sangh*.
- (4) Mr. Benjamin.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Chairman*.—In what department do you work ?

*A*.—In the health department.

*Q*.—What is your pay ?

*A*.—Rs. 17-8-0 per month.

*Q*.—Are you monthly-rated or the daily-rated ?

*A*.—Monthly-rated.

*Q*.—What are your hours of work ?

*A*.—5½ A.M. to 9½ A.M. then 2 P.M. to 6 P.M. This is the daily routine of work.

*Q*.—What is your work during these periods ?

*A*.—The work of the sweeper is to clean.

*Q*.—All of you get Rs. 18-0-0 per month ? What is the rate of women sweepers ?

*A*.—All males get Rs. 18-0-0, females get Rs. 13-0-0 or Rs. 14-0-0, some Rs. 14-5-0.

*Q*.—Is this wage fixed or is there any grade of increment ?

*A*.—It is fixed ; there is no increment of any kind.

*Q*.—There is 8 hours of continuous work ? Is there any holiday ?

*A*.—Yes, the work is constant for 8 hours. There is half-holiday on Sunday. No holiday to the sweeper. The *Jamadar* gets six days in the year as leave.

*Q*.—Do you get pay when you are ill ?

*A*.—No payment for the sick. We get same rate of pay and there is absolutely no increment. There is no grade. We are working since 7 or 9 years, on the same pay.

*Q*.—Have you got quarters to live in provided by the Company ?

*A*.—No, we live in huts. We have been given lands by the Company free of rent and we have built our own huts on them. There is no room but only *Jhopri*.

Q.—Is there any arrangement for you or for your children to read and write ?

A.—No arrangement from the Company but there is one school from the Harijan Sewak Sangha.

Q.—Have you all got debts ? If so, how much ?

A.—Yes, all have got loan. About Rs. 100-0-0 each.

Q.—From whom have you borrowed ?

A.—There is one Haji Saheb, who takes interest. If you take Rs. 23 from him, he will file suit for Rs. 101-12-0.

Q.—Mohammadans also take loan ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you drink wine or toddy ?

A.—Yes, half a bottle daily.

Q.—What is the price of half bottle ?

A.—Two annas.

Q.—So in the month you drink for Rs. 4-0-0 or Rs. 5-0-0 on the average. What do you do with the rest of your money ? If prohibition is introduced, would you like it ?

A.—Yes, we want prohibition. That would be a great boon to us. It is very difficult to leave this habit by ourselves. If compelled to do so, we would prefer.

Q.—If you begin to manufacture wine at home illegally ?

A.—No, Sir, in that case we will be prosecuted and sent to jail.

Q.—When you go to the toddy shop, what castes do you find there ?

A.—All castes come. There is great rush in the shop.

Q.—Do the doctors of the Company go to your house for treatment ?

A.—When we fall ill, we go to the hospital.

Q.—Where do you live ?

A.—In the quarter where there is one room only. There is no cemented floor, it is damp. The kitchen is not open and has no windows. It is almost closed. There is no door also. The result is that dogs and other animals destroy the food prepared. The huts also are at great distance.

Q.—How many lines are there ?

A.—Six.

Q.—How many taps for water ?

A.— 2 or 3.

Q.—There are six lines and two taps ? Do you think it sufficient?

A.—It is not sufficient; there is water scarcity.

Q.—How many sweepers are there in the Tata Iron and Steel Company ?

A.—800.

Q.—The work is very hard ?

A.—Yes, where there ought to be eight persons, there are only four workers.

Q.—Since how many years you are working ?

A.—28 years.

Q.—Where do you live ?

A.—In the *mahalla* Kasidih. The houses are very low. We want to make it high but they do not allow us. No air can come because nearby there are high houses.

Q.—Do you live with your family in that house ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you get diseases there ?

A.—The place is so damp that we always get influenza.

Q.—If there is no arrangement for taps, why do you not dig wells ?

A.—We are not allowed to dig wells.

Q.—What is the treatment of the health officer and other officers?

A.—The treatment is very bad. Sometimes they beat, abuse and also fine and even not satisfied with this, they give charge sheet and ask us to go. These are the conditions.

Q.—I think much of the indebtedness of these people is due to marriage and other ceremonies. Is it not so ?

A.—(Secretary) Yes, that is so.

Q.—There are also many cases of early marriage in them ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—The mass literacy work has increased much during the recent years ?

A.—Yes, we have trained 40 Harijans and they are now doing this work. This work has also been started among women.

Q.—How many mass literacy centres are there ? How many adults have been educated up till now ?

A.—There are only 4 centres and about 100 persons have been educated.

Q.—Do you get help from the Company also in this work?

A.—In the beginning the Company used to give Rs. 10-0-0 or Rs. 8-0-0 per month as aid, but now they have stopped giving.

Q.—Do you intend to open more literacy centres?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you get medicines and medical aid of the doctor free of cost?

A.—When the doctor comes to my house for seeing any patient, he takes fees of Rs. 2 and the medicines also are given very late.

*Mr. Saran.*—The Provident Fund is for women workers also?

A.—Yes, those who are getting more than Rs. 15 and who are permanent; that is the rule. Women are getting less than Rs. 15, so they do not contribute to the Provident Fund.

Q.—If one gets only Rs. 16 there is no bar, the rate is fixed?

A.—Those who are getting Rs. 16 will contribute to the Provident Fund.

*Mr. Gandhi.*—Do you get your salary monthly or daily?

A.—Monthly-paid daily-rated. We want monthly-rated and monthly-paid with grades. (This is our biggest grievance.

We want the Government to enforce prohibition and we press this demand through the Committee.

### XVII. Duplex Plant :—

- (1) Sansar Singh, Electrician.
- (2) J. C. Biswas, Mt. Inspector.
- (3) R. C. Banerjee, Mt. Inspector.
- (4) Dewa Singh, Mt. Inspector.
- (5) Ashan Shall, Mt. Inspector.
- (6) Khari Gul.
- (7) Abdul Rahman.
- (8) D. G. Chatterjee.

*Mr. John.*—Do you work in the Duplex Plant, all of you?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—In what departments do you work ?

*A.*—Electric, Pit-convertor, Furnace, Wire-loco.

*Q.*—What is the production in the Duplex Plant ?

*A.*—60,000 tons.

*Q.*—What was the production before ?

*A.*—It was 55,000 last year.

*Q.*—So the production has increased this year ?

*A.*—Yes, it has increased from 55,000 to 60,000. The production in the year 1928 was only 35,000 so in the course of 10 years it has increased so much.

*Q.*—Has the plant also increased ?

*A.*—Yes, some.

*Q.*—The number of labourers is very less for the production ?

*A.*—Formerly there were 152 men but now there are only 112. The number of convertors is 25. In one shift there used to be 12 but now there are only 6 men. The number of Pit *khalasis* was 70 or 80, but now there are only about 30.

*Q.*—What is the position in the Electric Furnace ?

*A.*—In the Electric Furnace Department there were 27 but now there are 21.

*Q.*—Is it a fact that the work has increased and the men have decreased ?

*A.*—Yes.

Q.—Is it a fact that there is much overtime work ? If so, do we get any payment ?

A.—Yes, there is much overtime work but is no payment for the overtime. In 1928 there was less machinery; so there was no overtime work but now there is more machinery and there is a lesser number of men, so there is much overtime work.

Q.—What is the percentage of cases in which the number of work has increased but not the number of workers ?

A.—98 per cent except the supervisory staff. The minimum wage is annas 10, 12, or Re. 1; we want more than that.

Q.—What is the wage that they get in the course of the month ?

A.—It is Rs. 2-8-0 per day or not more than Rs. 75 per month. But the greater part of our salary is spent in the treatment of diseases and our personal expenses.

Q.—Do you want monthly-rated, weekly-rated or the daily-rated scale of payment ?

A.—All of us want monthly-rated system. That is the best kind of payment.

Q.—Why ?

A.—In the monthly-rates of payment there are many facilities of leave, etc.

Q.—Do you get sick-leave or payment for the period when you are sick ?

A.—No, nothing.

Q.—Do you get gratuity and if so after how many years ?

A.—Yes, at present the period of gratuity is very high. One can never expect to live up to that period. So we want that the gratuity period should be decreased to 10 years.

Q.—How many days leave you get ?

A.—We get only 15 days in the year with pay. We want at least one month in the year, besides that other festival leaves.

Q.—How many of you live in the quarters of the Company? Is it sufficient? All of you want Company's quarters?

A.—Very few have got Company's quarters. All of us want the quarter of the Company at cheap rent. Whenever we go to the manager for a quarter we are turned out by the *chaprasi*. Recently many people went to the Superintendent and he promised to give quarters but up till now we have not got any. Some favourites who are *dalals* of the Company get good quarters by special recommendation.

*Mr. Chandra.*—(To the Crane Driver of the Duplex plant). Since how many years you are working ?

*A.*—Since 1928, about 12 years.

*Q.*—Will you please say something about the gratuity, leave and rate of pay ?

*A.*—In the year 1929 there were strikes and after the strike they promised to give some increment but they did not give. We are getting Rs. 2-2-0, Re. 1-0-0 and Re. 1-6-0, since 1929.

*Q.*—Are there any spare hands in your department ?

*A.*—No.

*Q.*—Did you get increment in this period of work ?

*A.*—I was appointed at the rate of annas 12, after two months I was promoted to the grade of Rs. 2 in an other department; then Rs. 3.

*Q.*—Do you get shoes from the Company ?

*A.*—Yes, we get shoes every five months. But that is not sufficient because after two months the shoes are worn out. We have to buy our own shoes and use them. When we go to ask for shoes within the period, we are not given any but are turned out with remark that the time has not come for the supply of new shoes.

*Q.*—Convertors also get shoes ?

*A.*—Yes, but the same rule is applicable to them also.

*Q.*—Do you get clothes to wear ?

*A.*—Yes, but not sufficient.

*Q.*—Do you get fresh water to drink or lemonade or soda ?

*A.*—No, we get dirty water to drink; there is no arrangement for soda or lemonade. If we complain about these, we are given charge-sheet.

*Q.*—Is there any arrangement for women or their children to live in the day time ?

*A.*—No, nothing. When the management heard that the Bihar Labour Enquiry Committee was coming, they, for showing them, arranged a room with cots and dolls for children. Previous to that children used to play in the hot sun of June. All these will be removed as soon as the Committee goes away. Women work in hot places and there is no arrangement for cooling.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—In the Duplex Plant there are 10 or 12 labourers for one job, say in one battery; what was the condition formerly ?



A.—There was one battery and more men.

Q.—The work has increased ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—In the Duplex Plant the roof is open and there is great hardship ?

A.—Yes. The trouble is that during the rainy season water drops down on the heads of the workers and during summer there is severe sun light . Water falls on the battery also and thus the work is spoiled.

Chairman.—Have all of you got debts ?

A.—Yes, almost all.

Q.—How do you think to pay them off ?

A.—There is no way, we will declare insolvency. We cannot pay.

Q.—From where have you taken debt ?

A.—From the Provident Fund account.

Q.—Have you taken loan from the outsiders also ?

A.—Yes, from the *Marwaris*, *Kabulis* and *Mahajans*. They get our commodities attached if we do not pay. Sometimes the salary also is attached.

Q.—What is the rate of interest ?

A.—The outsiders take annas 2 in the rupee in one month. Sometimes they take signatures on blank paper and filed suit in courts for double the amount borrowed. We take rice, pulse, etc., from them on credit and for that we have to pay. Generally things are dear.

Q.—When you get gratuity or bonus what do you do with the money ?

A.—We pay to the *mahajans* or if not, we buy provisions and keep in the house to be eaten for sometime.

Q.—Have you got any land ?

A.—No.

Q.—Why do you not pay off from the monthly salary ?

A.—The payment is so small that it is not sufficient even for food.

**XVIII. Plate Mill (Shipping) :—**

(1) M. A. Rahman.

(2) A. C. Dutta.

*Chairman.*—Are you members of the Labour Union ?

*A.*—No.

*Q.*—What was the number of labourers before and what is it now ?

*A.*—Formerly there were 1,000 or 2,000 but now it is 5,000, 6,000, or 7,000 more than before.

*Q.*—Do you get bonus ?

*A.*—No, we do not get bonus. The workers have been increased from 1,500 to 7,000. The work of the present is different from that of the past.

*Q.*—The work of the checker has been reduced or increased ?

*A.*—Cannot say exactly.

*Q.*—What are the wages in this department ?

*A.*—It is Re. 1-0-0, Re. 1-4-0, and also Rs. 2-0-0. Re. 1-0-0 is the least. There is one man A. C. Dutta whose wages has increased from Re. 1-4-0 to Rs. 2-0-0 during the course of 5 years. He is a checker. We get increase every year. Every one is responsible for his own job.

*Q.*—What is the privilege leave ?

*A.*—It is 14 days.

*Q.*—Do you get acting allowance ?

*A.*—No.

*Q.*—Do you want more leave or what you get is sufficient ?

*A.*—What we get is sufficient. We do not want more.

*Mr. Gandhi.*—What is your qualification ?

*A.*—Matric and I.A.

*Q.*—Does the Company pay more now ?

*A.*—I cannot say. We submitted an application through Professor Bari to the G. S. about leave, etc.

*Q.*—When was that ?

*A.*—Four months ago. A.G.S. told us that the Superintendent will consider. He recommended for us.

*Q.*—When you have grievance you go to the Superintendent and he hears your case ?

A.—Yes, he recognises us. We want that the rate should be increased.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—There are *Khalasis* in the Plate Mills ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you get sufficient water ?

A.—Yes, when necessary. When there is scarcity we give them petition.

Q.—What about the medical facilities ? Is it adequate ?

A.—Yes, the doctors do not take fees for coming to the house.

**XIX. Rail Mill :—**

Babu K. P. Jha and others.

Q.—What are your grievances ?

A.—We do not get coat and clothes. Our health becomes bad by working. There is one Coal Tax that we are to pay. We get Rs. 3. Production is increasing and it ought to be about Rs. 5 or Rs. 6. Since 2 months the work is very hard. There is no arrangement for latrines and urinals.

The relieve gang gets annas 10 when the usual rate is Re. 1-2-0, Rs. 1-8-0 or Rs. 1-10-0. The permanent apprentices have been reduced from 1928. There is no protection to the workers. There is no increment. It all depends upon recommendation and favouritism.

\*The Committee resumed its sitting in the Tata Institute, Jamshedpur, on the 5th April 1939.

The following members were present:—

- |                           |     |                             |
|---------------------------|-----|-----------------------------|
| (1) Dr. Rajendra Prasad   | ... | <i>Chairman, Presiding.</i> |
| (2) Dr. R. K. Mukherjee   | ... | <i>Member.</i>              |
| (3) Mr. A. M. Hayman      | ... | <i>Member.</i>              |
| (4) Mr. H. B. Chandra     | ... | <i>Member.</i>              |
| (5) Mr. J. N. Lal         | ... | <i>Member.</i>              |
| (6) Professor Abdul Bari  | ... | <i>Member.</i>              |
| (7) Professor R. K. Saran | ... | <i>Secretary.</i>           |

**Oral evidence of Mr. J. N. Mitra, Mr. M. John, Mr. N. C. Paul and others on behalf of the Tinplate Workers' Labour Union, Jamshedpur.**

*Mr. Hayman.*—I have read the memorandum which you have submitted on behalf of your Labour Union? Has this memorandum been prepared by the Union?

*A.*—Yes, it has been prepared by the Union.

*Q.*—You have made very serious statements here...(*Reads*). Can you give some examples of your statements to test the veracity of your statements?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—In making complaints of the acting allowance you have said .....Do you stand by that?

*A.*—Yes, as I understand, it is that in making the acting appointments, the foremen have got much discretionary power and they often give them to the favourites who are not deserving; often allowance for acting is not paid.

*Q.*—Do you know personally?

*A.*—They say that the acting allowance is not always given to them, on this particular point, the workers' statement is of more value than that of others, because they are concerned. They say that the favourites are given the acting allowance.

*Q.*—Do you support the statement?

*A.*—We have been told by the workers; we are, however, prepared to go into the matter if it is otherwise.

*Q.*—I consider it to be a serious charge against the management and unless you prove it, it is very difficult to believe.

A.—We do not consider it to be false but if you challenge it, we are prepared to verify it from the management.

Q.—I find in your statement that at one place you have mentioned a concrete case of a man who has not been given compensation under the Workmen's Compensation Act. He lost his sight in the course of the work? (This is also a very serious charge against the management? Are you satisfied with the statement of the man? (Reads).

A.—Yes, I am.

Q.—You have definitely stated on page 18 of the memorandum.

A.—(That is what was gathered from the complainant.

Dr. Mukherjee.—Kindly go through the pages and the following lines.....(Reads).....Do you not say here that the man suffered from (Trichoma disease during the course of the work and he went on working with the damaged eye and it become serious?

A.—Yes, it might be so.

Mr. J. N. Lal.—I want to know the rate for the sweepers, whether they are monthly-rated or daily-rated or both?

A.—Inside the factory they are daily-rated and outside the factory, in the town, they are monthly-rated.

Q.—In the case of the monthly-rated, are they paid for Sundays?

A.—Not paid for Sundays, they are monthly-paid but daily-rated.

Q.—Is the work in the Tinsplate of a harder type than that of the Mats, e.g., in the Sheet Mill?

A.—The work is of the same type but there is some difference.

Q.—What are the rates in the two?

A.—In the Sheet Mill the rate is about Rs. 5 maximum and in the Tinsplate it is Rs. 4 maximum.

Q.—Have you made any complaints regarding the compensation case to the factory?

A.—Yes, one or two cases.

Q.—So far as the adult literacy is concerned is any work being done from the side of the Union for education?

A.—We have appealed to the workers that attempts should be made for literacy drive; I think they have made some efforts.

Professor Saran.—The management states in the memorandum that in 1929 and again after the strike of 1938, there has been collaboration with the Union and they sanctioned Joint Committee?

A.—In 1929, there was only one sitting, it was in connection with one Abdul Samad Serang.

*Chairman.*—We are not prepared to go through individual cases.

*Mr. Chandra.*—In the memorandum submitted by the Company, they say that there is amity between the management and the Union ?

A.—The management will also agree that the position has changed altogether for the better.

Q.—I think that the position is changed on both sides ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You might remember that Sir A. R. Dalal in the course of his examination on behalf of the Tatas referred to the Joint Committee; do you prefer this system in the case of the Tinsplate Company, also ?

A.—I stand by the terms arrived at by the Conciliation Board. The relation of the Company is neither friendly, nor antagonistic now and time will prove the sincerity or otherwise. They must agree that it is the Union that can voice the grievances of the workers.

*Chairman.*—Are there any other unions ?

A.—There is only one union recognised by the Company, that is ours.

Q.—What is the membership ?

A.—2,600 out of the total number of 2,900 workers in the Company.

The Committee met in the Tata Institute, Jamshedpur, on the 5th April 1939 at 2-30 P.M.

Present :—

Dr. Rajendra Prasad ... .. *Chairman, presiding.*

Dr. R. K. Mukherjee.

Mr. A. M. Hayman.

Prof. Abdul Bari.

Pof. R. K. Saran.

Mr. J. N. Mitra ... .. *(Co-opted Member—  
Labour.)*

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**Oral evidence of the following workers on behalf of the Indian Tinsplate Company, Limited, Golmuri, Md. Khairu Din Mian, Store Department, Ramlal, Electric Department, Newal Singh, Hot Mill Department, Hohamad Hasan, Machine shop.**

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*Mr. Saran.*—In which department do you work? How much do you get?

*A.*—I work in the Painter Department. I get Re. 1-6-0.

*Q.*—Since how long you are working?

*A.*—I am working since eight years.

*Q.*—On how much did you start your career in this factory?

*A.*—I started my career in this mill on 14 annas.

*Q. (to the second man).*—In what department you work? How much do you get? How long have you been in the service? How much did you start on?

*A.*—I work in the Electric Department. I am getting Re. 1-8-0, I am working since nine years and I started on Re. 1-2-0.

*Q. (to the third man—the same questions repeated).*

*A.*—I work in the Tinsplate Hot Mill. I am the Heater helper. I am getting Rs. 2-10-0, I am working since ten years and I started on Re. 1-8-0.

*Q.*—In the machine shop what is the monthly rate that you get?

*A.*—The monthly rate is Rs. 70 plus an allowance of Rs. 25.

*Q.*—Are you all monthly-rated?

*A.*—No. Since my transfer to the machine shop from the position of a car-driver an allowance has been given to me. But I have prayed for consolidated pay.



Q.—You are working since ten years and you work in the Hot Mill; is there any provision of rest period?

A.—Yes, there is rest period for half an hour after half-hour's work. That is half hour's work and half hour's rest.

Q.—Have you got to do any work during the rest period?

A.—We have to help to clear if plates get jammed in the mill during the time.

Q.—What is the rate of bonus.

A.—I do not know. It may be very small. I think it is Re. 1 per 17 boxes. The rate has been reduced recently. But the size of the boxes is the same and also the profits of the Company has increased.

Q.—What is the rate of general production bonus? I want to know the percentage? That should be on the piece average.

A.—It is on the average 4 annas in the rupee or it is 25 per cent.

Q.—What is the system of holiday?

A.—We get 14 days' holiday *plus* 5 days' sick leave *plus* 2 days more leave for festivals.

Q.—Do you get provident fund?

A.—After 15 years of service we are entitled to this scheme of provident fund. I do not know exactly what one gets if one is in continuous employment for 15 years.

Q.—Supposing a worker leaves the service within the period of 15 years; then he will not get the provident fund?

A.—If a man leaves the service before 12 years then he will not get and after 12 he is sure to get.

Q.—Have you been given provident fund?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Have you got the quarters of the Company?

A.—Yes, there are quarters of the Company made of tin sheds in which the workers live with their family.

The Company also gives money to build houses but it is very difficult to get money.

Q.—Are you permitted to sell the house which you have built on the land of the Company?

A.—Yes, but we have to give 25 per cent of the sale proceeds to the Company then only we get permission for selling the house.

Q.—If you have no quarters how do you live?

A.—We live in the *Basti* and pay rent at about Rs. 4 or Rs. 5 for a room. We have not got quarters. (Some said that they had built their houses on the land of the *Tatas* on a monthly rental of 8 annas per plot.)

Q.—Has the monthly rent been reduced to 4 annas?

A.—Now; before it was 5 annas but now it is 4 annas.

Q.—In the terms of agreement by the Board of Conciliation it was decided to give the workers quarters. Has it been given?

A.—Some have got *kutchra* huts within the *Basti*.

Q.—Do the men who are discharged from the service get anything as compensation for their house?

A.—Yes, they get about Rs. 50 and that is paid as valuation of the house whatever be the cost of the building.

Q.—If you leave the service you will have to leave the house? Then all sorts of houses are sold at the rate of Rs. 50 or do some of them fetch higher value? Does it depend upon the quality of the house.

A.—Generally the houses are of the same type and they fetch the same price, nearabout Rs. 50 or Rs. 48 for the smaller type. The case is that if you have got a house of the value of Rs. 200 or Rs. 300 they give you Rs. 50 and not more than that.

Q.—For the house of the Company the rent is Rs. 11 or Rs. 8.

A.—Formerly it was Rs. 11 for an L2 type but now it is Rs. 8. They have reduced the rent of the houses of the Company, since three or four months.

Q.—Can you take loan on the provident fund?

A.—No, under no circumstances it can be had.

Q.—Can you take from the Co-operative Society?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Are you all members of the Society?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What is the rate of interest of the Society?

A.—9 per cent.

Q.—Have you taken share?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Of what value?

A.—Rs. 150; some have taken less.

Q.—Is there any rule for the membership of the Society?

A.—Yes, only the workers and staff of the Tinsplate Company can be members and only they can take loan also. One who has become member of this association, cannot be a member of any other association.

Q.—Is the rule the same for the workers and the clerks of the Company? Or is it different?

A.—In two different societies there are different rules; in one society where the workers are members there is one kind of rule and in the other where clerks are members rules are different; but before two years such difference was not in vogue.

Q.—Have you got any loan?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What is the amount of loan?

A.—Rs. 100.

Q.—What is the rate of interest?

A.—I have taken loan from the *Marwaris*. They take high interest. (*The second and third men said that they have no loan.*)

Q.—Can you say of any other people who have got loan? What is the rate of interest and what is the amount and from where they have taken loan?

A.—Yes, the amounts are Rs. 150, Rs. 200 or so and they have taken from the *Mahajans* and they pay interest at the rate of 8 per cent per month if the loan is up to Rs. 100. For loan above Rs. 200 the interest is 1 anna per rupee per month.

Q.—Why have you contracted this loan?

A.—For treatment of diseases of the children and other members of the family and for ceremonial occasions like marriage, etc.

Q.—If you fall ill do you not get medical treatment free of cost from the hospital of the Company?

A.—No, in the hospital one is given medicine free, but if a man calls the doctors to his house, he has to pay fees. Even then they will never go in time. If you call them at 4 P.M., they will come at 8 P.M.

Q.—Have you got to pay the doctor when you call him for yourself (workers or employees)?

A.—Yes, whether the employee is ill or his child is ill he has got to pay. We do not know if there is rule that the doctors should not accept fees. If they are not paid, they may not pay due attention to the patient.

Q.—Do you get shoes or gloves for hot work?

A.—Yes, we get only one pair in the year made of leather, only to wrap the hands.

Q.—Is there no place for taking food?

A.—There is one shop for tea.

*Prof. Bari.*—You do not get more than one pair of shoes in the year? If the shoes are torn away before the time what do you do?

A.—If we require in the middle of the year we buy ourselves.

Q.—If there is any case of accident do you get compensation?

A.—There is one rule for payment of compensation. After 7 days of the accident we get half the wages.

Q.—Have you ever got an injury.

*Chairman.*—Do you know that there is a rule that if a man is injured he has got to apply to the Deputy Commissioner for compensation?

A.—We are illiterate; we do not know the rule that the Deputy Commissioner is to be moved for that. I think the employer decides.

Q.—In each case, you have got to apply to the Deputy Commissioner; have you done so in any case?

A.—There is a man who has suffered from injury but he has not been given compensation (*points out to the man*). He is working since 14 years and he has not got the compensation. He has lost his eye on account of the heat of the furnace. He suffered so much that he had to go to Calcutta for the treatment of his eyes but the Company did not give him any thing (*the man stands up and shows his eyes*).

Q.—What did the doctors say?

A.—The doctors said that it was the result of normal eye disease and not due to heat. When he resumed he got the reduced rate of Rs. 2. Before this accident he was getting Rs. 2-4-0.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Have you applied to the Compensation Commissioner?

*Chairman.*—Can you see with one eye?

A.—Yes, it is better than the other which is altogether spoiled.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—In some section of the Machinshop is there any difference in job rate for the same job?

A.—Yes, there are *goondas* appointed by the Company who are a sort of *Dalal*; they work nothing but get more wages for the same job.

Q.—How do you know that?

A.—I know that there are one or two men of the type.

Q.—Is he a new man or an old man?

A.—He has been working with me since long.

Q.—Do you get acting allowance?

A.—No, we do not get.

Q.—In any department?

A.—Yes, in some places some kind of acting allowance is given.

Q.—Can you cite cases of preference?

A.—Yes, in one department a man was getting Rs. 2-4-0 but now he gets Rs. 2-12-0. In three months he has got an increment of 8 annas, i.e. from Rs. 2-4-0 to Rs. 2-12-0. There are 3 or 4 men of the type. There is great difference between the rates.

Q.—Is it always so? In which department?

A.—In the Machine Shop, Electric Department, Boiler, etc. The man who is employed later on gets more than the man who has been working for years before; there are such cases in the Scrap building.

Q.—In the Electric Department how many men got preference?

A.—All relatives always get preference. Moreover where there were 4 or 5 men formerly, only 3 men are working now.

Q.—Is it due to rationalisation or change in the machinery?

A.—No, it is not so.

Q.—Has the production been reduced.

A.—No.

Q.—Is it a case that the production is more but number of men is the same.

A.—No. Production has increased but the men have been decreased from 4 to 2; in some departments from 3 to 2.

Q.—In what other departments?

A.—Acid plant, scrap building.

Q.—Is there any change in the machinery?

A.—No.

Q.—Is there any spare man?

A.—No. There are only spare hands for fireman and crane drivers.

Q.—Is it a responsible work?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You are working since 10 years. Have wages been reduced?

A.—Yes. In the Hot Mill, Electric Department, Catchers, Doublers, men used to get Rs. 2-4-0 formerly but now they get only Rs. 2 and in place of Rs. 1-14-0 now Re. 1 only.

*Chairman.*—The Company says that the wages have not been reduced but it has been increased?

*A.*—No, it is not so; it is a definite case of reduction from Rs. 1-14-0 to Re. 1 in almost all departments—Hot mill catcher, doubler, fitter, helper.

*Q.*—Whether the monthly-rated have been reduced or the daily-rated?

*A.*—In the Main Stores Department there is one old man who joined the Company about 17 years ago and was promoted by the Ex-General Manager, Mr. Layshon to Rs. 40 but afterwards he has been reduced; he has been placed in the contractor's gang and now he is getting Rs. 1-14-0 as a daily-rated man. Since 1929 he has been sent from place to place.

*Mr. Chandra.*—Is there overtime work also and do you get payment for that?

*A.*—Overtime is worked but it is not paid for and off-time is given if overtime work is done.

*Q.*—Has there been opening of new machines?

*A.*—Yes, 3 more mills have been started.

*Q.*—Have you worked for more than half an hour in one stretch and have you got payment for that?

*A.*—Yes, but no payment.

*Mr. Mitra.*—If you work overtime for 4 hours and overtime is due, you get payment for these hours?

*A.*—No.

*Q.*—In some departments there is long overtime work, is it not against the Factory Act?

*A.*—Yes, there is violation of the Act.

*Q.*—Do you get festival leave like Holi, Moharram, etc. If you do not, do you want it?

*A.*—Yes. What to speak of leave on festival days; on those days overtime work is taken rather under compulsion.

*Q.*—What is the method of holiday in the case of the monthly-rated workers and daily-rated workers? Is there any difference?

*A.*—Yes, there is difference. The daily-rated men get 7 days' leave and 2 days' festival leave in the course of the year. The monthly-rated have got the graded scale. But the daily-rated men have not got that. They get leave for Sunday and payment also. But the daily-rated men do not. They can go out whenever they like but not the daily-rated men. The monthly-rated get 14 days leave with pay. The

daily-rated man is called on Sunday to work and no allowance is given for the overtime work. It depends entirely upon the foreman to give or not to give. They are always at the mercy of the foreman.

Q.—Do you get leave for Sunday?

A.—Yes, but without any payment.

Q.—What are other grievances of the daily-rated workers?

A.—We do not get payment for Sunday and over-time work on Monday and other days excluding Sundays. There are many differences between the two. The daily-rated man can be dismissed at a week's notice but the monthly-rated man requires a month's notice. The monthly-rated men get 42 days wages as Profit Sharing Bonus whereas the daily-rated men get 36 days wages. The monthly-rated men work for 26 days and get one month's wages.

Q.—Is there any other bonus that the daily-rated workers do not get?

A.—No. We get only one bonus that is the General Production Bonus.

*Mr. Saran.*—Is there any difference in work also?

A.—They generally get soft job of supervision.

Q.—Is there any promotion?

A.—No.

Q.—Is there any graded scale?

A.—No. Promotion and grades are not a practice with the officers.

Q.—If a man who is getting the rate of Rs. 1-14-0 goes on leave and there are five men working on the next rate, who will be given the leave vacancy? What is the rule guiding this?

A.—It depends upon the will of the officers. In the mill the rates are Rs. 1-2-0 and Rs. 1-4-0 and if the man who is getting Rs. 1-4-0 goes on leave, then the other man of the same rate will get the post. We are not satisfied with the rule of promotion, as those who do not deserve get promotion and the deserving hands remain behind. There is no justice.

Q.—Are there also cases of reduction of rates and suspension?

A.—Yes, suspension has been less for the last six months. But suspension and rate reduction are methods of punishment in this company. Supply of shoes, gloves, clothes, etc., are absolute necessary in the Acid Plant where clothes are spoilt by acid. Doublers also do not get shoes and clothes. In the mills gloves are supplied. Supply of clothes where it is made is not sufficient. Leather shoes wear out soon. In the Hot Mill it is not adequately supplied.

Q.—In the Acid Plant and other departments there are gas fumes coming out. Is it harmful to health?

A.—Yes, the Sulphuric Acid fumes are very injurious to health so much so that special diseases like blood vomiting, consumption, etc., diseases of fatal type, prevail. Life is cut short. In the Scrap Mill also this is the case. Lungs disease is very common.

Q.—What about the arrangement of food in the hotel?

A.—They supply bad things. The *ghee* is very bad and the rate is also very high.

Q.—Have you made any complaints to the Manager?

A.—Yes, and the shop-keeper was suspended.

Q.—You can make your messing arrangement through your union. You can maintain your shop. The labour union can take this work?

A.—Yes. That will be very good.

Q.—Can you say anything about the contractors' labour, *Rejas*, etc.?

A.—They have to work for more than 8 hours and are paid only 4 annas. Their rate is very low. Their condition is very miserable.

Q.—In some departments there have been reductions; formerly there were 12 men but now only 6?

A.—Yes, in the Pickling Department and the Annealing Furnace there have been heavy reductions of men, from 10 it has been reduced to 8. In the Electric Crane Section also, the maximum rate has been reduced from Rs. 3-8-0 to Rs. 3; the rate of control driver has also been reduced.

Q.—In the Conveyor there is work for 8 hours and no interval?

A.—No interval.

Chairman.—The Company shows that in every department since 1929 rate has been increased?

A.—No. They show this but this is not the case. We can show it. In the Tin House, operators' rate has been reduced from Rs. 3 to Rs. 1-14-0.

Mr. Mitra.—Do you get medicines all right? What is the trouble?

A.—There are only two doctors. There is great rush in the hospital. The number of doctors should be increased.

Mr. Lal.—Can you supply a list showing department by department the number of men reduced? Please give us complete list if possible?



A.—Oh, yes, (1) Scrap Mill : 3 men reduced. (2) Tin House Duster and Facker 2 to 1. (3) Hot Mill 4 to 3. (4) Rougher 4 to 3. (5) Sheet-  
ing Mill 4 to 2 and so on.

Q.—What is the trouble in recruitment?

A.—Favouritism towards friends and relations of the foremen and chargemen.

Q.—What kind of rates do you want?

A.—We want the rates like the Tatas; and all facilities of bonus, etc., like them, also leave on their line. We want leave on Sunday with pay, proper housing accommodations, payment for overtime work, acting allowance, spare gangs as the work is very hard.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Did I understand that the practice in the Tinplate Company is to reduce the rate?

A.—Yes, not hours reduced but rates reduced.

Q.—Do you know that there might be a possibility of reduced rates due to bad workmanship or some damage done as mark of punishment?

A.—It may be, but we were never told so.

*Mr. Mitra.*—Is it that the acting allowance is given to the Foreman's men?

A.—Yes.

The Committee resumed its sitting in the Tata Institute, Jamshedpur, on the 3rd April 1939.

The following members were present :—

- |                            |     |                             |
|----------------------------|-----|-----------------------------|
| 1. Dr. Rajendra Prasad ... | ... | <i>Chairman, Presiding.</i> |
| 2. Mr. R. R. Bakhale ...   | ... | <i>Deputy Chairman.</i>     |
| 3. Dr. R. K. Mukherjee ... | ... | <i>Member.</i>              |
| 4. Mr. A. M. Hayman ...    | ... | <i>Member.</i>              |
| 5. Mr. H. B. Chandra ...   | ... | <i>Member.</i>              |
| 6. Mr. J. N. Lal ...       | ... | <i>Member.</i>              |
| 7. Prof. Abdul Bari ...    | ... | <i>Member.</i>              |
| 8. Prof. R. K. Saran ...   | ... | <i>Secretary.</i>           |
| 9. Mr. T. H. Clifford ...  | ... | <i>(Co-opted Member).</i>   |

**Joint evidence of Mr. J. N. Mitra, President, Copper Workers' Union, Mr. Jagannath, Vice-President, Mines Union, Mr. M. John, Vice-President, on behalf of the Copper Corporation Workers' Union, Moubhandar and Mines Labour Union, Mosaboni.**

*Chairman.*—In the statement submitted to us by the Union, they have made certain suggestions and you have also made some suggestions in your statement. I would like to clear some of the points that arise out of those statements. As regards recruitment your suggestion is that the recruitment should be controlled by the General Manager. What is the system that you have at present?

A.—We have a labour officer at present.

Q.—How long has he been there?

A.—About five months.

Q.—What was the system before he was appointed?

A.—I do not know. I think it was carried on through time-keepers and the foremen.

Q.—The recruiting officer?

A.—He was the Mines Superintendent.

Q.—Is he the labour officer now?

A.—No, another man, Mr. E. Dallas Smith.

Q.—Why do you think that matters will improve if the recruitment is done through the General Manager?

A.—He should go round the *basti* and recruit the right man instead of black leg labour. Whatever is done, it is bound to be governed by

favouritism but we hope he will be less influenced. (*Mr. Hayman objected to the use of the expression 'blacklegs'.*)

Q.—My question was how recruitment, direct by the management, will improve matters?

A.—The General Manager looks into the applications more carefully than others. He being a more responsible officer, we hope he will not allow favouritism, etc., to play a considerable part in recruiting the labour.

Q.—The General Manager will not be able to recruit always. He depends on some other officers. He accepts the recommendation of some other officer. Is that no so?

A.—If improvement can be achieved by any other machinery, we have no objection.

Q.—I am trying to find out how the General Manager, by taking over the work himself can improve matters? Have you any other suggestions to make?

A.—We have no other suggestion to make.

Q.—I think there is only one mine and factory there and they are both governed by the same corporation and so the management is the same. Do you think anything in the nature of a labour exchange is possible or advisable?

A.—The recruitment is not healthy and I do not think any labour exchange will help that. If they take the union into confidence, matters can be improved considerably. That is what we think.

Q.—In what way?

A.—The union will recommend applications.

Q.—Will not the Company then think in the same way as you do at present (*laughter*)? So you see, the difficulty is still there.

Q.—Are all the men working there, members of the Union? You have not suggested any remedy out of the situation?

A.—We demand that there must be a complete overhauling of the system. That is what we want.

Q.—You are making a personal charge against the officer in your statement? You must then suggest how it could be remedied.

A.—We have not made any personal charge against anybody. We have presented the facts as they are, and request that the system should be changed for the better.

*Mr. Hayman.*—You said that General Manager is a more responsible officer than the labour officer. That means that the labour officer is not responsible. You are attacking the integrity of the officer. Is integrity related with responsibility?

A.—I have not said anything about the integrity of the labour officer. I simply said that the Manager is a more responsible officer who will look to the interest of the concern more than anybody else. You are at liberty to draw your own inference from that.

Q.—You said that the Union can help considerably in the matter of recruitment by recommending applicants? Do you think the Union will have sufficient knowledge of the efficiency of the man for the particular job?

A.—Yes, through close touch with the applicant.

Q.—With regard to security of service you have stated here (*reads*). The doctor is used for getting rid of the men? How?

A.—The doctor examines and certifies that the man is not fit and he is asked to go. We can give you figures if you want.

Q.—That is rather a serious statement to make without proof of the facts.

A.—We have submitted to the Labour Commissioner and also to the Ministry of Labour. This is the statement that we sent to the Labour Commissioner. (*The statement was handed over to the Secretary of the Committee.*)

Q.—Can you give us for the present, an idea of the number of persons who have been thus dismissed? From what you have collected here?

A.—We have given a list already. When we gave the list the number was about 20 or 25. It will be much higher today.

Q.—Was this practice prevalent before?

A.—No, Sir.

Q.—How long has it been there?

A.—I should say, for the past 6 to 8 months.

Q.—Do you know of any other concern in Jamshedpur where such a system of medical examination prevails?

A.—No, Sir. It does not prevail anywhere else.

Q.—Can you say that the men who have been declared unfit, these 20 or 25 people, are those who have participated in the recent strike, rather actively?

A.—Yes, Sir, that is what we are aiming at. These people did participate in the strike actively. That was the reason for their being sent out like this.

Q.—Have you examined the list from that point of view?

A.—Yes, Sir. All these persons are members of the Union and those who participated in the strike. They were also active members of the Union. They took part in picketing.

Q.—You have suggested here that security of service should be made by legislation, restricting the employer's powers to dismiss, etc. Could you tell me what is your exact proposition—how are you to actually restrict the powers of the employers in this matter? What sort of legislation do you desire?

A.—Our idea was this: If the management wants to dismiss a worker justifiably or unjustly, there is no law putting a check on the employer from such dismissal or punishment. He awards rather a "capital punishment" to the worker by summarily dismissing him. We request that some sort of check should be exercised by legislation, for example, like the convention and rule in the Government employment, the man should be asked to submit explanations to the management and ultimately to the Labour Commissioner or some other authority of Government, before any severe punishment is given by the management. He should be given a charge sheet and asked to explain his conduct and all serious matters where management contemplates dismissal as punishment should be finally referred to competent Government authorities. The Union should also be consulted during investigation and allowed to take part in the proceedings. Thorough enquiry should be conducted before he is punished. This way, the power of the employer can be curtailed in regard to this matter. The Government should legislate accordingly and amend the clauses of the Factories Act suitably.

Q.—That means, that the man should not be dismissed by the employer summarily; he should be dismissed only if the decision of the Labour Commissioner is against him?

A.—Exactly.

Q.—Can you tell me if you are aware of any industry that does such a thing as you suggest?

A.—I do not know. But in other countries the Unions are powerful enough to represent to the managements. They are given the power to represent by law. In many countries dismissals and appointments are controlled by unions.

Q.—Would you refer to the Labour Commissioner only cases of dismissals or all cases that come up between the union and the management?

A.—There is the Conciliation Board already functioning to arbitrate for other differences. I would also suggest that there should be a joint Board of the union and the management which will be able to settle almost all the matters that crop up between the labour and the management. If you are not agreeable to the suggestion for Labour Commissioner, we have no objection to create any other proper machinery that you think fit to settle such matters.

Q.—Now as regards discharges and suspensions would you have the same procedure or another procedure?

A.—We do not insist upon the interference of the Labour Commissioner in all cases, if a Joint Committee is formed between the labour and the management, which can settle almost all the cases that crop up daily. We are only particular that the poor labourers should not be made to lose their jobs for trifles; that is all.

Q.—In the matter of discharges, they must lose their jobs.

A.—In such cases we do insist that some other punishment should be awarded, according to the nature and weight of offences.

Q.—What other punishment? It is bound to be lesser than actual discharge?

A.—Yes, it may be suspension or demotion.

Q.—What is the system in Mosabani and Moubhandar?

A.—I am taking both together. The workers here are discharged, suspended and dismissed according to the sweet will and pleasure of the management. Very rarely is an explanation asked for the worker does not get any opportunity to explain his conduct at all. Before he is discharged even the union is not given notice that a certain worker is to be dismissed.

Q.—The union need not be supplied with a charge sheet—if that is what you mean?

A.—I meant that if the worker does not get a chance to explain his conduct, at least the union should have a chance to represent such cases. (Laughter.)

Q.—From the evidence I find that a number of men were fined collectively?

A.—Yes, Sir. The Union then led a deputation (*the amount of the fine was Rs. 70*) to discuss the matter and they wrote to the Mines Superintendent and were called one evening at 4 o'clock. During the course of the talks, the Mines Superintendent insulted the members of the union by calling them cheats and liars and asked them to quit the room. We have never experienced such a thing before and have never heard of any other employer to have done a similar thing.

Q.—I want to know what you mean by a collective fine—24 men were fined collectively Rs. 72, that is 3 rupees each?

A.—The amount of Rs. 72 was to be realized from all the 24 workers.

Q.—What it to be distributed equally?

A.—Yes, Sir. I think so.

Q.—They were therefore fined jointly? Each man to pay Rs. 3?

A.—I think so, Sir.

Q.—Why were they fined?

A.—They were supposed to have removed some tools from a certain place. The management said that the tools were missing and wanted to recover the cost from these people. So they fined them.

Q.—The amount being the value of the tools lost?

A.—Supposed to be lost, Sir.

Q.—You have said here that there is not grade system. Do you mean that there is no system of promotion according to time-scale? Do you think that for the same kind of work there is absolutely no difference in the wages?

A.—Yes, Sir. There is no difference in the wages between a man who has worked for 8 to 10 years and one who is a new recruit. He does not get any increment during the time.

Q.—I hope you remember the evidence we took some days back in which the group system of payment was mentioned?

A.—I understand, Sir. We have nothing like that in the mines.

Q.—That means that there is no higher wages paid according to the length of service?

A.—No such thing.

Q.—You have suggested here that there should be  $12\frac{1}{2}$  per cent increase on the present wages. I want to know how you arrived at this figure of  $12\frac{1}{2}$  per cent?

A.—25 per cent of increase was claimed before the Conciliation Board. We thought that 25 per cent was justifiable increase but the Board did not want to go into the increase of wages at all. They, however, agreed later that something must be given and suggested an increase of one anna to those who got less than Rs. 1-8-0 a day. The total increase would then work out at 6 or 7 per cent. But we insisted on a better percentage and finally we came down to  $12\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. That should be the minimum increase.

Q.—If you calculate the recent increase and other conveniences what will the total increase come to? Will it increase the bill by about 80 thousand rupees?

A.—I think so. Somewhere about the figure.

Q.—Including provident fund?

A.—I think so.

Q.—What is the increase in the wage bill now?

A.—We do not remember the figure exactly; we have not calculated. We shall give you later on

Q.—If you calculate your 12½ per cent increase alone what will it come to?

A.—About 84,000 rupees a year.

Q.—Including what the Company will have to give according to your suggestion—one month's leave with pay?

A.—No. That will be another Rs. 2,500 a month increase in the wage bill.

Q.—Will you give us a statement calculating as far as you can, and taking into consideration the effect of the various recommendations you have made, on the wage bill? You can get it from the management also?

A.—Yes, Sir. I shall submit it later on.

Q.—Including every item?

A.—Yes, Sir.

Q.—As regards intensification, etc., you have stated here (*Reads*). Refined copper has increased by about 400 per cent, i.e. in 1929 it was 1,625 tons and in 1937 it is 6,832 tons? Therefore the ore consumption also has increased 4 times?

A.—Actually the ore consumption has increased much more because the percentage of copper in ore has dwindled according to the management.

Q.—Now, even if 50 per cent is attributed to efficiency of the men, still there is great intensification of work, is it? Have you any idea of the number of men who used to be employed before and the number of men employed now?

A.—The number of men have fallen down considerably. It was 6,000 before and it is 4,000 today.

Q.—I want to know whether for the same work there are lesser number of men employed now than before?

A.—Yes, Sir. Where there used to be 4 men, it is now worked only by 2 to 3 men. During the contractors time they were working the upper levels and now the ore is extracted from lower levels and they are now cutting down at the 11th or the 12th level. In various ways, I should say, the work has been intensified.

Q.—We cannot calculate the percentage of intensification from these figures you have given here. You can only get an idea of the total intensification?

A.—Making allowance for the efficiency of the men, there is still 100 per cent intensification.

Q.—Supposing the management were to say that because of the inefficiency of the previous management they were employing more hands formerly, what would you say to that?



A.—Still there could not be 100 per cent intensification. Moreover I would not accept such a statement at all. That cannot account for such increased production.

Q.—Now, so far as the mines are concerned you have said here that the men do not get any intervals at all? 8 hours work without any pause?

A.—Yes, Sir.

Q.—In the works at Moubhandar the catchers, the rollers, etc., get a pause; do they?

A.—No, Sir. They do not, though they need it terribly.

*Prof. Saran.*—We visited the Factory and we found that they were getting rest?

A.—No, Sir, they do not.

Q.—In which departments do they get rest and what are those where they do not get any rest?

A.—There is not a single department, where men can have rest.

Q.—What are the particular categories of work in which you consider rest is necessary?

A.—(*Witness mentioned some technical departments*).

Q.—Now in the case of those who do get a pause, is it like what prevails in some other places, viz., he works for say, half an hour, gets rest for half an hour, then again works for half an hour and so on?

A.—I do not know if copper workers get any such pause.

Q.—As regards the question of interval for food do you want them to get interval inside the mine, or come out for food?

A.—They must be given sufficient time, that is all. I should say that it may be given underground. To go out and then come back for work will take much time.

Q.—Do you know the rule that ordinarily a miner cannot be kept underground for more than 9 hours, from surface to surface? Do you think that this interval for food should be included in the 9 hours?

A.—Surely, it should be included.

Q.—What should be that interval?

A.—At least three-fourths of an hour should be given. I do not think that it will affect the volume of production in any way.

Q.—Now, coming to the question of the 'minimum wage' you have suggested certain figures. Have you calculated them on the basis of prices prevailing at that place?

A.—The prices of Jamshedpur and Mosabani are the same. We have taken into consideration that also.

Q.—Have you taken into consideration, the family budgets?

A.—No, we have not.

Q.—That means, this is only a general average?

A.—Yes, without going into the family budgets.

Q.—On the basis of these figures you have given, will you be able to calculate the effect it would have on the wage bill?

A.—Yes, we shall give you a separate statement later on.

Q.—We discussed the increase in the wage bill sometime back in connection with the increased wages in other factories? Have you included this item also there?

A.—Yes, Sir.

Q.—You have complained that the attitude of the management has not been friendly so far as the union is concerned and you have given certain suggestions. Are you in a position to tell us what agency or machinery you would like to have for settling disputes that arise from time to time?

A.—It is very difficult for me to suggest any machinery immediately. I should say that unless a change in the policy of the management comes, any machinery that we may put forth will not satisfactorily work. One of the fundamental requirements at present is a joint committee of the management and the union so that disputes arising from day to day can be amicably settled without resorting to conciliation and arbitration, i.e. without making it a big issue. Such a joint committee consisting of the representatives of the management and the union can function effectively. We have referred certain matters to the Labour Commissioner and the Labour Minister and are awaiting their decision. It was all done simply because the management were unreasonable and declined to settle it between ourselves, from the very beginning.

Q.—So, you are for a joint board of the management and the workers to settle disputes?

A.—Yes, but that again can function only if the outlook of the management undergoes some change from their present position.

Q.—The decision of this board should be made binding on the parties? For that, what Government or other legislative machinery do you suggest?

A.—The decision of this board shall become binding on the parties through the intervention of a permanent Labour Commissioner appointed by the Government with necessary powers.

Q.—Then, you have suggested a permanent Labour Commissioner? What should be his powers?

A.—We went into that in detail in the beginning. Whatever machinery there may be, so long as there is not that good will between the management and the workers, nothing can effect a proper remedy for the situation. If the Government cannot make the management more sane nothing is possible. (*Laughter.*) Now-a-days the Government is also one with the management. During a strike they supported the management against the workers. It is the workers that need more protection than the employers. But with all that what happens? The police are used against the labour always. It is we who want protection, not the employers.

Q.—And allow the works to be destroyed?

A.—No, no, they will never do that. The police do not see whether a strike situation is peaceful or not. They come with a bias. What does that mean? It means that they are also acting for the management as against the workers. Suppose there is a sudden attack on the workers. Is not the Government supposed to protect them?

Q.—There is no such case on record. (*Laughter.*) The employer has property to be protected—it may get destroyed during strike times. It is for that that the police are employed to see that it does not happen. Your suggestion seems to be that the police force should give protection to the strikers.

A.—Yes. At least they should not be sent against us. (*Laughter.*) The management have resources and they can protect themselves. I shall tell you what happened sometime back. There was a natural break-down of a plant and unfortunately it happened during a strike. The management published photographs in the papers and said that it was done by the workmen. That is what the management does.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—We understand that the ropeway was interfered with?

A.—It was never proved. Let them prove it today. They know only too well how it happened. Why did they publish in the papers? Simply to create opinion against the spirit of the strikes and elicit sympathy in their favour. Moreover they employ *goondas* and try their best to break down the spirit of the union. During a peaceful strike these *goondas* are let loose and if anything untoward happens, due to their provocation, the blame is thrown on the heads of the workers that the strikers resorted to violence, etc.

*Mr. Bakhale.*—I would like to know what you mean by security of service. Do you suggest that there is no permanency of employment now? Do you distinguish between security of service and permanency of employment?

A.—Both are intermixed.

Q.—Very well. I will give you an illustration. Suppose there are 4,000 workers in your works, and the average production is 40,000 tons. As a result of the character of the industry production comes down—due to whatever reason. There is accumulation of stock and the management have necessarily to reduce a number of workers in proportion to the reduction in production—or to the extent to which reduction of production is necessary. Would you consider that insecurity of service?

A.—It is not insecurity of service. It is want of permanency of service.

Q.—Yes. Now, am I correct in saying that an employer has in him certain powers of dismissals and punishments?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You have suggested certain remedies to overcome the retrenchment of the workers and also the fluctuating character of the industry. Does it apply to all industrial undertakings or refers only to your mines and factory?

A.—To the Mosabani mines and factory only.

Dr. Mukherjee.—Taking up the question of Mr. Bakhale, is there considerable unemployment in the mines?

A.—Only new men who come in anticipation of getting work are unemployed.

Q.—I have heard remarks to the effect that there are a lot of unemployed Nepalese and it is also said that the management is trying to get new labourers?

A.—Yes, Sir.

Q.—What action has the union taken or what action does it intend to take with regard to this question?

A.—I am afraid that we cannot take it up now.

Q.—I find you are against the establishment of a labour exchange also?

A.—We are not against it. We fear it is not practicable.

Q.—Are these Nepalese workers members of your union? How many are there as members?

A.—All of them had joined the strike. Since the appointment of the labour officer by the management, he has successfully seduced most of them and asked them to withdraw. (*Laughter.*)

Q.—You mean persuading? (*Laughter.*)

A.—Yes.

Q.—Don't you think that the degree of unemployment prevalent over there is rather alarming?

A.—Yes. And the management should be advised to take necessary steps to stop that.

Q.—Could you give us some accurate figures regarding the unemployment prevalent in your mines and factory areas?

A.—Yes, Sir.

Q.—In regard to hours of work you said that from surface to surface it should be 9 hours?

A.—That is law at present, Sir, and we want to reduce that to 8 hours including the interval for food.

Q.—Why do you want to reduce it?

A.—Because the present hours are rather long. (*Laughter.*)

Q.—With reference to the question of wages, you have pointed out that there has been an increase in production and also decrease in the cost of production from year to year and they have not been accompanied by a general rise in the wages. (*Reads from page 20.*)

A.—We like very much to submit a statement in this connection showing all these facts clearly with figures. (*The statement was handed over to the Chairman.*)

Q.—The increase in the volume of production has not been due to rationalization?

A.—No. It has been due to intensification.

Q.—That is your basis for the demand for increase of wages?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Taking into consideration the nature of the work of the miner, who has to go deeper and deeper and consequently do harder work, do you think a system of bonus would be having good effect on the labourers?

A.—Yes, Sir. Certainly.

Q.—Could you give us information of the bonus system and its method of working which does fair justice to the conditions of work?

A.—We have at present only a footage bonus and no other.

Q.—Is it different for different levels?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What other bonuses do you want to introduce?

A.—There must be general production bonus and profit-sharing bonus which must be given to all varieties of workers. That is what we want.

Q.—On the whole you have this footage bonus and it is worked out in the way you have just said. You want this to be modified to include other categories of workers also?

A.—Certainly, Sir. Now out of 2,000 men it is given only to about 350 men.

Q.—You ask for a bonus for everybody?

A.—Yes.

Q.—With reference to the considerable number of accidents you have noted somewhere—what steps you think is necessary to minimise them?

A.—There should be some safety methods adopted. There is nothing there at present. The men are left to their fate. If any stone slides down and injures a man he lies there unconscious and bleeding for hours and he is not attended to at all.

Q.—You suggest the formation of a safety committee?

A.—Yes, that is desirable, to give prompt medical aid in such cases.

Q.—It is suggested that in the mines now, there is no qualified man to supervise, say, a set of *coolies*? Do you think that some persons with mining diplomas should be taken in so that they will know the nature of the work and will be of immense help and assistance to the labourers?

A.—Yes, Sir, that must be done. It is an absolute necessity.

Mr. Chandra.—Do you seriously think that a labour officer appointed by Government will reduce this discontent amongst the workers?

A.—Yes, Sir, that is my hope and wish. (*Laughter.*)

Q.—It has been suggested to us that the appointment of such Government officials is not conducive to the development of proper unionism. Can you meet this criticism?

A.—As I explained before, nothing is possible unless the attitude of the management towards labour changes.

Q.—I know that. I want a suggestion from you in respect of this question.

A.—Trade unionism does not rule out collective bargaining. During a strike or in frequent periods of frictions over disputes, very often contending parties, i.e., labour and employer exhaust themselves without coming to an understanding or settlement. A Labour Commission as an arbitrator whose decisions should have some binding force will be a welcome third party. I do not suppose Trade Unionism suffers there until and unless its day to day function is usurped by the Government machinery.

Q.—Now, I would like to know more about the table you have submitted. I want to know whether you have verified these figures in any way?

A.—You mean the increase in production? No. We have collected those figures as best as we can possibly do. I am not in a position to tell you what the office figures are. You can get them from the management and verify for yourself.

Mr. Saran.—It is said in the memorandum submitted by the management that since 1931, contract labour has been abolished?

A.—It is true.

Q.—What do you think of the financial implication of such a change?

A.—I do not know.

Q.—Under the terms of the agreement the company is giving 15 days leave to all daily-rated workers?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Has it established a Provident Fund?

A.—They have agreed to. It is not yet established.

Q.—Also maternity benefits?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is it a fact that the company provides half the wages during the waiting period in compensation cases?

A.—Yes, after the 3rd day they pay half the wages.

Q.—Are you referring to sickness benefit or compensation?

A.—I am sorry, the Company pays half the wages for the first 7 days and then according to the Act.

Q.—I understand that the workers are made to contribute to the medical aid?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is it popular with the workers?

A.—Yes, it is appreciated by the workers. They have no objection to it. At the same time they feel the need of more doctors preferably Indian, because the European doctor is not familiar with the condition in the Indian quarters. Besides, medical attendance is inadequate.

Q.—A statement was made this morning that when a worker faints in the course of the work there is nobody to look after him. Did you say that?

A.—Yes, it is a fact, there is nobody at the level. The authorities come after a long time. Hence, prompt action is never taken; that is what I said.

Q.—So, you want some sort of first aid also to be kept underground?

A.—Yes. They say that they have a telephone connection and that when cases occur it is reported and it is immediately attended to and all that. But it never happens.

Q.—You mean the rules are not observed?

A.—Exactly.

Q.—I was told this morning that the sweepers were not given the benefit of any increment sanctioned by settlement terms. Are they monthly-rated?

A.—Yes, but they never get the advantages of a monthly-rated person; then again they were deprived of the benefit of increase given to the daily-rated men. So the position is very anomalous.

Mr. Lall.—You have stated in the statement that gradually production is increasing and the cost of production is decreasing. Could you give us an average figure not only of what the labourer is getting now, but what he got at a certain period?

A.—It does not refer to unskilled labour at all. Their wages have been increased by the result of the Conciliation Board. The statement refers to the skilled and semi-skilled workers.

Q.—Now, with regard to the unskilled labourer what does he get now and what was he getting before?

A.—It was 5 annas and 4 annas respectively for men and women. Now it is 6 annas and 5 annas. Recently it has been raised to 7 annas in the case of the men workers.

Q.—Now, what rate do you think should be given to these unskilled workers?

A.—I have stated that in the statement I have submitted to the Committee. 12 annas should be the minimum.

Q.—In the case of the semi-skilled and skilled workers, could you give us some figures? I want one or two instances.

A.—That has also been given in our statement.

Q.—You referred to the cases of dismissals and wanted an enquiry to be conducted before the worker is actually dismissed by the management. Do you want the enquiry in all cases?

A.—Yes. But minor matters can be settled by the representatives of the Union and the management sitting in a Committee. I would also add that they will change their attitude only when the union becomes irresistibly strong.

Q.—You suggest two remedies here, one through the Board of Conciliation. Now, in cases when the joint committee of the Labour and the management does not function due to any temporary difference,



do you want a labour officer of Government to go into the question and arbitrate? If so, should there be one officer for the whole of Bihar, or an officer for each district, or for each industry?

A.—There should be one for each district, I mean each Industrial Centre.

Q.—I see. Now, has there been any provision made for security of service, and has it been carried out?

A.—The Conciliation Board made provision of it but no strict code has been framed. The management are not carrying out the terms.

Q.—Are workers allowed to explain their conduct before any punishment is awarded?

A.—No. We insist that he must be given a charge sheet and asked to explain his position before any action is taken. And moreover dismissals should never be made by the Company until the matter has been gone into by the union previously. That is our view.

Q.—Are there any schools for the adults in your place?

A.—There is one school at Mosabani, one upper primary school. That is all; there is no adult school. There is one lower primary school at Moubhandar.

Q.—Do you think that such adult schools are desirable?

A.—Certainly. We are trying our best in the matter of adult education of the working classes.

Q.—Do you think the existing school serves the purpose well?

A.—No. It needs further expansion in size and also in attendance. We also want some more higher classes at Musabani which should be raised to be an middle English school.

Q.—And the expenses to be borne by whom?

A.—Of course by the Company. They should meet the expenses for the education of the children there (*laughter*).

Q.—Now, is medical attention sufficient or it wants improvement?

A.—As I stated before, we want more Indian doctors—at least half a dozen Indian doctors should be provided. At present we have no Indian doctors at all.

Q.—How many doctors have you got there at present?

A.—Only one.

Q.—And you want half a dozen more?

A.—If the Company would not appoint 6 at present, at least 3 doctors there should be to begin with.

Mr. Hayman.—I understand that you represent two labour unions, Mr. Mitra?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Both registered?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Both recognised?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What is the number of men in both these concerns, together roughly?

A.—About 5,000.

Q.—And how many of them are members of the Union?

A.—4,200

Q.—What is the rate of subscription?

A.—For Musabani it is annas two, annas four and annas eight and for Moubhandar it is one anna, four annas, six annas and one rupee.

Q.—Per year or per month?

A.—Per month.

Q.—When were they founded?

A.—One in December 1937 and the other in March 1938.

Q.—How much money have you collected as subscription?

A.—Rs. 3,500 for Mosabani and Rs. 1,400 for the other; the Secretary is not here; I shall give you the figure later on if you want it.

Q.—Throughout this memorandum and also in the course of your evidence, I am sorry to find that you have charged the management of hostility to the union. Will you please for my benefit and also for the benefit of the Committee, cite one or two instances, at least one instance, where such conduct has been witnessed by you? (*Reads some portions of the memorandum.*) This requires proof. Can you give me that?

A.—Yes, I gave one instance in the morning. We were discussing some issue relating to the fact that certain number of men were fined. The Superintendent got annoyed. I do not know the reason. He unceremoniously asked us to quit the room.

Q.—Is it not a fact that the Mining Superintendent asked one of your men to go out of the room only after the Superintendent was called a liar, etc., by one of your men?

A.—Nothing of the kind happened. It is not true.

Q.—Was it not a fact that the fine was imposed because the workers, contrary to instructions, left the tools somewhere and they were lost? I do not know what the Members of the Committee feel in regard to this matter and ever so many others contained in this memorandum. This memorandum was given to me only this morning and from what little I have gone through, I find that damaging statements have been made which are not facts or true. Please correct me if I am wrong. The Union has been thoroughly unfair to the management; that is what I gather from this memorandum. Nothing has been substantially proved also. I should submit that these are rather serious charges that they have made. This should not be treated lightly.

A.—Kindly tell me on what points the statement is incorrect?

Q.—Will you substantiate on any matter which requires proof which you have put into this statement at any time when you are called upon to do so? I have not had sufficient time to read through What you have written.

A.—Yes, we are prepared.

Q.—In the case of dismissals and discharge, do I understand you to say that you want the power to be taken out of the hands of the management and vested in the hands of the union? That means that they should not effect any dismissal or discharge until the union agrees or if the union disagrees you want the labour officer to decide?

A.—Yes. It must be scrupulously investigated.

Q.—And the union is still at liberty to disobey the orders of the Labour Commissioner?

A.—No, that is not what we want. The union wants that a charge sheet should be given to the man so that he may represent his case through the union and if nothing can be settled, the labour commissioner should intervene and settle the dispute.

Q.—Do you want that procedure to be observed in all cases of punishment?

A.—Yes, for serious cases at least.

Q.—And you want a charge sheet in every case?

A.—Yes, as in the TATAS.

Q.—You have not read the answers to the questionnaire submitted by the TISCO?

A.—We do not give charge sheet for trivial offences.

Q.—How long should the man be given time to answer the charge sheet?

A.—A suitable time-limit may be fixed up.

Q.—You do not want to suggest anything just now?

A.—No.

Q.—I want to clear one or two points in regard to what you have said on the subject of recruitment. (*Reads the statement.*) You stick to that statement?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Are you aware of the fact that generally the people assemble in great number at the place of recruitment; that the appointment is made on the spot?

A.—Yes, we know that. The persons who are selected on that day are previously informed; that is all that is done. (*Laughter.*)

Q.—Who informs them?

A.—This Labour Officer or any agent of his; how can we know.

Q.—If you do not know that why do you say that they are previously informed?

A.—The person is informed not publicly but secretly.

Q.—If it is a secret how do you know that he is informed at all?

A.—But the secrets get out in some way. (*Laughter.*)

Q.—No, No, Mr. Mitra. Can you justify a statement like this? Can you prove the fact that the recruit gets notice previously? Unless you can substantiate this you cannot make such a wholesale statement like this. I think I must seek your protection, Sir, Mr. Chairman (*Turning to the Chairman*) that this Committee should not accept statement of this nature unless it is substantiated. I have no objection to any statements provided they are proved with facts. But statements made like this must be objected to.

A.—I have substantiated that, Mr. Chairman.

Q.—Now, coming to the question of acting allowance are you aware that the company employs a considerable number of relief gang which undertake the duties of absent persons and therefore the necessity for acting allowance is not justified?

A.—You are referring to the mine or the factory?

Q.—Both. You can answer separately?

A.—There is no relief gang either in the mine or in the factory.

Q.—You have given a statement here which is directed up to show that although the quantity of production is going up the number of men for the work has gone down. Can such an inference be drawn from this statement?

A.—Yes, that is also a fact.

Q.—(*Reads some of the figures*) 1934—26.6, 1935—37.5, etc., In the same way you say the cost of copper per ton rose from 30.3 in

1934 to 36.2 in 1938. You say that the cost of production has gone down whereas the management have shown here that it has gone up. (*The two statements were handed over to the Chairman by Mr. Hayman.*)

You talked of a 12½ per cent increase—a further increase I should say of pay over and above what they got as a result of the conciliation award. Am I correct?

A.—Yes, that is so.

Q.—Is it not a fact that the position of the company at present is such that it cannot be given effect to and that your making this further demand of 12½ per cent is not justifiable?

A.—They would not agree to all that we said and so we are demanding this general increase in the wages. It is justifiable and the company can afford to pay that. We have given reasons why this demand of 12½ per cent is made; this is fully explained in the memorandum.

Q.—Are you aware of the fact that the industry was wanting in capital and that the dividend that they paid to the share-holders in 1924 was only about 3 per cent?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you think the capital is now adequate enough to make good profits and continue to pay such high wages as you seem to require?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you want the state of affairs to continue for long?

A.—I am not a prophet. (*Laughter.*)

Q.—If it happens, the industry cannot run. Do you admit it is because of the unreasonable attitude of the labour?

A.—No, our demands are reasonable.

Q.—Are you aware that there is a slow down in the Rolling Mills at the present moment?

A.—No, I am not aware.

Q.—You suggested a reduction of the hours of work from 9 hours to 8 hours with interval for food, etc. Do you contend that they are working all the 9 hours they are inside the mine?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Continuous work?

A.—Yes.

Q.—There has been a complaint made by some of the workers here that the money earned by 5 people is so divided that the company misappropriates one share. Has any such case been brought to your notice?

*Chairman.*—Mr. Hayman, it was an answer given in relation to a question on bonus and not on wage. It refers to the footage bonus and is mentioned in one of the statements they made.

*Q.*—Thank you, Sir. Now, Mr. Mitra, the mines are working under the Mines Act and the Factory under the Factory Act, is that not so? Could you wish to make any statement in the matter of improving the hours of work or rest in regard to the safety of the place?

*A.*—Regarding hours of work we have suggested that it should be reduced.

*Q.*—What I wanted to know was, have you noticed or do you believe that the management is violating any of the provisions of these two enactments I mentioned?

*A.*—Yes, the complaints regarding delay in giving medical aid to the injured men, making the men work much more than 9 hours are some of the instances that we have observed and have mentioned in the replies to the questionnaire.

*Q.*—Have you pointed it out to the management at any time?

*A.*—Yes, we forwarded a lot of complaints from the workers. But nothing was done.

*Q.*—I understand that you are to have a provident fund scheme—that being one of the awards by the board of conciliation? Has it been introduced?

*A.*—Not yet. It will be introduced in 1940 or thereabout.

*Q.*—Why? What is the reason?

*A.*—I do not know. The company agreed to introduce it in 1940 and we consented to that.

*Q.*—I understand you to say that you want the company to give advances to the people for building houses? Have they advanced any loans at present?

*A.*—No, if they give we will all accept it. (*Laughter.*)

*Q.*—You would consent it to be repaid through reduction in wage bills by instalments?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—Don't you know that the company is prevented to do that by law?

*A.*—No; with permission advances by employers can be recovered.

*Q.*—One last question. You said that there is a practice of disqualifying the hands medically. Would you like to undergo further medical examination at the hands of other doctors to disprove that you have been wantonly disqualified?

A.—Yes, and if it is proved that it was wanton, the company should bear the expenses of the examination and discharge the doctor.

Q.—Of course, we shall ask the management to do that.

Mr. Chandra.—It appears that before your opinion was formed there was a good deal of hostility between the management and the workers resulting in strikes at frequent intervals. Has the union in any way helped to stabilize the labour conditions; if so, on what basis?

A.—We have begun.—If the employer does not seriously interfere again it will progress. The organisation was formed in December 1937 and we are trying to stabilize the labour conditions. We have done something towards that end. Since its formation the Executive Committee has advised men to present their grievances and await the result and till then carry out the orders of the management. Now it all depends on the good will and farsightendness of the employer.

Q.—As compared to the labour troubles before the union was organised, has it tended appreciably to reduce the number of incidents?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Could you give us an idea of the comparison?

A.—We have given a short note in the memorandum. Strikes were frequent in 1936 and we have given how many took place after December 1937. We have also been trying to control the number of dismissals from service. But unless the management changes the present attitude, it is impossible to avoid friction. We may say that our progress has been checked at every turn and the attitude of the management is anything but fair. They are trying their best to prevent labour organisation.

Q.—Could you give us an idea how this is done?

A.—Yes, the management never give any scope to the union to intervene in matters of dispute although it has been specifically mentioned in the terms of settlement by the Conciliation Board that the union must have the right to intervene into and represent all such disputed matters. The management are working in flagrant breach of the terms in not dealing with cases represented by the union. They give preference to a body of some of their own men whom they call members of a different organisation though as a matter of fact the organisation is a defunct body. This is surely fighting labour organisation recognised and duly registered.

Q.—Have you got evidence for that?

A.—Evidence there is, but it is hard to place every detail before this Committee. I shall get you some information if you so require.

Chairman.—Thank you very much.

The Committee resumed its sitting in the Tata Institute, Jamshedpur, on the 3rd April 1939 at 8 A.M.

The following members were present :—

Dr. Rajendra Prasad	...	<i>Chairman, Presiding.</i>
Dr. R. K. Mukherjee	...	<i>Member.</i>
Mr. A. M. Hayman	...	<i>Member.</i>
Prof. Abdul Bari ...	...	<i>Member.</i>
Prof. R. K. Saran	...	<i>Secretary.</i>
Mr. T. H. Clifford	...	<i>(Co-opted Member, Management).</i>
Mr. J. N. Mitra ...	...	<i>(Co-opted Member, Labour).</i>

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Oral evidence of the following workers, Y. K. U. Menon, Bloom Scraping (foundry), A. P. Banerjee, Sanitation and Hospital, Lachman Singh, Machine Shop, K. S. Menon, Concentration Plant, on behalf of the Indian Copper Corporation, Moubhandar.

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*Mr. Mitra.*—I will ask you a question on recruitment. How is recruitment done in this company?

*A.*—In this factory favouritism plays a great part in the matter of recruitment. The relatives of the superior staff like brother, nephew, etc., are given first preference. Those who took part in the strike are victimised.

*Q.*—What kind of victimisation? Is it a fact that those who took part in the strike are suspended and fined; where some of the active workers dismissed also?

*A.*—No, but there is a threat of dismissal. One man named Jai Singh was dismissed without notice.

*Q.*—Have you got grade system?

*A.*—No. Some people have got some rise in the rate but no grade. There is the same work with different rates.

*Q.*—Why is this that there is same work but different rates?

*A.*—Those who are favourites and friends of the officers and also relations get more wages than others.

*Q.*—Suppose there is one worker who is working since 5 years and another working since two years, is there difference in rates?

*A.*—In some cases there is difference and in others there is not.



Q.—After the strike there was a Conciliation Board which decided that there should be a general increment in the wages to the workers. How much increment has been given and to whom?

A.—Those who get up to 7/7 have got an increment of 1 anna.

Q.—But actually have they got it?

A.—Yes, but many have been left out.

Q.—What other things the Conciliation Board recommended; have they been followed?

A.—The Conciliation Board sanctioned an increment to all including the sweepers and also a fortnight's privilege leave to all the workers. But the sweepers got neither. Leave is difficult to get ordinarily.

Q.—If some people act on higher jobs, do they get acting allowance?

A.—No, nothing.

Q.—It is also said that the Conciliation Board recommended two weeks leave with pay, do you get that?

A.—The Board decided but it is not being followed.

Q.—In the Copper Plant, volume of Sulphur fumes always comes out and it is very injurious for the workers. It has been experienced that they cannot work for more than 15 years in the environment.

A.—Yes, sulphur fume is very injurious. It spoils the health and system. Something should be done to remove that. Sulphuric acid also is very injurious. It spoils our clothes but we do not get aprons. One cannot remain in the department for more than half an hour.

Q.—Do you get sufficient money to maintain yourself and your family?

A.—No, we must be given retiring gratuity.

Q.—After how many years you want the retiring gratuity?

A.—After 12 years.

Q.—In the memorandum you have said that the work is very heavy and there has been intensification. What are the departments?

A.—Rolling mill, Converter, Machine Shop, Electric Shop, Smelter, etc., in all these there are six men instead of 8.

Q.—Do you get leave for taking food?

A.—No.

Q.—Is there any shed for that?

A.—No, there is one house made of clay. The greatest difficulty is that fumes and poisonous gas come in contact with our food and the result is that our food becomes bad and poisonous. It loses its taste

Q.—The convertor men have got to work for 8 hours. Is there any difficulty?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you get interval in the midst of the work?

A.—No.

Q.—Now coming to housing, do you get quarters? What percentage of workers have got quarters?

A.—Only 30 per cent of the workers have got houses of the company or it may be 35 per cent also.

Q. Is the quarter good and ventilated? Is there proper sanitary and water arrangements?

A.—The quarter is altogether bad. There is no ventilation and water drops from the roofs in the rainy season. The drainage system is so bad that water is accumulated and gives foul smell. When rain water from hills runs down, the 3' water accumulates in the courtyard. The floor is also very damp.

Q.—Those who have not got quarters, where do they live?

A.—They live in *katcha* quarters.

Q.—Do you want more quarters?

A.—Oh, yes. We want not only more quarters but better quarters. The present quarters are like cattleshed. The houses should be built with good plan. There is also no enclosure in the present quarters. That should also be done.

Q.—Is there latrine and water arrangement in the quarters?

A.—No, nothing. There are two blocks for latrine but there is only one latrine and that is also small.

Q.—Is there any latrine inside?

A.—No, only outside.

Q.—What is the rent for such quarters?

A.—It is Rs. 2 and upwards.

Q.—Is there any difficulty in the quarters for keeping family?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You have said that the rates of wages are not good?

A.—Yes, the average highest rates are about Rs. 60. Convertor-men get Rs. 90 at the highest; Blooming Department about Rs. 60; the piece-rate was 8 pies in the year 1930 or 1931; it was afterwards reduced to 6 and in the year 1934 it was further reduced to 4½ pies.

Q.—Is there also reduction in the number of men?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What is the trouble in the Rope line?

A.—There are 2 Supervisors over 2 men.

Q.—Are the supervisors on the piece work?

A.—During the last strike some people helped the management against the workers. They have been made *dalals* of the company. Now they have been given the post of supervisors. 12 or 10 persons are on piece work. The company's men are made supervisors and we have got to pay money to them out of our own earnings.

Q.—What is the other difficulty in the Rope Line department?

A.—Formerly the rate was Rs. 23 per thousand tons carried and it was then reduced to Rs. 20; we have also to carry materials from Mcubhandar to Mosabani.

Q.—Do they pay money for that?

A.—No, not at all.

Q.—Is it covered by the contract? What is your opinion?

A.—We ought to get money for carrying materials to Mosabani.

Q.—You mean to say that you should get for both sides, going and coming?

A.—Yes.

Q.—In the purchase of commodities do you find that the price at Moubhandar is higher than that at Jamshedpur?

A.—Some of the materials are the same in price, some are cheaper and some dearer.

Q.—Do you maintain on the whole that the cost of living there is dearer than that at Jamshedpur?

A.—Yes, that is so. The place is backward; so there is great difficulty of marketing and other facilities.

Q.—In the Rolling Mill and the Converter, how much wage do you suggest?

A.—At least Rs. 3 a day. It may be more than that; I have said the minimum.

Q.—Do you get boots?

A.—We get one pair in 6 months. We want that they should be supplied every 3 months.

Q.—Do you get clothes?

A.—We get one pant. Nothing more.

Q.—Do you get bonus?

A.—No, bonus is given only in the Convertor.

Q.—Do you get off day on Sunday?

A.—No.

Q.—If you work overtime do you get leave on other days?

A.—Yes. There is no payment for the overtime work but only leave in lieu thereof.

Q.—Is there continuous 8 hours work?

A.—Previously the work was for 6 hours; now it has gone up to 8 hours.

Q.—Is there any reduction in rate?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What was the rate before and what is it now?

A.—The present rate is Rs. 1-8-0 per day. Formerly it was Rs. 3. Formerly it was Rs. 105 per month but it is only Rs. 50 or Rs. 60 now; sometimes it is Rs. 30 only.

Q.—Is the production the same or has it increased?

A.—The production has increased and the wages have been reduced. This is the position.

\* *Mr. Hayman.*—One of the workers have said that the food is spoiled by the gas; can he explain how is that?

A.—The food is spoiled in this way: it is kept at a place where the convertor is working from which sulphur gas comes out. The southern and western wind carrying the foul and poisonous gas enters the food. Thus it is spoiled.

Q.—Sometimes it is spoiled or is it spoiled always?

A.—It is spoiled always.

Q.—Is it spoiled in the case of somebody or is it general?

A.—Food of those who work in the gaseous place is generally spoiled.

Q.—Have you brought this to the notice of the management?

A.—Yes, many times, we have told the superintendent.

Q.—What did they say?

A.—They told us that it will be looked into but up till now they have not looked into the matter.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Is there much unemployment?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Have you got men from Jamshedpur only?

A.—We have men of all provinces, from all parts of India.

Q.—How many are unemployed in Moubhandar?

A.—About 200 to 300.

Q.—Do they go to the labour office; what is the number of their attendance?

A.—The daily attendance of those people is 200 or so. They come for work. Some of them are also ex-employees.

Q.—Is it a case that new men are employed in preference to old men?

A.—Yes. The labour officer does favouritism in matters of employment.

Q.—Is it not a fact that newly appointed workers get increment and the old workers are ignored? Can you cite a case?

A.—Yes, it is a fact. There was a friend of the management. He was appointed in the company at annas 12. After a little time he was given an increment of annas 8 over the head of the old man who was working efficiently for many years.

Q.—What is the practice of bonus?

A.—Profit sharing bonus is given to all, but production bonus, is not given in all the departments, e.g., the Concentration Department.

Q.—Have you got the profit sharing bonus for the last two years? How much have you got?

A.—15 days' wages.

Q.—Do you get anything for the injury?

A.—Even if one dies he does not get anything.

Q.—When a worker falls ill, does the doctor go to his house to examine him?

A.—No, there is only one doctor.

Q.—What is the rent for one house?

A.—Rs. 4—that depends upon the kind of the house. It varies from Rs. 2 to Rs. 4. For the *katcha* house the rent is Re. 1-8-0; for B block the rent is Rs. 2. If the quarter is family quarters the rent is never less than Rs. 4 or Rs. 6.

Q.—Is there proper latrine arrangement?

A.—No, there is no latrine.

Q.—How the workers come from the houses which are situated at great distance?

A.—They come on cycle; about 300 men do so.

Q.—If a man comes late then what is the punishment?

A.—He does not get payment for that day.

Q.—In what departments and sections relieving work is done?

A.—Smelter, Rolling, Foundry, Boiler.

Q.—Name the department where health is affected most and the payment is on piece basis?

A.—They are 8 or 9; Boiler, Smelter, Foundry, Rolling Mills, Refinery, etc.

Chairman.—Have you all got debts?

A.—Yes, all.

Q.—Is the debt heavy or light?

A.—Rather heavy; we take much from outside.

Q.—Why do you take loan?

A.—We cannot manage with the wages and so have got to borrow.

Q.—From where do you take the debt?

A.—From the *Kabulis*, *Marwaris*, *Pathans* and friends.

Q.—Do you take loans from the Co-operative Societies also?

A.—Formerly there was a Co-operative Society but now it has been abandoned. The Government has stopped it.

Q.—What is the rate of interest in the case of the *Kabulis*?

A.—It is annas 2 in the rupee per month. They give one rupee but on the document they make us write Rs. 1-8.

Q.—What rate of interest the *Marwaris* take?

A.—Anna one and six pies or one anna in the month in the rupee.

Q.—What is the extent of the debt?

A.—Rs. 1,600, Rs. 1,500 or like.

Q.—You have taken so much loan; how do you pay?

A.—When we get money we pay but the percentage of payment is very small. When one cannot pay, he flies away.

Q.—Then how is it realised.

A.—Generally the money is realised by the interest. When the creditor catches hold of anyone he realises by force.

Q.—Do you take on credit from the market?

A.—Yes, we take rice, etc., on credit.

Q.—But is the rate same for credit and cash?

A.—In the case of credit we have got to pay more money. In every seer they take one anna or one and half anna more. Rice is sold in the market at the rate of 10 seers but we are given 8 seers. In case of flour also it is the same.

Q.—Will you like the proposal to revive the Co-operative Society and to give you all facilities to take loan from it on cheap rate?

A.—Yes, we want easy arrangement. The interest should be low.

Q.—In the case of the credit from stores, how do you pay?

A.—The price is deducted from the wage.

Q.—If Co-operative Stores are established for the sale of goods, will you like the proposal?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is there any market in the *basti* or at *Ghatshila*?

A.—There are markets in those places. But they are two miles away from the place.

Q.—Are there many cases of disease there?

A.—Yes, diseases are very prevalent, malaria, pneumonia, bronchitis, phthisis, etc.

Q.—What is the special disease?

A.—Asthma, chronic bronchitis, rheumatism. In the Blooming Mill and Scraping there are diseases like hernia and rheumatism.

Q.—Are they due to heavy work?

A.—Yes, and also due to lifting of heavy weight. The chest is affected thereby. The water is very bad.

Q.—In the workshop what disease do you get?

A.—Malaria and cough; the teeth and throat are spoiled. There are also cases of gastric pain.

Q.—Is there no arrangement for treatment and hospital?

A.—There is one European doctor who does not understand our language. When we go to the doctor he tells us to go to the market and purchase medicine. The medicines in the hospital are meant for the European staff.

Q.—Have you got to pay for the medicines?

A.—No.

Q.—Have you got the system of Provident Fund?

A.—No, the management says that it would be introduced in the year 1940, not now.

*Mr. Saran.*—Does the company take the rent of the land on which you build house?

A.—Yes, at the rate of annas 8 or annas 4; in some case it is also annas 12 per month.

Q.—It has been brought to our notice that the rent of the land has been reduced.

A.—No.

Q.—Those realising money against loan badly treat you. Is it a fact?

A.—Yes, he shows the sword and money is snatched away. The matter has been reported to the management. He beats with the stick.

Q.—Is he so strong that it is snatched from you and you do not speak anything?

A.—He shows sword.

Q.—Since then, you have stopped going to borrow from them?

A.—Yes, so far we can help.

Q.—When you take money from the company, is it deducted from the pay?

A.—Yes, it is deducted from the wages.

*Mr. Mitra.*—Are there many cases of hernia and pneumonia?

A.—Yes, many.

Q.—When a man suffers from hernia, is he operated upon for that?

A.—No, when he has got to be operated upon he has to go away to other places to make arrangement himself and when he comes back he is not taken in.

Q.—Is there any case?

A.—Yes, there is one case in the department of Blooming Mill. Besides, the period for which he is in the hospital, he is not paid.

Q.—Has the rate been reduced in the Blooming Mill?

A.—The wage has been reduced at the rate of 2 pies. But even then there is a regular cheating through deceptive calculations made according to production; wilfully less payment is made. In the month of February I saw the accounts and I found, that it was less by Rs. 2 or Rs. 3 per head and figures for 18 or 15 days were less. I questioned the clerk. He said that it was the rate of production on the average.



He asked me to go to the foremen. They would not show the account. In one month there were 5 units but he wrote 4 units only. I detected this also.

Q.—Why do you not see the account yourself? Are you not allowed to go to the foreman to see the account.

A.—No, they do not show us the account.

Q.—Can you make calculations correctly?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Suppose in one month you got Rs. 35; can you make out how it is given?

A.—If the production is known and the rate is also known, I can make correct calculation.

Q.—There is no increment since you are working?

A.—Yes, no increment.

Q.—Do you get compensation in the case of accident?

A.—No, no compensation.

Q.—Can you get compensation if you apply to the Commissioner for Compensation?

A.—On the 14th March one man was discharged. He did not get the compensation under the Workmen's Compensation Act. He applied to the Deputy Commissioner for payment. The matter was kept hanging for more than 6 months but he did not get the money.

Q.—Now is it more than 6 months?

A.—Yes.

Mr. Hayman.—Have you brought the case to the notice of the union?

A.—There was no union then. It has been recently started. They will not listen to the union now.

Those who work in the union are victimised and are turned out.

The Committee resumed its sitting in the Tata Institute, Jamshedpur, on the 3rd April 1939.

The following members were present :—

- |                            |     |  |
|----------------------------|-----|--|
| 1. Dr. Rajendra Prasad ... | ... | <i>Chairman, Presiding.</i>            |
| 2. Dr. R. K. Mukherjee ... | ... | <i>Member.</i>                         |
| 3. Mr. A. M. Hayman ...    | ... | <i>Member.</i>                         |
| 4. Mr. H. B. Chandra ...   | ... | <i>Member.</i>                         |
| 5. Mr. J. N. Lal ...       | ... | <i>Member.</i>                         |
| 6. Prof. Abdul Bari ...    | ... | <i>Member.</i>                         |
| 7. Prof. R. K. Saran ...   | ... | <i>Secretary.</i>                      |
| 8. Mr. T. H. Clifford ...  | ... | <i>(Co-opted Member,<br/>Capital.)</i> |
| 9. Mr. J. N. Mitra ...     | ... | <i>(Co-opted Member,<br/>Labour.)</i>  |

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**Oral evidence of the following workers, K. Narsingham, Madura Mathur, Triolokya Singh, Jogudas, Ramji, on behalf of the Musabani Copper Mines, Musabani.**

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*Mr. Mitra.*—Is it a fact that many workers have been taken on contract system?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—How recruitment is made?

*A.*—In matters of recruitment Nepalis are given preference. Nepalis form the great bulk of the working population in the mines.

*Q.*—No other workmen are taken in? Do you think that men of other nationality are not able to do this work?

*A.*—It is not that others cannot do the work. No other class is given service.

*Q.*—Is it true that other classes are not taught the work as the Nepalis?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—Since how many years you people are working? What are your respective salaries?

*A.*—We are all working since 10 or 12 years and getting the rates of Rs. 1-8-0 or Rs. 1-4-0; we do not get more. There is also no promotion or grade.

*Q.*—Anything more?

A.—Some persons are appointed to learn the work and they get promotion and get more wages than the old men.

Q.—Why, what is the cause of that?

A.—Because they are the relations of the supervisors.

Q.—Are they taken in to break the strike?

A.—Yes, these are the causes of conflict between the management and the labourers.

Q.—You mean to say that favouritism is the cause of conflict?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you bring this to the notice of the officers?

A.—Yes, when we say anything they reply that if you want to work, then work; otherwise go away. They do whatever they like. We have submitted an application through the union.

Q.—Have you received any reply to that letter?

A.—No.

Q.—If a man works in the union, is he given any trouble?

A.—If a man takes the help of the union he is suspended.

Q.—In the blasting job, what is the condition of work and what is the treatment of the officers?

A.—In that job working involves poisonous gas. The result is that the workers faint. If a worker faints he is left in that place for hours together; sometimes up to 8 or 10 hours he remains lying on the ground.

Q.—Do you require soap in the department?

A.—Formerly we were supplied with soap but now it has been stopped.

Q.—What happens if any man is injured.

A.—No one takes his care. A word is sent to the Manager but no action is taken. It takes three or four hours before the order comes.

Q.—What is the arrangement for drinking water?

A.—There is no sufficient arrangement for that. There is one tap at one place and 2,000 workers have to take water from that. There is only one tap at each plat for drinking water.

Q.—Is there security of service?

A.—No.

Q.—Recently some men have been discharged; what is the number of the discharged persons?

A.—About 40 to 50.

Q.—What is the number of suspension?

A.—Daily someone is suspended.

Q.—Who are dismissed?

A.—Strikers are dismissed. There is a talk going on for the dismissal of some more men.

Q.—Is there any interval for rest?

A.—No.

Q.—What is the condition of the medical department?

A.—Some people, about 18, were sent to the medical department for examination. Instead of being examined they were given chits and declared unfit for further service. They were given compulsory leave. It was falsely said that they were suffering from T. B. A man met with an accident and received an injury. After treatment for sometime, he was given leave to go home. But when he returned from leave, just after two months, the doctor said that he had got T. B. and was unfit for service. The result was that he was not eligible for compensation also. He was not given compensation due to the remark of the doctor.

Q.—Why is this? Who is the doctor?

A.—The doctor favours only the favourites of the Company. He is a European. He generally disfavours the *Madrasis* and *Oriyas*.

Q.—When a man has to take leave does he go to the doctor for recommendation and examination?

A.—No. He is examined after he returns and often declared unfit for further service, if he is not a favourite.

Chairman.—At the time of new recruitment, the candidates have to undergo medical examination?

A.—Yes, but men recruited during the strike, were not examined.

Q.—Is the rate same for underground work and surface work?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is the work of a difficult nature?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Some people are given a higher rate; why is this?

A.—Due to favouritism.

Q.—Do you contend that the general rate is less?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What is the starting rate?

A.—12 annas.

Q.—During the strike some black-legs were taken for the underground work; were they kept on increased rate or the same rate?

A.—On increased rate. It was also said that those who would not join the strike would be given one cup of tea daily.

Q.—What percentage of workers joined the strike?

A.—90 per cent of the workers.

*Prof. Bari.*—How many joined the strike?

A.—3,000 out of 3,050.

Q.—You have said that during the strike some black-legs were appointed; how much do they get now?

A.—They get Rs. 2 or Rs. 3 a day while the old workers get only Rs. 1-8-0 maximum.

Q.—You have said that they get advantages over the old hands?

A.—Yes, they get better pay, and other concessions.

Q.—Did they get promotion also?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Was any man removed?

A.—No.

Q.—You say that the rate is not the same; what is the rate?

A.—The underground rate is Rs. 1-3-0, Rs. 1-1-0, 15 annas and so on. There are various jobs, e.g., blasting, timber, fitter, machine-men, blaster-men, etc. The following rates are usually prevalent :—

Welder—15 annas.

Blaster—1 rupee 1 anna.

Timber *Mistri*—1 rupee 3 annas.

Holder—1 rupee 1 anna.

Helper—15 annas.

Mucker—13 annas.

Trammer—15 annas.

Scraper Driver—1 rupee 1 anna.

Punch fitter—1 rupee 3 annas.

Underground—15 annas.

Q.—Do you think the rate to be sufficient?

A.—No. The work is very difficult. The supply of ore is the most important work. Without it there will be no production.

Q.—Do you get bonus?

A.—No, only those who work on monthly basis get bonus.

Q.—What should be the daily minimum rate?

A.—Rs. 2 a day.

Q.—Do you think that the earning of the workers is less?

A.—Oh, yes.

Q.—Do you want that the rate should be increased?

A.—Yes. The average earning underground is 13 annas or Rs. 20 per month. It is not sufficient.

Q.—Do you fall ill always?

A.—Yes. Every week a man faints once and then he is not able to come for 3 or 4 days. The wages for that period are lost.

Q.—You want that for the period of accident you should get the wage?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you get acting allowance?

A.—No.

Q.—Underground you have to use carbide lamps. Do you get lamps from the Company?

A.—No, we have to use our lamps and carbide which costs us Rs. 3-4-0, Rs. 3-9-0, Rs. 3-12-0.

Q.—You want that carbide should be given free by the Company?

A.—Yes, it should be given entirely free as is the practice in coal mines.

Q.—Do you get any increment?

A.—Since 10 or 15 years we have not got increment. I am working since 14 years but without any increment.

Q.—Is there any grade system?

A.—No.

Q.—Do you get the superior post?

A.—No.

Q.—After the strike, there was a Conciliation Board. It recommended increment. Have you got that?

A.—The Conciliation Board recommended an increment of one anna but it has not been given to all.

Q.—There is no arrangement for coming up the incline of the mine?

A.—No, there are 12 levels in the mine. Those who work in the last level take  $2\frac{1}{2}$  hours to come to the surface. If a worker starts at 12 noon he comes to the surface at 2-30 P.M. So the hours of work should be counted from surface to surface; the 8 hours work should include the time of going and coming also.

Q.—The work is for 9 hours; do you wish any reduction in it?

A.—Yes, we want 8 hours including the time for reaching the level and back to surface instead of 9 hours. Inside there is no arrangement of seeing the time; so we cannot make out the time and sometimes go on working even after the shift is finished.

Q.—Can you take food inside the mine. If you take what happens?

A.—Inside the mines one cannot take food. If he takes, cough and blood spitting begins. The place is quite unfit for taking and even keeping food.

Q.—Do you get leave?

A.—We get 2 months' leave without pay and 14 days' leave with pay.

Q.—Is it sufficient?

A.—No, we should get at least 1 month's leave with pay.

Q.—Can you say for how many years a man can work underground?

A.—15 years maximum.

Q.—What is your suggestion?

A.—My suggestion is that we should get retiring gratuity after 10 years.

Q.—Have you got gratuity system.

A.—No.

Q.—Do you want it?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Has there been any reduction in the number of men?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is there any water arrangement?

A.—No good water; the water is unfiltered and impure.

Q.—Do you want rest after 4 or 5 hours' work?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is there latrine arrangement?

A.—There is open latrine. We want closed latrine.

Q.—Have you got quarters.

A.—Yes, but very bad. There is only one room in each quarter.

Q.—Is the quarter very expensive?

A.—Yes, the houses of the *Basti* are cheaper.

Q.—Do you pay rent?

A.—Yes, 5 annas per month in the case of the *Basti* houses.

Q.—What is the rent of the Company's quarters?

A.—It is Rs. 6, Rs. 3, Rs. 4. There is no drainage system.

Q.—Is there proper sanitation?

A.—No, nothing.

Q.—Is there proper lighting and road arrangement?

A.—No, nothing.

Q.—Is there any school in the *Basti*?

A.—No school in the *Basti* but one in the mining area, at a distance of one mile.

Q.—Are there many children in the school?

A.—No, more schools are necessary, at least one lower primary school and one middle English school.

Dr. Mukherjee.—Are there many people unemployed?

A.—Yes.

Q.—I have seen that there are many *Gurkhas* unemployed?

A.—Yes, they were brought to act as *Dalals* during the strike. You will find that there are 2 or 3 men unemployed in every quarter.

Mr. Saran.—How are they fed?

A.—The man who earns gives them food.

Q.—They are all *Gurkhas*?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Who feeds them?

A.—We feed them.

Q.—When one starts work he gets 12 annas; does he always get 12 annas or some get 14 annas?



A.—Very few people get 14 annas.

Q.—What is the rate?

A.—In the contract system the rate is Re. 1, Rs. 1-2-0.

Q.—All the people work in the week, full 6 days?

A.—Yes, all and always.

Q.—Is it a fact that some do not work all the days?

A.—Yes, when he is sick through underground work.

Q.—You get 12 annas; what is the average monthly income or earning?

A.—The average monthly earning is from Rs. 12 to Rs. 20.

Q.—Is it a fact that if you work more, you get more wages?

A.—No, it is not a fact.

Q.—Is the rate the same for work at different level?

A.—Charge rate is the same. We get bonus from 10th level at 1 anna.

Q.—Is there fine system?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What do you say about the drinking water?

A.—We want that there should be proper water arrangement underground. There should be one tap at every 300 feet.

Q.—Is there security of service for the raising contractors?

A.—No.

Q.—What is the rent of the Company's quarters and for land?

A.—The Company charges Rs. 1-4-0 as rent and the ground rent for each *Basti* plot is 8 annas per month.

Q.—In one month how many accidents take place. Is there arrangement for ambulance car?

A.—I cannot say how many accidents occur in the month. There is no arrangement for an ambulance car. Only there are one or two stretchers on which the injured man is carried by four men. It takes 2 or 3 hours to reach the surface.

Q.—What is the rate for the Rejas?

A.—It is 5 annas and 4 annas. The Conciliation Board increased it by one anna.

Q.—Do you want that the *sardari* system should be removed?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Are there latrines for women?

A.—No.

Q.—Is it a fact that because the work is very hard only hardy people, such as *Gurkhas* are taken?

A.—No, Sir, other men are so hardy that they can beat down even the *Gurkhas*. The Mining Superintendent wants the *Gurkhas*.

Q.—Are all the members of the management European?

A.—Yes.

Q.—If they have to take any man, do they publish notices?

A.—No.

Q.—Then how so many *Gurkhas* have been taken?

A.—It is the wish of the Company. They can take any man they like.

Q.—Then there are so many unemployed?

A.—The reason is that the management gives preference to the relatives. So every worker has brought his relatives in the hope of getting employment.

Chairman.—Have you all got loan?

A.—Yes, all have got.

Q.—From where have you taken loan?

A.—*Marwaris*, *Kabulis* and shopkeepers.

Q.—What is the rate of interest?

A.—2 annas, 3 annas and also 1 anna per month per rupee.

Q.—From the *Bania* you take the things on credit?

A.—Yes, they give things dear. In every maund they take Re. 1 more. We take on credit throughout the month and pay at the beginning of the month.

Q.—How much loan each of you has got?

A.—(1) Rs. 50; (2) Rs. 60. In all there are Rs. 62,000 as debt.

Q.—Do you pay back the debt from your salary?

A.—No, the salary is not sufficient even to eat and drink.

Q.—If you do not pay the loan, what do they do? How will you pay off?

A.—The creditors give us much trouble; they beat us if not paid.

Q.—Have you got loan from the co-operative also?

A.—Yes, there was a Co-operative Society but since 5 or 6 months it has been closed.

Q.—Do you agree that a co-operative store should be established? If it is done, will you purchase shares?

A.—Oh, yes, we are ready.

Q.—For working in the mines some special equipment is required, e.g., shoes, clothes?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you get shoes?

A.—No.

Q.—You get carbide lamps?

A.—No, we do not get them free; we have to purchase them.

Q.—Do you know any place where the lamp is given free?

A.—In the Kolar Gold Fields the company gives free carbide lamps. Also in the coal mines.

Q.—You say that since 10 years men are working but there is no increment to *karigars* also?

A.—Yes, we do not get anything.

Q.—I have seen that in the coalfields people are paid on the number of tubs raised; do you like this arrangement here also?

A.—No, we do not want this system.

Q.—Do you want piece work underground?

A. No. Piece work is not possible in copper mines.

Q.—Why not?

A.—The work is so hard that there is always pain in the chest. More work is done by machine. So piece work is not possible.

Q.—Do you get provident fund?

A.—No, it will be introduced after 1940.

Q.—Do you meet with accidents?

A.—Yes, 22 to 23 in the month.

Q.—Do you prefer payment in kind? Suppose you are paid Rs. 5 or Rs. 6 and the rest is paid in kind?

A.—No, we do not prefer payment in kind.

Q.—Can you make accounts of what you get or what you do not?

A.—No, all are illiterate.

Q.—Are there any facilities for the workmen to check the accounts of payments?

A.—No, there are no facilities.

Q.—Please look to the page 27 of the memorandum where it is said that..... (Reads) what is the time taken?

A.—Half hour coming and 1 hour going in the incline. So the total is  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hours.

Q.—Is the increased rate from no. 10 level a permanent rate.

A.—No. It is the level bonus.

Q.—Regarding the footage the Company says.....(Reads) that men can earn much from footage bonus.

A.—No, there is no likelihood.

Mr. Saran.—The work is in groups?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You get the footage bonus?

A.—Also the production bonus.

Q.—Have you got to pay anything for the hospital?

A.—Yes, we pay for the school also; 4 annas per man.

Q.—What is the rate for the hospital?

A.—Every man 4 annas. Those who get Re. 1 daily pay 2 annas.

Q.—You pay for schools also?

A.—For both the school and hospital.

Q.—You have said that in the case of the injury there is no compensation but the Company says that they pay half the compensation.

A.—Yes, before we used to get full.

Q.—The Company says that the earning is quite sufficient but they spend the money on cinema and plays.

A.—We see cinema but we do not pay for the ticket. We see free.

Mr. Hayman.—Do you understand that the work has increased?

A.—Yes, 100 per cent since 2 or 3 years.

Q.—Hours of work are also more?

A.—Hours of work have also increased. Efficiency has increased.

Q.—Is there complaint regarding the payment of wages?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you think that they do not get the same wages as a few years ago?

A.—No, they don't get.

Q.—What is the piece payment?

A.—Rs. 1-5-0 per day.

Q.—Rs. 1-5-0 is the daily rate. How many days they work? Do you know that they work less in the week?

A.—No.

Q.—Is there anybody who received less than was due to him?

A.—During last many payments I have received payments short by annas four or eight.

Q.—What were your earnings?

A.—Rs. 15, Rs. 14-10-0, Rs. 13-9-0.

Q.—You have said that the cashier does not give account? Have you complained to the management?

A.—Yes, we complained to the management but they have taken no notice of that.

Q.—You have said that there is deduction in the amount of work. Suppose they have worked for 125 feet. The captain when passing will make it 115 feet and finally the foreman will make it 100 feet. So there are so many deductions made. Have you brought this to the notice of the management?

A.—Several times.

Q.—Have you represented to the management that there is 25 per cent deduction every day? It is not a great and serious charge against the management?

A.—Yes, we have complained many times but without any reply.

*Mr. Mitra.*—You are given money and your signature is taken on a piece of slip?

A.—No, no signature but thumb impression.

Q.—Last year there was one case that the worker went on leave and he did not get his due wages?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Even after the Union wrote to the Company, they did not give?

A.—Yes, the union wrote two or three times.

Q.—In the departments of Driller, Hot Plants, Moulding-shop, there is no arrangement for water supply, or soda supply, working hours are long and the rate is very low, say, Rs. 1-2-0, Rs. 1-4-0, Rs. 1-12-0, in some jobs?

A.—Yes, quite.

*Prof Bari.*—When you send any letter to the management, do you get any reply?

A.—No, they do not reply to our letters. The copy of the letter is with the Secretary.

Q.—Have you spoken to the Chairman?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Did you get any punishment for speaking to the Chairman, of the Labour Enquiry Committee?

A.—Yes, no leave was given to underground workers.

The Committee resumed its sitting in the Tata Institute, Jamshedpur, on the 28th March 1939.

The following members were present :—

- |                            |     |                             |
|----------------------------|-----|-----------------------------|
| 1. Dr. Rajendra Prasad ... | ... | <i>Chairman, Presiding.</i> |
| 2. Mr. R. R. Bakhale ...   | ... | <i>Deputy Chairman.</i>     |
| 3. Dr. R. K. Mukherjee ... | ... | <i>Member.</i>              |
| 4. Mr. A. M. Hayman ...    | ... | <i>Member.</i>              |
| 5. Mr. H. B. Chandra ...   | ... | <i>Member.</i>              |
| 6. Mr. J. N. Lal ...       | ... | <i>Member.</i>              |
| 7. Mr. M. P. Gandhi ...    | ... | <i>Member.</i>              |
| 8. Prof. Abdul Bari ...    | ... | <i>Member.</i>              |
| 9. Prof. R. K. Saram ...   | ..  | <i>Secretary.</i>           |
| 10. Mr. T. H. Clifford ... | ... | <i>(Co-opted Member).</i>   |

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**Oral evidence of Mr. M. John, Mr. J. N. Mitra and Mr. N. C. Paul, on behalf of the Indian Cable Company, Limited, Labour Union, Jamshedpur.**

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Q.—Do you represent the Cable Union?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Since how long has the Union been in existence?

A.—Formerly the Union was started in 1929 and again in September 1936.

Q.—How many members are there and what is the rate of subscription?

A.—758 members. Subscription rates are as under—

Those who get up to 8 annas—2 annas per month.

Those who get from 8 annas to Re. 1, 4 annas per month.

Those who get above Re. 1, 6 annas per month.

Q.—There is a complaint that much favouritism is shown in the case of new recruitment. Who is doing the new recruitment?

A.—The recruitment is done by foremen and the departmental heads. When a departmental head is a Bengali, all the workmen in that department are Bengalis, if he is from Sylhet, all the workmen in that department are Sylhetees. There is no fair recruitment.

Q.—They might be better qualified. How can you say that they are taken because they are of the same community?

A.—Best men are not appointed. The management is not taking the trouble of seeing to this.

Q.—The management state in the memorandum that there is no favouritism or anything of the sort.

A.—There are other better men. They do not see to the qualifications of the candidates, and appoint only men from their own community.

Q.—As regards the security of service, what is the procedure adopted in the establishment?

A.—No such procedure has been adopted.

Q.—In case of mistakes and faults, what is the punishment meted out to the workers.

A.—Suspension and dismissal. The figures as supplied in our memorandum for 1936 and 1937 will show the true facts. Turn-over in Tisco is only 4 per cent whereas in the Cable Company it is 18 per cent.

Q.—What suggestion do you wish to make in this connection?

A.—First warning can be given. Charge-sheet in every case can be given with a copy to the Union. Then there can be joint enquiry and the matter can be decided after fully enquiring into the matter according to the circumstances. At present it is not done like that.

Q.—Was any charge-sheet being given to the workmen up till now?

A.—In most cases charge-sheet is not given. Only in one or two cases charge-sheet was given.

Q.—Management state that charge-sheet is given in all cases, sometimes in writing and sometimes verbally.

A.—I suggest that charge-sheet should be given in writing always.

Q.—Do you think it feasible to consider jointly by labour representative and the management in all cases of dispute?

A.—We are doing in some industry and it is successful. In Tinsplate the members of the union and the management sit together and work together in settling the cases of fault and mistake on the part of the workers.

Q.—Since when?

A.—For the last six months. When a man had done some mistake, he will have to wait for the decision of the committee. If the decision of the committee is not satisfactory, the President or the Secretary of the Union sees the General Manager and necessary thing is done.



There is a regular board in the committee in Tinplate nominated by the Union. They sit every Saturday and settle up all things that take place in the week.

Q.—Do you think that similar scheme will be possible in this industry?

A.—Yes. In all other industries also.

Q.—Have the rates been reduced recently?

A.—Yes. Previously in one department the rate was Rs. 1-4-0 (skilled) and 9 annas (unskilled). Since 1932 the rate has been reduced to Rs. 1-2-0 (skilled) and 8 annas (unskilled). In other departments also the rates have been reduced. The average earning of the skilled workers has been reduced. The men who were getting Rs. 1-4-0 were replaced by men who were started on 12 annas according to the new rate. After two years 2 annas increment was given to these people—

Block stripper—Previous rate Rs. 1-4-0; now 14 annas and 12 annas.

Stranders—Previous rate Rs. 1-2-0; now 14 annas and Re. 1.

Q.—Is there any grade system in the Company?

A.—No. There is job rate. Three men working as strippers are getting 12 annas, 14 annas and Rs. 1-2-0.

Mr. Hayman.—Are the workmen not working on piece work rate?

A.—In one department there is piece work rate. But even there the rate has been cut. When there was daily rate system, they were earning more than on piece work system. The average earning of the worker has been brought down to 50 per cent. Afterwards they were given 25 per cent increase in rate. But still the workers are getting 25 per cent less than the previous rate.

Q.—The management say that the employees on piece-rate work are earning double.

A.—We do not admit that.

Q.—Did they give any increment in wages?

A.—Recently 25 per cent increment in rate of piece work system was given after the representation by the Union. All were not given except only the heavy section of the Wire Mill. In 1930 the average earning was Rs. 25.3 per month for 558 employees. In 1937 average earning was Rs. 23.9 per month. The production increased in the proportion 2.6. Therefore per head production is 2.6 times more than before.

Q.—What is the rate for overtime?

A.—The usual rate of wages is given for the overtime worked. Nothing extra is given for working overtime.

Q.—Is there any bonus given to the employees in this company?

A.—No.

Q.—How many workers are there on piece work system?

A.—104 workers are on piece work system out of about 800 workers.

Q.—How much minimum wage do you suggest for this company?

A.—For unskilled 12 annas, semi-skilled Re. 1, skilled Rs. 1-4. We did not suggest the same minimum wage as in the Tatas. The Company cannot bear such minimum wage. At the same time the skill required by the men is not so much. The per head production is  $2\frac{1}{2}$  times more. The cost of production in 1929-30 was Rs. 13 and that in 1937 was Rs. 8-7-0. The financial position of the Company and the cost of living of the workers have been taken into consideration in fixing the minimum wage. We compared the rates and figures of the Tatas. Tatas are making 4 or 5 crores of rupees as profit. Therefore minimum wage was fixed higher in the case of the Tatas.

Q.—There is a certain minimum which cannot be reduced, which cannot be changed unless the prices change. Other factors won't affect minimum wage.

A.—The financial position will have to be taken into consideration.

Q.—You must suggest a minimum and if less is paid a man will not be able to live. You can expect more facilities from the Tatas. But in other respects, only the price of article manufactured by the Company can affect the minimum wage fixed. What do you suggest finally?

A.—Trade also is taken into consideration. We think the same figures as suggested before must be the minimum wage for this industry.

Q.—How many days leave do you get in a year?

A.—Two weeks leave with pay and two days festival leave.

Q.—Is there any reduction of men?

A.—Yes. On almost all the machines there is reduction of men. According to the plant they require about 1,600 men. Previously one shift was working. Now three shifts are working.

Q.—Are the shift duty hours the same as other industries.

A.—No. The shift hours are very inconvenient. (*Memorandum was shown with regard to the different duty hours.*) In one shift, the man will have to finish the job at 3 A.M.

Q.—You have stated in the memorandum regarding the shortage of housing accommodation. Is this a fact?

A.—Yes. Only 20 per cent of the employees have been provided with quarters. There is no more plot of land available for the Company for building additional quarters. On account of shortage of quarters about 50 workers have built their houses in the *Basti*.

Q.—Where do others live?

A.—They live outside with other people, 2 miles away.

Q.—What is the difference in rent between the Company's quarters and private quarters.

A.—Not much. The employees pay Rs. 3 as rent for one-room house and Rs. 2-4-0 for Company's one-room house. The Company quarters have got no windows.

Q.—Do Tatas build similar type?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Are there shelter houses for the children of the employees in the Works.

A.—There are no shelter houses in the works. *Rejas* leave their children at home and attend the works.

Q.—Where do the employees get the loan from?

A.—Mainly from *Kabulis* and *Marwaris*. They have no chance to get loan from the societies of other companies as only their own employees who are members of the society can get loan.

Q.—What is the rate of interest?

A.—36 per cent to 150 per cent per annum. Many people have taken loan on higher rate of interest.

Q.—Can you suggest any remedy for this kind of indebtedness?

A.—We want that the wages should be raised. The debts should be wiped out by legislation, since interest more than the principals, has been paid. Whatever wages they get are not sufficient for purchasing clothes and food. There was one Credit Society but it is not in existence now. During the lock-out last year it ceased to exist. We have just finished the dispute. Now we want to start the Credit Society again.

Q.—In your memorandum you have stated that the machinery is not up-to-date. In 1936 did they not buy the best in the market then? There are best plants in other countries yet this company faces the competition with increased production. If they purchase still more up-to-date machinery, then there will be reduction of men?

A.—No. But it will reduce the intensification of the worker.

It depends upon the machinery. This factory has got a larger proportion of skilled workers to the unskilled than other companies.

Q.—Are there any hazardous jobs?

A.—Yes. There are poisonous chemicals and lead used in certain departments, such as rubber mixing and vulcanizing departments. People working in the departments get diseases on the skins of the hands. They get sick. Many suffer from colic pain.

Q.—Is there any occupational disease?

A.—In the copper industry some of the workers working with poisonous chemicals get ulcers.

Q.—Are there many men getting ulcers? Are they paid higher wages for doing hazardous jobs?

A.—There is a large number of men getting ulcers. They are not paid higher wages.

Q.—Did you represent this case to the Conciliation Board?

A.—It was only with the management of the Tinsplate that we had a Conciliation Board. The Cable Company did not consent to a Conciliation Board being the mediator in the dispute.

Q.—Is there any bonus and gratuity scheme?

A.—No. Employees do not get anything at the time of retirement.

Q.—You say the earnings of the workers on the piece-rate system have been reduced. Have you any objection to the piece-rate system being carried on?

A.—We have no objection to this, provided the basic rate is fixed as 15 annas per day with additional wages according to the tonnage produced to induce the workers to give more production.

Q.—You want the hospital to be outside the Factory. Why so?

A.—Yes. We want the hospital outside the factory so that we may get medical aid properly.

Q.—Any other facilities you require to be made?

A.—We require one shelter house for the sake of women workers and their children.

Q.—Is there any school in your company?

A.—No. At least there must be one primary school for the education of the children of the workers.

Q.—The minimum wage of 12 annas you suggested will vary according to the market conditions.

A.—As already told, we have taken into consideration the cost of living, efficiency of the workers and the financial condition of the Company. More prosperous concern requires more financial consideration.

Q.—Have you got any other suggestion to make with regard to service rules?

A.—We demand a grade system. We require a bonus if the Company gets sufficient profit. If the Company's profit goes down then the rock bottom basis must be the minimum wage we have suggested. That should not be lowered.

Regarding the hours of work, in hazardous jobs, the duration of work must be reduced.

*Mr. Hayman.*—The management says that the rates of the workers have been increased. Is this correct?

*A.*—The basic rate of piece work has been reduced many times. In the course of the last five years, the rate has been reduced 3 or 4 times.

*Q.*—The management says that the recruitment is done by the Manager?

*A.*—No. Recruitment is done by foremen. They fill up the employment slip, which is signed by the General Manager.

*Q.*—Do you mean that it is not desirable to give preference to the sons and relatives of the employees in the case of appointment?

*A.*—In certain cases preference can be given, but not generally.

*Q.*—According to your statement the people on piece work system earn 50 per cent more than before. If the earning of the men is not full, how can they get more?

*A.*—Old people on higher rate were sent out on account of reduction or dismissal. These posts were filled by men of lower grades. That is why the average has fallen down. But the people now filled are getting more than what they were getting before but not to the extent the old people were getting then.

*Q.*—How did you calculate the cost of living?

*A.*—We have taken a family of four; self, wife and two children. On the cost of living, we have added the house rent and something for clothing.

*Q.*—In this way how many families did you enquire into?

*A.*—About 300 workers out of 830.

*Q.*—Would you be prepared to place the figures of this finding at the disposal of the Committee?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—Generally what is the interest paid by the workers on loans?

*A.*—The average interest would be 50 per cent per annum.

*Q.*—What was the rate of interest in the Loan Society?

*A.*—9 per cent. But the Loan Society is not in existence now due to the strike.

*Q.*—Did you try to examine and revive the Loan Society?

*A.*—The union is struggling for existence since it was started. If an opportunity is available, it is the intention of the union to examine this.

Q.—Is it a fact that all are paying house rent to the Company?

A.—There are some free quarters also.

Q.—Do you know the number of free quarters?

A.—About 60 quarters.

Q.—What kind of workers does this Company require?

A.—This company requires more people of a semi-skilled and skilled type.

Q.—In dealing with the principles underlying the fixation of a minimum wage, you have suggested that trade should be taken into consideration, the living factor in Jamshedpur and the profit the Company makes. Is this correct?

A.—Yes. The minimum wage should vary according to the industry.

Q.—If you consider that the unskilled workers do not play any less important part in the profits of the Company and in production, you have to consider that the cost of living factor is the same as in other factories in Jamshedpur and the minimum wage should be the lowest living wage.

A.—We have suggested the rock bottom rate of 12 annas per day. Leave periods should be covered. Then he will get 12 annas  $\times$  30 days = Rs. 22-8-0 per month.

Q.—With reference to the skilled workers, especially those who work on the piece rate system, I would like you to consider certain other things. In other countries in determining the minimum wage it is fixed on a basic rate. For instance, in the Coal Mines in Great Britain the minimum wage is the basic rate and this is unchangeable. In such an industry the basic rate is not affected by the insufficiency of orders or inadequacy of materials. The minimum wage for skilled men must be fixed as a basic rate *plus* a fluctuation rate. By this the workers will be sure of minimum wage and the fluctuation rate will vary according to the tonnage produced.

A.—It is a good system.

Q.—Is there any intensification in the Cable Industry?

A.—There is intensification not only in the Cable Company but elsewhere also. A standard level is given to the skilled workers to produce certain tonnage in a certain period of time and afterwards the standard of production is raised higher and higher on account of which the earning in a piece work system goes down and men are reduced, though production is increased.

Q.—Do you suggest that close co-operation between the management and the union is essential to get rid of this?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How many unions are there in the Cable Company?

A.—Only one union.

The Coimmitte resumed its sitting in the Tata Institute, Jamshedpur, on the 1st April 1939.

The following members were present :—

- (1) Mr. R. R. Bakhale, Deputy Chairman, Presiding.
- (2) Dr. R. K. Mukherjee, Member.
- (3) Mr. A. M. Hayman, Member.
- (4) Prof. Abdul Bari, Member.
- (5) Prof. R. K. Saran, Secretary.
- (6) Mr. T. H. Clifford, (Co-opted Member, Capital).
- (7) Mr. J. N. Mitra (Co-opted Member, Labour).

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**Oral evidence of Mr. A. Sen, Mr. Desa Singh, Mr. Nath Singh and Mr. Y. S. Rao, assisted by Mr. J. N. Mitra on behalf of the Indian Steel and Wire Products Labour Union, Jamshedpur.**

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*Mr. Bakhale.*—What are the respective positions of you gentlemen in the Union?

*(Mr. Mitra).*—Mr. Sen is the Secretary of the Union; Mr. Rao is the Assistant Secretary; Messrs. Desa Singh and Nath Singh are members of the Executive Committee.

*Q.*—The other gentlemen besides you, Mr. Mitra, are also the workers of the Company and also the office bearers of the Union?

*A.*—Yes, but four of the office bearers, viz., Messrs. Nath Singh, Sen, Desa Singh and another have been dismissed by the Company since last six months and have not been taken back yet.

*Q.*—Others are not harassed for their taking part in the union?

*A.*—Yes, they are called to the office and tutored not to do this. They are also persuaded on some pretext or the other.

*Q.*—Are they not victimised?

*A.*—Yes, they are victimised also

*Q.*—Since August 1938 you have established your Union; what is the membership of the Union?

*A.*—1,150 except *Rejas* (Women workers).

*Q.*—How many workers work in the factory?

*A.*—1,600 or 1,700 including *Rejas*.

*Q.*—Do they pay their subscription monthly?

A.—They do not pay their subscription monthly. Some pay yearly and some weekly.

Q.—What is the rate of subscription?

A.—The rate is 3 days' wages per year per head.

Q.—What is the total collection up till now?

A.—The total collection is Rs. 720 up till now.

Q.—Do you keep the money in a Bank?

A.—Yes, there is a Joint Account in the Bank.

Q.—Who is the treasurer?

A.—Mr. Sarfaraz Ali is the treasurer.

Q.—Do you keep the money in the name of the Union?

A.—Yes.

Q.—In your statement you have said that—(*reads*) there is no increase of wages since the Company was started.

A.—There is no grade system. There is great favouritism in the matter of increase. People who are relatives of the management get early increase.

Q.—Have you got figures of the relatives and favourites who have been given increment?

A.—Yes, I have got.

Q.—Will you send that to the Committee?

A.—Yes, I will send it to the Committee later on.

Q.—Can you substantiate the charges against the management?

A.—Yes.

*Prof. Saran.*—You have said in your memorandum that there is payment only for 28 days in the month? Therefore, there is a loss of 2 days' wages to the workers. Is this the violation of the Factories Act?

A.—Yes, we have given you the names of the departments. There are other departments where Sundays are off and consequently there is work for only 26 days. We want that all workers should get work for 28 days as is the practice in the Tata Iron and Steel Company, Limited. There is sufficient work in the Company and the departments can run for 28 days.

Q.—What is the condition in the Wire Drawing Department?

A.—Formerly, there was no difficulty in this Department but now only 25 trolleys of raw materials per shift are given to the workers which provide work only for 4 or 5 hours



Q.—What is your piece-rate?

A.—No fixed daily rate. It ranges from 12 annas to Rs. 1-8-0.

Q.—Are the rates different for different people?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is there any fixed amount for time-rate?

A.—No. The rates for the same work differ from Rs. 50 to Rs. 125.

Q.—Do you get acting allowance?

A.—No, only the people in the Rod Mill are given acting allowance but the rate depends on the sweet will of the management. There is no system about it.

Q.—What about increment? The Management say that care is taken to give increment every year.

A.—Workers do not get any increment. There are workers who have not got any increment since they joined the service. They are getting the same rate as was given to them at the time of appointment.

Q.—The Management say that if they cannot get the same work some other work is given to them?

A.—It is not the case.

Q.—What about the hours of work?

A.—8 hours attendance is given but in some sections, such as the loading side of the Rod Mill and Nail Machine Shipping Department, they work for more than 8 hours.

Q.—Is there any Safety Committee?

A.—Yes, but the workers have no representation on it.

*(Conflicting replies were given by the witness.)*

Q.—Do you get compensation?

A.—Compensation is not given according to the rules. Some workers are given no compensation at all. Prompt attention is not paid to the injured persons who should be immediately sent to hospital.

Q.—Is punishment by suspension in practice here?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What is the period of suspension?

A.—There is no fixed period but after the formation of the Union punishment by suspension has increased. Formerly, it was on a small scale. The period varies from a few hours to 20 days.

Q.—How many persons have been suspended after the formation of the Union?

A.—I think about 21 men.

Q.—For how many days?

A.—It varies from one day to 20 days. No payment is made for the period of suspension.

Q.—What is the method of over-time work?

A.—Over-time is generally not paid. Workers in the Loading Department of the Rod Mill do not get any payment for over-time even if there is 12 hours work.

Q.—Is that general practice?

A.—Yes. They get neither payment for over-time nor off-time in lieu thereof.

Q.—Is it a fact that skilled and semi-skilled workers in the Rod Mill are kept on wages of un-skilled labour?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What is the payment?

A.—Annas eight or nine.

Q.—What is the hours of work in Tongs Department and what is the payment?

A.—It is from 1½ to 2 hours and the payment is 8 annas for *coolie* work.

Q.—Do they get glove to protect their hands from burns?

A.—Yes, they do, but the gloves are small and are not supplied in sufficient number.

Q.—Do they get bonus?

A.—It is not the general rule. Some get according to special rules made by the Management. There is a lot of scope for partiality and favouritism by the officers.

Q.—In the Wire Mill also the same conditions prevail?

A.—Yes, as that in the Rod Mill.

Q.—Is there proper water and sanitary arrangement?

A.—No. They have put earthen water-pots after the Labour Enquiry Committee has come to Jamshedpur.

*Prof. Abdul Bari.*—Has the Management recognised the Union?

A.—No. There is no effective recognition though the Union is called in the Joint Committee.

Q.—Is the Union represented on any body or committee?

A.—No.

Q.—If you refer any matter to the Management, do you get a reply?

A.—No. They do not acknowledge our letters. This creates a difficult situation sometimes which we cannot remedy. We represented this matter to the Management but the result is zero.

Mr. Hayman.—Have you complained it to your leader?

A.—Our leader has often drawn the attention of the Management towards this but to no effect.                   ...                   ...

Q.—Have you put your demands before the Company? If so, with what effect?

A.—We have, but without any effect.

Q.—You mean to say that there is a general victimisation of the workers of the Union?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What is the nature of victimisation towards the Union workers?

A.—No charge sheet is given to them, they are suspended and maltreated and there is always a threat to beat them.

Q.—Has it begun only recently?

A.—No. This has been the case since the formation of the Union.

Q.—You have levelled a number of serious charges against the Management, can you substantiate them?

A.—Certainly, we can do, if the Committee wants.

Q.—Are the wage-rates low?

A.—They are not only low but they are poor. Here the rates are the lowest compared to the same nature of work in other local industries.

Q.—Do you say that the wages are low or the earnings are low?

A.—Both the wages and the earnings.

Q.—You say of the Nail Department or the Wire Department?

A.—Of all the departments.

Q.—The standard rate is higher?

A.—Not at all.

Q.—How many men are there who get about Rs. 40?

A.—About 75 per cent.

Q.—I understand that the earnings of the workers are Rs. 2 to Rs. 3 per day; can you explain this?

A.—The daily rate *plus* the production bonus brings the average income to Rs. 1-8-0 to Rs. 3. The provident fund is cut only on the daily rate and on the daily income.

Q.—And the profit sharing bonus?

A.—We are getting profit sharing bonus for the last two years but there is no fixed system for the calculation of this bonus.

Q.—You have complained that recruitment is done by persons who are responsible to the Managing Director?

A.—No, I have not said anything against the Managing Director. I recommend that there should be a Board of Recruitment in which there is representation of the Union.

Q.—In your statement you have brought a very serious charge against the Management that in matters of promotion there is great favouritism towards the relatives of the Management. Can you prove it?

A.—Yes, when time comes.

Q.—Is there any interval in the midst of work?

A.—Yes, there is such a rule to give rest after their respective round of work but very often they are forced to work double round without any rest.

Q.—Do I understand that the complaint is that they are not paid compensation for accident and injury under the Workmen's Compensation Act?

A.—Some have not been paid.

Q.—Can you tell me any case where you have approached the Compensation Commissioner complaining about the non-payment of compensation? If not, why did you not report the matter to him?

A.—We have not done that.

Q.—Is it not the work of the Union to take up these cases?

A.—Yes.

The Committee resumed its sitting in the Tata Institute, Jamshedpur on the 1st April 1939 at 2½ P.M.

Mr. R. R. Bakhale, Deputy Chairman, Presiding.

Members present :—

- (1) Mr. R. R. Bakhale, Deputy Chairman.
- (2) Dr. R. K. Mukherjee, Member.
- (3) Prof. R. K. Saran, Secretary.
- (4) Prof. Abdul Bari, Member.
- (5) Mr. A. M. Hayman, Member.
- (6) Mr. T. H. Clifford (Co-opted Member—Management).
- (7) Mr. J. N. Mitra (Co-opted Member—Labour).

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**Oral evidence of the following workers, Mr. Sarwan Singh, Galvanising Department, Workman, Mr. L. M. Bergon, Rod Mill, Tongs Man, Mr. Karnal Singh, Cooling Bed Yard, Mr. Sarfraz Ali, Wire Drawing Department, on behalf of the Indian Steel and Wire Products Company, Jamshedpur.**

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*Prof. Saran.*—Where do you work, please tell me the department?

*A.*—(1) I work in the Wire Drawing Department, (2) Tongs Department.

*Q.*—How much do you get as your wage?

*A.*—(1) Re. 1 per day, (2) Rs. 1-6-0 per day, (3) I work in the Wire Drawing Cooling Bed Department. I get 8 annas a day, (4) Rs. 1-12-0 per day.

*Q.*—What is the general rate in the Wire Drawing Department?

*A.*—From 8 annas to Rs. 2-2-0.

*Q.*—In your reply you have said that there is no graded promotion; you want promotion: Is this right?

*A.*—Yes, in every department.

*Q.*—On how much did you start and how much are you getting now?

*A.*—I started on 12 annas and I am getting Rs. 1-4-0.

*Q.*—In how many years?

*A.*—In 8 years. Since 3 years there is no increment.

*Q.*—What is the rate of a *Khalasi*?

*A.*—It is 3 annas.

Q.—In the Tongs Department?

A.—It is Rs. 1-6-0, Rs. 1-2-0.

Q.—On how much did you start?

A.—I started on Re. 1.

Q.—How much rest do you get?

A.—There is no rest.

Q.—It is said that there is half an hour rest.

A.—There is no rest. In the Rod Mill there is a system of giving rest but very often rest is not given.

Q.—Do you get bonus?

A.—There is no fixed rate of bonus. Some get Rs. 15, some Rs. 16, Rs. 10, Rs. 5, Rs. 3.

Q.—Do you get rest after 75 billets?

A.—There is no rest so long as 75 billets are not complete.

Q.—Do you live in the company's quarters?

A.—Some live in the company's quarters and 60 per cent live in private houses.

Q.—Do you pay rent?

A.—Yes, Rs. 6 per month.

Q.—How many days leave with pay you get?

A.—14 days in the year and two days festival leave.

Q.—Do you get leave always?

A.—No.

Q.—Is there any arrangement for provident fund?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How much contribution you pay in the provident fund? What is the company's contribution?

A.—I pay 1/12th of the monthly wage and the company also gives the same.

Q.—What is the rate of interest in the provident fund?

A.—I do not know.

Q.—Since how long you are getting provident fund?

A.—Since 3 or 4 years. It may be more than 4 years; it may be 5 years also.

Q.—Have you got loan?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How much?

A.—(1) About Rs. 200, (2) Rs. 500, (3) Rs. 250, (4) Rs. 400.

Q.—What is the rate of interest that you pay?

A.—15 per cent, 18 per cent.

Q.—Have you got the loan from the society? What is the rate of interest there?

A.—Yes. From the Co-operative Society of the company; the amount taken is Rs. 225 at 12 per cent interest.

Q.—From where you pay off the loan?

A.—From the pay or bonus.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—In the nail machine and wire drawing departments, is the piece-rate high? Basic rate is different? What is the case?

A.—I do not know exactly.

Q.—Is the number of old men higher?

A.—Generallp old men get post but new men also are given preference to old men.

Q.—Is it a fact that some mills are closed?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What is the daily rate in the Rod Mill?

A.—It is 8 annas.

Q.—Do you get shoes and gloves?

A.—Yes, but not according to requirement.

Q.—Is there any rest interval?

A.—No. The work is similar as in a Kiln (*Bhatta*).

Q.—In the Tong Department do you get rest?

A.—No, there is no rest, as soon as fuel is finished another set of the workers comes in. There is one round after another round.

Q.—In every kind of work there is such a system?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is there any reduction of men in the same kind of work? Is there intensification of work?

A.—In the Rod Mill there were 4 or 5 men per work, but now for the same work there are 2 or 3 men. The number has been reduced.

Q.—What is the position in the rod mill?

A.—The same condition.

Q.—Do you get wages for the over-time work?

A.—Very seldom in other departments except in the Rod Mill and Machine shop where we get very often.

Q.—Is there work on Sunday also, and if so, do you get extra wages?

A.—Generally there is no work on Sunday but if there is work on Sunday, then we get holiday on some other day; but we don't get extra wages.

Q.—Is there fixed period of over-time work?

A.—3 or 4 hours. On Sundays complete 8 hours and some times more than that.

Q.—Do you get off-time?

A.—Yes.

*Prof. Bari.*—The living of the place is very dear. For minimum subsistence, how much do you think a worker should get?

A.—In our opinion one should get Rs. 2 or Rs. 2-8-0 per day. This should be applicable to the man who has got family. Without family Re. 1 should be the minimum.

Q.—What rent you pay for non-family quarters?

A.—For the kutchra house Rs. 2; and in that we live with our family. If we live with family and children we have to pay Rs. 4, if alone Rs 2.

Q.—Where do you live?

A.—In the *Basti's kutchra* house.

Q.—Do you not get the *pucca* house from the company?

A.—No.

Q.—Do you get compulsory leave?

A.—We are sent away for 12 or 14 days but some times a month also.

Q.—Is it a fact that when former workers come back they are not taken back but new hands are employed?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Why is it so; do you know the reason?



A.—There is no difference between the new and the old workers. There is favouritism in the company. Relations are taken in first and get preference over the rest. If one man goes, four come to take his place. One who has any body to back him gets a job but otherwise not.

Q.—The work of the helper is also on piece-rate?

A.—Yes, some get annas 8 a day and some are monthly paid.

Q.—Those who take part in the Union are treated badly?

A.—Yes, recently 3 or 4 men were discharged for taking active part in the union. There are many *dalals* of the company. They report to the management and try to create friction between us.

Q.—What is the work of the *dalals*?

A.—They do not work and only send information to the management. They are favourites of the foreman. Many workers have been suspended on the false report of these *dalals*. For becoming office bearers of the union as Secretary or the Assistant Secretary, they victimise and dismiss the workers.

Mr. Mitra.—How men are recruited?

A.—First the department gives the number of the persons wanted and then the head of the department appoints.

Q.—Before this the foreman used to appoint?

A.—Yes. Since the establishment of the union workmen are not taken from among the outsiders.

Q.—There is no leave for weekly-rated workmen?

A.—No.

Dr. Mukherjee.—Is there no place for drinking water?

A.—No, recently there has been installed one pipe for this.

Q.—Is there fan for hot workers?

A.—Yes, there is; but it is not at all sufficient.

Q.—Do you get shoes and clothes for the hot work?

A.—Yes.

Q.—In the Wire Mill?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is there system of production bonus?

A.—No, there is no regular system declared by the Company. It is given according to the will of the company.

Q.—What is he earning in the Nail Mill?

A.—It is Rs. 25 to Rs. 125 in the month.

Q.—Is there favouritism? Is preference towards relations shown in giving them good machines?

A.—Yes. Relations and favourites are given good machines.

Q.—Is there any difference in the out-put from the old and the new machines?

A.—Yes. The out-put of the old machines is less. The earning of workers to whom they are given is, therefore, less.

Q.—Do you get quarters?

A.—No.

Q.—Do you want quarters?

A.—Yes, by all means. Those who have not got houses need it very badly.

Q.—All of you pay rent?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What is the rate of the crane driver?

A.—The rate is annas 15 or annas 15-6, some also get annas 8 or annas 12.

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# ENGINEERING

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The Committee resumed its sitting at Jamalpur (Monghyr) on the 15th December 1938.

Present :—

- (1) Mr. R. R. Bakhale, Chairman.
- (2) Dr. R. K. Mukherjee, Member.
- (3) Mr. H. B. Chandra, M.L.A.
- (4) Mr. J. N. Lal, M.L.A.
- (5) Mr. M. P. Gandhi.
- (6) Mr. R. K. Saran, Secretary.
- (7) Mr. Browne (Co-opted Member—Capital).

**The Committee examined Mr. Nirapado Mukherjee, President of the East Indian Railway Labour Union, Jamalpur.**

*Chairman.*—When was the union started?

*A.*—The union existed in some form for a long time but it was not functioning properly. It was reorganised only this year in the month of January. The union has been registered but it has not yet been recognized by the employers. The total membership of the union is about 3,500. I have not submitted any reply to the questionnaire.

*Q.*—Is membership confined to workshop only or does it extend to the line?

*A.*—It is mainly confined to the workshop. A very small percentage is from the line.

*Q.*—What is the amount of subscription for membership?

*A.*—One day's wage in the year.

*Q.*—Is the union affiliated to any central labour organization in India?

*A.*—Not yet.

*Q.*—I suppose there is more than one union on the E. I. Ry.?

*A.*—Yes. There is one union at Lucknow and another at Lilloah.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—What is the proportion of casual labour to the total labour strength in Jamalpur?

*A.*—Not more than 5 to 10 per cent.

*Q.*—Do you think that this number of casual labour has increased due to agricultural depression?

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*The evidence is not corrected by the witness—Vidyabhushan Shukla.*

A.—No, because in the workshop they have a certain sanctioned number for each department for casual as well as permanent hands. Therefore it is very difficult to say whether it is guided by fluctuation. That is done according to the needs of the workshop.

Q.—There are many skilled workers taken as unskilled workers?

A.—I am not in a position to say what is the percentage. It sometime happens that a skilled labour comes and if there is no place, temporarily he is taken as unskilled labour and then when a vacancy happens he is given a lift.

Q.—You may not be aware that on the North-Western railway they have made a definite improvement by appointing a Labour Bureau at the Moghalpura workshop with a view to preventing unfair treatment. That is the main function of the Bureau. With this Bureau a Labour Exchange is established with a view to absorb the surplus staff. No recruitment is permitted until a reference is made to the Labour Exchange. There is an idea that the surplus labour staff may be sent out to other railways for employment. I would like to know your opinion regarding the establishment of a Labour Exchange for this function.

A.—We welcome this idea. There is no opportunity here to represent the cases of the discharged workers.

Q.—There are several shops. If you have surplus labour or unemployed people, is there any opportunity for these people to be transferred to another shop in Jamalpur?

A.—There is no machinery to do it. The management several times considered this question and it was said that certain persons of certain kind of skill are required and therefore they cannot be transferred. I am not an expert.

Q.—What is the attitude of the skilled workers who can be usefully employed?

A.—They would very much like the opportunity. On the whole I think the Labour Exchange would be very useful.

Q.—To what extent the educated middle classes are coming in the lower categories of skilled work in the different shops?

A.—They are given preference over the sons of the employees. There are educated people amongst them.

*Mr. Saran.*—How does the company classify workers under skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled caterogies?

A.—Unskilled workers are like coolies and menial staff, semi-skilled is that class of skilled labour which is styled as non-technically trained and the skilled labourer is technically trained.

Q.—Do you think that there is any corruption in appointment and promotion?

A.—Yes, we do get many complaints.

Q.—As regards promotion I find that you are giving promotion up to a certain stage and there is no promotion after that?

A.—Here there are different grades and there is no promotion beyond that grade.

Q.—Don't you think that slower rate of promotion is far better than rapid promotion up to a certain stage and no promotion after that?

A.—I would prefer rapid promotion up to a certain stage. If a maximum is fixed for a certain grade, as a rule, the sooner the maximum is reached the better for the worker.

Q.—But you will be getting the same amount of money throughout your career; what is your objection to slower promotion?

A.—Well, I would prefer quick promotion.

Q.—But if a worker looks forward to some promotion there might be incentive to do work?

A.—When he is convinced that there is very little chance of promotion that may have a very deteriorating effect upon his career.

Q.—Do you know that there are certain number of seats reserved for Anglo-Indians?

A.—Yes, to a very great extent. It is about 50 per cent.

Q.—What is the proportion reserved for Biharis?

A.—I have no idea. ...

Q.—Do you know of any case in which the Bihari quota has been filled by Anglo-Indians if they come from the province of Bihar?

A.—I do not know.

Q.—Is it a fact that apprentices are paid no allowance on days on which they are sick?

A.—I have no definite information about that.

Q.—There are some people working on hot jobs. Would you suggest that the management ought to supply them with boots and clothing?

A.—Yes.

Mr. Chandra.—As a general proposition may I read out to you a few sentences from the report of the Royal Commission on Labour. (*reads.*) I would put it to you whether you would consider it retrograde to divide the province into different water-tight compartments for the standardization of labour conditions?

A.—Why should it be because the labour condition at Jamshedpur is exactly the same as it is at Jamalpur. If the industry is of the same kind then the wages must be the same. It will be unfair to allow different scales of pay for the same kind of work.

Q.—Have you any idea of the annual addition to the Fine Fund?

A.—It is a pretty huge amount. This year perhaps they have got about Rs. 14,000.

Q.—Have you any idea of the total amount at which the fund stands at present?

A.—I can tell you that previously we had no knowledge that there was such a fund. Recently there was a vacancy in the Staff Benefit Fund Committee and so the delegates were asked to elect a man to fill that vacancy. Then we came to know that there was such a fund. We have suggested, therefore, that the committee should be formed on both elective and nominative basis and the management can nominate a certain proportion but the majority of the members should be from the labour side on elective basis.

*Mr. Browne.*—There is a Staff Benefit Fund run for the benefit of the whole E. I. Ry. to which is credited a grant from the Railway Board. In addition to that grant all fines realised from workshops all over the line are credited to it and it is disbursed by a Central Committee sitting in Calcutta which has one or two nominated members by the General Manager and the remaining members are elected by the area. In each railway centre there is original sub-committee and at divisional centre meetings of original sub-committees are held every quarter. Their minutes are sent forward to the Central Committee with recommendations for grants which are usually to Institutes for Europeans and Anglo-Indians, for assistance to staff requiring considerable amount for sanatorium treatment and in addition every district or divisional medical officer has an imprest grant for the provision of medicines, serums, etc., which are outside the medical store. In addition to that, staff who are sent by railway medical officers for treatment in a non-railway hospital have a very large proportion of their diet charges met by this fund. With regard to the point raised by Mr. Mukherjee that the workshop labour in this district was unaware of the existence of such a fund, I may say that for many years past representation to the original sub-committees have been on elective basis and not by nomination. The only nomination is of the local senior officer. There have been two representatives of Europeans and Anglo-Indians and two representatives of the Indian staff.

*Chairman.*—How are they elected?

A.—By *Panchaiti*.

*Mr. Chandra.*—Would you like that a particular principle should be laid down for the disbursement of the Fine Fund in the same proportion in which the wage bill is determined?

A.—I would like that the major portion of it should be spent for the welfare of labour which is very poor.

*Mr. Browne.*—Fines are not imposed very much now, but the supervising staff, guards and drivers who are not affected by the Wages Act are punished sometimes.

*Mr. Chandra.*—Had you had occasion to come across any instance of corrupt practice in the matter of employment, promotion and so on.

A.—Yes.

Q.—Would you indicate the general trend of the cases which lead to such practices?

A.—Much depends on the officers themselves, but there are others who are not of good behaviour.

Q.—Apart from individual matters can you suggest any general principle of reform in order to get over this practice?

A.—I think I have already answered to Mr. Mukherjee's question about Labour Bureaus and Labour Exchange.

Q.—How the Safety Committee is constituted?

A.—We want that it should be on elective basis.

*Mr. Browne.*—The Safety Committee as at present constituted is as follows :—

One of the officers is the Chairman and a certain number is elected and a certain number is nominated. The proportion is 50 : 50. They enquire into all workshop accidents.

Q.—Have you had any instance of victimisation or punishment?

A.—Yes, in several cases.

Q.—What is the proportion of elected members to nominated members?

A.—It is mostly nominated but nominations are changed very frequently with the object of supporting safety principles.

Q.—What is the nature of such punishment or victimisation?

A.—Of course in one case one man was being pursued like anything but on account of the intervention of Mr. Browne that has been set right. Of course the delegates are not looked upon with favour by their immediate superiors. That is the general complaint. There are several men who dislike the idea, because these delegates are victimised.

Q.—Would you like to have such instances immediately brought to the notice of the Deputy Chief Mechanical Engineer or the union should have power to do so?

A.—Yes.



Q.—Would you have any objection to give one seat to a member elected by the apprentices?

A.—I will have no objection.

Mr. Lall.—You have referred to corruption in the matter of appointment and recruitment. Can you indicate the nature of corruption?

A.—There is some underhand transaction sometimes, and sometimes there is favouritism. These underhand transactions sometimes take place through senior officers. The man immediately concerned is the foreman in charge of that shop. He selects these men and there are certain other persons under him who are supposed to help him in their selection. In the case of one shop we have positive complaint and I believe the man has already complained to the D. C. M. E. by giving thumb impression and taking the risk of counter prosecution.

Q.—Recruitment and appointment is not made by the head of the department but on the recommendation of the immediate superior officer in each workshop?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Can you suggest any better method of avoiding complaint in this connection?

A.—There should be a Recruitment Board.

Q.—How should it be composed?

A.—I think labour should have a representative on that Board and the management and if possible, a Government representative also.

Q.—Is the appointment made casually or is it made from the list maintained of old hands who have been retrenched?

A.—To be frank, we are not conversant with the fact that there exists a waiting list and our demand is that there should be a regular waiting list and out of that list selection should be made and a copy of that waiting list should be made over to the union so as to know whether recruitment is properly made.

Q.—How would you like the waiting list to be prepared?

A.—Those persons who have been discharged or retrenched should get preference and after them the passed apprentices.

Q.—Are the apprentices the only source of recruitment or recruitment is made from outside also?

A.—Recruitment is made from outside also. As I have already explained there are three classes of labour. Those who are untrained are called unskilled labourers, those who are trained in the workshop are called semi-skilled labourers and those who pass the apprentice examination are called skilled labourers. I want that apprentices who do not get employment after obtaining their final certificate should also be entered in the waiting list.

Q.—Are promotions made according to different rules?

A.—There are grades and there are no different rules.

Mr. Browne.—I give you, Mr. Mukherjee, an assurance that such a waiting list is maintained.

Mr. Nirapado Mukherji.—If there is any deviation from that list we can bring it to your notice.

Q.—Have you any grievance in this connection ?

A.—The grievance is against the administration on principle.

Q.—What is the grievance ?

A.—It is not properly worked.

Q.—Do such complaints arise often ?

A.—It happens oftener in some shops and occasionally in others.

Q.—What is your suggestion for improving this state of affairs ?

A.—I think the Employment Officer is supposed to look after the welfare of labour but as he is overburdened with work he has very little time to look to these things.

Mr. Browne.—The Employment Officer combines the function of employment and labour officers.

Q.—Do you think that one labour officer can do for so many thousands of labourers ?

A.—He may be assisted by anybody but he will have to do it.

Q.—What is the system of promotion : is it time-scale or is it both time-scale and graded ?

A.—There is very great grievance against the grade. The semi-skilled labour have to end their lives on Rs. 27 though they do the same kind of work as the second class *mistris*.

Q.—Have you anything to say in connection with the recruitment of the three classes of apprentices ?

A.—Our demand is that preference should be given to the children and relations of the employees. Of course the authorities also try to follow it but sometimes it is deviated and that ought not to be allowed.

Q.—Do you consider that some occupations deserve special attention for the purpose of providing special equipment ?

A.—There is a complaint about goggles in the welding shop. In other departments the Committee is satisfied by their visit that certain shops should be provided with special equipment.

Mr. Gandhi.—It has been stated that for hazardous occupations adequate equipment is not provided by the management ?

A.—Our complaint is that it is not provided. It depends much on the immediate superior officer. It is through his fault, I should say, that they do not get the things.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—You suggest the use of more protective clothing, boots and gloves ?

A.—Yes.

*Mr. Gandhi.*—Are you generally satisfied with the method of recruitment of new hands ?

A.—[There is a grievance and it is that the principle is not adhered to. [The recruitment is made on the basis of recommendation of the immediate superior. So far as Mr. Browne is concerned I have no complaint against him. [There is a policy of continual reduction in the grade in this railway.

*Mr. Saran.*—How much sickness leave is given to unskilled workers ?

A.—[The present rule which is in force here is very bad. There is no separate sick leave.

*Mr. Browne.*—I will send you a copy of the rules for granting leave.

*Mr. Saran.*—Does a man who receives a higher salary have longer sick leave ?

A.—The sickness leave should be the same for everybody irrespective of the amount of salary.

*Mr. Lal.*—Are there certain occupations where you feel that work is very hard and there should be some leisure allowed during working hours ?

A.—Yes. In Public Works foundry, iron foundry and rolling mills.

Q.—What hours of work would you like to be fixed for those occupations which are hard ?

A.—Instead of 45 hours it should be 40 hours in a week.

Q.—Have there been cases of enforced idleness in the factory ?

A.—Yes. [There is no work on a particular day in the week.

*Mr. Saran.*—Is anything paid for working outside working hours ?

A.—Yes.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—You have stated that in hazardous work there should be rest pauses or change of sets of labour. [To what extent do you think it is desirable to adjust the hours of work according to the temperature here ?

A.—(They might begin from 6 A.M. to 10 A.M. and again from 11 to 3.

Q.—Do you think that it will be more convenient for the workers?

A.—Yes.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Do you know anything about the Washington hours of work subsequently ratified by the Government of India?

A.—I am not conversant with it.

Q.—I think your view is that the fixation of a basic minimum living wage of Rs. 15 a month falls far too short of the demands of labour in the present conditions of life?

A.—Certainly.

Q.—What is the average rate of wages of unskilled workers here in the workshop?

A.—They begin at Rs. 13 and end at Rs. 17.

*Mr. Browne.*—I estimate that without working over-time, the minimum is Rs. 11 and the maximum is Rs. 14-8-0 or Rs. 15.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Has there been any increase here?

A.—No. there has been no change for unskilled labour. They should begin with Rs. 20 rising by time-scale of Re. 1 to Rs. 30.

Q.—According to the figures I am giving you the necessity of a daily worker would be at least Rs. 35.

A.—Yes, more than that, but the labour being in a weaker position I agreed to Rs. 15.

Q.—Is there complete standardization of these wage-rates?

A.—They do vary.

Q.—Do you consider that this disparity in wage-rates, even for the same category of work, reacts very badly on the morale of the workers?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is there any system of bonus or gratuity payment?

A.—No, no, it is not working to the satisfaction of the workers and I shall give you the system which we want. We want one month's pay as gratuity instead of half month's pay.

Q.—Are all classes of workers entitled to such gratuity?

A.—Yes.

Q.—When casual labourers are employed, are they given lower rates than normal rates?

A.—They are sometimes given lower rates.

Q.—So the management takes advantage of the seasonal influx of labourers and gives them lower rate! (*no answer*).

Mr. Chandra—May I ask you as to what are the different grades which are at present in operation?

A.—*The witness here gave a typed memorandum*). We have given the old rates and how they have been reduced and what we want.

Q.—Do you find, as a result of the operation of these rates, that the pay bills have been considerably reduced?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is it a fact that persons working in a higher grade have in many cases been re-employed in lower grades?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you find that workers working in a lower grade have to do the work of higher grades?

A.—Yes, there are 1,750 workers who have to end their lives on Rs. 27 though they have to do the same kind of work.

Q.—The result of all this has been that general level of wages has been considerably reduced?

A.—There was revision of scales and it was introduced from 1931.

Q.—What are the considerations which govern the fixing of wage rates?

A.—The local rates.

Q.—Is it your point that the considerations that should govern the fixing of wage-rates should be the conditions prevailing not only in their own workshop but also conditions prevailing for similar work in other parts of the country?

A.—Yes, certainly.

Dr. Mukherjee.—Is it a fact that the minimum wage at Lilloah and Luknow is far better than what obtains here?

A.—Yes.

Mr. Chandra.—Is it a fact that the Railway Board take strong exception to the employment of the staff on jobs other than those on which they are charged?

A.—We are not aware of it because we find that a semi-skilled man has to do the work of a chageman.

Mr. Chandra here read a copy of a letter from the Railway Board on the subject. Mr. Browne confirmed that this letter was addressed to all the Railways.

Q.—Do instances of irregularities apply to *mistries* also ?

A.—Yes. We shall bring instances of lapses to the notice of the management.

Mr. Gandhi.—If the standard of living at Howrah is higher would you object to there being difference in the rate ?

A.—I have experience of Lilloah where it is not higher than at Jamalpur.

Q.—Would you not take into consideration the question of higher rent ?

A.—I do not think there will be great difference in the rent of houses in which the labourers live.

Q.—Do you think that for the same kind of work either here or at Bombay there should be same rate of wage ?

A.—I do not say that. (The cost of living at Bombay may be higher; but I was talking Lilloah.

Q.—Suppose the cost of living were higher at Jamalpur than at Lilloah, then would you agree to higher wages for Jamalpur ?

A.—If it is proved then I would press for higher wages. The basic minimum should not be changed. I can give you one instance. At Lucknow there was no time checking office. These men from here went there and trained them. (There they are getting Rs. 50 while these men are rotting on Rs. 40.

Q.—What is in your opinion the cause of this difference ?

A.—The people at Lucknow are stronger than the people at Jamalpur. Even at Jamalpur there is an anomaly. The new entrants are getting Rs. 45 and the old men are getting Rs. 40, the old rate.

Mr. Lal.—Has there been a corresponding rise in the salaries of the higher staff ?

A.—I find that there has been a reduction in the wages of labourers but increase in the salaries of the supervising staff.

Q.—Does the rate of casual labourers vary in different seasons ?

A.—Yes.

(Mr. Browne here informed that rates for casual labour were the same.)

Mr. Saran.—You said that the scale of pay at Jamalpur compared unfavourably with Lilloah. Are you not comparing the old scale of pay ?

A.—There has been no change in the skilled labourer's pay.

Q.—Even now there is difference in the scales of pay at Lilloah, Jamalpur and Lucknow ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You might admit that the cost of living at Lucknow and Lilloah is higher than at Jamalpur, but does that difference exhibit difference in payment ?

A.—Yes.

*The Chairman.*—Is it your position that so far as minimum wage is concerned it should be common to all workshops at Jamalpur, Lilloah and Lucknow ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—So far as grades are concerned is it your opinion that they should be the same for the same kind of work at all centres ?

A.—I do not say that their scale should be lowered down, but as far as possible people doing same kind of work should be put on the same level at different centres. If Lucknow people get Rs. 27 I shall not be satisfied with that. My point is that so far as Rs. 27 is concerned, I should say that it is most unfair and it should be done away with and the grade that I have suggested should be accepted, for Lucknow also.

Q.—What I should like to be clear is this: whatever the grade may be, assuming that your's is accepted, should that be common to all centres like Lucknow, Jamalpur or there should be any variation ?

A.—The minimum of Rs. 30 cannot vary. If there be any higher cost of living, a certain allowance might be given to them. The minimum wage cannot be varied.

Q.—If the cost of living is low, you stick to the minimum. But if there is any higher cost of living at a particular place, then there should be some allowance for that place ?

A.—Yes. That is the basic minimum for a man to keep his body and soul together.

*Mr. Chandra.*—Are you aware that after the earthquake a number of new machines have been erected resulting in greater output for the same amount of labour ?

A.—The labour has been reduced.

Q.—What would be your estimate of the number reduced ?

A.—I believe it will be about 15 per cent.

Q.—Is it also a fact that while reduction went on one side, fresh hands were also taken on lower rates ?

A.—That is about casual labour.

*Mr. Sharan.*—But rationalization started after the earthquake or from before ?

A.—After the earthquake the whole workshop has been remodelled and our grievance is that certain sections which have been abolished should be rehabilitated here. When Government have spent a huge amount over the construction of this building and have brought improved machineries, I do not understand why they should purchase from outside.

Q.—As a result of rationalization the same labourer has to do a large amount of work than he had to do before ?

A.—Yes. I do not think the labourers are getting any increase in their pay.

Q.—There has been reduction of staff. Can you say how much of this is due to the fact that some shops have been transferred or abolished ?

A.—No shop has been transferred. The steel foundry was abolished for patronising Tatas. Things which were manufactured here are being brought from England or Germany.

Q.—It then follows that the Railways are following a suicidal policy ?

A.—That is the idea of patrolizing outsiders at the cost of India.

Mr. Gandhi.—Don't you think that the reason for getting work done from outside is cheapness ?

A.—No. Previously they used to manufacture certain things here and instead of giving encouragement to manufacture more so that locomotives might be manufactured here, even those parts which they used to manufacture here are being imported.

Mr. Browne.—The reason for closing down the steel foundry was that the cost of production was higher than the price on which we could get the production from outside. A further reason was that there was direction from the Government of India that railway workshops should not enter into competition with outside firms. At that time the Tata Iron and Steel Company were getting considerable subsidy from the Government of India and the firm was also protected by protective tariff. Therefore we closed the shop here. Considerable number of men retrenched have been re-employed and the retrenchment was carried out on the lines as laid down by the Railway Board.

Mr. Saran.—Do you not think that Government ought to have insisted on the Tatas to engage these workers ?

A.—They were not particular with regard to the steel foundry; they were not Biharis. They came from outside Punjab.

Dr. Mukherjee.—You have said in your note that the management does not discharge its due responsibility for the education of workers who are recruited from the neighbouring villages ?



A.—Yes, and also those who reside in the town.

Q.—In this connection I would refer you to the need of instruction to daily workers ?

A.—In Jamalpur mass literacy centres have been opened and in that some labourers go.

Q.—Does the management contribute anything ?

A.—Recently from the Staff Benefit fund they have given Rs. 500.

Q.—In some countries like Russia the higher officers in the factory actually take part in educating the skilled operatives in technical schools. To what extent the different heads of different shops take part in educating in those technical schools ?

A.—They do not take any part at all. About 30 per cent, of the labour force is resident in Jamalpur and there is no proper housing accommodation on behalf of the railway for even that.

Mr. Lal.—With regard to education what facilities have been given by the management for the neighbouring villages ?

A.—None so far.

Q.—Is the need for such schools being felt keenly ?

A.—Yes, not only they feel the absence of schools but they want to have free schools.

Q.—Has the union represented this grievance so far ?

A.—The union has not been recognized as yet.

Q.—What medical facilities are available to labourers living round in the villages ?

A.—None, except when the workers can manage to come here.

Q.—Are these facilities available to the family of the employees also ?

A.—They are available only to sons. Theoretically facilities are given to all but only those who reside in Jamalpur can avail of it; those who reside in villages cannot bring their children.

Q.—Are the families entitled to medical treatment ?

A.—They are entitled to it.

Q.—In case of sickness do the labourers get sufficient attention ?

A.—It depends upon the medical officer. Sometimes when there is a good medical officer they get good treatment. The position at present is neither very good nor bad.

Q.—Is the location of the hospital sufficiently convenient for the labourers ?

A.—There is a grievance about it. The children and dependants of workers are allowed free treatment and free medicine. The hospital is situated near the hills and there is a branch at the railway station. The hours of attendance of the medical officers are such that a labourer cannot avail himself of that facility to bring his children because the doctors do not remain there in off hours. Therefore our prayer is that a branch should be opened near the gate and it should keep open from 6 A.M. to 9 A.M. and 11 A.M. to 2 P.M. and 4 P.M. to 6 P.M.

Q.—Is there adequate provision for recreation and tiffin-rooms?

A.—Absolutely none.

Q.—Are there reading-rooms?

A.—No.

Q.—What about housing arrangement?

A.—There is no housing accommodation for those labourers who reside here. There is some accommodation for clerks and chargemen.

Q.—What percentage of labour lives in Jamalpur?

A.—About 30 per cent.

Q.—So far as indebtedness is concerned, Jamalpur factory is maintaining a co-operative society. Is that not enough?

A.—That is not enough. They become victims of kabulies and other money-lenders. I represented about it to the management.

*Mr. Browne.*—We have forwarded it to the local police as we have no jurisdiction.

Q.—Is it your grievance that the provisions in the Workmen's Compensation Act are inadequate?

A.—Its administration is also defective. Sometimes people are not allowed even what compensation is admissible to them.

Q.—How is your trade union being treated by the management?

A.—It has not been recognised up till now and so long as they do not recognize it they do not recognise the existence of the body.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—In your Monghyr evidence you suggested that a peaceful atmosphere in the factory cannot be established by law and that formal and informal deliberations between labour union and the management would be necessary to deal with disputes as they arise from day to day?

A.—Yes, as we have introduced in Monghyr, there should be fortnightly meetings after the union is recognized.

Q.—I would like to develop some details relating to the development of more human touch between the employers and workers through trade union. Did you have any experience about this in Monghyr?

A.—Yes, we are having discussions. Very often when the management feels any difficulty it intimates the union and I go and visit that part of the shop and we discuss and come to a settlement.

*Mr. Saran.*—Do you think that grievances represented through *Faidamand Panchayat* are listened to and proper action is taken?

A.—No. It is a nominal body.

Q.—Would you like the Panchayat to keep a record of all grievances represented to the management?

A.—We have it.

Q.—Is it a fact that one member of the *Panchayat* was transferred from a certain shop to some other shop because he was not liked by the foreman?

A.—Yes, it is a fact. Several cases have happened in which they are not looked upon kindly by their immediate superiors and they always get pinpricks.

Q.—Is it also a fact that some members such as clerks are afraid to represent their grievances?

A.—Yes.

Q.—So far as the common workers are concerned they are not afraid as these men?

A.—The clerks say that if they are discharged they will have no place and therefore they are much afraid.

*Prof. Bari.*—Is your union registered? If so, when?

A.—It was registered in April.

Q.—Do you know that the management is also consulted about it?

A.—I believe in many cases the management is also consulted but in the registration of this union I do not know whether it was consulted or not.

Q.—How many times your application for registration was returned to your office?

A.—I think twice.

Q.—Did you make any special effort to get it registered.

A.—Yes. There is a distinct atmosphere in the registration office not to allow registration very easily.

Q.—What is your relation with the management? Is it cordial?

A.—I have no relation with the management. The union was registered in April last, but it has not yet been recognised. The proposal for recognition has gone up.

Q.—Is it a fact that whenever there is trouble the management seeks your help?

A.—No. But sometimes we have informal conference when there is some dispute or grievance of a particular shop.

Q.—Do you know that there is attempt on the part of the management to set up rival unions?

A.—No.

Q.—Was there any dismissal or discharge for joining the union?

A.—No. There has been harassment to some people not because of joining the union but because of joining the welfare committee.

Q.—Do you know that the supervising staff is annoyed on account of the existence of this union?

A.—I had no talk with them. At least in one shop the foreman said "go to your union".

Q.—Then there is no general annoyance?

A.—Yes, but there are particular officers who are a bit annoyed.

Q.—Do you know that on account of the formation of this union you have been able to check repression or maltreatment?

A.—The matters have improved a little, but we have no direct dealings. If much depends upon the personality. At present there are three foreman in three shops against whom there is general complaint of maltreatment.

Q.—In what direction has the situation moved?

A.—The management has become a little more alert.

Q.—Do you know of any case in which people have been discharged in large numbers owing to joining the union?

A.—No. It only happened in 1930 when the Non-Co-operation Movement was going on. At that time of course, poor labourers after their days' work were shut down and many people were discharged.

Q.—If the union is not recognised, do you propose to enforce the recognition of your union?

A.—I think there are only two ways to get recognition. One, by legislation and secondly by gathering strength. We can force the hands of the management.

Q.—What do you mean by strength?

A.—When the authorities find that the union is so strong that without consulting it they cannot carry on the management, then they will be forced to recognize it.

Q.—Have you got any shop committee here?

A.—Yes.

*Chairman.*—On the East Indian Railway I understand that there is more than one union. What is your suggestion with regard to the method by which the management can deal with the union, when there is more than one union on the same line?

A.—There are three workshops and three unions.

Q.—It is possible for both sides to have a way to solve the question. But there are grievances which are common to all workshops on the whole line. Would it not be better for the unions to create a sort of joint board which can deal effectively with the management so far as the grievances of the workshops are concerned?

A.—Yes.

Q.—In reply to Prof. Bari you said that you prefer legislation for recognition of trade unions?

A.—Yes.

Q.—So far as the present Trade Union Act is concerned any people can make an application to get a union registered. That union may or may not succeed in organizing a reasonable number of workers within its fold. Assuming that there is a dispute involving 5,000 people in the workshop which has got to be settled; if a union has got 500 members on its roll, do you think that such a union will be able to deliver the goods to the employees if it receives recognition?

A.—But there is one thing in that. As soon as a union is recognised it will not be confined to 500 members only. A provision might be made that if such a union, even after recognition, cannot deliver the goods, that recognition should be withdrawn.

Q.—In that case the management may get unions established by their henchmen which will receive greater favour?

A.—They can do that.

Q.—Don't you agree to secure recognition under the existing condition on the strength of your organizing capacity?

A.—That is the way in which all the managements deal with unions. They look with disfavour and therefore they always put obstacles in the way of the creation of unions. But when the Government by registering a union recognize the utility of such an institution, why should not the management recognise that union?

Q.—My fear is that whenever you secure recognition by legislation the law is bound to be tightened up to a certain extent so far as industrial disputes are concerned and if the union fails to deliver the goods, penalties may be imposed. Therefore although I have considerable sympathy with your point of view would you not think that it would be a better method to secure recognition by means of your own strength?

A.—I think if the union is not found to be active then recognition will automatically cease.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—The law may be changed in this manner with reference to the trade union that every factory should have one single union which should be the legally recognised union maintained and financed out of the subscription realised from the workers.

*Mr. Saran.*—There is a union and I do not want to be a member. Do you think that compulsory membership would add to the strength of the union?

A.—I do not think a member will come and break it. Labour will be intelligent to know the person who is trying to wreck it.

Q.—But under the law he will be there and you cannot chuck him out? He will be a source of weakness instead of strength!

*Mr. Chandra.*—This feeling has emanated from the feeling that labour is unconscious of its rights. That is the principle underlying this suggestion. Would you generally agree to such a scheme being put into operation?

A.—I will have no objection because I am inviting everybody to my union.

Q.—There must be only one union and membership must be made compulsory and the constitution must be absolutely democratic. How do you take it?

A.—Can you by legislation compel every man to become a member?

Q.—Would it not be fair because the unions are conceived in the interest of the workers that membership should be made compulsory?

A.—It is rather revolting that a man should be made a member by compulsion. I will have no objection to compulsory membership provided it is only with a view to exercise their franchise and pay their subscription.

Q.—Would you like the constitution to be as democratic as possible?

A.—I think all the world over democracy has failed and it is on its last legs in Europe.

*Prof. Bari.*—Do you want that the supervising staff also should become member compulsorily?

A.—There must be a distinction between the supervising staff and the workers.

*Chairman.*—You may perhaps like to know that when the draft of the Indian Trade Unions Act was made by the Government of India and when it was circularised to the employers' and to the workers' organisations and when the bill came before the Central Legislative Assembly, the representatives of the employers without any exception insisted upon the trade unions being made compulsory in the sense that every worker who is working in a factory shall be a member of the trade union. There was a row raised from the workers side and the labour representative in the Central Assembly opposed it tooth and nail.

The Committee resumed its sitting on the 26th April 1939, in the Civil Secretariat, Patna, at 9-50 A.M.

Members present :—

- |                         |     |                          |
|-------------------------|-----|--------------------------|
| (1) Dr. R. K. Mukherjee | ... | <i>Member presiding.</i> |
| (2) Mr. A. M. Hayman    | ... | <i>Member.</i>           |
| (3) Mr. J. N. Lal       | ... | <i>Member.</i>           |
| (4) Prof. R. K. Saran   | ... | <i>Secretary.</i>        |

**Oral evidence of Mr. G. G. Pagay, Head Clerk, District Electrical Engineer's Office, Adra (B. N. Ry.), on behalf of the B. N. Railway Union, Adra.**

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Do you represent the Adra Bengal-Nagpur Railway Union?

*A.*—Yes, I represent the Bengal-Nagpur Railway Indian Labour Union, Adra Branch.

*Q.*—What is your membership?

*A.*—29,000, taking the Railway as a whole.

*Q.*—Is the Head Office of your Union at Adra?

*A.*—No, at Kharagpur.

*Q.*—You will speak about the workers of Adra only?

*A.*—Yes, I will speak about the whole line (B. N. Ry.) with special reference of Adra.

*Q.*—Then I think 29,000 is the membership of the whole Union?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—What is that of Adra alone?

*A.*—1,159.

*Mr. Lal.*—Including both skilled and unskilled?

*A.*—Yes.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Have you anything to suggest regarding hours of work and shifts of work?

*A.*—No, but those working during the night should get extra wages.

*Q.*—Have you any suggestion to make regarding the Provident Fund Scheme?

*A.*—With regard to Provident Fund I suggest that the daily-rated men should be allowed to join the Provident Fund as soon as they are confirmed. Presently such staff below three years service are restricted.

Q.—Do workers derive benefits of the Institute?

A.—Yes, they do when they join the Institute.

Q.—Have they joined?

A.—Some of them have.

Q.—Do you think that you have got control over the expenditure of the Staff Benefit Fund?

A.—No. The representatives of the Institute have no control over the expenditure of the Staff Benefit Fund. This Fund is controlled by the Agent and General Manager, B. N. Railway, Calcutta.

Mr. Lal.—You have suggested the appointment of a Recruitment Board for prevention of corruption in recruitment. Can you suggest any other method?

A.—No, Sir. There is no other method which I can suggest.

Q.—What kind of corruptions are there?

A.—Corruptions exist in the form of favouritism.

Q.—Do you like that rules should be so framed that in matters of recruitment preference is given to the retrenched hands?

A.—Yes, I agree with you Sir, that rules should be made that in matters of recruitment first preference should be given to the retrenched hands, then to relations of employees, and lastly, to direct recruited persons by open competition.

Q.—About maternity benefits: what kind of maternity benefits you want to give?

A.—Regarding maternity benefits I want that women should get three months leave in all (preceding delivery and after delivery).

Q.—Have you any Arbitration Board?

A.—No, Sir.

Q.—Is there an Arbitration Officer on the Bengal-Nagpur Railway, Adra?

A.—No, there is one Welfare Officer appointed by the railway at Khargpur, but he never comes to Adra.

Q.—Will you appreciate the idea of appointing an arbitration Officer?

A.—No, Sir.

Q.—If Government appointed a Labour Officer to arbitrate, how would you like the idea?

A.—It may be tried.



*Q.*—Do you agree that in the case of strikes and lockouts Government should enact legislation to make such strikes and lockouts illegal which had not been referred to a Conciliation or an Arbitration Board appointed by the Government? Are the strikes on the Bengal-Nagpur Railway declared by the Central Body of the Union?

*A.*—Yes, I agree. I also want that the Conciliation or Arbitration Board should be appointed at the request of either party.

The strikes on the Bengal-Nagpur Railway are declared by the Central Council.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Are there cases of victimisation?

*A.*—Victimisation is there in the form that active participants of the union are not given promotion.

*Q.*—What do you suggest for that?

*A.*—I suggest that it should be stopped by legislation.

*Prof. Saran.*—How can you stop victimisation? Supposing the management dismissed a person not on the grounds of participating in strikes but on grounds of inefficiency. What would you do in that case?

*A.*—But there must be some previous record to show that the man concerned was actually inefficient.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Have you seen any tendency on the part of the management to subsidise or bolster up rival unions?

*A.*—No, Sir, but at times rival unions are encouraged by the Administration.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Do you want that arbitration should be compulsory?

*A.*—Yes, Sir, it will be better.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Are you aware of the consequences of compulsory arbitration?

*A.*—Yes, we are not afraid of that. If once an award is given, we shall abide by that.

*Prof. Saran.*—Reverting to the hours of work again; there is work for 8 hours, if you work 10 hours, what should be done?

*A.*—Then there should be payment for 2 extra hours. At present the daily-rated staff get overtime but not the fixed pay staff.

*Q.*—In your reply to question no. 39, you say that there is no maximum or minimum limit for daily working hours?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—What do you mean by that?

*A.*—They have to work long hours without any rest.

Q.—They have got to work beyond the normal hours?

A.—Yes.

Q.—The Eastern-Bengal Railway pay special rates in the case of repair work. Do you also get that?

A.—No. I do not know of the Eastern-Bengal Railway.

Q.—What is the number of daily workers in the Power House, Adra?

A.—The total force is 83; out of 83, 51 are on daily wages.

Q.—Are daily wage earners entitled to leave?

A.—Yes. The arrangement of leave is that they get leave for 10 days after 3 years service, 15 days after 10 years service, and 20 days after 20 years service.

Q.—In the case of monthly-paid what is the practice?

A.—They get leave after one year service. They also get casual leave for 14 days, but the daily-paid staff do not get this leave.

Q.—You have mentioned a large number of cases of deduction in wage?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Have you got fines?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Are wages in Adra lower than those at Kharagpur?

A.—Yes, for those whose wages are fixed on local gang rates.

Mr. Lal.—What is the number of women employees in the Workshop?

A.—Twenty-five.

Q.—With regard to schools, do the Railway authorities maintain schools?

A.—There is one High School, one primary school and one Girls' school.

Q.—Is there any arrangement for adult education? Have you started the Mass Literacy Campaign?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is there any arrangement for outdoor games, libraries, and clubs for the labourers?

A.—Yes.

Q.—When was your union formed?

A.—It was formed in 1921.

Q.—What is the attitude of the Railway authorities towards your union?

A.—I personally think that they are not in favour of the union.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Are there any Shop Committees?

A.—Yes, at Kharagpur, but not at Adra.

Q.—Do you know that at Jamalpur there is a body called the 'Faidanand Panchayet.' Is there any such thing in the Bengal-Nagpur Railway?

A.—No.

Q.—Would you approve of a Labour Welfare Officer at Adra?

A.—No.

Q.—What is the difficulty?

A.—We do not approve.

Q.—Are there women in your union?

A.—Yes.

*Mr. Lal.*—In the case of disputes between the Railway and the union would you like any outsider to come and arbitrate?

A.—Yes, I have suggested that in answer to question 131.

*Prof. Saran.*—In the case of quarters do you think that the accommodation is adequate?

A.—No, the housing accommodation is not at all adequate for menials. There is only one room.

Q.—Adra is more or less a town and there all the workers live in private houses?

A.—There is only one town near-by at a distance of 4 miles called Raghunathpur. Some of the workers come from a distance of 7 or 8 miles?

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—You had a strike in 1937 which lasted for 60 days?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Was there any case of discrimination or victimisation during the course of the strike like the cutting of electric or water-supply.

A.—Yes, there are cases of victimisation but not the latter. Victimisation should be stopped by legislation.

Q.—Is there any tendency to start rival union?

A.—No.

Q.—Do you want that there should be one union for each trade or industry?

A.—There should be only union for each factory but not separate unions for each trade or industry in a factory.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Is there any complaint about the inadequacy of wages? ...

A.—Yes.

Q.—What is the minimum wage?

A.—There are different minima for different places for gangmen based on local rates.

Q.—Is the minimum a living wage?

A.—Not in all cases.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Thank you.

The Committee met in the Inspection Bungalow, Samastipur (Darbhanga) on the 6th February 1939 at 4 p.m.

Members present:—

- |                         |     |                                   |
|-------------------------|-----|-----------------------------------|
| (1) Mr. R. R. Bakhale   | ... | <i>Deputy Chairman Presiding.</i> |
| (2) Dr. R. K. Mukherjee | ... | <i>Member</i>                     |
| (3) Prof. R. K. Saran   | ... | <i>Secretary.</i>                 |
| (4) Mr. C. A. Tookey    | ... | <i>(Co-opter Member Capital).</i> |

**Oral evidence of Pandit Ramnandan Misra, President, Railway Workshop Union, Samastipur.**

*Chairman.*—Mr. Misra, will you please give your full name, designation and address?

*A.*—Yes, my name is Pandit Ramnandan Misra. I am the President of the Railway Workshop Union of Samastipur.

*Q.*—When was your union started? Is it registered under the Trade Union Act? Have you framed the constitution of the union?

*A.*—The union has been recently started and it has not been registered yet. I have framed the constitution of the union but I have not got the same here. I may supply it later on.

*Q.*—Are you the President of the Union of only the Railway Workshop at Samastipur or your membership extends to others also?

*A.*—I am the President of the union which includes workers of Samastipur Railway jurisdiction.

*Q.*—How many members are there in the union?

*A.*—The total number of members of the union is 400 on the register. In all we have received the names of about 900 members out of which 400 have been registered already and others will also be registered in due course.

*Q.*—Is your union recognised by the employers?

*A.*—As soon as we have formed the union we sent a formal letter for recognition but we have not received any reply from them.

*Q.*—How were you selected the president of the union? Was there a general meeting in which you were elected the president?

*A.*—Yes, a general meeting of the workers was held in which I was elected president; in that meeting 500 workers were present.

*Q.*—Have you framed the general grievances of the workers on behalf of the union?

*A.*—Yes, (1) the first grievance is that the minimum wage of the workers should be at least 7 annas a day as it is in the Gorakhpur

Workshop. There the minimum wage for the workers is 7 annas a day, (2) there is great corruption prevailing in the Bengal and North-Western Railway as regards appointment, etc., when a man has to be appointed he has to pay about Rs. 2 as tip and then only he gets a job. In some cases it is as high as Rs. 5. This sort of corruption and bribery should be at once abolished in the matter of recruitment, (3) the question about dismissal—a worker is dismissed without giving any reason and any chance to explain his conduct. This kind of thing should be stopped at once. His service depends upon the whim of the manager. There is also no security of service. He is entirely at the mercy of the Loco Officer, (4) the rates are also not uniform. The Government of India rates should be introduced in this workshop also and (5) there are no quarters altogether for the workers. They should be given quarters with sufficient accommodation for them to live in.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Is there any system of grades, or gratuity or provident fund scheme or any promotion?

*A.*—No, nothing of the sort.

*Q.*—You want a minimum wage of 7 annas for the *coolie* class of all the department?

*A.*—Yes. The sixth demand is that there is great victimisation and oppression to the workers and that should be removed.

*Mr. Saran.*—Have you got any case of corruption prevalent there in your view?

*A.*—Yes, I have got several cases.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—With regard to dismissals, is it applicable to every case or it is with any particular individual only?

*A.*—Such is the case with every man.

*Q.*—You want standard rates of payment and promotion in graded scale?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—At the time of dismissals they are not given any reason at all and asked to go?

*A.*—All on a sudden they are asked to go away and if they ask the reason they are threatened to be beaten and abused.

*Mr. Saran.*—You have said that the Gorakhpur rates are higher. Is there work on contract system?

*A.*—No it is not on contract system.

*Q.*—Is there work of piece basis?

*A.*—Very little.

The Committee resumed its sitting in the Town Hall, Dhanbad, on the 7th April, 1939, at 9 A.M.

The following members were present :—

- |                         |     |                   |
|-------------------------|-----|-------------------|
| (1) Dr. R. K. Mukherjee | ... | <i>Presiding.</i> |
| (2) Mr. A. M. Hayman    | ... | <i>Member.</i>    |
| (3) Mr. J. N. Lal       | ... | „                 |
| (4) Mr. H. B. Chandra   | ... | „                 |
| (5) Prof. R. K. Saran   | ... | <i>Secretary.</i> |

Oral evidence of Mr. Moinuddin Ahmad, Secretary of the Union, Mr. Dhanraj Sao, Treasurer of Union, Mr. Sayeedur Rahman, Assistant Secretary, Mr. Ram Lagan Mistri, President, Chipping Department, on behalf of the Kumardhubi Workers' Union, Kumardhubi.

*(Some workers also were watching and assisting in the evidence.)*

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Are you all workers of the Factory and also the executives of the union?

*A.*—Yes, Sir, we represent the Kumardhubi Workers' Labour Union.

*Q.*—When this union was formed?

*A.*—It was formed some 7 or 8 months ago.

*Q.*—What are your designations?

*A.*—Mr. Ahmad, Secretary, Mr. Sao, Treasurer, Mr. Rahman, Assistant Secretary, Mr. Mistri, President.

*Q.*—Is the president also the worker of the factory?

*A.*—Yes, Sir.

*Q.*—Were they all elected in the general meeting?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—Have you framed the constitution of the union?

*A.*—Yes, Sir.

*Q.*—Is your union registered?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—When it was registered?

*A.*—It was registered on the 20th April 1939.

*Q.*—Have you got representatives from all the three allied factories in Kumardhubi?

A.—Yes, Sir, from Rolling Mills, Eagle Mill and Fire works.

Mr. Chandra.—In your factory what is the practise of recruitment and promotion?

A.—I do not understand you.

Q.—Suppose there are 5 men to be employed who are working and have been discharged for some reason or other, if a fresh recruitment is to be made, are these men given preference or new men are employed in preference to the old men? I want to ask about the recruitment of workers.

A.—So far as the recruitment is concerned we have objection to the method followed and about promotion we have got to say something. Always preference is given to the relatives of the employees. Recruitment should be done in other way. When a man has got to be employed he should go to the office of the time keepers. When a vacancy occurs proper notice should be given; those who want to be employed should go there and their-examination should be taken and those who pass should be taken in. That is the system which we want for recruitment.

Q.—But regarding those who are discharged, should they be taken in preference to the new men?

A.—Those who are dismissed in strikes are not taken at all.

Q.—Have you got contractors' work?

A.—No, there was contractors work in some places but now it has been stopped.

Q.—Is there any graded system?

A.—No.

Q.—If a man is appointed on 10 annas does he always get the same rate?

A.—If he works continuously then it is not always so; he gets promotion. Those who do not work continuously do not get promotion.

Q.—Suppose there is a worker who is working and he is removed all on a sudden without any notice. Is notice always given for dismissal?

A.—If a man is a striker no notice is given for dismissal but in other cases regular notice is given.

Q.—With regard to the hospital, is there any lady doctor for women workers?

A.—In the agreement after the strike there was a settlement to give medical facilities, security of service, provident fund and quarters but nothing has been done as yet.



Q.—What is the treatment of the employers towards the union?

A.—Before we formed the union, there was a Labour Federation with which there was always a fight; but since we have found this union there has been no trouble.

Q.—When you fall ill, do you get leave?

A.—No, we do not, get, leave with pay, we get it without pay.

Q.—Are there also women workers? Are there children?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do women workers get maternity leave?

A.—Yes, for 8 weeks.

Q.—Is there any arrangement for living?

A.—No, no arrangement for them, we want that some house should be built for them.

Q.—What do you think about hours of work?

A.—We want that hours of work should be changed. This is my opinion. Formerly there was 8 hours shift of work but after the strike it was reduced to 6 hours of actual work for the crane drivers in the Rolling Mill. There is one shift of 6 hours and after that the shift changes.

Q.—Has the work of the company increased?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Suppose there were 3 men working for 8 hours but now when the hours of work have been reduced to 6, were new men appointed?

A.—Dismissals decreased.

Q.—In the case of the Crane drivers, have they got continuous working?

A.—No.

Q.—Is there overtime work in the department?

A.—In every department it is so, but not more than 2 hours.

Q.—Somewhere we note that they do not get shoes for hot works?

A.—We want that those who are working in such departments should get spectacles, shoes, gloves, etc. We want them at hot places of work, e.g., boiler, furnace, gas, silica work, and *bhattas*. At present we do not get. Punjabis are given.

Q.—But the company says that the Punjabis work more and so they get these things?

A.—It is not a fact that Punjabis work more. As a matter of fact Biharis work more but they do not get these protective equipments.

Dr. Mukherjee.—Is there any difference in rates?

A.—Yes, Punjabis get annas 12 but Biharis get annas 8 to annas 10 only.

Q.—There are Bengalis also. Is there any difference in their rates compared with the Punjabis?

A.—Yes. There is difference between Punjabi and non-Punjabi.

Prof. Saran.—Have you brought it to the notice of the union and through the union to the management?

A.—No.

Mr. Chandra.—In the strikes did you do picketing?

Q.—On that occasion some people of the Rolling Mill struck work for 2 weeks. The strikers compelled us to do picketing but we did not like the way in which it was done. Mr. Homi was the president of the union but we disliked his methods and founded our own union. Many people were sent to jail in the strike due to the methods adopted by Mr. Homi. Before the strike there was the practice to work on *cowries* and after the strikes it was decided that *kamias* should be given the rate of annas 6 for females and annas 8 for males, and the *cowry* system was abolished. This was mostly for sand work. This was disliked by the people of Mr. Homi.

Q.—You have said that since the formation of the union, the wage rate has increased? What do you think about the general strike?

A.—We have said that in our memorandum. We want that the union and the Company should live on peaceful terms. We want that our workers should make their own union and should not be guided by only the outsiders.

Q.—But according to the Act outsiders are allowed to form the executive in certain proportion in time of necessity, and you can take help of them. What do you say?

A.—I do not say that outsiders should not be the members but bad and unscrupulous people should not be allowed to do anything with the union; in that case there is great hardship for the workers and instead of better condition, they generally lose in the long run.

Mr. Lal.—You have founded the union? Since how many days?

A.—Yes; 28th March.

Q.—Sufficient number of people are members?

A.—Yes, about 700 or 800; the entry fee is annas 4 according to the constitution; the rule is that those who get Re. 1 per day as their wage should pay annas 4 as entry fee and those who get Rs. 2 a

day should pay annas 8 and those who get Rs. 3 should pay annas 12 and so on.

Q.—Is there any other union in that factory?

A.—No, there was a Labour Federation of Mr. Homi.

Q.—Do you think that union to be bad?

A.—Yes, many things in that were questionable. It was out of the control of the workers.

Q.—Have you got grievances about their treatment?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Was any account of the money realised kept?

A.—No.

Q.—Do you think that in that union something against the law was being done?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Has your union been recognised by the company?

A.—No, we have not yet applied for that.

Q.—Do you want recognition?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What is the treatment with you?

A.—It is good; we have no grievance against that.

Q.—In your statement you have said that you have got the grievance of the inadequacy of the water-supply.

A.—Now every month the A. D. C. goes and makes enquiries about the adequacy or otherwise of water-supply, and the company tries to remove if there are any complaints.

Q.—Is it not a fact that the water is drawn from the pit and is not filtered?

A.—No, this water is used by the management also. They are big people and they can afford to drink lemonade, etc. We are poor people and take this water.

Q.—Do you know that there are 4,000 workers in Kumardhubi and there are *dhowras* for 700 only? What is the percentage of *dhowras*?

A.—There are houses for about 2/3rd workers and 1/3rd are without houses; they live in rented houses, sometimes even three or four live together in one quarter.

Q.—Are the quarters rented?

A.—No.

Q.—Is there such arrangement with the company that those who live pay the rent in advance?

A.—No.

Q.—Like the Tatas do they give land for building houses?

A.—No.

Q.—Do you like that system?

A.—No, in the Tatas workers get Rs. 100 or 200 per month; they can build houses but we cannot do that; we get less. We like company's houses.

Q.—What kind of quarters you like? There are 3 types of quarters here.

A.—We want quarters with compound wall and some arrangement for privacy. There should be arrangement for latrine. There is no light in the quarters. We want latrines of Hindustani type, one outside and one inside, one for males and one for females. In 'A' type quarters compound wall is necessary. Preparation of food in the quarters is also very difficult because there is no proper arrangement for a place for cooking. There should be a separate kitchen.

Q.—Do you prefer daily-rated system?

A.—No, we want monthly system.

Q.—What is the difference between the two?

A.—The monthly-rated man gets overtime payment, his services are secured, he has got provident fund, and gets payment for Sundays. He gets leave with pay; but all these are denied to the daily-rated workers.

Q.—Do you get retiring gratuity?

A.—No.

Q.—Provident Fund?

A.—No, we want retiring gratuity after 20 years. We do not get production Bonus in the Rolling Mill and Silica. We want that, because that is Engineering work.

Q.—What are your greivances against the medical arrangement?

A.—There is no lady doctor.

Q.—How many female workers are there?

A.—400 in Silica, 30 in Eagle Mill, 50 in the Engineering Works; the total is 500. There are no nurses, no lady doctor. There should be a Biharee lady doctor and nurse.

Q.—If you call doctors to your houses have you got to pay fees?

A.—No. Under the rules he has to pay visits without fee. We also want that beds in the hospital should be increased. There is great rush in the hospital because there are very few compounders. Their

number should be increased. There were two cases of pneumonia which were not treated. There are great difficulties in the treatment of cases like ptyphus, pneumonia, hydrocele, etc.

Q.—What about education?

A.—There is no Middle English School; there ought to be 3 schools, one for Hindi, one for Urdu and one for Madrasi. There are 4 Upper Primary Schools. If you want to give higher education to children you have got to send them at Chirkunda.

Q.—Is there any arrangement for adult education?

A.—No, there is no arrangement for mass literacy. We want one night school for mass literacy, with 8 or 10 centres. There was one night school opened by Mr. Homi in the Silica Works, but we boycotted it because in that favourites of Homi's party were given preference and others were ignored. It was a device by Homi for controlling the workers and bringing them under his own influence.

Q.—Are there many cases of drink?

A.—Yes, the party of Homi drinks much; we do not.

Q.—How much wine they drink?

A.—1/4th of their income.

Q.—Are you in favour of prohibition? Can you arrange for that?

A.—Yes, we are in favour and we can arrange.

Q.—Can you do it by propaganda through the union?

A.—Yes, but they can drink in other areas. After the river Barakar Bengal begins and they can go there and drink.

Q.—About retrenchment; you want that workers should not be reduced. If there is an occasion to discharge workers, what do you want?

A.—We want that they should not be discharged; they should be given compulsory leave. Suppose the work is less; then instead of 8 hours work, it can be reduced to 5 or 6 hours and for 3 or 4 days in the week. Then all will be employed.

Q.—Is there any system of fine?

A.—No.

Q.—Why is there complaint of theft in or near about the *dhowras*?

A.—*Dhowra* lines are not lighted; so theft takes place in the *dhowras*.

Q.—In case of a dispute between the company and the union, do you like that a conciliation board be appointed by the Government to decide the issue?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you want that notice of strike should be given to the Company?

A.—Yes, strike should be decided by ballot.

Dr. Mukherjee.—Is there any case of unemployment in any part of the mill?

A.—Yes.

Q.—When the work is less how many people are unemployed?

A.—Notice is given before reduction takes place.

Q.—We want to fix standard loads to be carried by men and women on their heads? Will you like this?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How many bricks do they carry? What is the weight?

A.—9 bricks weighing about 75 or 80 lbs.

Q.—What maximum weight would you like to be fixed?

A.—30 seers maximum for women and 40 seers for men.

Q.—Is bonus given?

A.—If a man gets Rs. 40 as his wage he is given Rs. 45.

Q.—What is the proportion of bonus to the wage?

A.—I do not know.

Q.—Is the market rate high?

A.—Yes, near Kumardhubi the biggest market is Assansol or Chirkunda where the prices are high.

Q.—Will you like the idea of co-operative stores to be maintained by the union?

A.—Yes.

Prof. Saran.—Is there any difficulty in registration?

A.—No, we applied in November and got it in March, in 4 months.

Q.—Do you pay the registration fees?

A.—Yes, Rs. 5; nothing else.

Q.—How many members are there in the Executive Committee?

A.—15 members, taken from all mills; there is no fixed proportion. In the constitution there is nothing fixed; we generally take 5 from each.

Q.—From which districts do the khalasis come?

A.—From Muzaffarpur, Gaya, Ballia, Madras and Punjab. They are all illiterate. Homi threatens them and persuades them to become members of his party.

Q.—There is one labour officer in the company. Do you get any benefit from him?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What is the work of the labour officer?

A.—To look after the welfare of the labourers.

Q.—Is there any leave?

A.—Yes, 15 days with pay; it has been provided recently.

Q.—How is dismissal done?

A.—According to the views of the foreman.

Q.—Is there any deduction like *dasturi*?

A.—No.

Q.—What are the hours of work?

A.—54 a week including 4 hours, i.e., half work on Saturday; overtime for 2 hours is paid.

Q.—Do you get acting allowance?

A.—No, we act but do not get the allowance.

Mr. Hayman.—You are the president of the union?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Did you complain to the management about the excess hours of work as you say here?

A.—No, we have not.

Q.—Under the Workmen's Compensation Act do you get compensation?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Are the workers indebted, if so to whom?

A.—Yes, to the *kabulis*.

Q.—Has the loan been taken for drink?

A.—To some extent. They drink away their earning and enjoy at the earnings of their wife and children.

Dr. Mukherjee.—Thank you.

The Committee resumed its sitting in the Tata Institute, Jamshedpur, on the 31st March 1939.

The following members were present :—

(1) Mr. R. R. Bakhale	...	<i>Deputy Chairman, Presiding.</i>
(2) Dr. R. K. Mukherjee	...	<i>Member.</i>
(3) Mr. A. M. Hayman	...	<i>„</i>
(4) Prof. Abdul Bari	...	<i>„</i>
(5) Prof. R. K. Saran	...	<i>Secretary.</i>
(6) Mr. T. H. Clifford	...	<i>(Co-opted Member, Capital.)</i>
(7) Mr. J. N. Mitra	...	<i>(Co-opted Member, Labour.)</i>

**Oral evidence of Mr. J. N. Mitra and Mr. N. C. Paul, on behalf of the Tatanagar Iron Foundry Workers Labour Union, Jamshedpur.**

*Mr. Bakhale.*—Well, Mr. Mitra, what is your position in the Labour Union?

*A.*— I am the Vice-President of the Union.

*Q.*—You Mr. Paul?

*A.*—I am the General Secretary and Cashier.

*Q.*—Who is the President?

*A.*—Prof. Bari is the President.

*Q.*—Since how long your Union is in existence?

*A.*—We started the Union in the month of April, 1938.

*Q.*—What was your position before that?

*A.*—Before that there was one Mr. Manik Homi who had tried to organise a Union but he had failed; it was organised by us.

*Q.*—What is the membership of the Union?

*A.*—It is 1,680.

*Q.*—What is the total number of workers there in the Company?

*A.*—It is about 2,000 out of which there are 1,600 men and about 400 women. Owing to the fluctuating nature of the work, there is considerably small number of members of the Union out of so many workers.



Q.—So your membership also fluctuates?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What is the membership fee?

A.—Those who earn upto annas 8 give one anna per month. Those who earn from annas 8 to annas 12 per day give annas 2 a month and so on.

Q.—What is the maximum and minimum rate of wages for the women workers?

A.—It is annas 4 on the minimum and annas 12 maximum.

Q.—Is your Union recognised by the management?

A.—(What do you mean by recognition)?

*Mr. Bakhale.*—The meaning of recognition is that if there is any dispute you are consulted by them for conciliation and they think you to be the representative of the workers?

A.—In that case it can be said that there is practical recognition. There was, on the 4th December 1938, a conciliation and certain terms were arrived at and the Union was also represented in it. But they do not act upto the terms of the settlement.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—I find that there is a variety of rates in piece-work sections; is my notion correct?

A.—It is almost general in the Company. There is no uniformity of rates in the departments.

Q.—Why is so? Is it advantageous for the Company to keep different rates?

A.—I do not think so.

Q.—Is there security of service?

A.—There is no security. Many workers are temporary for many years.

Q.—Are there many cases of reduction of rates?

A.—There are some cases of reduction. Increase was given but later on reduced. Say, a man was given annas 12 but later on he was reduced to annas 10.

Q.—Do you advocate the standardisation of rates?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Are you in favour of the minimum wage and do you suggest that there should be the minimum wage of annas 10 to the worker?

A.—No, I am in favour of the minimum wage but not annas 10 a day. Please refer to page 5 of my memorandum. I want for the skilled worker the minimum wage of Re. 1 per day; and annas 10 for the unskilled worker.

Q.—In the fitters' section there is not much rationalisation and intensification?

A.—Yes.

Q.—There has been increase of work per head to some extent?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How will you fix the basic rate?

A.—Each man should be allowed to earn a minimum wages per day, say annas 10 for the unskilled work and Re. 1 for the skilled work. The piece rate should be fixed accordingly.

Mr. Hayman.—Have you not got the basic minimum rate for the fitters? Do you want that it should be the same for the workers of all categories?

A.—No. There are different varieties of jobs and different skilled jobs too. Then there should be different minimum and different basic rates for different varieties; annas 10 for unskilled and Re. 1 for skilled worker in this industry should be the minimum in the lowest rated job.

Q.—You have said that in this factory the number of accidents is higher than the normal; what do you think it is due to?

A.—Absence of mechanical devises and provision of proper safety measures. Even for excessively hard work there is no proper arrangement of supervision for safety.

Q.—Do you not think that it is due to negligence of the workers.

A.—No, I do not.

Mr. Clifford.—When you talk about permanent work, can you tell me the minimum profit from that during the course of one year?

A.—We have no idea of the maximum or minimum profits in a month or year.

Q.—How can you talk of this then?

A.—We have idea of the per permanent and temporary work and not of the profit figures.

Mr. Saran.—You have said in the memorandum that..... (reads) about the permanent work. You want an arrangement to be made with the Railway Board?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Which means that when a certain kind of work is started, it should be carried through permanently?

A.—What we want is that work should be properly secured to ensure permanency to labour force.

Q.—The labour force should be permanent as long as the factory is there?

A.—Normally there should not be annual reduction in an industry like this.

Q.—Have you had a talk with the management also?

A.—Yes. We have agreed that permanent labour force should not be reduced.

Q.—Then you think that temporary retrenchment may be necessary?

A.—Yes. But then there are means available to the management which can minimise the period of unemployment.

Q.—Then you want certain safeguards against reduction and retrenchments?

A.—Yes, there should be safeguards against unrestricted retrenchment.

Q.—Regarding minimum wage, it is found that the minimum wages claimed in the Tatas is Re. 1, in the Cable Company, it is annas 12 and in the Foundry it is annas 10?

A.—In arriving at the minimum wage figures, we have not disregarded important factors namely, the capacity of the particular industry, its financial position, and nature of work. If the nature of work is different, cost of living is bound to vary. A roller certainly requires more nourishing food than a sweeper. Hence different minimum wages.

Q.—From the financial position of this Company, it is agreed that if they pay annas 10 will be a satisfactory living wage?

A.—We have to note the difference between economic wage and living wage. We have to take into account the fact that the workers sometimes have to be content only with *bhat* and *dal*; but they also require nutritious diet like milk and *ghee*, other better kind of food. So there cannot be an absolute minimum.

Q.—You do not agree to a uniform scale whether here or there?

A.—Of course, minimum wages can be fixed at Re. 1, all things taken into consideration. But I would take into consideration the financial position of each company.

Q.—Is it a fact that there was shortage of work and so there has been some retrenchment?

A.—It might be so. But attempts should be made to secure permanent flow of orders.

Q.—Regarding shifts, what is the objection if they come to work at 6 or 6-30 A.M.?

A.—There is no objection.

Q.—Is there any delay in the supply of materials to the men or it is supplied as early as possible?

A.—No, there is delay.

Q.—Are the men not paid for extra work besides the shift?

A.—Of course, they are paid.

Q.—You have said of rationalisation that.....(*reads*).

A.—Yes.

Q.—How do you find it out?

A.—Say, for example, there were in a certain department three men working before; now only 2 men are working there.

Q.—Is there intensification also?

A.—Yes.

*Prof. Bari.*—You have said that the Union has been recognised by the management. What do you mean by that? Please explain it perfectly?

A.—By recognition, we meant recognition in practical sense. The management said that until there was registration of the Union, they would not formally recognise it. They however, consult the Union in times of trouble. When grievances are put before them they pay heed to them. The claims of the workers are heard. Hence the Union enjoys practical recognition.

Q.—What is the actual experience?

A.—It is a long history.

Q.—Whether it is satisfactory or unsatisfactory?

A.—It is not satisfactory.

Q.—Then what is the case?

A.—The thing is that when we press for the redress of any grievance, we are called and discussion takes place between the two parties. A few months ago there was a strike, and after that a Conciliation Board was appointed by the Government before whom respective cases were placed by the representatives of the management and the labour. The Board decided that the Company should give one anna increment to all with retrospective effect from September 1938 and that all workers should be made permanent. They also recommended provident fund to the workers. We were satisfied at the termination of the dispute. But in practice the recommendations have not been given effect to.

Q.—So you mean that this is the sort of recognition that you enjoy?

A.—Yes.

Q.—So recognition is observed in discussions only.

A.—Yes; the resolution is never carried out into effect.

*Mr. Bakhale.*—So far as fixation of wages is concerned you have said that.....(reads). You want the basic standard of wages?

*A.*—Yes, of course.

*Q.*—In that case the hours of work will also be different?

*A.*—No. It will not be.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—There is reduction of wages and not the reduction of work?

*A.*—Yes, that is so.

*Q.*—There are different types of work?

*A.*—Yes.

*Prof. Bari.*—What should be the rent of quarters to be paid by the workers in comparison to their wages?

*A.*—10 per cent.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Are the higher paid workers to pay higher rent?

*A.*—No.

*Q.*—Can you say the requirements of workers in their quarters and how far they are satisfied?

*A.*—Yes. In addition to bed rooms, there should be store room, kitchen, baith room, etc. These are not provided by the Company's quarters. Some workers complain that they have got to pay Rs. 12 as rent, for three rooms, without any other amenities.

*Q.*—There is also complaint that some workers have got to work for about 12 hours? Can you name the department?

*A.*—Yes, in the General Furnace and Casting.

*Q.*—Do they get compensation for working for 12 hours?

*A.*—Yes, they are paid for the excess period.

*Q.*—It was also found that some of the women have to carry heavy loads; do you know what is the weight they have to carry?

*A.*—About 100 lbs., it varies from 50 lbs. to 98 lbs. and go to 100 lbs. The minimum is 50 lbs. and the maximum is 100 lbs.

*Q.*—They carry only sleepers?

*A.*—Yes.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Your Union has been reorganised in April, 1938. Has it been started as a fresh Union or the same Union continues? Did you register the Union again or the same registration continues?

*A.*—The first Union was abolished due to some reasons, and a new Union has been started. We have applied for registration but it has not yet been registered.

Q.—There is one common Union for workers of all the companies here at Jamshedpur?

A.—Not a common union. There are separate unions under the guidance of the same group of leaders.

Q.—Is it a fact that you applied for registration of the Union but it has not been registered?

A.—No, the fact is that we applied for registration but the Registrar wanted alteration of some points in the constitution and it was returned to us. We have made necessary corrections and it has been sent to the Registrar again for registration.

Q.—I understand that there are 680 members in the Union?

A.—Not 680 but 1,680 members.

Q.—What are the average rates of subscription?

A.—Annas 2 to annas 4.

Q.—What have you collected in the last 12 months?

A.—Say about Rs. 350 from 1,680 members.

Q.—In the matter of recruitment you have said that the contract system is not good and there is great favouritism in recruitment of labourers. Some men and community is given preference over the other? Can you give any concrete case of the same?

A.—Oh, Yes.

Q.—You want that the responsibility of recruitment should be shifted to some other administration than the present?

A.—Yes. Something like that.

Q.—Coming to the wages you have suggested that the minimum wages should be annas 10 to the unskilled worker? Have you given considerable thought to this figure? Do you think that any factory can give that? I put it to you that they cannot pay so much? You give your opinion on this, considering the prosperity and condition of the Company.

A.—Yes. I have based it on the economic conditions and the prosperity of the Company. That is how economic wage is calculated.

Q.—In the Tata Iron and Steel Company, the minimum is also annas 10 or Re. 1?

A.—Re. 1 roughly.

Q.—Is there no difference in the conditions of the prosperity of the two companies, Tisco and the Tatanagar Iron Foundry?

A.—Yes, there is difference in the conditions, and so there is difference of annas 6 in the minimum economic wages of the two industries.

Q.—In the Tatas how much is allowed for efficiency and how much for prosperity of the Company?

A.—We have not calculated that way. We have not made out figures separately.

Q.—Do you not see that the prosperity of the two companies is widely different and you have put the difference of minimum wages at only annas 6; the prosperity of one is far greater than that of the other?

A.—Yes, the difference in minimum wage is therefore reasonable and is alright.

Q.—Have you compared the profits of the two companies, the Tisco and the Tatanagar Foundry? Can you give figures?

A.—I cannot give figures.

Q.—You have said in the memorandum tath.....(*reads*). Have you suggested that there are wholesale dismissals; do you stand by that?

A.—Yes, that is our apprehension. It is the practice also.

Q.—You mean that it is only apprehension and not the truth?

A.—Yes, also truth.

Q.—Can you say that the dismissal is without any cause?

A.—Yes, without sufficient cause.

Q.—Is there overtime work also?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Are they required to work for more than the hours prescribed under the Factory Act?

A.—Yes, it is so complained by men.

Q.—You mean to say that there is the violation of the Factory Act?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Have you brought this breach to the notice of the Factory Inspector?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Did he not take any action?

A.—No, he did not take.

Q.—Is not the payment for overtime made according to the payment of Wages Act, and if they are not paid, there is another breach of the Act?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Then you do not know the rules of the Payment of the Wages Act? I put it to you that it is not the case. The management will be asked to refute the charges.

A.—You may do that. As a Trade Unionist, I have often read the Act.

Q.—I understand that there is no permanent cadre of workers. Can you enlighten me as to how many labourers roughly there are on the two cadres of permanent and temporary?

A.—We have not got the figures; we only know that there is no security even in the permanent cadre. No-body can be sure of his job. Recently some men were given compulsory leave and asked to go away.

Q.—Can you say whether the compulsory leave of the workers is with or without pay?

A.—Without pay and often without any chance of getting the post again.

Q.—Is it not a fact that there are workers who are working since long? You say, even then, that there is no security of services?

A.—Even then it is not a case of security of service. They can be sacked any time. There was no occasion and so they are there.

*Prof. Bari.*—Regarding compulsory leave, what is your experience whether the men concerned are re-employed?

A.—No, they are often not re-employed.

Q.—Is it not a fact that those who are employed do not get the same wage and same post?

A.—Yes, it is a fact.

Q.—Do the workers get profit-sharing bonus? Do you think that Tatas alone give the profit-sharing bonus?

A.—In this Company there is no system of profit-sharing bonus. Tata, Tinplate, Copper Corporation, Wire Products give bonus. Shipping Companies, such as Mackinon Mackenzie and Company, pay bonus.



The Committee met in the Tata Institute, Jamshedpur, on the 31st March 1939 at 2-40 P.M.

Members present :—

- |                         |     |     |  |
|-------------------------|-----|-----|--|
| 1. Mr. R. R. Bakhale    | ... | ... | <i>Deputy Chairman,<br/>Presiding.</i> |
| 2. Dr. R. K. Mukherjee. |     |     |  |
| 3. Prof. R. K. Saran    | ... | ... | <i>Secretary.</i>                      |
| 4. Mr. A. M. Hayman.    |     |     |  |
| 5. Mr. T. H. Clifford   | ... | ... | <i>(Co-opted Member,<br/>Capital).</i> |
| 6. Mr. J. N. Mitra      | ... | ... | <i>(Co-opted Member,<br/>Labour).</i>  |

Oral evidence of the following workers of the Mr. Bishnu Pada Sinha, T. N. 317-Sleeper Moulder, Mr. Nagendra Nath Dass, Mr. Md. Sardar Ali, Machine Shop, Mr. Kalidas Mukherjee, T. N. 357-Sleeper Moulder, on behalf of the Tatanagar Iron Foundry Works.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Is the work continuous for 12 months in the Factory?

*A.*—No, for 3 months the work is closed entirely.

*Q.*—Do you get wages for those 3 months?

*A.*—No.

*Q.*—In the case of continuous work, you have generally got the Casting work?

*A.*—There is not one kind of work.

*Q.*—What is the kind of general work?

*A.*—There are normally standing orders for casting and that continues throughout.

*Q.*—Suppose there are in the machine shop 5 or 6 fitters, one getting Rs. 1-9-0, another getting Re. 1-1-0 and the third 12 annas. Is the work the same for all these men getting different rates on the same job?

*A.*—Yes, the work is the same?

*Q.*—Is there security in jobs?

*A.*—No, not at all.

*Q.*—Why is it that some get Rs. 1-9-0 and others get 12 annas, Re. 1-1-0, etc.?

A.—The job rate has been reduced in many cases.

Q.—There is no fixed rate for the workers; the Company gives what it likes; why is this?

A.—Yes, the Company gives more wages to the favourites and the *Dalals*; there is the question of sweet will.

Q.—Why has the job rate been reduced?

A.—That is the will of the management?

Q.—In the Ramming Department, in the general Casting and the Furnace Department since 1934 is there any reduction in rates?

A.—Yes. In these departments 5 or 10 labourers were reduced on the pretext that work had decreased. From 10 it has been reduced to 8 men now. This is the general case.

Q.—In what other departments?

A.—In the Laddle Carrying and Ramming Departments.

Q.—Is there any case that work is taken for more than 8 hours in these departments?

A.—Yes, in these departments 8 hours' work is taken. Including the overtime work there is total work for 10 hours and it is not written in the register.

Q.—Does not the Factory Inspector see to it because according to the Factory Act it is not permitted to take more than 54 hours' work in the week?

A.—No, who sees to it? Work is taken for even more than this.

Q.—How much money would you require to have your wants removed and to live a decent life?

A.—We require at least one rupee a day. It is the lowest minimum in which we can manage any how.

Q.—In the Factory have you got taps and sheds for water and food?

A.—No, not at all. There is no place where we can take food and water and take rest for a while.

Q.—There are some *Rejas* in the Factory. How much do they get?

A.—Yes, there are some. They get 4 annas 6 pies or 5 annas a day.

Q.—Is there any general security for them?

A.—No. In September, 1937, there was a general increment of 3 pies for the female workers but after some time there was reduction. So on the 19th September last there was a general strike in the Factory. Before this strike some men were discharged. After the strike

there was a settlement granting increment from 4½ annas to 5 annas and from 8 annas to 9 annas but up till now they have not given that increment. They have not implemented the terms of the settlement.

*Mr. Mitra.*—Are all of you permanent workers?

*A.*—No.

*Q.*—The Company promised you an increment; have you got that?

*A.*—No.

*Q.*—They also said that you would be given promotion and would be made permanent? Have you got all that?

*A.*—No, nothing.

*Q.*—Are you given higher posts when they fall vacant?

*A.*—No.

*Q.*—Why are you not given when you are entitled to get?

*A.*—The thing is that they give all facilities to their favourites and *Dalals*. Favouritism plays a great part in these matters.

*Q.*—The rate which you get is enough?

*A.*—It is not at all satisfactory. One gets 6 annas 6 pies, another 7 annas 6 pies. Since 1929 they are working and are getting the same rate.

*Q.*—Before the Conciliation Board they promised to give you a number of facilities. Have they given all that?

*A.*—No, nothing has been given.

*Q.*—Do you get provident fund?

*A.*—No.

*Q.*—In the terms of the settlement it was decided and the management promised to give you provident fund. Have they given you?

*A.*—No. After the strike there was a Conciliation Board and they promised to give the facility of Provident Fund but they have not implemented the terms of the settlement.

*Q.*—Did they give bonus, they promised that in the agreement?

*A.*—Yes, they promised no doubt but have not given anything.

*Q.*—I think the production of the Company is the same or is it greater in comparison with the previous output?

*A.*—The production has considerably increased. It has increased by 35 per cent and therefore they are able to give bonus.

A.—Yes, undoubtedly.

Q.—Is it a fact that the rate is the lowest prevailing here?

A.—Oh, yes.

Q.—For the same work formerly there were 3 men but now there are only 2?

A.—Yes, in another department formerly there were 4 but now only 3; and the rate was Re. 1-2-0 but now only 14 annas.

Q.—Is the housing accommodation sufficient?

A.—There is no housing accommodation for the workers here. There were a few rooms which have been lent out to some relatives of the Police Inspector; and the workers who were in the quarters were asked to go away and vacate the rooms.

Q.—You mean to say that those quarters are not meant for the workmen?

A.—It appears like that.

Q.—Have you got any doctor to treat the labourers?

A.—Yes, there is a doctor for the benefit of the workers.

Q.—Is there proper arrangement for giving medicines and is there sufficient quantity of medicine?

A.—No. When a man goes to the hospital the doctor says that there is no medicine.

Q.—Have you got proper arrangement for water? From where do you get water for drinking purposes?

A.—No, there is no proper arrangement. We get water from a well. The water is unfiltered and unboiled. We take it from the well directly.

Q.—Is more work done through the contractors than done directly? Are you paid regularly by the Contractor?

A.—Not regularly.

Q.—How many female labourers are there?

A.—400.

Q.—Is there arrangement for their babies and children to sleep and take rest?

A.—No, not at all. They live in the open sun in the hot weather of June and July.

Mr. Saran.—Do you get compensation for any injury?

A.—When a man is injured he is sent to the hospital and for 1 to 7 days there is no payment of compensation. After that he gets half pay and after that the Company gives something, say, Rs. 20 or Rs. 30.

Q.—Then you get compensation?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What is the behaviour of the officers towards the workers?

A.—Well, it is very bad. They abuse, beat and slap.

Q.—Why do they do so?

A.—They say that you must not go to the Union and must not join it.

Q.—Is there only one Union and are there women members of the union?

A.—Yes, there is only one Union and there are members from women workers also.

Q.—What is the rate of subscription?

A.—It is 4 annas per month.

Q.—Is there fixed period for collection of the money of subscription?

A.—It is collected every three months. Those who get 8 annas and above daily pay 4 annas and similarly it is fixed proportionately for low paid workers.

Q.—For work in the hot departments do you get shoes and gloves?

A.—Yes, we get but not sufficiently. These wear out soon and if in the middle of the period it is rendered useless, we have got to buy our own. Generally we get three pairs of shoes in the year.

Q.—How many *mistries* are there?

A.—There is a good number of *mistries*.

Q.—Where do they live?

A.—In the quarters of their brothers, or in the quarters of other workers in other companies.

Q.—What is the rent?

A.—Rs. 3.

Q.—Have you all got loan or debts?

A.—Yes, almost all have got debts. (1) Rs. 100, (2) Rs. 200, (3) Rs. 250.

Q.—What is the rate of interest?

A.—It is 2 pice per month in the rupee.

Q.—Since how many years you are working in the Company?

A.—Since 11 or 12 years.

Q.—You take loan from the Company or from some other source?

A.—From both the sources, from the *Mahajans* and the *Moghuls*.

Mr. Hayman.—What is the general hours of work?

A.—In one shift work starts from 7 A.M. and lasts up to 11½, again from 1½ to 5 P.M. Another shift is from 8 A.M. to 4 P.M. There is yet another shift from 6 A.M. to 2 P.M. There are various shifts.

Q.—So you mean to say that there is no fixed shift for work?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you want payment for overtime?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What is the general practice of work, whether it is 8 hours or more?

A.—The practice is for 8 hours and not more.

Q.—And for 6 days in the week?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is there no work on Sunday?

A.—No work.

Q.—Do you say that often there is work for more than 8 hours?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is it not a fact that work for more than 8 hours is overtime work for which you get extra payment?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What is the rate of pay?

A.—I am working since 8 years and getting Rs. 20 and started with the same rate of pay.

Q.—What you are earning (*to another man*)?

A.—Re. 1 a day.

Q.—(*To the third man*) How much do you get and on what you started?

A.—I started on 14 annas and I am getting Re. 1.

Q.—You have said that you do not get workmen's compensation?

A.—(*Some say 'Yes' and some say 'no'*).

Q.—Is it not a fact that you got compensation in 1937?

A.—We want that compensation be paid after the case of injury.

Q.—Is compensation given before the injury? (*Laughter*).

A.—No, I mean to say that it should not take a long time in getting the money.

The Committee resumed its sitting in the Town Hall, Muzaffarpur, on the 24th January 1939.

The following members were present :—

- |                            |                          |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Dr. Rajendra Prasad ... | ... Chairman, Presiding. |
| 2. Mr. R. R. Bakhale ...   | ... Deputy Chairman.     |
| 3. Dr. R. K. Mukherjee ... | ... Member.              |
| 4. Prof. R. K. Saran ...   | ... Secretary.           |

**Summary of the oral evidence of Babu Satrugna Nath Tiwari, Secretary, Arthur Butler Labour Union and Press Workers' Union, Muzaffarpur.**

The Press Workers' Union was established in April, 1938, and the Arthur Butler Union in November, 1938. There are about 175 members of the Union of Arthur Butler and about 41 members in the Press Union. I get one anna from those who get salary of Rs. 10 as subscription, and I take annas two as subscription from those who get from Rs. 11 to Rs. 20 and from Rs. 21 to Rs. 30 we take three annas, and so on. All the subscriptions are deposited into a Savings Bank Account. All the members taken together are about 275. I spend the money got from subscription for the needs of the members and the Union as for example registration, papers and other office materials. Up till now we have been able to collect Rs. 55 from subscription. Workers become members themselves at their own initiative. There are two workers who have been unpaid apprentices for a year. Workers are mostly illiterate. Workers are chestised by abuses, suspensions, dismissal, fines and also in some cases wages are cut. In the case of the workers whose wages are above Rs. 35 one day's wages is cut. At a certain time one worker was assaulted. This led to a strike. There was a compromise but when they returned to work, 20 were expelled. This led to a second strike when the Union came into being. The Manager called us. I and my President went there. We placed our grievances before them and there was an agreement. Up till now 5 or 6 meetings have been held. Many workers have not been given increment, since they were employed. Those who are employed in the Company get increment but after a very long time. There are cases in which some workers are victimised.

The Union has arranged to give education to the workers through the Mass Literacy Campaign and teach them on every Sunday by means of charts. They are then directed to learn their lessons at home. This arrangement is done because the workers do not get time on any other days than Sunday. There is no school as there are no quarters for them built by the Company in its compound. About 70 workers come from places five to ten miles away on bicycles. About 30 per cent of the workers live in rented houses. There is no rule about fine. The power of suspending workers due to slackness of work should be given to the workers themselves and they will decide who will sit and who will work.

The witness referred to the following demands:—

- (1) There should be proper housing arrangements for the workers.
- (2) There should be graded increment for them, like office.
- (3) Appointment letters should be issued to them at the time of appointing them (with condition of service); they should not be appointed verbally and dismissed verbally.
- (4) The minimum pay should be Rs. 15.
- (5) Workers should get 15 days' leave with pay like casual leave, 15 days' leave with half pay called sick leave, and all gazetted holidays together with local holidays.

*Chairman.*—What do you mean by gazetted holidays.

*A.*—I mean leave like criminal courts.



The Committee resumed its sitting in the Inspection Bungalow, Dehri, on the 19th December 1938.

The following members were present :—

1. Mr. R. R. Bakhale ...	...	<i>Deputy Chairman, Presiding.</i>
2. Dr. R. K. Mukherjee ...	...	<i>Member.</i>
3. Mr. M. P. Gandhi ...	...	<i>Member.</i>
4. Mr. H. B. Chandra ...	..	<i>Member.</i>
5. Mr. J. N. Lal ...	...	<i>Member.</i>
6. Prof R. K. Saran ...	...	<i>Secretary.</i>
7. Mr. Shanti Prasad Jain ...	...	<i>(Co-opted Member).</i>
8. Mr. Basawan Singh ...	...	<i>(Co-opted Member).</i>

**Oral evidence of Mr. Ram Prakash Mistri of P. W. D. Workshop,  
Dehri-on-Sone.**

*Chairman.*—What is your name?

*A.*—My name is Ram Parikh Mistri.

*Q.*—What work you do?

*A.*—I am a carpenter.

*Q.*—What is your pay?

*A.*—I am daily-rated and get 12 annas at present.

*Q.*—For how many years have you been working?

*A.*—I have been working since 1925.

*Q.*—Are you a member of the Union?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—Do you know the contents of the letter which your Union has addressed to Mr. Brown?

*A.*—Yes, I do.

*Q.*—Are you on strike?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—How many of you are on strike?

*A.*—Eighty-five of us are on strike.

*Q.*—When a reply is given to your letter, then you intend to return to work. Is not that your intention?

*A.*—Yes, that is our intention.

*Mr. R. K. Saran.*—When Government has promised that after one month you would receive a reply, why do you not accept that?

*A.*—I explained to Mr. Brown that at present it is very cold and when we go under water, for that must be done as we have to do work beneath the surface, cold water enters our ears and they bleed profusely, so that after one month conditions under water might become better and by that time the reply from Government would also have been received, when we may go to Buxar.

*Q.*—Do you have to go there every year?

*A.*—Yes.

*Mr. Lal.*—Do you have to dive under water here also to do your work?

*A.*—No.

*Q.*—In the previous years you usually went to Buxar, did you not?

*A.*—Yes, we did.

*Q.*—Did you go in winter?

*A.*—No, not usually in winter.

\* Questions and answers were put and given in Hindustani.

*Q.*—You can say to Government that it is very hard to work in the winter. Anyway, if you are not to go to Buxar then why do you not work here?

*A.*—Because those twenty, who were asked to go to Buxar, have been dismissed, others have stopped working.

*Mr. Bhagwan Singh.*—When your wages were cut along with the cut in the pay of officers, was any promise made that the cut would be restored?

*A.*—Yes, it was promised that the cut would be restored after three months.

*Mr. Shanti Prashad Jain.*—Were payments made at different rates to different men?

*A.*—Yes.

*Mr. Bhagwan Singh.*—Were not even the allowance restored?

*A.*—No.

*Q.*—Of those who have been discharged has anybody who is junior to them in service retained?

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\* This evidence is not corrected by the witness.

A.—Yes, there are at least two such men who are junior to the eight people who were discharged.

Q.—What is the reason that those eight hands were dismissed?

A.—Because they joined the Union.

Q.—Do you want to come to a settlement?

A.—Yes, if we know definitely that we will get what we were getting in 1932.

*Mr. Lal.*—Government have appointed this committee, and if this committee makes certain recommendations, are you willing to agree to accept those recommendations and work?

A.—No, unless our grievances are redressed.

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**MINES AND QUARRIES**

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The Committee met in the Town Hall, Dhanbad, at 3-45 P.M. on the 18th February 1939.

Members present :—

Dr. Rajendra Prasad	...	...	Chairman, Presiding.
Mr. R. R. Bakhale	...	...	Deputy Chairman.
Dr. R. K. Mukherjee	...	...	Member.
Mr. Jagat Narayan Lal	...	...	Member.
Mr. M. P. Gandhi	...	...	Member.
Mr. H. B. Chandra	...	...	Member.
Mr. R. K. Saran	...	...	Secretary.
Mr. J. E. Phelps	...	...	(Co-opted Member).
Mr. A. L. Ojha	...	...	(Co-opted Member).
Mr. K. N. Sen Gupta	...	...	(Co-opted Member).
Mr. K. N. Bhattacharya	...	...	(Co-opted Member).

**Oral evidence of Mr. Mukut Dhari Singh, Secretary, Chota Nagpur Majdoor Singh, Jharia, supported by Mr. Shiva Kumar Singh.**

*Chairman.*—You have some experience of the coalfields here. Out of the two systems of labour recruitment that is generally prevalent, namely through the agency of contractors and the other through *Sarkari*, which do you prefer?

*A.*—Certainly *Sarkari* where they got better treatment and better facilities. Contractors are always contractors. There are defects in the contractors' system which are absent in the *Sarkari*. Considering the two systems of employment of labour certainly *Sarkari* is far better than raising contractorship. Working under a raising-contractor is detrimental to the worker in several ways. Generally the employers do, to some extent, look after, or rather try to look after the welfare of the workers directly under them, I mean the *Sarkari*, whereas with the raising-contractors it is just the opposite. He is keen only in extracting work out of these poor fellows as much as he can for the sake of his profit.

*Q.*—Is it your experience that the system of raising contractors exists to a considerable extent?

*A.*—I do not think so. There are places where raising-contractors exist. But generally the position is getting towards the better. It is being gradually replaced by the *Sarkari* system. Anyway it is not to the extent you imagine.

*Q.*—So you mean to say that mostly it is the *Sarkari* system that is prevalent in these parts?

*A.*—Yes.

Q.—Has it come to your notice that any portion of the wages of a worker goes to the middle men in the shape of *Dasturi* or tips?

A.—Oh, yes. Several instances. That is a general complaint. If a worker wants a particular working face or any other facility of work he must pay something to the *Sirdar*. That is a general practice. This is not only the case in the contractor system; middle men there are in the *Sarkari* system also. As the management of collieries take tips; the workers do pay something to their supervising officers.

Q.—Does it come to a considerable proportion of the wages, or is it only a small amount?

A.—My view is that it is somewhere near 20 per cent of the wages of a worker. It must be more. A very correct figure cannot be given. I put it at somewhere near 20 per cent. What is entered in the books at the colliery does not come to the hands of the worker. That is certain.

Q.—What remedy do you suggest to put a stop to this practice?

A.—I think if there is a minimum wage for each worker it will reduce this to a very great extent. That is the first thing. Secondly, it depends on public opinion also; that is, if public opinion is created against this, it can be eliminated to a very great extent.

Q.—Public opinion amongst the workers, you mean?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How is minimum wage going to help?

A.—It is so plain. If a worker is assured a minimum wage for his 8 hours' work inside the mine, when he comes out of the mine he will have that wage earned for the day and will not feel it necessary to give tips to his superior officers to get his dues.

Q.—I suppose that workers are paid by the tubs? If in the course of 8 hours he does not fill anything for the reason that he gets a bad working face how will that solve the difficulty, I cannot understand? He will then also continue to pay the supervising officer some tips to get proper working face so that he may fill the required number of tubs?

A.—I did not say minimum wage per tub. I said he must be assured a certain wage for his 8 hours' work underground. When that happens the employer will show him the best working face to get the maximum work out of him. He will also get the tubs in time. There will be little time wasted.

Q.—Have you come across any individual cases of such bribery and has that been brought to the notice of the management?

A.—That is a rather difficult question. This is a practice which is so prevalent that it is impossible to single out cases. The worker, if he complains to the management today, cannot get work for days

together and may be harassed in many other ways. Moreover, it will not reach the higher colliery authorities at all. Well, I may say that the lower staff also are frequently used to this habit of taking tips as the *Sirdar* or the supervising gangman underground does.

Q.—Do you mean to say that even if they bring this to the notice of the management, it is of no use to them?

A.—Certainly, I know of cases brought to the notice of the management in which action has not been taken. They are so frequent that every day the workers cannot complain.

Q.—So, according to you the introduction of an economic minimum wage will put a stop to this practice?

A.—Yes, it is because of the bad economic condition of the workers that this practice has gained ground a great deal.

Q.—We have come across cases during our visits to the collieries of much overcrowding in certain seasons, and I am also told that there is a fall in the earnings of the labourers consequent on the influx of labour. It is also said that the colliery people do not keep out excess labour but employ them on a lower wage, probably on the principle that half a loaf is better than no loaf at all. What have you to say about that?

A.—I think it is entering into the domain of the re-organisation of labour altogether on modern lines—a system by which we can regulate labour. I agree, that is the position.

Q.—What remedy do you suggest? Do you prefer a number of people being kept out and others provided with work on a better wage scale or to employ all on a lower scale?

A.—I think the only method to solve that will be to see that only a required number of workers are allowed into the area. It so happens, we are told, that when there is famine round the colliery area there is large influx of labour and that during the harvesting season there is considerable diminution of workers. I think that if better working conditions are introduced in the collieries most of the workers can be made permanent and this difficulty will not arise.

Q.—The remedy you suggest is that the management must be compelled to maintain a permanent labour force?

A.—Exactly, so that the migratory portion may become less and less, of course gradually.

Q.—Your suggestion is that conditions of work here, including the wages should improve considerably so that the workers themselves may prefer to work in the colliery than go back to the land?

A.—Yes. I know of workers who have been here for the last twenty years working in the same colliery but who are forced to go

to their land during the harvesting and other seasons. Had they been made permanent I know they would have been here all the time.

Q.—Do you think that the conditions in the mine will be, from the money point of view, better than the work in agricultural field?

A.—I cannot say that exactly. I know this that they go back because the wages they are getting here are inadequate for their family requirements.

Q.—Now, should labour be paid on monthly basis or daily? I want your views on it. So far as the monthly-rated people are concerned, they have been provided with facilities of privilege and other leave. But we are told that in the case of daily and weekly-rated men, there is nothing like a provident fund or even leave.

A.—I know that only the permanent employees of only a very limited number of the collieries get the advantages that you have just mentioned. I would like such rules for all classes of workers, whether monthly, daily or weekly so long as they are permanent employees.

Q.—Yes, there is no difficulty with regard to the permanent hands at all; I can understand that. I am asking from the stand point of the casual labourer.

A.—The problem can be effectively solved only in one way. Make the casual labourer also permanent. When once they are permanent the difficulty about payment does not arise at all.

Q.—With regard to the piece wage earners, how would you fix the rules for leave and other similar facilities? There are workers who work all the year round earning their wages from day to day. They are paid, of course, only for the days they work. They remain out of work for certain days in the month. Do you not think that they are bound to suffer a good deal under this arrangement, even though they work all the year round?

A.—Well, that is a big question involving so many other considerations. As I said before much of the difficulty will be solved when once such people are made permanent. That should be our aim. It will be better than having a solution indirectly, keeping the workers still uncertain regarding their tenure of work.

Q.—Well, that brings us to another question. If Provident Fund is provided, do you think it should be on a contributory basis?

A.—I think, it should be on a contributory basis.

Q.—Do you think that under the conditions existing today, a worker will be able to contribute anything at all?

A.—Not at all. Unless workers are paid a little over and above their daily requirements they cannot contribute anything. At present they have not got sufficient to purchase their daily food even.



Q.—Do you want an addition to the present wages of the worker or a contribution to be made by the authorities direct? Which do you prefer?

A.—Both. But whether there is a Provident Fund scheme introduced or not, the workers' present wages must be increased. We see he has little food for himself and his family to-day. It is the first necessity. Provident funds can wait consideration but not the problem of increment in wages.

Q.—What according to you should a worker earn today?

A.—Well, I think an average coal-cutter should earn, on piece wages, 12 or 13 annas per day at the minimum. He is now getting just half of that or even less.

Q.—What should be the average earning? Please be a little more definite.

A.—I think the question of wages is certainly a psychological one. It must be as much as can be sufficient for his daily needs. It must be a little more than a living wage, if I am permitted to so put it I have tried to work out the figures to some extent. I have considered an average family of four adults.

Q.—A family of four adults?

A.—Yes, the worker, his wife and his aged parents. Then come the children. I have come to the conclusion that the necessities for the family are according to this statement. I have given my reasons for the figures.

*(Witness handed over a statement to the Chairman.)*

There are also certain other miscellaneous expenses, such as marriage, etc. Considering all this, I have come to the conclusion, as you will gather from the statement I have just given, that the workers, coal-cutters and loaders, should get at least Rs. 25 a month.

Q.—You have considered a family of four adults with one earning member. You have thus increased the liability on the part of the worker. At the most he is getting, as you say, only 8 to 10 annas a day. You have also not made any mention of the children in the family who may be earning.

A.—Yes, I have, as I said in the beginning, considered an average family. The exact position is that with each worker there are not only his aged parents but many other relations hanging on. He must provide for some of them at least. I believe you will agree with me that his parents, at least, must be taken care of by him. That is what happens any how. It is worked out on that basis; that is my view on the matter.

Q.—Well, it is two and half times the present wages? Have you not noticed the fact?

A.—Yes I have, it must be 2½ if it is so.

Q.—Therefore according to you the minimum wage of a coal-cutter should be Rs. 25 a month?

A.—Yes, we are considering the coal industry alone here. It requires great human labour to cut the coal. The worker should have sufficient nutritive food to sustain him in the strain. He has a family to support. He must live to work. Considering all these aspects I am of opinion that the minimum wage of a worker should be at least Re. 1 a day.

Q.—Rupee one a day is not Rs. 25 a month?

A.—But the worker is not working all the 30 days in the month. His earnings per month should be Rs. 25.

Q.—We understand you. But I was trying to get an answer to another question. Do you suggest that a minimum wage should be fixed?

A.—Yes. That is an absolute necessity.

Q.—And that minimum, you say, should be Rs. 25 a month?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Don't you think then, that the workers will go down the mine and sit for hours together without filling any tub at all? Now when they do not get tubs to fill in time, they sit idle. When you assure them a minimum wage what do you think will be the position?

A.—I also believe in human nature as much as you do. Conditions round them have made them idle. When they improve, workers will also improve. Just the opposite of what you have conceived will be the result. Tubs will be in plenty; they will work all the time.

Q.—That is your answer?

A.—Yes. If you fix a minimum wage the employers will also be very earnest with regard to their duties. They will try their best to get the maximum out of their workers and the workers cannot remain idle as you imagine.

Q.—Why not consider this suggestion. A basic minimum should be fixed, which is assured to the worker as soon as he enters the mine. For the rest, he will depend upon himself to earn by piece work. Don't you think that will make the position still better? I want to know whether the figure you have given is the basic minimum or the total earnings. Your object is that the worker should earn Rs. 25. But should the whole of that amount be fixed? Why not fix a portion of it and allow the worker to earn the rest to make up Rs. 25? How do you split this amount of Rs. 25?

A.—I would put it at 12 annas per day.

Q.—That means Rs. 22-8-0.

A.—No, he is not working all the 30 days.

Q.—Well, it will be somewhere near Rs. 19 I believe, that is your basic minimum?

A.—Yes, the rest, as you suggest, he may be allowed to earn for himself. That is not a bad idea.

Q.—Now, in considering this basic minimum, are you taking into consideration the wages that are prevailing outside this industry?

A.—Well, I should say no. But I can say with certainty that it will compare very well with the rates prevailing in other industries, such as the cotton industry, where I know workers are getting much higher wages. Mostly it is with reference to the collieries that I am speaking. Any way, I shall say that in no case, whether you consider other industries or any other factor, your basic minimum should not be less than Rs. 15.

Q.—Now, when you are concerned with a minimum wage, you must have taken into account not only the wages earned in that particular industry, but also the prevailing wages in the locality and the cost of living at that place? Which of the two places, Ahmadabad or Jharia, is costlier?

A.—Well, I should say that Ahmadabad is costlier.

Q.—But how much?

A.—That is very difficult to say.

Q.—Have you taken into account all these factors?

A.—Well, we cannot take into account all the factors obtaining all over the world and try to arrive at a particular uniform rate. That is an impossible task. We must confine ourselves to the coal industry, the conditions of living in the coal-fields and such other factors as are related to that industry only.

Q.—So, you think that it is not fair to compare wages here with the wages of other workers outside this area?

A.—I did not mean that. Outside this area, of course, you can take into account the general wage rate in other coal-fields. Even then that cannot be a standard for Jharia in my opinion.

Q.—What will be the effect of the industry, if there is a high margin of difference between the wages here and round about? I am now considering the industry, not the labour. Today they are getting Rs. 5. You give them Rs. 15 to-morrow. The wages in the villages are also somewhere near, say Rs. 7. You see the margin of difference. What do you say to that?

A.—If conditions change here for the better, the conditions elsewhere are, similarly, bound to change. The agriculturists will also get a similar wage level in course of time.

Q.—Don't you think that there will be a greater inducement to flock the mining industry?

A.—No, there is the management to guard against that. When they begin to pay high wages they will not have to deal with so many surplus labour. They will choose the right type and the required number. Moreover, a very large number of labourers are going to the villages. They will not go hereafter. The village people will look after that. There will be, thus, a mutual adjustment and increment in wages will, to a very great extent, solve the problem of fluctuation in the labour force. Moreover, there is always a tendency in the people having lands to look after them and not to leave their homes, unless they are compelled to do so. I do not think it will have much effect.

Q.—I am contemplating the big margin you are now creating. At present the wages in the industries are a little higher than in the villages. I am told that is the reason why they are coming into the industrial centres. Now if you raise the wages to such a degree as  $2\frac{1}{2}$  times the present level, what do you think will happen?

A.—I do not think that there will be much change. Of course, there may be a little influx in the beginning. That is bound to disappear when once they find that they cannot be entertained. It will not stand in the way at all. That is my opinion.

Q.—Have you any suggestion to make with regard to the hours of work? We know that there is a statutory limitation of 9 hours a day; 54 hours a week. But we are told that workers remain for a much longer time underground. They do not get tubs to load and they are made to wait. That is what we hear.

A.—Still greater arguments can be advanced for reducing the hours of work. Coal industry is particularly unfortunate in more respects than others and so the arguments are many. It taxes the energy of the worker to the utmost. I know of cases where workers have remained underground for 12 hours. It is not only a loss to the worker, it is, in every other respect, very bad. Hours of work must be reduced.

Q.—What about the wages? You think that full wages should be paid?

A.—Certainly, we have discussed the basic minimum and the minimum wage. It must be given to the worker in full, there can be no doubt as to that.

Q.—What about holidays, Sundays?

A.—They are allowed at present, but without pay. They must be declared as holidays with pay. Other holidays also must be given, such as festival and casual leaves.

Q.—Can you give us some idea as to the number of holidays you would suggest and the number of days per year that could be granted to the worker?

A.—I think a month's leave will do. Holidays are of course, dependent on festivals, etc.

*Mr. Saran.*—And how many holidays?

A.—That is rather a very difficult question to answer off-hand. It depends on the various festivals of the communities concerned.

Q.—Is it your information that overtime work is being done without pay?

A.—Always overtime work is taken but never paid for. That is also my information.

Q.—Now, as regards the supply of tubs, what is your information? Is it adequately supplied, in time?

A.—I have received repeated complaints regarding that matter. It is not supplied in time; the supply is most inadequate. The general complaint is about the inadequate supply of tubs and the consequent loss of wages.

*Mr. Chandra.*—Is it a general complaint all over the year or only during particular seasons?

A.—Mostly it is when there is a large influx of labour but somehow or other, the complaint persists.

Q.—The complaint is extensive and exceptions are few?

A.—Yes.

*Chairman.*—That affects the earnings of the worker?

A.—Certainly to a very great extent. It is most tragic to think of it.

*Mr. Saran.*—We are told that a miner does not start his work unless he is given the tub?

A.—That is not my information.

*Chairman.*—Now, as regards the size of the tubs. We are given to understand that there are varying sizes of tubs. Do you think that the varying sizes of tubs will always prejudice the worker?

A.—Oh, yes. There are for instance 30 c.ft. tubs and 36 c.ft. tubs. They are both brought underground. It is really very difficult to judge which is which. The worker may load a larger tub but only get the wages for the smaller. That happens generally.

Q.—There is difference of rates for the two sizes?

A.—Yes, there is a little difference but there are collieries where there are many other sizes. The fact is that if he is given a larger tub, he must necessarily put in much more coal to fill it.

Q.—Can you tell us the exact difference in the rates, if any, between a 30 c.ft. tub and a 36 c.ft. tub?

A.—I cannot exactly say.

Q.—Would you suggest a uniform size of tubs to be used?

A.—Most certainly. That will be a great relief to the worker. It will to a great extent avoid overloading. However, much a worker may load a tub, still he is told "no, no, it is not loaded" and he is forced to put in more coal. Such disadvantages will disappear when once tubs are made of a uniform size.

Mr. Chandra.—The worker will know whether a tub is loaded or not? He cannot be forced to overload?

A.—True, but if he refuses to put in more coal he is the party that suffers because he will get  $\frac{3}{4}$  wages,  $\frac{1}{4}$  being deducted for under-loading. Sometimes even half the wages are deducted. I am given positive information of certain cases. In that way they are able to force the workers to load the tub more than the required quantity.

Mr. Saran.—We have been told that when there is a general overloading the extra loading is also paid for? Is that not so?

A.—I cannot say, my information is just the other way.

Dr. Mukherjee.—Cannot the worker insist that some other higher officer should see and decide whether the tub is loaded or under-loaded? Say the complaint can be made to the manager and he may be made to inspect the tubs?

A.—I do not think so. That never happens. There is no appeal or anything of the kind. It is decided by the man on the spot supervising the loading.

Mr. Lal.—Has it come to your notice that the management are in the know of these happenings?

A.—Of course, they must know; they get extra coal for nothing. The question of bribery comes in here. The worker is forced to tip the *munshi*. He has already cut enough and has been inside the mine for 10 to 11 hours. I can say that in this particular case, the management are also not free from tips. Though it is not a general rule.

Q.—Do you think that weighing will solve this question?

A.—I think so. Even there many difficulties are possible; the worker must know what work he has done and for how much. He must not be cheated. He must know the weight of the tub, and the weight of the coal. Well, it will take time for him to understand all that. He can be cheated even at the weighing machine.

*Mr. Bakhale.*—You mean workers' understanding must be raised higher?

*A.*—Yes.

*Mr. Saran.*—But the *munshi* is the final authority to pass the tub?

*A.*—Yes that is true. Hence unless weighment is perfected, and the worker is made to understand, that also will be of no use to him. That will no doubt be a check on the present practice. It will be more definite.

*Q.*—Our experience has been just the other way. The miner knows only too well whether a tub is full or not. He knows what work he is capable of doing. Even if you want more work out of him and request him to do a little more for any urgent necessity, he would not do it. He knows when a tub is full and when not.

*A.*—Well, it may be true from your side. Our experience has not been like that. The treatment that a worker is getting is such that he is unable to oblige the employers.

*Chairman.*—As regards education, do you think that there is sufficient provision either by the collieries or by the district boards or any other agency for the education of the children of the miners?

*A.*—No, there are certain collieries which provide schools, but even they are not satisfactory. A large majority of them have nothing of the kind. Generally, the miners also do not go to the schools. They are not given the necessary incentive to attend schools.

*Q.*—My question was different. Are there sufficient schools or not?

*A.*—No, there are not sufficient schools, rather they are hopelessly inadequate.

*Q.*—Do you want provision to be made for the establishment of schools for the education of the children of the employees?

*A.*—Certainly. In the beginning it will be difficult, of course. Those that are having schools now plead that the workers do not turn up at all. It is because there is no inducement. If schools are established, as it should be, proper encouragement must also be given. Otherwise it will be a failure.

*Mr. Saran.*—Do you find the children of the miner accompanying the miner to his work place, because they have nothing else to do?

*A.*—Yes. They do frequent the surface. They can be seen there.

*Q.*—How many people live with their family amongst the workers? Can you give us a proportion?

*A.*—I should say 50 per cent live with their families.

*Q.*—Mostly permanent labourers?

A.—It is very difficult to say the exact proportion, yet it will be somewhere near 50 per cent.

Chairman.—Do you suggest that compulsory primary education would be helping?

A.—Of course, every other reform depends on the raising of the understanding of the worker.

Q.—Would you say that it must be undertaken by the owners?

A.—Why not? There cannot be great economic difficulty for them. They must undertake the responsibility for free compulsory education of the children of their employees.

Q.—You have raised the wages of the workers? Have you not therein provided for education? Should not they be made to contribute towards the education of their own children?

A.—Well, wages of the labourers are not meant for that. That only gives them just sufficient to live upon. If you want to provide for that also, the figure must be changed to something still higher. (Laughter.)

Q.—Do you think it is worth trying?

A.—Why not. It is an imperative necessity. Educational centres should be started soon.

Mr. Bakhale.—You want the wages to be increased, for that you want the understanding of the workers to be raised, which takes you to education and back again to wages. Therefore, it is a vicious circle. Nothing can be achieved unless conditions improve? (Laughter.)

A.—I am giving facts and you are here to solve the difficulty and get us out of this vicious circle.

Chairman.—As regards shortage of *dhowrahs*. We have come across cases where there is terrific overcrowding. Now is it your experience that this overcrowding is general or is it only in particular coalfields and in particular classes of *dhowrahs*?

A.—It is general. There is lack of *dhowrahs*; there is no doubt about that.

Q.—I will try to give you certain figures. We have been told that there are about 60 to 70 thousand workers here and that the *dhowrahs* are provided for nearly 80 per cent of them. That means that there are nearly 29,000 *dhowrahs*? Don't you think that is a sufficiently good number?

A.—I am not considering it in that way. You are speaking of the actual workers only. I am concerned with his family and his dependants also when considering the question of overcrowding. Certainly, a worker may have a wife, children and some dependants also. In that case let me ask you whether that 80 per cent will be a good proportion? To me it is nothing.



Q.—The owners are not concerned with that. They provide only for their workers?

A.—I do not agree with you here. They must consider a worker as a family and not as an individual.

Q.—Out of the 60 to 70 thousand I mentioned there are casual labourers also?

A.—Yes.

Q.—We take 50 per cent of the workers as stationary and 30 per cent migratory and the remaining 20 per cent coming from near about villages who go back to their homes after the day's work. Is that not so? Then it comes to that the quarters provided for are sufficient for 45 thousand persons.

A.—Yes, but what about their families?

Q.—Let us come to that later. So nearly 45 thousand persons are provided with *dhowrahs*. (*Witness remarked that the number was very great.*) How? It is calculated on your own proportions? Let us assume that there are 62 thousand men. That is to put it at the nearest correct figure? (*Witness.*) Taking for calculation the percentage of workers coming from the village homes to be roughly 25 per cent, the rest should be more or less permanent sort of labour and people to whom *dhowrahs* are a necessity?

A.—According to this calculation there ought to be no overcrowding. If the number of *dhowrahs* is sufficient, then there cannot be overcrowding to this extent, even if their relations are considered. I would like the attention of the members to be drawn to this that when you consider a worker, you must consider his wife, children and dependants.

Q.—What percentage of the workers will be living with their families?

A.—I should say 50 per cent.

Q.—Then it comes to this: 30,000 workers are to be provided with quarters big enough to accommodate them with their families and another 15,000 ordinary *dhowrahs*?

A.—Yes, something like that.

Mr. Phelps (*Co-opted Member*).—You are surmising?

A.—No so, Mr. Phelps, I am speaking from the little experience I have in that direction.

Q.—No, you are only guessing. The Government collect the details but nothing of any such proportion has so far been produced by them?

A.—Is it not a fact Mr. Phelps, that the overcrowding is terrible in these *dhowrahs*? In what other way do you suggest it is due to?

Mr. Sen Gupta (Co-opted Member).—Is it not a fact that the overcrowding is terrible only in certain seasons when there is a large influx of labour from the surrounding villages and at other times there is not much overcrowding at all?

A.—I remember to have answered that question before. From my experience overcrowding is always there.

Mr. Phelps.—Is it not due to the fact that most of the workers live in gangs, that they work together, and live together also? They would not live separately. I suppose you know that?

A.—Yes, the tendency is there. I do not deny that. But under such circumstances better *dhowrahs* should be provided to accommodate the gangs when you know that they live only in that way, than allowing them to live in a single room. Gangs may sufficiently be induced to live in three or four adjacent rooms than in one as they are doing today.

Q.—So providing more *dhowrahs* will not solve that difficulty?

A.—It will. Provided you build good *dhowrahs* suited to the size of your gang. (Laughter.)

Q.—Do you also know that consequent on the overcrowding in certain places many of the *dhowrahs* are vacant?

A.—That does not in any way justify overcrowding. Does it?

Q.—Your suggestion to build *dhowrahs* to the size of the gang is not feasible. Do you know the number of the members of a gang? Then you would not have made that suggestion. The human element is always there, do you admit that?

A.—Of course, I admit that but the shortage of *dhowrahs* and overcrowding is also there.

Q.—So, overcrowding is not necessarily due to the fact, as you put it, that the worker is living with his family and dependants? It is, as a matter of fact, due only to the fact that the workers live in gangs and do not like to live separately?

A.—That cannot be generally accepted. Of course, that is also one of the causes of overcrowding, that is all. You can solve the difficulty by building blocks of *dhowrahs* so that they can live in one block.

Mr. Ojha.—I suppose you are aware that there are regulations with regard to the building of *dhowrahs* and overcrowding and that the law will come into operation when it is found that there is overcrowding or shortage and the like?

A.—Yes, the law is there, but it is more observed in the breach. We know that.

Chairman.—So according to your opinion more *dhowrahs* should be provided?

A.—Yes. I hope Mr. Phelps will agree with me in that.

Q.—There is one other question I would like you to answer; have you come across cases of accidents?

A.—Of course.

Q.—And do you think that adequate compensation is paid in all such cases?

A.—Unfortunately not. The Indian capitalists are more to blame for this. Generally, what we find is this. When accidents occur they pay the workers 10 and 20 rupees and try their best to hush up the whole matter. In most cases, suppose a worker from Central Provinces is injured, his relatives will find it very difficult to fight the case. I have personal experience of what I am saying. In one particular instance we were maintaining the family of the deceased worker for months, until the compensation was forthcoming. The capitalist-employer does not care at all. He is so heartless in his behaviour that even after the award of compensation after months of delay, nothing is left for the relatives and dependants after meeting the expenses.

Q.—The result is, as you say, that compensation is not adequately paid?

A.—Yes. It is a very unfortunate story and much can be said about it. The Indian capitalists, I emphasise, are very much worse in this respect.

Q.—As regards the Compensation Act have you any suggestions to make so that it may be easier for the sufferer to get compensation?

A.—Yes, at present it is not worked properly and the provisions are inadequate. I would suggest that power be vested in a labour commissioner. He must visit each centre at least once in the course of a month and decide the case and settle the award.

Q.—I think cases of fatal accidents are reported to the A. D. C. of the place and also to the Chief Inspector of Mines?

A.—Yes. I think so.

Q.—Now, according to the scheme you have just mentioned do you want the management to deposit the compensation amount before the Labour Commissioner, so that immediately he settles the claim the money may be paid to the injured party?

A.—Yes. That is a welcome modification. He should be a Compensation Commissioner also.

*Mr. Bakhale.*—So you want the Commissioner to deal with compensation cases only?

*A.*—Not necessarily; both the offices may be combined in one and the same person.

*Chairman.*—Do you think that then awards will be settled in time and without much difficulty?

*A.*—I hope so. He must decide and settle the claim on his next visit which must be during the next month.

*Q.*—Is it your experience that mostly the workers find it difficult to fight out the cases that they prefer to go without compensation than fight it out?

*A.*—Yes, mostly. It is the duty of the trade unions to help them.

*Mr. Phelps.*—With your permission, Chairman, you mentioned a case of accident in which you were helping the sufferers family. May I know whether you brought that fact to the notice of the Chief Inspector of Mines?

*A.*—No, I did not. I think there was no necessity for that.

*Q.*—You said that it was much delayed. What was the compensation paid in the end?

*A.*—Well, after such a long delay and inconvenience something did come out in the end. The provision that he must file a case for adequate relief takes away much of the benefit out of the compensation that he is to get.

*Q.*—Only in doubtful cases?

*A.*—Unfortunately, that was a straight case for us, but doubtful from the view-point of the owners as is often the case. (*Laughter.*)

*Chairman.*—Now, as regards trade unions, it is generally said on the owners side that they have no objection to recognising a trade union if it is run on proper lines?

*A.*—Yes, every trade union is run on proper lines; not proper from only their point of view. (*Laughter.*)

*Q.*—Now in cases of disputes between the labour on one side and the management on the other, have you any suggestions to make to avoid the labour going to the extreme and taking recourse to strikes and the like?

*A.*—Of course, much can be done if there is mutual understanding on both sides. There should be some sort of arbitration with necessary sanctions behind it. Both parties must agree to it. Such a machinery could be set up.

*Q.*—What agency do you suggest for this arbitration?

A.—To me first of all, the Government is not to interfere at all. It must be settled by the Labour and the Capital only. The Labour leaders must be recognised by the capitalists and, by law, they must consent to arbitration. The Arbitration Board shall consist of representatives of both Labour and Capital. If properly conducted, I am sure good success can be achieved.

Q.—Do you prefer the system which is in practice at Ahmedabad?

A.—Yes, something like that. There it is on voluntary basis, that is, workers and the employers have agreed to abide by the decision of the man set up by them.

Q.—Do you want a Conciliation Board to be set up by Government by legislation?

A.—Yes, much depends on the sanction behind the whole thing.

Q.—Suppose, for instance, in a particular issue either the capital or the labour are not willing to abide by the decision of the Board. The parties feel that justice has not been done to them. Do you suggest that compulsory arbitration should be enforced?

A.—I do not think there is any harm in that.

Q.—Are you prepared to tolerate it or do you recommend it?

A.—If you put it that way, well I can tolerate it.

Q.—Suppose one party is not willing to submit to arbitration; in that case you will be prepared to accept forced arbitration?

A.—Yes, we must do something. Most of the everyday quarrels and petty grievances can be settled that way. Of course, very major questions must be considered more seriously. I think it will work.

Mr. Lal.—Yesterday, we were told that employers will prefer to deal with labour direct than through a Commissioner or a Conciliation Officer and all that. They say that at present the labour is thoroughly unreasonable?

A.—They forget that we hold the opinion that they are always unreasonable. I also like to deal with them direct, in all cases.

Mr. Bakhale.—I shall like you to tell us little more about the Labour Exchange? Will you kindly explain it a little further? I suppose it refers to the Jharia coalfields in particular? (Reads.) That is to say you want the Labour Exchange to be compulsory?

A.—Exactly.

Q.—Could you tell me what you mean by saying that it must be compulsory in operation?

A.—To me it seems that Labour Exchange will do more useful work if it is made on that basis. Instead of recommendation, the employers must be compelled to take labour only from the Exchange and must not recruit otherwise.

Mr. Phelps.—Should it be a part of the trade union?

A.—No not part of the trade union.

Mr. Gandhi.—Such a thing is not in practice even in countries where Labour Exchange exists. You suggest that India might lead?

A.—Yes, of course, why should India lag behind.

Q.—Now with regard to wages you have said in your written memorandum (*reads*). Will you give us a few examples?

A.—It has been reported to us that on many *jatras*, i.e., forced deductions are made which is in all respects illegal.

Q.—Can you give us specific items of deductions, in terms of money and can you give us some idea of the fact that these deductions are against the Payment of Wages Act?

A.—Yes.

Mr. Saran.—It has been reported to us that some employers deduct in the name of the *Kalifund* and *Goushala*?

A.—Yes, so many deductions are made.

Mr. Bakhale.—Can you give us a list of the deductions made in the shape of *Jatras* and *Kalipujas*, etc.?

A.—Yes, I have got some figures. I will submit later on.

Q.—Now, at page 21, you say (*reads*) criticising the policy of the Railway Board.

A.—Yes, that is correct; I have recommended that there should be a syndicate and the coal rates must be fixed once for all, say, at Rs. 2 or Rs. 2-8-0 or any other figure that is thought reasonable.

Q.—Do you think that Railway Board charges higher rate for the coal?

A.—Yes, higher rate.

Q.—Now coming to the trade unions a part of your statement runs as follows (*reads*). And at another place this is what you say (*reads*)? You would prefer one trade union for the whole of the Coal Industry. And at the same time you admit that there may be dangers and that suspicious people will be hovering over the fields and creating difficulties for the industry and particularly for the workers? Now suppose that the Government create one union only. How are you then going to eliminate the undesirable elements out of it and see that it is run on proper lines?

A.—The answer to that depends on the understanding of the workers. It must be developed. Spirit of trade unionism must be developed.

Q.—You are talking of the future and I want a solution for tomorrow. Do you want a trade union first or understanding of the workers to be developed before you start a trade union?

A.—Of course, a trade union. A registered trade union running properly will automatically develop the understanding of the workers.

Q.—You said that to start a trade union you want proper men to run it. You said of outside elements trying to create trouble and that the workers will not in the first instance know to discriminate between a sincere worker and one who is not. For that you wanted their understanding to be raised. How are you going to resolve all these views?

A.—Yes, ultimately the workers will come to realize who is a sincere worker and who is not.

Q.—But that will take time?

A.—Not as long as you think it will. It will, of course, take some time. We are going to their *dhowrahs* often; we must meet them and talk to them. By such contact they will know who is the real worker.

Q.—But your experience is not the experience of the whole country?

A.—I do not say so. The difficulty is that whereas it is desirable to have one union of the industry, that is not possible for all industries.

Q.—Have you read the Bombay Act?

A.—Yes, I have tried to read it as carefully as I can, but my reading will not be that of a lawyer.

Q.—But of a trade unionist?

A.—Yes. (*Laughter.*)

Q.—I should like you to tell us whether that Act contemplates one union or it provides for more than one union?

A.—It provides, as far as I know, for more than one union. It also provides for the number of members that a union should have.

Dr. Mukherjee.—You have given us some details relating to the formation of the Labour Exchange to regulate the supply and demand of labour. Can you give us some more details about the working of this Labour Exchange possibly to eliminate some of the seasonal difficulties that are now experienced and to supply labour by better methods?

A.—I think that at present the number of workers here in the coal-fields is not much below the actual requirements. Such an arrangement, to supply just the required number will be best managed only through an Exchange. All the labour required by the owners must be got only through the Exchange.

Q.—Do you suggest that it should be organized by the employers and the workers and run by the Government?

A.—Yes, it can be run by the Government; that will be better. Some sort of a Committee consisting of the representatives of workers and employers can also be created.

Q.—This Labour Exchange is to keep a record of the workers and to supply them when called for? Should they also take it as their functions to enquire into the cases of dismissals?

A.—When, as you say, it should be managed by the Government, it can do that function also.

Q.—Do you think that you are hopeful of its success?

A.—I am very hopeful. Of course, in the beginning, there may be some trouble. It will run smoothly thereafter. It may not be a permanent solution of the labour troubles. At any rate, it will regulate supply and demand of labour and prevent the influx in certain seasons and scarcity in others.

Q.—Now regarding the question of minimum wage at present the wages are paid on a piece basis mostly. The method of introducing a minimum wage should in the first place be done by introducing a basic minimum rate and then the worker should be allowed to earn his piece-rate also. Do you agree to this?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Well, suppose you have the two factors A and B. Let us assume that A represents the basic minimum and B the piece-rate. A plus B will represent your minimum wage. What is your idea of the figures? How much should A represent and how much B?

A.—I gave my answer to this question also yesterday. My figure of Rs. 25 represents the minimum wage which satisfies the minimum requirements of a worker in my opinion. The difficulty in fixing a basic minimum is that the tendency is always for the minimum to become the maximum. I also said yesterday that it may be fixed at Rs. 18, in no case below Rs. 15.

Q.—You fix the basic rate A to be, say Rs. 18, should that be fixed by legislation?

A.—Yes, preferably.

Q.—Should this be a uniform rate for all workers?

A.—Not necessarily.

Q.—Why? What do you mean by that? To arrive at the basic rate there are ever so many considerations. If you have different basic rates for different classes of workers how do you arrive at the figure



of Rs. 18 or Rs. 15 and the like? To help you I shall tell you what they do in Great Britain. They have got District Committees and there are representatives of the union in them, as well as those of the employers. They work out the district piece-work rates. How do you like some such machinery to work in India also?

A.—Of course, it is desirable. The family requirements of the worker should be the main consideration.

Q.—Do you think that the minimum wage principle will work even without organized trade unions?

A.—Yes, if the basic rate is there. Along with the legislation regarding minimum wage organized trade unions can be found. Some of them are already there.

Q.—In your written memorandum you have mentioned several kinds of deductions made from the wages of the workers. Do you consider that under such circumstances, the introduction of the Payment of Wages Act would be advisable?

A.—That is essential. The introduction of the Payment of Wages Act is an absolute necessity.

Q.—Do you consider the prevailing agricultural wages nearabout when you think about the minimum wage for the industrial workers?

A.—Certainly.

Q.—Do you not think that there is a great difference between the two and that will try to take away most of the benefit of the minimum wage?

A.—How can it. Conditions will improve for the better in agricultural centres also. I can see that the day is not far off.

Q.—When you fixed the minimum wage at Rs. 25, there will be a larger labour force than today? That will mean unemployment to many?

A.—Yes, to a certain extent.

Q.—In spite of the resulting unemployment and the condition of agricultural labour you say that the minimum wage of a miner should be not less than Rs. 25?

A.—When I say that the miner is to be provided with Rs. 25 I mean that it is just amount to sustain himself and his family. That is the minimum.

Q.—Can you give me some details about the agricultural wages?

A.—Yes. In some respects it is better than the mining industry in that the labourer gets his daily food also besides the small wages he gets. Most of the mining labourers are agricultural labourers also. They go to the land during the harvesting and other seasons, only

because what they get here is insufficient.\* Most of the raising contractors have got lands also. They are *zamindars*. That is why they get labour for the coalfields at such a cheap rate.

Q.—The conditions of the mines are such that they are addicted to so many evil habits such as drink, immorality, etc., and they have also not sufficient earnings for proper food and clothing for themselves and for their families. Do you think that under such considerations the introduction of prohibition and compulsory education in the coal areas will be helpful?

A.—That is also an absolute necessity. The drink evil should be eradicated at the earliest opportunity and the understanding of the worker also should be simultaneously raised. For that compulsory education is essential. Both are welcome.

Q.—One other point, you have said in your written evidence that the whole coal industry should be reorganized that much depends on the Government to control the cut-throat competition that is now prevailing in the industry, which, according to you, is one of the chief causes of the miserable condition of the workers today. You talk of the establishment of some kind of a syndicate amongst the coal owners of Bihar, Bengal, and Central Provinces?

A.—Yes that also is an imperative necessity, because we know that there is much cut-throat competition which is telling not so much upon the owners as upon the workers. The miners' wages are reduced. If an agency is set up to control the price of coal, certainly much benefit will result not merely to the worker but to the industry as well.

*Mr. Bhattacharya (Co-opted Member).*—You are the Secretary of the Chota Nagpur Labour Union? Have you applied for registration of your Union?

A.—Not yet. We mean applying shortly.

Q.—Have you framed a constitution, and have you got rules and regulations?

A.—Yes.

Q.—May I have a copy of that?

A.—I will give you later on.

*(Prof. Saran requested the witness to send a copy to the Committee also.)*

Q.—Who are the office bearers please?

A.—There is Mr. Atul Chandra Ghosh and myself as Secretary; we have assistant secretaries also. Mr. Ghosh is the President of the District Congress Committee and has been connected with the labour movement in this district for a pretty long time.

Q.—You said that you want one trade union for the whole coal industry. Don't you know that there are nearly 70,000 workers here. Do you think that one trade union can efficiently manage all these 70,000 workers?

A.—Why not? By having one trade union I did not mean one centre also. It can have branch offices at every place. It is easy. The Central Office should control all the branch offices under it. There is no difficulty in that.

Q.—Would it not be better to have a federation of several unions, all the unions having a general policy and programme?

A.—I do not think so. It will create trouble. To get them all federated will be difficult. To have a Central Union with branches is really better, in my opinion. We have some practical experience of the success of such a Central Union with branches.

Q.—You also said that the management is responsible to a certain extent for the corrupt practices?

A.—I mean the staff.

Q.—Do you say that it is with the knowledge of the superior officers?

A.—It may not be with the knowledge of the superior officers. You cannot deny that they are not in the know of it either. May be that some of them do not know anything about it at all.

Q.—Have you had any occasion to bring such conduct to the notice of the authorities?

A.—Yes, one case at least; I have got the necessary redress also.

Q.—Now, as regards the indebtedness of these workers, do you think that delay in the payment of wages is one of the causes?

A.—Yes, the indebtedness of the weekly paid is higher than those of the monthly paid. It may be the result of such delay as you say.

Q.—Do you know the rate of interest these money-lenders charge?

A.—Cannot say, it may be 100 per cent, or 200 per cent (*Laughter*). It is rather a difficult question for me to answer.

Q.—Would you favour the idea that these money-lenders should be prevented from beseiging the workers on pay day?

A.—Oh, yes, I am definitely of opinion that such a preventive measure will do much good to the workers. There must be legislation to that effect. It is absolutely necessary because what the worker earns in the course of a week is at times only 8 annas and if that is taken away from him, you can imagine what the state of affairs will be.

Q.—You mean that the subsistence wage of a labourer must not be taken away?

A.—Exactly. They should not be taken away even by the law courts.

Mr. Chandra.—Legislation for preventing the besieging of the pay offices on pay days? Is that what you mean?

A.—Yes.

Mr. Bakhale.—Do they besiege the *dhowrahs*?

A.—Oh, yes, mostly.

Mr. Bhattacharya.—Do you suggest any modification in the present Trade Union Act?

A.—Yes, it must be amended on almost all important points.

Q.—Now, do you have any subscription in your union?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you hold meetings?

A.—Plenty of them.

Mr. Lal.—With regard to housing you said in answer to a question from the Chairman yesterday that it is totally inadequate. We are told that there are sufficient number and it is according to the bye-laws of the Board of Health?

A.—They are not. The difficulty is that the authorities seldom find out cases of overcrowding. Moreover, the construction of these *dhowrahs* is very bad. There is no enclosure at all. When large families find such insufficient accommodation, naturally they cook, eat, sleep and do every thing in the same room and just outside on the ground. They must all be reconstructed on more decent basis.

Q.—Do you suggest that the Mines Board of Health's Regulations and bye-laws should be amended to that effect?

A.—Certainly.

Q.—Do you feel that more pressure should be put on the Jharia Mines Board of Health to see that they enforce the regulations properly?

A.—Well the bye-laws are more observed in the breach than in their observance.

Q.—What do you suggest for that?

A.—To begin with the Jharia Mines Board of Health should be thoroughly revised. There must be equal representatives of labour and capital on it. If labour is not in a majority at least they must have equal voice.

Q.—Any other suggestion?

A.—The whole constitution should be changed. It must be a new Board altogether. It must be an elective body. I wonder how the

nomination principle is still being adopted in spite of a popular Government now functioning. When once it becomes an elective body, the A. D. C. of the place will see that the bye-laws are enforced and the C. M. B. will not be afraid of the colliery proprietors. At present we can say to a certain extent that the predominance of capitalist's interest in the Board prevents all persons concerned to enforce the regulations against them. I am not bringing any definite charge, but we all know what happens.

Q.—Now, with regard to the security of service, I would like to know from you if there is any security of employment for the piece-wage-earners?

A.—No.

Q.—Labour is so fluctuating, that at certain seasons you find a shortage of labour, and at others a large influx. What do you suggest so that these persons may have security of employment?

A.—I have answered that question in my written evidence. I have suggested the formation of a Labour Exchange and when once it begins to work this problem will be automatically solved, for when an employer wants to dismiss a man, he will refer the case to the Labour Exchange.

Q.—According to you, the functions of a Labour Exchange is not merely to recommend the labour asked for but also to see that no worker is dismissed?

A.—Yes, that body must call upon the worker to explain and decide the case on its merits. You see if that worker is rightly dismissed he cannot get another employment at all, for he must go through the Exchange. Labour will be more honest and straightforward and the management also will be careful.

Q.—You are sure that this applies to the piece-worker? That was my question?

A.—Undoubtedly. When once a Labour Exchange is formed and worked there will be more security of employment and less labour trouble. The management will see twice before it takes up a fight with the Labour. There will also be an organized Trade Union.

Q.—I should like you to tell us about the prevailing rates of wages as compared with wages 10 years ago?

A.—(*Witness referred to paragraph 56 of the Coal Mining Committee report.*)

Q.—In these 10 years wages have fallen by 40—45 per cent. What was the previous level of wages, could you tell us roughly?

A.—They were definitely much better both in regard to piece-workers and others. I shall give you exact details if you want some-time later.

Q.—The fall in prices may be the cause of the general low level of the wages prevailing today?

A.—Yes, there are other factors besides. It may be due to surplus labour being accommodated, it may be due to general depression and also due to the fact that the employers pay less. All these contribute their own quota to the state of affairs today.

Q.—Do you consider that competition between the owners has anything to do with it?

A.—Certainly, that is the main cause; I have said that before.

Mr. Chandra.—May also be due to the weak bargaining power of the worker?

A.—Yes.

That is the reason why there should be a minimum wage, below which a worker should not be paid.

Q.—Are there many women workers on the surface?

A.—No.

Q.—Do you think they are necessary?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Now, coming to the question of literacy, both for the children of the workers and the adults, we are told that the labourers have not any inclination for reading and writing. What is your impression?

A.—My idea is that they are not by nature dull, and if sufficient means are given to them, that is if schools and such other things are provided, they will learn as much as any one of us here can. It is because of the circumstances under which they live, now that their incentive to learn and live better has been killed. That is the plea of the owners. But, they are not dull; some of them are more intelligent than most of us here. (*Laughter.*) Only you must give them proper facilities.

Q.—Do you like provision to be made for that?

A.—Yes, that is what I said.

Q.—Are any overtime-wages paid?

A.—No, mostly not.

Q.—Very well, one question more. Do you think, that the general health and morality of the worker will improve if prohibition is introduced?

A.—Yes. Unless that is done much of the benefits of education and such other measures, if introduced, will not touch him at all.

*Mr. Sen Gupta (Co-opted Member).*—You said that there should be one labour union for the whole industry. The name of your union is the Chota Nagpur Majdoor Sangha; do you include members of all classes of Chota Nagpur?

*A.*—I have got a federation of all workers of the coalfields of Jharia and I have a mind to affiliate in it all the unions of the Chota Nagpur Division.

*Q.*—You receive collection from all the workers of the field mentioned?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—There are three registered unions in Jharia. How do you deal with other unions?

*A.*—Quite amicably.

*Q.*—Then how do you say that there should be one union in one industry?

*A.*—I mean that all the subsidiary unions should be federated into one big union.

*Q.*—You have said that the *khalasis* should get a minimum of Rs. 20 per month?

*A.*—No, I have not said that, I have said that the minimum wage of the coal workers should be about Rs. 25. I have said of the *khalasis* that they should get Rs. 10.

*Q.*—Can you give us an idea as to how much of the total income of the workers is spent on drinking?

*A.*—I think one-fourth of the income is spent in drinking; that is the exact figure I have collected.

*Q.*—Are workers represented in local bodies?

*A.*—So far as my information goes, there is one representation by nomination of Rai Bahadur A. B. Banerjee to represent labour in the Mines Board of Health; otherwise there is no representation.

*Q.*—Do you think that workers are represented in the Municipal Board?

*A.*—No, there is no representation.

*Q.*—Do you like that representation should be by nomination?

*A.*—Representation should be by election and not nomination. We want election.

*Mr. Chandra.*—Are you aware that fines are common here?

*A.*—Yes.

Q.—What is the principle of fines?

A.—It is on the monthly wage. I cannot give you the figures.

Q.—Some workers complain that there is much fines and dismissal?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Are you in favour that fines should be abolished?

A.—Yes, Certainly.

Q.—Do you know that there are very heavy fines levied on the workers and they take undue advantage of fines?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you also find that the workers in the course of their work get away and lose their wages?

A.—No, they generally absent themselves on Mondays because Sunday is the pay day and on Monday they eat and drink.

Q.—Do they work more than 40 hours a week?

A.—Yes, 8 hours a day and half on Sunday, i.e., 40 hours a week.

Q.—Now coming to the wages do you think that the minimum can be fixed by the employers?

A.—No, it should be fixed by legislation. There should be a Wages Board to consider the necessary amount.

Q.—When there is large number of unemployment in the villages and the village teachers get Rs. 5 per month and many graduates do not get even Rs. 25 per month how do you advocate that the minimum wage of the labourers in the coalfields should be Rs. 25 per month?

A.—The conditions of life of the teachers and graduates are quite different from the coal workers in the mines. The conditions in the villages are quite different also. The work here is far more hazardous and difficult.

Q.—You do not agree that the minimum wage of Rs. 25 is an unreasonable demand?

A.—I do not agree.

Q.—With regard to the trade unions, do you generally agree that they should give notice before strike?

A.—I think that the Government should lay down such principles and laws for check.

Q.—You like to say that the majority of the members of the Jharia Mines Board are colliery proprietors and have great hands in the matter?



A.—Yes.

Mr. Phelps (Co-opted Member).—I am very sorry, I was not able to study your memorandum, but as far as I have been able to read I would want you to clear certain points. Here you have used hard language in saying that the employees do not get food for most days and they and their children starve: Do you really say that? These are your very words. (*Reads.*)

A.—Those are the words of a miner that have been put in there—they are ringing in my ears.

Q.—Do you say they starve?

A.—Of course, most of them do. I have seen what is happening and that is no exaggeration, Mr. Phelps.

Q.—Starved to death, that is what you say?

A.—Yes, day by day, I will add.

Q.—Don't you know that about 50 per cent of the workers are monthly paid men? You also say that the low wages they get they drink away and starve themselves and their families. Don't you think that by paying more, the same state of affairs will result?

A.—Of course not.

Q.—Will not their indebtedness also increase; they drink more?

A.—Certainly not. They will be much better. You can try that. Pay more to the workers and see how they react. (*Laughter.*)

Q.—Human experience has been to the contrary. Mr. Mukut Dhari Singh. The more you pay the more they get into debt?

A.—My experience has not been that, Mr. Phelps. Moreover, I do hope that if you pay them more, they will be released from the clutches of the money-lenders..

Q.—So you are definitely certain that now the workers are not getting the subsistence level of wages?

A.—Absolutely certain. The conditions are appalling.

Q.—Will not the conditions of the poor labourers be due to the fact that most of them have got land and that they send money to their people in the villages?

A.—Nothing of the sort. They are poorly paid, and cannot even eat. How do you say that they are sending money?

Q.—A large sum of money is being sent through the Jharia post office. Don't you know that?

A.—I do not know. I cannot believe that. Probably the more highly paid might be sending money to their homes.

Q.—(*Reads some portion of the memorandum*): The whole time they are underground they work; is that what you mean? No rest?

A.—Yes.

Q.—I have also been in the Jharia field for some time now, Mr. Singh and I cannot agree with you there. Our ideas differ; I know that. I also know something about the miner, probably not as much as you do. Well, you also say that they are not getting tubs at the proper time. What do they do then? They are idle. Are not they?

A.—You call that rest; do you Mr. Phelps, in that atmosphere? To me it is not rest.

Q.—But that is leisure, not work?

A.—True, it is not rest either.

Q.—Right you are. But what you have said is 'exert his utmost during the period of employment with no rest when he is on duty'.

A.—It is a matter of opinion.

Q.—Is it a general rule for all classes of workers?

A.—There are among your workers very intelligent people, Mr. Phelps. They know how long they are kept inside the mine. You may not know that, but I know a little.

Q.—You mean the workers go over to you and give you the information?

A.—Of course, daily we come across so many things which you never believe perhaps.

Q.—Then you go about talking in that fashion and create the impression that what the worker has passed on to you is true. More workers then come forward with the same tale? Don't they Mr. Singh? (*Reads*) 'They sleep on duty and accidents have become common': Can you back that statement? Is it heresay?

A.—Well Mr. Phelps, I know of a man who worked for three shifts, 7 to 9 in the morning, 2 to 5, then from 11 to 1 in the night and says that these have been his working hours for the whole year.

Q.—In a matter like this are you answering these questions from such individual cases, even if they exist? You ought to be more general. Is it a general state of affairs?

A.—There are many cases like that.

Q.—It is more picturesque than true, is it not?

A.—No.

Q.—I do not think that you have come across such a case?

A.—Your colliery may be better managed, Mr. Phelps. There are others also in Jharia. (*Laughter.*)

Q.—Don't you think that the conditions of coal miners are much better here than at other places like Central Provinces and Bengal? Don't workers come from these places to work here?

A.—Yes, they do. It is not that conditions are better here; it is necessity that drives them. And most of them are also more or less permanent labourers, are not they? Their conditions can be improved through better recruiting agencies. I suppose that you do accept the position that you are having more men than you want and pay them all much less.

Q.—By your Labour Exchange how are you going to prevent labour flocking?

A.—They will supply you only the necessary labour you want, not a hand more, and make you pay also more, and at the same time it will do away with the abuse of unjust and illegal dismissals.

Q.—Unjust dismissals? Your Labour Exchange will be impartial, of course?

A.—I think so. I hope it will do away with all these difficulties to a great extent.

Mr. Bakhale.—I don't think Labour Exchanges in other countries look to that work. Their main business is to regulate supply and demand of labour, that is, to supply labour when asked for?

A.—May be. At any rate, why not begin it for the first time, if need be, here in India?

Q.—Do you think it will be feasible?

A.—Why not?

Mr. Phelps.—Taking conditions as they are, do you think that legislation to that effect, organizing an impartial Labour Exchange will solve the difficulty of labour problems once and for all? When you are thinking of such a wonderful Labour Exchange, are you not taking into consideration things that ought to be and not what they are? It is a mere surmise?

A.—Mr. Phelps, I hope we met across this table to find a way out of this impasse. You are free to suggest your own proposals. Somehow the difficulty should be solved; that is all.

Q.—I am only suggesting, should we not view this question, as they exist to-day?

A.—Yes, we have to legislate for a permanent labour force hereafter. Labour force is getting more and more permanent.

Q.—At present?

A.—Yes.

Q.—The miners have lands, you know. They will want to go back to the land at certain period of time during their work in the mine. Now if they go back according to you, they must again come in through the Labour Exchange. Is it not?

A.—Most of them have no lands at all. The insufficient wages that they are getting at present drive them to work in the fields. When conditions improve they won't go back at all.

Q.—Don't you know that a labourer working at a particular colliery will not go to any other place for work? That is a prevalent and common habit of these workers?

A.—The whole idea behind is permanency of service—security of employment.

Q.—You said that the bye-laws of the Mines Board of Health are more observed in the breach. I am a member of the Mines Board of Health. May I know some instances?

A.—Take *dhowrahs*.

Q.—That may be right to a degree but not sufficient enough to back what you said in respect to the Mines Board of Health. There are new types of *dhowrahs* being constructed; the Mines Board have got a scheme for that. It has been seen through by proper officials?

A.—What about the overcrowding in the present *dhowrahs*? The Mines Board of Health does not permit that? Has there been a prosecution? The only conclusion is that the officers are afraid to displease the employers? What else?

Q.—Yes. Have you made thorough investigation into that? The bye-law is not a dead letter as you put it. What bye-laws are dead letter I would like you to tell me. I have interest as I am a member of the Board.

A.—The sanitary condition in the collieries. It is not good. You have got a C. M. O. and several inspectors under him. I would like you to tell me in truth where those bye-laws have gone?

Q.—The bye-law is there, Mr. Mukut Dhari Singh. You have not cared to see its operation. The number of cases of prosecution, can be seen from the annual reports of the Board?

A.—I have not been able to find one. The C. M. O. is under the Board?

Q.—Do you take full responsibility for your statement?

A.—What do you mean by that?

Q.—That the C. M. O. is not immune from being influenced by the owners?

A.—Can there be a deference of opinion about that? (*Laughter.*) I think he is not. He has to serve his masters.

Q.—What masters?

A.—Should I tell you that, Mr. Phelps? He is an officer of the Mines Board of Health, represented mostly by the colliery owners.

Q.—You cannot make such statements unless you can back them up. You can see for yourself the report for the last 10 years and we have statistical data for every activity of the Mines Board of Health. What work has been done in that direction you can know from the reports—the conditions that were existing when the Board came into being and how they are to-day. They are before your very eyes. And you have a wide experience yourself. You have said that the general health of the worker has gone down. Can you substantiate that?

A.—Well, Mr. Phelps, I thank you for putting me on to the reports of the Mines Board of Health. I meet the labourers in the coalfields and I have been meeting them for the last so many years. I speak from that point of view—what I actually see around me.

Q.—Let us take instances—what are the diseases that are prevalent here? You have not seen much cholera here, I believe? When the Mines Board of Health was started, do you know the state of affairs then? It was the raging epidemic of the day. What you find now? What about Malaria? We have on our Board now a special officer tackling that problem with assistants under him. He has been specially appointed for this problem alone. I believe very good work is being done in that direction. I suppose you know all these. So you cannot suddenly come round and say that the bye-laws of the Mines Board of Health are mere dead letters.

A.—I judge things from what I see round me, what is actually the state of affairs among the workers in the Jharia coalfields and not from the printed activities of this body, the Mines Board of Health. I go to their homes, I see the workers almost every day, a good lot of them.

Mr. Phelps.—You must substantiate your statement, Mr. Mukut Dhari Singh?

A.—I don't follow you Mr. Phelps. I again tell you that what I have said is what is happening. Could you find anything which could substantiate my statement more than these facts?

Q.—Do you think that it is because of the capitalists that nothing has been done? Are they standing in the way?

A.—I cannot say. The fact remains that this is the state of health of the miner of the Jharia coalfield.

Q.—You say that workers in the Jharia field undermine their health to a certain extent by their work here?

A.—We find that the conditions of work in the fields here are horrible as compared to other industries.

Q.—You mean coal only or take into account all other industries?

A.—I am coming to that. Generally, the conditions of work in the coalfields are horrible. You cannot deny that Mr. Phelps. I speak with experience that the coal-cutter does to a large extent undermine his health by his work.

Q.—All other industries in India you say?

A.—Yes.

Q.—And that is your experience?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is it wide enough to make such statement as that?

A.—You may say as you like; that is my experience.

Q.—A miner has to remain underground for a certain period of time fixed by statute?

A.—He is kept much more than that limit, I have already said that.

Q.—You mean to say he is always kept like that everywhere?

A.—Generally; conditions may be different and better in some collieries.

Q.—How many of them are so kept overtime?

A.—A vast majority of them, I should say.

Q.—That cannot be right?

A.—But that is right.

Q.—And they all work overtime?

A.—Of course.

Q.—Will you please illustrate? You must prove it?

A.—We have received repeated complaints from workers in regard to this matter. Moreover, we personally meet the workers and get from them the actual number of hours they have been kept inside due to some reason or other. I shall give you actual cases, Mr. Phelps, if you are very particular of noting them.

Q.—It might be an individual accidental case. You cannot generalize from such a single instance.

A.—I assert that it is not a stray, isolated instance. A vast majority of workers are made to remain overtime under the mine.

Mr. Phelps—(Reads). “The wages paid to the workers very rarely find a way into their pockets. Most of the amount.....” What remedy do you suggest to that?

A.—Security of employment, control of coal prices by Government to prevent cut-throat competition, etc.,—they are suggested in the memorandum itself.

Q.—Do you think your suggested syndicate would work?

A.—I have every hope, it will.

*(The Chairman explained to Mr. Phelps what was meant by the syndicate and its workings as suggested in the memorandum of Mr. Singh.)*

Q.—Do you also suggest that after your syndicate is formed, i.e., the coal proprietors in Bihar, Central Provinces and Bengal have agreed to have the same price, the wages of the workers in the three provinces should also be the same? I have a lot of sympathy with your point of view. Now coming to your minimum wage, do you think the industry can afford to pay such a wage as Rs. 25 per coal-cutter, taking the market conditions and the present state of the coal industry? Have you given thought to that when you worked out your figure? Do you realize that it means a tremendous financial problem? I will just read to you what the Whitley Commission had to say in regard to that (*reads from page 211*). Do you agree with that?

A.—So far as the question of minimum wage is concerned, I do not think it is necessary to wait for such a period and go through all those enquiries. It is imminently necessary.

Q.—You want to consider that question from the point of view of labour alone. You are not considering the economic possibility of the concern to pay such a wage as Re. 1 a day per worker. I shall read to you some more portions of this Report (*reads*).

*(Quotes from I. L. O. Report about minimum wage.)*

Q.—Now, with regard to the question of minimum wage you have given rather a long answer. Would you prefer such legislation for the whole province of Bihar or have you only looked at it for the coal-fields of Jharia?

A.—I prefer for the whole province, not only that for the whole of India. I am thinking of a time when such a thing will happen and according to me it is not far ahead.

Q.—Would you prefer such a legislation to be passed in Bihar first or wait till it becomes an All-India affair?

A.—I will not wait for such a time. It is imminent.

Q.—Have you taken into consideration the market conditions of coal?

A.—I have. Things will improve if such a legislation is passed.

Q.—Have you also taken into considerations the wage rates prevailing in Central Provinces and Bengal and also the market condition of coal there?

A.—Yes. I have also suggested that the three major coal producing units must combine.

Q.—You want the combination or syndicate to come first and then the minimum wage legislation?

A.—I did not say so. I want the minimum wage legislation to come in force immediately. The combination is for the benefit of the capitalists. (*Laughter.*)

Q.—Have you thought about the financial implications of such a legislation?

A.—Yes, I suppose, you very well know the financial implications existing at present from the point of view of labour.

Q.—Don't you think that a much wider enquiry is necessary?

A.—No, the matter cannot wait so long. Before any such legislation is passed Government will take all necessary details into consideration; that is what I hope. There is no need for another wider enquiry.

Q.—So, you are not in favour of a wider enquiry after the findings of this Committee have been submitted to Government?

A.—No.



The Committee\* resumed its sitting in the Town Hall, Dhanbad, on the 18th February 1939 at 8 A.M.

The following members were present:—

1. Dr. Rajendra Prasad	...	<i>Chairman, Presiding.</i>
2. Mr. R. R. Bakhale	...	<i>Deputy Chairman.</i>
3. Dr. R. K. Mukherjee	....	<i>Member.</i>
4. Mr. A. M. Hayman	...	<i>Member.</i>
5. Mr. H. B. Chandra	...	<i>Member.</i>
6. Mr. J. N. Lal	...	<i>Member.</i>
7. Mr. M. P. Gandhi	...	<i>Member.</i>
8. Prof. R. K. Saran	...	<i>Secretary.</i>
9. Mr. J. E. Phelps	...	<i>Co-opted Member.</i>
10. Mr. K. N. Sen Gupta	...	<i>Co-opted Member.</i>
11. Mr. K. N. Bhattacharya	...	<i>Co-opted Member.</i>

**Oral evidence of Mr. Shiva Kali Bose, General Secretary, Indian Colliery Labour Union and Tata's Colliery Labour Association, Manbhum.**

*Chairman.*—You are the Secretary of the Indian Colliery Labour Union?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—How long has your union been in existence?

*A.*—It was started in 1920 and has existed since then. The Tata's Colliery Labour Association was established in 1930.

*Q.*—You are secretary of that also?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—Are both the Unions registered?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—Have they been recognized by the employers?

*A.*—The Tata Association has been recognized by the employers but the Indian Colliery Labour Union is only unofficially recognized by the I. M. F. They do not recognize it officially.

*Q.*—In the Indian Colliery Labour Union, you have got members from various mines?

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\*This evidence is not corrected by the witness.—*Vidyabhushan Shukla.*

A.—Yes.

Q.—What are the mines from which you have workers?

A.—(No answer).

Q.—What is the number of workers who are members?

A.—About 9,000. It will be slightly below 9,000. I shall give you the exact membership: (After referring to a paper.) In the Indian Colliery we have 8,521 members and in the Tata Association, the membership is 3,123. Of course, some members have resigned since then; this is my last report.

Q.—Well, you have given a written statement but I would only ask you a few questions to elucidate certain portions of your answer that has not been too clear. In your statement you say that about 50 per cent of the labourers in the coal-fields are permanently settled and the remaining 50 per cent are migratory. Now, out of the first 50 per cent nearly 20 per cent live in their village homes and come and work daily. What about the rest?

A.—The rest live in *Dhowrahs*.

Q.—Can you give us any idea as to the amount of turn-over in the coal-fields? How many new hands are taken from year to year and what percentage of old hands are turned out?

A.—Not more than 30 per cent of new hands are taken every year.

Q.—The remaining 70 per cent are working from day to day?

A.—Yes.

Mr. Phelps (Co-opted Member).—These 30 per cent,—are they entirely new hands?

A.—Yes, since last year they are coming in larger numbers.

Q.—They are entirely new hands to the coal-fields, is that what you say?

A.—Yes. Entirely new employees in the coal mines.

Chairman.—As regards recruitment, are you aware of any complaints made by the labourers?

A.—Yes, in recruitment there are complaints of various kinds both from the side of the management and against the *sardars* who generally bring the workers. The most common and general complaint is that the *sardars* do not pay advances and at the same time they charge to the management.

Q.—What I meant by complaints regarding recruitment is this: Have you heard any complaints in the matter of recruitment that some sort of tips has to be paid to the recruiter and things like that?

A.—Oh, yes, they take tips from the management.

Q.—Not from the labourers? (Laughter.)

A.—I do not follow you.

Q.—Now, regarding the payment of wages of the miner, are they paid directly to the miner or is the payment made through *sardars*?

A.—Directly by the company, or if there is a raising contractor it is made through him.

Q.—Is the payment made to individual worker or do they pay in the name of one worker who represents say 8 or 10. I want to know the system of payment prevailing here?

A.—It is not paid individually.

Q.—In this connection have you come across cases where the worker does not get what is actually due to him, but gets something less than that? The man to whom the payment is made does not pay the whole wages due to the worker. Any instances like that?

A.—There are many cases like that. That is a general complaint. The man to whom the money is paid deducts something from the wages of the actual miner. It is a very complicated affair from the beginning.

Q.—I am not thinking of that for the moment. Do the *sardars* and the other intermediaries take anything from the wages by way of *dasturi* or tips?

A.—Of course, during the time of payment the *sardars* do take bribes like that. Not only the *sardar*, but the *Munshi*, the foreman and such other persons also. To get a good working face or to make tubs readily available something must be paid to these fellows.

Q.—Is this prevalent to any considerable extent or is it only in exceptional cases?

A.—It is prevalent to a large extent in almost every colliery. To give good facilities for working, something must be paid; that is almost the rule today.

Q.—Have you got any idea of the amount of money, in percentage of wages that is thus taken away?

A.—I can give you. It is more than 200 rupees, sometimes 100 rupees, sometimes Rs. 80 and so on at the cost of the workers. These are the tips taken by the *sardar* and this does not include the tips taken by the *munshis* and foreman and others. Every week some amount of money should be paid, say, one anna in the rupee and like that.

Q.—Are not the working faces and such things allotted by the superior officer in the colliery itself?

A.—Yes. It must be done usually by the Assistant Manager. But he generally gives it to the *sardar* and the *sardar* allots as he chooses. It is entirely at the hands of the *sardar*. He will allot

according to his whim and fancy. He may sometimes take a lump sum of say Rs. 100 or 50 for a particular working face from a gang of workmen.

Q.—Is it possible for him to allot this, only in that particular section in which he is in charge, or has he a choice of all the sections underground?

A.—He generally will have more than two or three sections. If he has more than one section and has a gang of say 60 men he will send them to different sections according to the tips he receives. Some may get good places to cut, others very bad places and like that.

Mr. Phelps.—Is it the mining *sardar* or the miners' *sardar*?

A.—Miners' *sardar*.

Q.—You are quite sure about that?

A.—Yes, certainly.

Chairman.—You said that the *sardar* makes Rs. 100 and Rs. 200. What time does he require to make that sum?

A.—That depends on the number of miners under him. In the Jamadoba colliery a *sardar* having 200 men under him will make his 100 rupees in a fortnight.

Dr. Mukherjee.—Is it made up from each individual worker or from a gang? How do they collect that money? Do the workers raise the total amongst themselves and then pay or pay individually?

A.—In both ways. Suppose the miners are certain that the working place is a good one and the coal is cut easily and all that, they pledge or mortgage their ornaments and other articles and pay the money beforehand.

Q.—You mean in advance?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is it not deducted from the wages?

A.—No.

Chairman.—If, as you say, the wages of the workers in a gang are paid into the hands of one person, do they not dispute amongst themselves. Now the miners, after receiving their pay, divide it and then raise Rs. 100 for the *sardar*. If they want more they mortgage and pledge and find the rest some how. Is that what you mean?

A.—Yes, Sir.

Q.—What do you suggest should be done to remedy this state of affairs.

A.—To get rid of this corruption what I would suggest is that the *sardari* system should be abolished and the raising contract system

also should go along with it. The Company must appoint the labour direct; or what is called the *Sarkari* system should prevail. That is what my experience has taught me. It would be much reduced in the *sarkari* system. The *sardar* takes from the labour, the assistant manager takes from the *sardar* and the clerks of the administration. The present system is full of corruption.

Q.—Do you mean to say that this Rs. 100 that the *sardar* gets is shared by the management?

A.—Certainly. That might not be in every case but certain collieries do share in the *sardar's* amount. It goes even into the pockets of the highest authorities in the mine. (*Laughter.*)

Mr. Phelps.—Do you suggest that the higher officials of the mines are in it also?

A.—I do suggest that. I know of cases where the manager takes bribes from his inferior staffs and through the raising contractors.

Chairman.—I have not come to the raising contractors yet. You say a *sardar* in charge of allotting the working faces gets as much as Rs. 100 and more and that it is also shared by the officials of the mine? Is that what you say?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Even as high as the manager and the Assistant Manager?

A.—Yes, to my knowledge it goes up to the Assistant Manager. I am told that in some collieries even the Manager takes a share. With regard to the Assistant Manager I have personal knowledge.

Q.—What do you suggest to remedy this? Have you any suggestions to make?

A.—Yes, Sir. As I said the whole system of employment of labour must be re-organized. At present more than 50 per cent of earnings of the maner does not come into his hands but goes to the pockets of others. The management must be made more responsible to the workers and the *sardars* should be removed.

Chairman.—If the *sardari* is abolished what is to take its place? A colliery is not a small concern, it must have as much as 3 to 4 thousand labour force. How can the management run the work? You want several managers?

A.—If in that particular locality there is an organized union, I would suggest that the Union can take it up. That is one remedy. A second remedy is that the *sardars* may be retained in service and paid by the management. Then, of course, we can hope that when once they get their salary, they may not stoop to rob the poor workmen. Now they are paid nothing by the management and hence they live upon the poor labourers. I think that if they are paid by the management they will stop, to some extent, this habit of getting their

Commission' from the miners. *Sardars* who are found to persist in continuing the practice should be dismissed and better men appointed. The miners can themselves elect the proper *sardar* from amongst themselves and a certain number of them will work under him. I would suggest that the miners' *sardar* and the mining *sardar*, both must be elected by the labour. These are my suggestions.

*Mr. Phelps.*—You want the *sardars* to be elected by the labour and paid by the management?

*A.*—Yes, the management can pay them; they can afford it.

*Q.*—Don't you know that even now a gang has its own *sardar*?

*A.*—(No answer).

(*Mr. Phelps explained to the Chairman about the Miners' Sardar and the Mining Sardar as to how they are appointed.*)

*The Miner's Sardar, he said, has the leadership of the gang and he controls the gang. He is not appointed by the colliery.)*

*Witness.*—The new people coming in recommend to a certain extent their leader as their *sardar*. But the old *sardars* are there. They have been there a long number of years and doing all the mischief possible. Even new *sardars* are not appointed because the company says 'Oh, he is new to the mine, we cannot have him'. That is what is actually happening. That is why I want the *sardari* system to be abolished altogether.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—With the abolition of the *sardari* system and the establishment of a minimum wage, do you think it will put a stop to these things?

*A.*—Certainly, Sir.

*Mr. Chandra.*—How can that be? There will still be deductions from their wages. There is a tub rate payable to the miners. They may not get the rate actually fixed. A commission will have to be paid to the superior officers still?

*A.*—No, Sir. The *sardars*, if they are there, must be paid by the management.

*Q.*—Even at present the *sardar* has a commission on the tub; is it not so? The management pay a certain tub rate plus the *sardar's* commission?

*A.*—I am of opinion that it will stop bribery and corruption that is now prevailing to a great extent. I have also suggested my remedy. I think that if they are worked, they will, to a large degree, ameliorate the conditions of the miner.

*Q.*—Now, just one point about the abolition of the *sardari* that you recommend. You want them to be abolished or retained and

paid by the management? Don't you think that then, the coal owners will resort to put in coal raising machinery and dispense with labour altogether?

A.—I do not think so. They will then try to put in qualified men, persons with some mining diploma and all that. That will be much better, they will know more about the mines than the present illiterate *sardars*. They will look more to the safety of the miner also. As it sometimes happens, these miners do not look to the surroundings at all. Now, if the Company will employ qualified men in the place of the present *sardars* it will benefit the company, as well as the labour. You can get a qualified man with mining experience for Rs. 60 a month.

Chairman.—So your point is that you want a technically qualified man for the post?

A.—Certainly.

Q.—Don't you think that these so-called qualified men whom you want, will be amenable to this bribery and corruption?

A.—I don't think so, Sir. There may be individual cases but not wholesale (*laughter*).

Q.—Don't you think that it is because the labour is illiterate that the *sardars* rob them? Don't you prefer the labour to become conscious?

A.—But they are helpless, Sir.

Q.—That helplessness will continue even after appointing technical men?

A.—(No answer).

Q.—Now let us take up the raising contractors? What have you to say about them?

A.—Generally, it is found that the Labour is better treated under *sarkari* system than under the raising contractors.

Mr. Phelps.—But you were complaining against the *sardars*, *Sardars* are common to both systems?

A.—Yes, that is why I wanted them to be removed. I was speaking with reference to both the systems. The Company must pay them under both the systems (*laughter*).

Chairman.—You say that the contractor does not look after his labour to the same extent as the *sarkari* labour?

A.—Yes, Sir. Bribery is also less in the *Sarkari* system, though it exists to some extent. Any way the *Sarkari* system is preferable to contract system. That is my view.

Q.—Do these contractors make much profit in their work?

A.—Oh, yes, Sir. Much more than what the company can make if the labour is under direct management.

Q.—What does he get on an average?

A.—Sometimes Rs. 10,000; never less than Rs. 5,000.

Mr. Bakhale.—You mean his profit, that is what he saves, or what he gets?

A.—Net profit, Sir.

Mr. Saran.—The raising contractors have not got to supply any machine?

A.—No, Sir, every equipment is supplied by the Company.

Mr. Chandra.—Do I understand you to say that the contractors, in your opinion, get much more than the highly paid officials of the management?

A.—Yes, Sir. They do and it is a fact. And you can, therefore, imagine what a position he holds among the management. He will always be in favour of the superior officers of the Company and will never look to labour. So, my point is that labour will be more safe in the hands of the management than under these contractors.

Mr. Saran.—The contractor gets his contract through the General Manager?

A.—You can say like that. He gets from the managing agents. At least the General manager can get him a contract. One thing I would like to point out. Now-a-days a lot of competition is going on and so the contractor will always be on the side of the management so that they will try to get him another term when the present one expires. The position will get worse and worse if you deeply think over it. To get a renewal of the contract, he must be good in the eyes of the manager. There again corruption and bribery may come in.

Mr. Saran.—Suppose for instance, I own a mine. I want to give it to some contractor to employ labour to work it. I will naturally invite tenders and would give it to the person who quotes the least amount. Is that not so? Generally, the contract is thus invited and given to the lowest tender?

A.—Of course, that must be the system. But that is never followed. It need not be given to the lowest quotation. It is at their discretion to give it to anybody they like.

Dr. Mukherjee.—In the tender, is any mention made about the rate of remuneration that is to be paid to labour?

A.—No. Sometimes it is a condition in the tender. In the Tatas it is so. But we find that conditions are always violated. It is not observed at all. I have found workers working on less than annas 3 a day where the condition in the tender was that they should not be paid anything less than annas 6 or 7 a day.



*Chairman.*—Do you suggest that there is a difference in the rate of wages paid by the contractors and that paid under the *sarkari* system?

*A.*—Yes, Sir. The difference is sometimes great. Contractors generally pay less.

*Mr. Chandra.*—Does it make any difference to the shareholders of a company if the labour changes over to the *sarkari* from contract?

*A.*—Yes, there will be some difference in their profits. A little, that is all. But the labour will gain more.

*Q.*—So, you are definitely in favour of the *sarkari* system of labour employment?

*A.*—Definitely for it.

*Chairman.*—Now let us take the advantages of the contract labour (*Witness was heard to remark that there is no advantage worth the name.*) Are not the labourers given gifts during ceremonies, like marriages, etc., by the contractors? What about the labourers? Do they also, in your opinion, prefer to work under *sarkari* than contract system?

*A.*—Yes, he pays something on their festivals, *Kali Puja*, etc. But it is negligibly small when compared with their wages. He will pay Rs. 100 for the whole lot of workers. Individually it is nothing. Regarding the advances that the contractor is said to make to the workers, it is small amount which he deducts from their wages and often takes interest also. There is practically no advantage in the contract system. Generally, the raising contractors are *zamindars*. They have got lands. The workers are compelled to go to the mines and work because many of them are their tenants.

*Mr. Lal.*—Would you please make this position clear? You say, that the contractor pays much less than the management, when he employs labour. You also say that under the contractor corruption is greater than under the management. When after paying such a low wage deductions are made does he not refuse to work?

*A.*—They cannot go back because most of them are his own tenants. He forces them to work like that. They are helpless. These are considerations why the employers give out contracts. They think that, labour will be more quiet under contractors than under them.

*Q.*—You are contradicting yourself. You say that labour is badly treated under the contract system than under the *sarkari* and you also say that labour trouble will be more in the *sarkari* than under the raising contractors.

*A.*—I am coming to that. What I was saying is this: The contractor has more control over the labour than the management because the labour is at his mercy. This has been understood by the

employers and they are using that against the labour. They are inviting tenders for raising contractors and changing from *sarkari* to contract system. The Indian Mining Association has drafted the agreement.

*Mr. Phelps.*—Is it?

*A.*—Yes. The Barakar Company has thus changed over to contract labour after the strike. And the policy has been dictated by the I. M. A.

*Q.*—Can you substantiate that statement?

*A.*—They have honoured the agreement and I have seen the draft. I am suggesting it to the Chairman to get the draft because it will be a little difficult for me to do it. The fact that the Barakar Company has changed over to contract labour under the orders or dictation of the Indian Mining Association is true.

*Mr. Phelps.*—(To the Chairman). I cannot allow such a sweeping statement to go into the records unless it is substantially proved. It is a standard form of tender that the I. M. A. has approved. There has been no such agreement as Mr. Shiva Kali Bose says. If there had been any, I would know it.

*Chairman.*—It may be a standard form. It may not be a new draft-tender form.

*A.*—Sir, this draft has been approved after the appointment of the Labour Enquiry Committee.

*Mr. Phelps.*—I cannot allow this to be discussed in this way, Mr. Chairman; it must be substantiated.

*Witness.*—Sir, I have seen that draft agreement myself and I cannot be wrong. In the Agreement I saw it was written that the draft had been approved by the Indian Mining Association. I saw it just two months back.

*Mr. Phelps.*—You know all about the strike, don't you? When it was said that the matter could be settled, we said that we could not do anything until we got sanction from the I. M. A. because that has been our policy whenever we deal with labour. But regarding the contract that it was drafted or approved by the I. M. A., I know nothing about it. It could never have been approved or drafted by the I. M. A. without my knowledge.

*Chairman.*—It may not be a new tender form at all. You might have been mistaken, Mr. Shiva Kali Bose. Moreover, it is a personal matter between the I. M. A. and the company.

*Mr. Phelps.*—I tell you, Mr. Chairman, that nothing of the sort has been done by the I. M. A.

*Chairman.*—Labour likes to work under which system?

A.—Of course, *sarkari*.

Q.—Which is the most prevalent system in the coal-fields here? *Sarkari* or Contract?

A.—I think it is about half and half.

Mr. Phelps.—Do you suggest that the general policy of employers is to work through contractors?

A.—I think so. It might not be a general policy but it is there. In spite of the recommendation of the Royal Commission on Labour 10 years back, do you find any appreciable change? That will answer your question.

Mr. Saran.—You say that 50 per cent of the collieries are working contract labour and the other *sarkari*? Well, out of this what is the percentage of European collieries that work *sarkari* and what is the percentage of Indian Collieries?

A.—I should say that 75 to 80 per cent of the European collieries are on contract basis. It is not accurate. Well, I shall say about 70 per cent. The biggest colliery, the Jamadoba Colliery which was working on contract system has after 3 years of agitation changed to *sarkari*. It is working on *sarkari* system now.

Chairman.—As regards wages, are you in favour of a minimum wage?

A.—Certainly, I am in favour of a minimum wage.

Q.—What figure do you suggest?

A.—I suggest a rupee a day.

Q.—A rupee a day for every worker?

A.—Yes, for every worker working under the mine.

Q.—What are the considerations that have led you to that figure? Have you worked out any family budgets and the like? One rupee a day is rather a high figure?

A.—It may be a high figure. But that is, where I have put it. The worker generally comes from a distant place; he will have to return to his home and also perform ceremonies like the marriage of his sons and daughters. These must be the considerations that should be kept in view.

Mr. Bakhale.—Have you any figures where you have worked out on the earnings of a miner?

A.—Yes, Sir. I have submitted a written memorandum where I have shown how I have arrived at the figure of rupee one a day. The data is mostly taken from the statements submitted to the Royal Commission on Labour in India.

*Chairman.*—One rupee a day comes to Rs. 30 a month? Don't you think it is rather a high figure considering what he earns to-day?

*A.*—But Sir, miners are not entitled to work on Sundays. So monthly earnings will not be Rs. 30.

*Q.*—So you are not in favour of holidays with pay?

*A.*—But I have not come to that question yet, Sir. Miners cannot expect work on all the days in the month. Besides, at present they are robbed of most of the earnings.

*Q.*—What are the items that you have considered and on which you have calculated in arriving at this wage? Have you taken into account the actual earnings of the miner from day to day?

*A.*—I did not make any statistics. I shall give you what I have worked out. But I have not got it here. I shall send it on afterwards if that will be sufficient.

*Q.*—As regards minimum wage there is an idea that you might fix a basic rate for the miner who goes under the mine, and then another piece rate to be paid on the quantity of work done. The original basic rate, he is entitled to get immediately when he goes underground. The other part of his wage, that is the piece-rate, he will earn by his work. That is, his wage will be split up into two parts, a basic rate and a piece-rate, the total of which constitutes his wages for the day. Now, I would like you to tell us how you will thus divide the wages?

*A.*—I stick to my figure, Sir. That one rupee he must be assured every day.

*Q.*—You want the basic rate to be put at Re. 1 a day? If that is the basic rate then you don't want him to earn anything more? Or you have not understood my question?

*A.*—One rupee is the least. Of course, he can be given more *(laughter)*.

*(Dr. Mukherjee explained the idea of the basic rate to the witness.)*

*Witness.*—I understand what you say but I cannot approve of it. *(Laughter.)* Because even Rs. 30 that is, one rupee a day that I have fixed cannot improve the lot of these poor people. The fixation of a minimum wage is so imminent that I shall not consent to anything that will reduce that one rupee. If you fix a basic rate then naturally he will be given only that rate and his earnings will not improve at all. *(Laughter.)*

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—You have not understood my point at all. The figure of Re. 1 a day can be safely divided into two parts. You see now the average earning of a worker is Rs. 10. Let us raise that to Rs. 15, i.e., 8 annas a day. That shall be fixed as the basic rate and the other 8 annas or 12 annas or 6 annas, whatever it is, he must be

made to earn by his work? Don't you think that will be a better way of enforcing the payment of a minimum wage which will be fair to labour and to the management?

A.—No Sir, I am sorry I cannot agree to that.

Mr. Phelps.—I have a lot of sympathy with your point Mr. Bose, but do you think the industry can pay that? It is nearly treble of that which is paid to-day?

A.—Yes, Mr. Phelps, the industry is anxious to improve only its own lot and never will agree to improve the lot of the workers. The industry can pay that and even more.

Q.—How do you say that? Will not the raising cost be also trebled? What is the price of coal to-day? Have you made any investigation into that when you arrived at the figure of one rupee per worker per day?

A.—Why should I? You people never made any investigation in the direction of improving labour condition? (*Laughter.*)

Q.—Let alone investigation; it is commonsense, I am telling you.

A.—There are always two points of view, Mr. Phelps. Unless compulsory legislation is made it will not improve the lot of the workers. That is all I have got to say. I may add that the industry can pay my figure of Re. 1 a day.

Q.—You are sure the industry can pay that; if this is enforced by law would you have it for Jharia fields only or for the whole of Bihar?

A.—I will prefer such a legislation to be enforced not only for the whole of Bihar but for the whole of India.

Q.—Quite right. I appreciate your point of view very much. Now, would it be practicable to enforce it in Bihar, which I hope is what you want now, before it is taken up by the other provinces?

A.—Well, Mr. Phelps, I tell you that it must be first introduced in Jharia. We must lead, and set an example for others to follow. We have the largest output of coal, I mean in Bihar. It is very urgently needed here. Let us not think or wait till others take it up. There is no harm in introducing it here first.

Q.—Let me have an answer to my question without any discussion. So, you want this legislation to be first enforced in Jharia to begin with?

A.—Yes, when once it is introduced here, it will be automatically introduced in other coal-fields also.

Q.—Jharia first. Well, have you considered what will be the result of such a legislation? Have you taken into account the present cost of raising coal and its market price? At the present market prices, do you think it will be practicable to work the mine at all?

A.—You will automatically get the prices increased.

Q.—How? Please explain.

A.—I will tell you. We are not thinking of the minimum wage from the selling price of coal only. We have other considerations in view. You need not close the mine. Even if the price of coal increased, others will have to buy from you.

Q.—There you are wrong. They will not buy from us at all. You do not know the present competition in the coal-fields?

A.—Yes, I know it. I have 14 years' experience in this coal-fields. Your cost of raising is low now and therefore you are paying low wages.

Q.—You cannot increase the price of coal as you like. If your coal cost is more, the consumers will buy from others and not from you. It depends on the supply and demand of coal to a large extent. That means the only other alternative is to close the mine.

A.—Then reserve it for the future generation; that will be better. *(Laughter.)*

Q.—Yes, but that will not solve your problem of the minimum wage. You do not want to work it, is it? What will your miners do if the mine is closed down?

A.—They will take to agriculture. As a matter of fact, more than 60 per cent of the labourers are casual labourers. They are going back to the lands for a little extra income, simply because you pay them miserable wages.

Q.—Do you know the position of the coal industry to-day? Not only in India but in the world? Coal is being re-placed by other cheaper fuels and if you reserve the mine for the future generation there will be no need to work it at all! Moreover, you are looking at the question of the minimum wage in regard to coal industry only. There are other industries in India besides coal?

A.—I do not agree with you, Mr. Phelps. The time has not come yet and it will take many more generations to replace coal.

Chairman.—So that is your opinion?

A.—That is not an opinion Sir; it is a fact. *(Laughter.)*

Mr. Phelps.—With your permission, Mr. Chairman, just one question more. There are coal-fields in Central Provinces and in Bengal also. Now, supposing we raise the cost of coal here by your suggestion—the labour alone being paid nearly 3 times as much as they are getting now. The raising cost will also be trebled. It will even be more.

A.—Not necessarily Sir, there are monthly paid officers getting Rs. 3,000 and 4,000. Their salary must be reduced to meet the little extra cost you are bearing towards labour? (*Laughter.*)

Q.—That is a different consideration altogether. You did not say or suggest that their salary must be reduced in the first instance and then paid to labour. That was not your point, I believe. I put it to you, that if the raising cost is thus raised, will not the employers dispense with labour altogether and import coal cutting machinery and work the mine to their profit? You will get greater output also. The coal owners will not sit idle and pay Rs. 30 to a miner and still work the mine to their loss. They will try to replace human labour by machinery.

A.—I do not think so. They cannot dispense with labour as you seem to think. Even in Britain, if I am not wrong, coal is being cut by hand also. There was evidence before the Royal Commission, that the Indian miner is in no way inferior to an English miner. They cannot dispense with labour at all.

Q.—Or another thing may happen. They will close down and work only those mines that are profitable. Most of the mines will have to be closed, if your scheme is put into operation or the alternative will be of importing machinery. Therefore, I put it to you that the minimum wage consideration involves the consideration of ever so many factors which I hope has not crossed your mind. First you introduce in Jharia, then into other fields in Bihar, then the Bihar Government makes a request to the Government of India to introduce it into other provinces also? The Bengal Government would not like to take it up. What will be the consequence? Bihar's so called monopoly of coal will go into Bengal. So, you want us to take the risk first?

A.—Sir, Bihar Coal can never be driven out because not only in India but in the world also, Bihar coal stands first. There is nothing to beat it in quality. We have and we will retain the monopoly for the best quality of coal inspite of your fear, Mr. Phelps.

Q.—In this connection, I should like to tell you that up to 1926, South Wales coal had the monopoly of the world. It is much better than your Jharia coal. After 1926 it entirely lost that monopoly. Is not such a thing possible in India? There are inferior coals which are replacing your Jharia coal even to-day.

A.—That is because of the policy of the Government to-day. They want to favour some other collieries and to deal with outside competition.

Q.—Now, do you think that it is possible for the Jharia coal to hold its place as the superior coal in India?

A.—Yes. Inferior coal cannot always stand superior to our coal. It may happen once in a way, that is all. It cannot be permanently put in to serve the purpose of superior coal.

Q.—Do you know the number of companies that raise inferior coal? We have only very limited quantity of superior coal, not as much as you seem to think. Your position is that you want the condition of the labour to improve and also to continue employment. Very well. Is it possible under the circumstances when you raise the wage to Re. 1 a day? I have only to repeat what I have said before that the alternative to this will be to replace manual labour by mechanical appliances. It is already being tried. In about three years after the minimum wage legislation according to your scheme nearly 80 per cent of the labour force will be dispensed with.

A.—I am not prepared to accept that. (*Laughter.*)

Dr. Mukherjee.—Regarding the increased raising of coal consequent on the minimum wage legislation and other factors it has been suggested that a syndicate or organisation of the coal owners is established. It is also suggested that the syndicate should be a combination of the coal proprietors of Bihar, Central Provinces and Bengal. You have said that the minimum wage legislation is desirable outside Bihar also. You wanted Bihar to lead in the matter of fixation of minimum wage. In this connection do you also approve of the formation of a syndicate to regulate the prices?

A.—Yes, Sir, it may be done. But the minimum wage is not to wait till this syndicate is formed. (*Laughter.*)

Q.—I hope you know the object of this syndicate. It is for the conservation of the marketable coal in Bihar and other places. It is done in other countries. Do you think that this also should be legislated upon along with the minimum wage legislation?

A.—Yes. I understand it to be this. This syndicate is to regulate production, distribution and prices of coal raised in Bihar.

Mr. Phelps.—You want the syndicate for Bihar only?

A.—Yes, in the beginning. We cannot force Bengal and Central Provinces unless it is done through the Central Government.

Dr. Mukherjee.—By this method you organize the industry as well as improve the condition of labour simultaneously?

A.—Yes, Sir.

Mr. Saran.—Don't you think that the formation of a syndicate might not go against the interest of labour in regard to some matters? You are organizing the industry also.

A.—May be but the Government must look to that, as they are doing in the case of sugar.

Q.—Do you know that the sugar industry in Bihar has combined itself?

A.—I do not know much about that.



*Mr. Chairman.*—I shall take up some little time more. Just one or two questions about Trade Unions. Have you any experience of the relationship between the employers and the Trade Unions in these coal-fields?

*A.*—It is unfortunately not very cordial due to 4 or 5 causes. I shall explain that to you, Sir. It happened in the case of the Tata Colliery Labour Association. This was before they recognized the Union. Now, of course, they are recognizing it. At present all disputes are settled through the collaboration of the officials of the Trade Union and the management. Still it is not satisfactory. There must be legislation for that and it must be forced upon them to recognize the Trade Unions wherever they exist.

*Q.*—What remedy do you suggest in case of a conflict between labour and capital, to resolve such differences?

*A.*—To my mind it seems that labour must be permitted to settle it with the management direct. If they recognize trade unions, then it will be easy. They can bring their grievances to the management and request them to redress them. And there must be a labour officer to see that they are redressed. He must not be an Indian Civil Service Officer (*laughter*). He must be a representative of labour. This officer must be responsible for settling disputes amicably.

*Mr. Lal.*—So you want an unofficial labour officer to be appointed by the consent of the labour and the management.

*A.*—Yes.

*Mr. Chandra.*—If he becomes an officer paid by the Company will he serve the interest of the labour?

*A.*—(*No answer*).

(*The Chairman repeated the question.*)

*A.*—The labour officer should be elected by the labourers then he is bound to serve both labour and capital impartially.

*Chairman.*—Then do you think the employers will agree to that? They will not consent to his election by labour and his salary to be paid by the employers.

*Mr. Saran.*—Moreover, how can labour know the proper person to elect?

*A.*—The secretary or the president of the union can be elected.

*Mr. Phelps.*—Elected Secretary or President of the Labour Union to serve as labour officer and to be paid by the management?

*A.*—I do not mean exactly the president or the secretary of a union; any member of the trade union can be elected. I will have no objection if you are elected and if you are one of our members (*laughter*).

*Chairman.*—This labour officer decides a particular issue, which is not accepted either by the management or the labour. In such cases would it not be better to have a Conciliation Board consisting of the representatives of labour, capital and Government than to have a labour officer? Do you agree to the formation of such a Board?

*A.*—I have no objection.

*Q.*—Do you agree that the decision of the Board should be made binding on all parties?

*A.*—Certainly. It must be enforced by a legislation by Government.

*Q.*—How?

*A.*—By law, that if such a decision is not given effect to by either party they will be subjected to certain penalties prescribed in the regulation.

*Q.*—Let us take one by one. What is the penalty for the employers?

*A.*—Well, it may begin from fine and go up to imprisonment.

*Mr. Saran.*—Imprisonment for whom, for the manager, director or the share-holder? Ultimately the share-holders are responsible for it, is that your view?

*A.*—Not exactly.

*Q.*—Then. All the share-holders should be imprisoned. (*Laughter.*)

*A.*—(*No answer.*)

*Chairman.*—Well, supposing the labour refuses to abide by the decision of the Board. What is to be the penalty for labour?

*A.*—The same. The fine must be a lesser amount than for the employers. (*Laughter.*)

*Q.*—Who is to pay the fine?

*A.*—That is a very difficult question. (*Laughter.*)

*Mr. Lal.*—Why not the secretary or the president of the Trade Union? In such cases the Union should be penalized. (*Continued laughter.*)

*Mr. Phelps.*—The trade union officials should be responsible for making the agitation only, is it?

*A.*—(*Answer to previous questions.*) The workers who have repudiated the decision of the Conciliation Board should resign.

*Chairman.*—What happens next? The Trade Union Officials should resign?

A.—You will have to arrange these properly. It can be put in the language of the criminal law prescribing the punishments.

Q.—How? We want your suggestions also?

A.—(No answer).

Chairman.—Now coming to the hours of work, I understand that the general rule is 9 hours in the underground work.

A.—The rule is 8 hours a day. Work is done in three shifts of 8 hours each. These hours of work are rather too long in the case of the work in the mines. As a matter of fact, it is only 8 hours but the work is always taken for more than nine hours. After finishing the work he takes more than one and half hours in coming and going down the pit. So the total work comes to more than  $10\frac{1}{2}$  hours work, instead of 8 hours.

Q.—Under the Act they cannot take more than the specified period of work. How do you say that they take work for more than  $10\frac{1}{2}$  hours?

A.—They take as a rule 8 hours but hours are not counted from the time when he enters the pit and to the time when he comes out.

Mr. Chandra.—Do the management pay them extra on the system of piece-rate for the extra work done besides the hours of work prescribed?

A.—No, that is not paid. The management always look for work done in their own interest.

Q.—Do the miners go down the pit at 6 o'clock and come out at 2 in the afternoon? The time for coming and going should also be included in the hours of work? Is it not so?

A.—Yes, that is so.

Q.—You have also said that the arrangement of shifts are also not satisfactory to the convenience of the workers?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You have said that the time spent in coming and going is about two hours, I put it to you that it does not take more than fifteen to twenty minutes and the workers themselves make delay in sitting and talking?

A.—No, I do not agree with that.

Q.—You have said that the hours of work are longer and also that the average number of days per week should be five days?

A.—Yes. In the interest of the miners it is necessary that the work should be reduced to five days in the week.

Q.—It has been suggested to us that the workers also at present, on the whole, do not work for more than  $4\frac{1}{2}$  to 5 days in the week. They do not come at all on Monday? They work half day on Saturday.

A.—No, that is not the case. On Saturday there is half holiday but they never get leave for half day.

Q.—Do you want that the hours of work should be 8 hours from surface to surface?

A.—Yes, the time should start as soon as the workers begin to descend into the mines. Inside the mines, the distance is even two miles to reach the working face. The Jamadoba colliery is the biggest colliery and there the distance from the mouth of the pit to the place of work is 2 miles and it takes about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 hours to reach the place.

Chairman.—Now coming to the size of the tub, there should be uniformity in it?

A.—The tub should be uniform, previously one tub contained 14 cwt. of coal in all. Since the Congress Government came into power they have reduced something. In the railway, managed companies there is uniformity of tubs but in other companies there is nothing like that. 1,400 tubs are daily coming out.

Q.—Is there any charge on the tubs raised by the *sardars*.

A.—Yes, they take 2 pice per tub.

Q.—We have received complaints about the uniformity of tubs. Do you wish that law should be enacted for the uniformity of tubs?

A.—Yes, I do.

Q.—Is there any trouble in the loading of tubs?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What is the size of the tubs?

A.—It is generally 30 to 36 c.ft.

Q.—It has been heard that there is overloading in the tubs.

A.—Yes, tubs are filled much beyond their capacity. If every tub is overloaded one can imagine how much the labourers lose in the long run. In the Kustur and the Jamdoba collieries this evil is prevalent to a great extent. The *sardars* do not pass the tubs unless they are filled sufficiently higher than the fixed level.

Q.—It has also come to your notice that there is great corruption in the matter of weighment of coal.

A.—Yes, that is also one of the evils. In weighment also the workers have to pay tips to the *sardars* or the *munshis*. If they do not pay, they pass it as under-weight.

Q.—Do you want that weighment should be abolished?

A.—No, I do not say that but it should be done in a way that there is no room for bribery and corruption.

*Mr. Bakhale.*—Do you suggest that some sort of co-operative societies should be entrusted with the task of weighment in order to check the evil? In the co-operative society, there should be representatives of the employers and the trade union?

*A.*—It can run very well if the Government help.

*Q.*—In order to avoid the exploitation of the workers in respect of the weighment of tubs, do you mean that there should be the standardisation of tubs and weighment?

*A.*—Yes. Standardisation of tubs and weighment are essential.

*Q.*—When and in what year your Labour Association was registered?

*A.*—In the year 1932.

*Q.*—This shows that your union has got solidarity and efficiency in the coal-fields. What about the membership of the union?

*A.*—It is about 9,000.

*Q.*—What is the annual contribution to the union and have you prepared a constitution?

*A.*—The monthly subscription was one anna per month in 1932 but it was reduced to one pice per month in 1934.

*Q.* So you are getting annas 3 per year from one single labourer and formerly you used to get annas 12 per year from the 9,000 men?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—How many paid subscribers in 1938 and 1939?

*A.*—Up to the 31st March it was between 2,000 to 3,000 who were regular payers. The money realised was about Rs. 600 or so.

*Q.*—You are getting so much money as the trade union subscription. Do you keep your money in a bank? Who is your treasurer?

*A.*—It is kept in the bank. The treasurer is Rai Bahadur H. P. Banerjee.

*Q.*—Is this money spent by the sanction of the executive body or at will?

*A.*—Yes, it is spent at the instance of the executive.

*Q.*—Do you submit the balance sheet every year to the meeting of the general body?

*A.*—Yes, it is submitted every time. Last year it was submitted in the meeting held on 31st March 1939.

*Q.*—Here there are five unions registered under the Trade Unions Act?

*A.*—So far as I know, there are three registered unions and each of them is for coal-workers.

Q.—Can you tell me how many of the staff are paid servant of the union?

A.—There are three paid staff of the union.

Q.—Three staff cater for 9,000 members?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you maintain *pucca* books and registers?

A.—Yes, certainly.

Mr. Saran.—In your statement you have said that inspection officers do not see to the things properly?

A.—Yes, it is the case. Specially the inspecting staff do not keep a strict eye on the European Collieries. They do not supervise the European Collieries properly.

Q.—Do you maintain that position?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you also maintain that the violation of the laws are greater in the European Collieries, as you have stated?

A.—Yes, I do.

Q.—You have said that accident cases are not investigated properly?

A.—I do not know.

Q.—In question 101 you say that wages in the mines in the country side are very low compared to the wages in the field? Are you referring to the wage-rates or the earnings?

A.—I am referring to the wage-rates.

Q.—You have said that some *Babus* and head clerks are in the habit of cutting the wages? How is it?

A.—Yes, workers are compelled to take commodities from the shop of the head clerk who maintains one and on the pay day the *Babu* deducts the amount due to him. In that shop things are dearer but they are compelled to purchase from there.

Q.—Do you think that co-operative system of sale and purchase should be adopted and managed by the workers? They themselves will buy shares of the co-operative stores and will do everything themselves.

A.—Yes.

Mr. Lal.—Can you give me an idea of the wage-rates prevailing a few years back and how they have changed during the recent years?

A.—Before the year 1921 the average wage of the miners was annas 5 per tub and that was the rate throughout the year. In the year 1921 the Trade Union Congress was held and due to the agitation

of the trade unionists there was an increment in the rate. It was increased to annas 10 per tub. This condition remained till the year 1924.

Q.—Do you expect that the wages will again go up?

A.—No, we do not expect.

Q.—As regards Conciliation Board I would like to know your idea. In the Conciliation Board there should be the representatives of the employers, employees and the Government. They should give the award considering the matters of both the parties, the employers and the employees. Do you like that the Government labour office should be opened?

A.—I think I am in favour of that.

Q.—Now coming to accommodation, what are the difficulties exactly regarding the *dhawrahs*? The *dhawrahs* are very few and also there is overcrowding in them. Is it a fact that there are no enclosures in the *dhawrahs* and it has been found that it is not fit for female habitation?

A.—Yes, there are no enclosures. There is no compound wall and this entails great hardship to the workers. That must be provided for.

Q.—It has been said that water-supply is not adequate?

A.—Yes, there is no sufficient water-supply and there are also not sufficient taps.

Q.—Is there any security for the workers, especially workers on piece basis? What suggestions have you got to make?

A.—I should like to suggest that the condition of the piece workers should be changed altogether. They should be on monthly basis. Their services should be made permanent. There are cases in which it has been found that they are taken work for two months, three months, or four months and after that they are dismissed on the ground of retrenchment.

Mr. Phelps.—Is it a question of my collieries?

A.—Yes, every colliery does that.

Q.—We are told that there is much victimisation?

A.—Yes, that is a fact.

Q.—May I put it to you that there is no representation of labour in the Mines Board of Health and the Medical Board?

A.—Yes.

Q.—There is no representation of labour in the local bodies at Jharia?

A.—Yes, labour representation should be there on all the boards. It is high time that the workers should be represented.

*Mr. Bhattacharya (Co-opted Member).*—Do you think that the labour should be represented in the loading depot of coal.

A.—Yes. It is absolutely necessary.

Q.—Do you also say that the members should be elected by the labourers themselves and should not be nominated?

A.—Yes.

Q.—It has been brought to our notice that there is much troubles about the *hazri* of the workers?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you think that there are adequate medical facilities for the workers? Have you experienced that there is no provision made by the employers?

A.—The provision is not adequate.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Regarding trade unions, do you think that there is any discrimination directly or indirectly against the workers of the trade unions, or those who take part in the trade union activities?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do the employers put any sort of obstacle in the way of the trade unionists and try to penalise the workers in any way, because they take part in the union?

A.—Yes, the employers do all sorts of things like this. There are much unfair labour practices and unionists have been victimised by the employers.

*Mr. Phelps.*—You have said that the colliery proprietors are making more profits and they can pay more wages?

A.—Yes.

*Mr. Bakhale.*—You have said that prohibition in the whole of Jharia coal-fields should be ushered into existence. Do you like it for the industrial workers only?

A.—It will be for everybody.



The Committee resumed its sitting in the Council Chamber, Ranchi, on the 23rd May 1939, at 6-30 P.M.

Members present :—

Dr. Rajendra Prasad	...	...	<i>Chairman Presiding.</i>
Mr. R. R. Bakhale	...	...	<i>Deputy Chairman.</i>
Dr. R. K. Mukherjee	...	...	<i>Member.</i>
Mr. A. M. Hayman	...	...	<i>Member.</i>
Mr. M. P. Gandhi	...	...	<i>Member.</i>
Mr. R. K. Saran	...	...	<i>Secretary.</i>
Mr. S. F. Tarlton	...	...	<i>(Co-opted Member.)</i>
Mr. A. L. Ojha	...	...	<i>(Co-opted Member.)</i>
Mr. K. N. Sen Gupta	...	...	<i>(Co-opted Member.)</i>
Mr. K. N. Bhattacharji	...	...	<i>(Co-opted Member.)</i>

**Oral evidence of Mr. S. B. Sen, General Secretary, Tata's Collieries' Labour Association and East Indian Coal Company's, Workers Union, P. O. Jealgora (Manbhum).**

*Chairman.*—You have not submitted your memorandum. So it is difficult for us to examine you.

*A.*—We have submitted one memorandum along with Mr. Shivakali Bose.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Did Mr. Shivakali Bose give evidence at Dhanbad on behalf of the Tata's Collieries Labour Association?

*A.*—He gave evidence on behalf of the Indian Collieries' Labour Union, and not for the Tata's Labour Association.

*Q.*—Have you submitted any memorandum on behalf of the Tata's Association?

*A.*—A general memorandum was submitted on behalf of both. But he was examined on behalf of the Indian Collieries' Labour Association.

*Q.*—Not separately?

*(Here Mr. Hayman pointed out to the Chairman that Mr. Shivakali Bose has been examined at great length for the Memorandum he submitted. So there is no need for re-examining Mr. Sen.)*

*Chairman.*—We have examined Mr. Shivakali Bose for 2 days and so there is no necessity of examining you. But I have no objection in your giving a general statement of particular grievances.

A.—Regarding particular grievances, Trade Union movement is not liked by the employers at all.

*Mr. Gandhi.*—You mean Tatas or the East Indian Coal Company?

A.—Tatas and the East Indian Coal Company both.

Q.—I was the first man who started a union some 8 years back and for that they were sympathetic to us. Local officials also do not like trade union organisations because they think that by keeping down the trade union movement they can keep the labour under control. The housing condition is also not satisfactory; medical arrangements are not proper; the present income of the workers is not sufficient according to the nature of their work. There is differential and whimsical treatment as also favouritism and nepotism of the servants of the management. The Company say something but in actual practice it is not followed. Those who take some interest in unions are victimised. In the East Indian Coal Company, they started a union with the result that 4 men were victimised and turned away. Then they had a strike. All the workers were re-instated. Up till now the union has not been recognised, though it is a registered union. Our president has written to the Company for recognising the union but no reply has been received as yet, on the other hand, the workers are asked not to be with the union. Those who did not take part in the trade union movement were given all facilities—good brick houses were built for them. We want that registered unions should be recognised.

*Chairman.*—Your statement is in regard to East Indian Coal Company or in respect of Tatas?

A.—This statement relates to the East Indian Coal Company only. Holding of meetings is very difficult. I have got some bitterest experience in this respect.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Is this for the East Indian Coal Company?

A.—For Tatas also. In 1937 there was a meeting of the Tata Workers' Union, which was dispersed by 50 *goondas* engaged by the Company and I was arrested.

*Mr. Ojha (Co-opted Member).*—Sir, I am afraid he is making a serious allegation.

A.—Then, regarding the payment of compensation under Workmen's Compensation Act. According to the present system the Company realise the amount paid to the injured man as *khoraki* when he remains in the hospital if the injured man is permanently disabled. He gets *khoraki* from the compensation money but in the case of a person who is injured but joins work the amount paid as *khoraki* is not deducted. We want that the compensation money should be paid within a month in case of fatal accidents. At present there is delay in payment and it requires about 3 to 4 months.

*Chairman.*—You mean to say that there is delay in giving compensation in case of death?

A.—Yes. There is very little arrangement for education. There is no freedom of association among the workers. The Jamadoba Colliery is spread over 6 square miles, the East Indian Coal Company's Collieries are also scattered over several miles. So we want that the collection of the unions' subscription should be made by the management.

Mr. Hayman.—What are the unions you represent?

A.—I represent Tata's Colliery Union and the East Indian Coal Company's Workers' Union.

Q.—You are the General Secretary for both these unions but I will ask you questions regarding Tata's Union only. Is it a registered union?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Has it been recognised by the Superintendent of the Coal Department?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is it a fact that you were fined recently for breaches of the Trade Unions Act?

A.—The fact is this. I was arrested on March 28th, 1937. I was off from the collieries' area for the whole of the financial year 1937-38. I was not allowed inside the collieries. After my release I was not allowed inside the collieries as they were fenced up by *Punjabi goondas*. On my approaching my president, Mr. Subas Chandra Bose, I was allowed entrance inside the collieries in July 1938.

Chairman.—We want the facts. First, say why you were fined and then you can explain yourself?

A.—We are required to submit annual return to the Registrar. For this period it was not submitted by Mr. Shivakali Bose as there was some disagreement between Mr. Bose and myself.

Q.—So you were fined for not submitting the return in time?

A.—I have preferred an appeal for that and it is still pending.

Mr. Hayman.—Your first complaint is that the attitude of the management of the collieries is inimical to you. What are the grounds on which you made such a statement?

A.—The real complaint due to the delays in replying. There are other causes also. Their dealings and behaviour are far from satisfactory.

Q.—Can you give any specific instance?

A.—Yes, I can give for the last 8 years.

Q.—I do not want for the last 8 years, but give instances of the behaviour of the last year.

A.—I am not given a proper hearing even. In one instance I represented the case of a particular worker who used to get 3 blankets but last year it was reduced to one of inferior quality of Rs. 1-12-0. I represented this case to the Superintendent and asked to pay a few annas increment to the workers who would purchase his own blanket. This the Superintendent refused to give.

Chairman.—What class of workers get blankets?

A.—Those who work just at the pit bottom. There it is very cold and therefore they require blankets.

Q.—Was it supplied by the Company?

A.—Yes. Now it was a question of 3 blankets but it was not given; formerly the *chaprasis* used to get 8 umbrellas but this has been reduced to two.

Mr. Hayman.—Your representations are not always attended to as you want them to be. Is that your complaint?

A.—Yes. Our union office door was locked up by force and I was arrested in 1937.

Q.—You have got a room for your office from the company. Do you pay any rent for that?

A.—We have got two rooms at present from the company but we do not pay any rent.

Mr. Hayman.—What is your complaint about housing; whether it is inadequacy of the number of houses or insufficiency of accommodation?

A.—The complaint is in respect of both. *Dhawrahs* are overcrowded by the workers. In these hot days the workers are sleeping in the motor garage of the manager's office.

Q.—Is it due to workers or people in search of jobs?

A.—Workers only. Not the job hunters.

Q.—Are you sure that they are not in search of jobs?

A.—Yes, I am quite sure.

Q.—Do you think that the company has not provided sufficient housing accommodation for the workers?

A.—Yes.

Q.—To what extent do you think there is insufficiency of accommodation?

A.—About 30 per cent. There is no proper accommodation for clerks and so some of the *dhawrahs* have been recently changed into *Babu's* quarters. This is also one of the causes of shortage in *dhawrahs*.

Q.—In your opinion there is shortage of about 30 per cent.

A.—Yes, about 10 to 12 men are living in one *dhawrah*.

Q.—Are you aware that mining regulations prohibit more than 3 persons in one *dhawrah*.

A.—Yes, there are many things in the Act but are not followed in practice in the Tatas.

Q.—Regarding compensation your complaint is that when a person gets compensation under Workmen's Compensation Act, the *khoraki* is deducted from the compensation money. Do you know that there is such provision in the Act itself.

A.—Yes, but that is unreasonable.

Q.—Then this is really a grievance against the Act?

A.—Yes, Sir. And there is considerable delay in payment also.

Q.—Mr. Farquhar and I will look into this complaint of delay. The Administration thinks that there is no delay in payment.

A.—Then regarding the medical facilities—Jamadoba Colliery is extended over 6 square miles and there are two doctors—one M. B. and one assistant. Two doctors are not sufficient. In Sijua also one doctor is not sufficient. Because the area is big and it is difficult to attend to outdoor patients if there is any accident case.

Q.—The position is that the Administration considers the present arrangement to be adequate. But when we get a representation from the workers that it is inadequate it will be re-examined. The question has been examined by Jharia Mines Board of Health and they are of opinion that they are adequate. But even then if complaints are made by the labourers we will re-examine it.

A.—We have already made a representation. Regarding education. There is one primary school; the building is very big but the school is only of L. P. standard for 8 years.

Chairman.—When the building is big there must be larger number of boys.

A.—No.

Dr. Mukherjee.—Why children do not go to school when the building is big.

A.—Being a lower primary school most of the children of the *Babus* go. The school is managed by the *Babu* staff. So little interest and care is taken for the children of the labourers. There is little attraction for the labourers' children. They can't afford to go to Jharia School when they complete their study in this school.

Mr. Hayman.—Mr. Farquhar will give evidence on this.

*Mr. Chairman.*—You have complained about the attitude of the management towards unions. Is there any change in the attitude in recent years?

*A.*—No. The difficulties that we experienced some years back are present even now.

*Mr. Bakhale.*—Why your Association did not submit a memorandum to the Committee?

*A.*—Because there was some difficulty. This was because of some differences amongst ourselves.

*Mr. Hayman.*—You said in the beginning that you are the General Secretary of the Tata Colliery Workers' Association. I am ready to challenge that statement.

*A.*—You might do.

*Q.*—If it is proved that you are not the General Secretary of the Union to-day then we will be entitled to discard all your evidence.

*A.*—Yes.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Mr. Sen you have stated that the Union is registered. But you are not allowed to hold meetings. Is that practice still continuing?

*A.*—Yes even now. Unless the management is agreeable we cannot hold any meetings?

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Then where do you hold meetings?

*A.*—Outside the collieries—on the side of the district board roads.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—You have said that at the time of the formation of the union there were certain cases of victimisation. Is that practice still in vogue?

*A.*—Yes.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Is there any attempt on the part of the management to encourage the formation of a union that they would like?

*A.*—No, not exactly like that. But they try to break the solidarity of the workers by giving bribes.

*Mr. Hayman.*—This is a very serious allegation, Sir.

*A.*—I mean by giving some undue privileges and facilities.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Is there any attempt to encourage or discourage a union at the time of a strike? And the men living in *dhawrahs* are victimised and turned away?

*A.*—There is no attempt to force them out of the *dhawrahs* but all attempts are made to discourage a union at the time of a strike.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Is it not a fact that you tried on several occasions to influence the management to give houses, better facilities and promotion in jobs to your own union men who were supporting you individually?

*A.*—No, it is not a fact. My duty is to represent the cases of all members of the union.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—You have spoken just now that the management has given you a house for the office of the union. Is it not a facility?

*A.*—Yes. But this is due to the fact that near about the colliery within an area of 6 square miles most of the land belongs to the Company.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Do you not think that the union should have its own house for the office?

*A.*—Yes, but here the situation is otherwise.

*Mr. Sen Gupta (Co-opted Member).*—In your list of grievances you have not mentioned anything about the maternity benefits? Do you get maternity benefits?

*A.*—Yes. But not adequate.

*Mr. Ojha (Co-opted Member).*—You said that the Company hired some goondas. In which year, please?

*A.*—In March 1937.

*Mr. Hayman.*—We deny that, but we do not want to go into that since the Chairman does not want it.

The Committee resumed its sitting in the Council Chamber, Ranchi, on the 22nd May 1939, at 7-30 A.M.

The following members were present :—

(1) Dr. Rajendra Prasad	...	<i>Chairman, presiding.</i>
(2) Mr. R. R. Bakhale,	...	<i>Deputy Chairman.</i>
(3) Dr. R. K. Mukherjee	...	<i>Member.</i>
(4) Mr. A. M. Hayman	...	<i>Member.</i>
(5) Prof. R. K. Saran ...	...	<i>Secretary.</i>
(6) Mr. S. F. Tarlton ...	...	<i>(Co-opted Member.)</i>
(7) Mr. A. L. Ojha ...	...	<i>(Co-opted Member.)</i>
(8) Mr. K. N. Sengupta ...	...	<i>(Co-opted Member.)</i>
(9) Mr. K. N. Bhattacharya	...	<i>(Co-opted Member.)</i>

**Oral evidence of Mr. P. C. Bose, Secretary, Indian Miners' Association, Jharia (Manbhum).**

*Chairman.*—Mr. Bose, you are the representative of the Indian Miners' Association of Jharia?

A.—Yes, Sir.

Q.—When did you establish your Association?

A.—My association is in existence since 1932.

Q.—What is the membership of your Association?

A.—About 4,000.

Q.—Have you got members from one colliery or from a number of collieries?

A.—We have got members from several collieries.

Q.—Will you please give the names of the collieries from which you have got your members?

A.—Yes, Sir, they are following :—

KARGALI; PURE JHARIA; STANDARD; BALGARIA;  
BAJUDI; GONORARI; BARARI COAK PLANT;  
KATRAS; BHANGA; and also from a number of Mica  
Mines.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Have you got members from the Tata Collieries also?

A.—No, not from TATAS.

Q.—Have you got members from TISRA area?



A.—Yes, from two or three mines, in all from 15 collieries, I have got members.

*Chairman.*—The statement which you have submitted refers generally to the conditions prevalent in those collieries in particular. Is it not?

A.—Yes, Sir. It is a general statement. These statements were prepared according to the grievances of the members. These are the personal views of the members.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Have all these been verified by the Union?

A.—Yes.

*Chairman.*—You have made a complaint about recruitment. You say that there are certain type of men called *Jobbers* who are responsible for recruiting the labourers of the collieries. It is a common practice in all the mines?

A.—Yes, there is great jobbery by these jobbers in recruiting the miners. These jobbers accept bribes from the labourers and unless they are paid good and handsome sums they do not appoint any man in the collieries. This is prevalent to greater extent in the big collieries than in the smaller collieries. Miners cannot get a chance unless they pay them.

Q.—Do you maintain that this practice cannot be eliminated unless the system is replaced by the Labour Exchange?

A.—Yes.

Q.—But regarding the establishment of the Labour Exchange, I would like to tell you that the employers do not approve the idea of its establishment?

A.—I do not agree with them. Our idea is that the Labour Exchange must be established.

Q.—Why do you not agree with them?

A.—Because in this country there is much unemployment and the establishment will remove to a great extent the pangs of unemployment. Under the office of the Labour Exchange we will have general statistics of the unemployed people; and upon this record the labour will be recruited in various industries. This exchange will be a sort of labour supplying agency.

Q.—But instead of benefit in the matter of employment, the employers will have to depend upon a third agency for the recruitment of labour and considerable difficulty might be experienced?

A.—There will be no difficulty in that because as soon as the employer will require labour that will be supplied by the office. There will be separate Labour Exchange offices in separate industrial areas, which will be responsible for the employment of that area.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Do you mean to say that the Labour Officer will be in charge of the Labour Exchange?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—If any vacancy occurs in any industry then the men from another labour office will be sent for recruitment?

*A.*—Yes, that is the idea of the Labour Exchange. The labour of one place will be sent to another place. The Labour Officer will be in charge of the Labour Exchange office.

*Chairman.*—You have said in your memorandum that such jobs are common.....(*Reads.*) Is this done at the instance of the miners?

*A.*—Yes, the contractors take money from the company in the form of wages and take their share from it.

*Q.*—In this case the labourers are paid indirectly through the jobbers; then may I ask you what is the advantage to the employers in paying the labour through the jobbers and in keeping the jobbers at all?

*A.*—The thing is that the jobbers are generally local men who bring the labourers from their own villages. They are fully conversant with the nature and conditions of labour whereas the employers do not know anything of this. The jobbers are responsible for the labour. They help the miners in time of difficulty and so the latter become obligated to them.

*Q.*—Do you think that the jobbers take 2 annas per tub from the labourers?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—What is the rate of payment per tub? What is the capacity of one tub?

*A.*—The wage per tub is 6 annas to 8 annas and the capacity of one tub is from 18 cwt. to 1 ton. The capacity of tub varies and also the rate per tub varies correspondingly.

*Q.*—The charge of 2 annas per tub is very high?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—Is the payment per tub or per ton?

*A.*—The payment is per tub of one ton each. Generally the tub is equal to one ton; so the payment becomes per ton.

*Q.*—Is the payment weekly or monthly or daily?

*A.*—The payment is made weekly.

*Q.*—What is exactly the benefit of jobbers?

*A.*—They ensure the quick supply of labour.

Q.—Is there only one jobber or are there many? How many workers generally one jobber has?

A.—It is not a fixed ratio and there is no hard and fast rule for that. It may be that only one jobber may recruit the whole number of workers. The entire labour force of Jamadoba is supplied by one man.

Dr. Mukherjee.—There are several kinds of contractors like the loading contractors and raising contractors?

A.—Yes, under the big jobber there are mates and *sardars* who number 20 or 30 or even 40. All these are the intermediaries between the employers and the labourers.

Mr. Saran.—Inside the cadre of jobbers are there the *sardars*?

A.—Yes, the jobbers employ the *sardars*.

Q.—Do you maintain that the jobbers and *sardars* together get 2 annas per tub?

A.—Yes, jobbers get 2 annas per tub sometimes, the *sardars* and mates get 1 pice or 2 pice per tub per man. In the Kustore colliery there are 300 or 400 men like that.

Q.—What is the function of the *sardars* and the mates?

A.—They help the jobbers in distributing the wages and keeping order. They watch the loading and the cutting.

Q.—Are jobbers landlords of the workers?

A.—Not necessarily, that is in one or two collieries only. There are some who are *zamindars* but generally they are influential men from the locality who have got some control over the local people.

Dr. Mukherjee.—We have come across many cases in which the contractors are the landlords?

A.—Yes, there are in some cases.

Q.—In the coal-fields, is there security of service for the ordinary coal-cutters?

A.—No, there is nothing like service rules or notice for dismissals. It depends upon the whims of the contractors. The only security is that he gets work when he wants it.

Mr. Saran.—Do you mean to say that the labourers are dismissed arbitrarily?

A.—Yes, there is absolutely no law that governs these appointments and dismissals.

Q.—Do you say that there is much dismissal of the workers in the mines?

A.—Not only this but in the coalfields the miners are dismissed, victimised, and are turned away from the *dhawrahs*. In all these there is no notice of any kind.

Q.—Is it a fact that in certain cases the old employees do not get work but the new employees are taken in place of permanent workers?

A.—Yes, old men are removed and new men are taken in.

Q.—Is not the general practice that old men are given preference?

A.—No, not at all.

Q.—Are permanent posts given to those who are temporary hands?

A.—No, it is not the case.

Q.—In the case of retrenchment what happens?

A.—It so happens that when retrenchment takes place, permanent hands are removed and temporary hands are retained. Those who are the favourites of the contractors are kept in.

Q.—Have tub rates been reduced?

A.—Yes, certainly.

Q.—Are the tub rates fixed?

A.—No, ordinarily it is not reduced every day, because of the economic difficulty.

Mr. Hayman.—What do you mean by the economic difficulty?

A.—That is, the selling price is low.

Chairman.—We have experienced that the size of the tubs is required to be very common and the regulation of the filling of the tub. What is your experience?

A.—So far as the filling of the tubs is concerned, my experience is that the tubs are always overloaded and the labourers are not paid for the overloading but if the tubs are just filled up to the brim and not over-loaded then those tubs are declared under-weight.

Q.—Is it a common practice?

A.—Yes. There has been much complaint about it, and also about the uneven size of the tubs. These practices are universally common in the Railway collieries, are generally due to the contractors. In countries like Germany and Japan there has been a regulation that there should be standardisation of tubs and the wages also are regulated by law. The tubs should also be loaded up to the standard level.

Q.—Do you think that such regulations should also be enforced in India?

A.—Yes, of course, that is very essential; it will relieve the workmen from oppression. There is another hardship that if coal is mixed with dust then they reject the whole tub.

Q.—Do you like that there should be regulation for that also?

A.—Yes.

Mr. Hayman.—If surplus coal is distributed to the miners by the contractors, would you like that?

A.—Had that been done before the question would not have arisen. There should be a fair deal to the labourers.

Dr. Mukherjee.—Is there any promotion in the service of the miners or any kind of grade?

A.—No, not at all.

Chairman.—There would be another objection to the distribution of the surplus because there would be variation in the surplus of coal?

A.—Yes, we do not agree to that.

Q.—Are these evils due to the *sardars* or the contractors because they are recruited by them and so they try to please them by over-loading?

A.—This can be overcome only if the system is abolished.

Q.—Why do the labourers submit to under weighment? The labourers can very well protest that the weighment is not less?

A.—The labourers are not so advanced as to protest. Out of fear they submit. There is no law under whose protection they can do anything.

Dr. Mukherjee.—There is also a system of check weighment?

A.—All these cannot do anything unless a law is passed. If the law is there, they will have fear and will not do such things.

Q.—The real safeguard against that kind of fraud would be the strength of the labourers themselves, than the actual change of the system?

A.—But that is not possible under the present circumstances, the only protection that can be afforded is by law.

Mr. Tarlton (Co-opted Member).—The weighment of the tubs is done in the presence of the Secretary of the Labour Union and checked in his presence. He is always present at the time of the weighment of the tubs. If the coal is over-loaded then there is extra payment for that. There are no deductions?

A.—No, the tub is cancelled if there is no over-loading.

Chairman.—Under regulations the miners work actually for 6 days? What do you say?

A.—Yes.

Q.—So the 7th day is holiday without pay?

A.—Yes, Sunday is generally a holiday.

Q.—Is the system of fines prevalent very largely?

A.—Yes.

Q.—For what faults fines are inflicted?

A.—Say, for bad loading, for the cancellation of tubs, underloading, sometimes for talking and sleeping underground, late attendance, breaking of tools, etc.

Q.—Actually there are 40 hours of work in the collieries. Do you want reduction?

A.—Yes, that is the general demand.

Q.—Are you aware that less than that is prevalent in any part of the world, in any other country?

A.—Yes, in France.

Q.—In any part of India?

A.—No.

*Mr. Hayman.*—How many hours the miners actually work? Is it not that they work for  $4\frac{1}{2}$  days only in the week for 5 or 6 hours a day?

A.—The actual work, you mean, that the workers are capable of doing is only 5 or 6 hours a day. But I have seen them working for 9 hours for 6 days continuously.

*Chairman.*—They go but they do not get tub?

A.—Generally they have to wait for tubs and the supply of tubs is always late.

Q.—Do they work for 6 days of 8 hours each day?

A.—I have seen them working 7 days in the week. As a rule, they cannot work on Sunday, but they are taken work on Sunday also.

Q.—Do you think that if the hours of work are reduced, the practice will be the same?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is your opinion based on personal experience?

A.—Yes.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Will the practice continue if the arrangement is made for the supply of tubs at the proper time on the working place and all other facilities are provided? Will they work for more or the same 4 or 5 hours?

*A.*—No, there are other difficulties as there are water logged areas and much time is spent in removing water from these parts. Some time is taken in cleaning the ways and so on.

*Q.*—Do you improve conditions if the supply of tubs is regulated? Will the workers earn more if the hours are reduced?

*A.*—If they are taken work for 6 hours a day then they will earn the same. Difficulties would be remedied if tubs are available in time. If instead of 48 hours a week they are taken 40 hours a week their earnings would not be reduced. Their health will be sound and so they would work more and earn more.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—The earning is also reduced because of the irregular supply of tubs? Is it not so?

*A.*—Yes, it is reduced.

*Mr. Bakhale.*—Are you aware that the European witnesses of the coal proprietors who gave evidence before us definitely said that whether there is regular or irregular supply of tubs the miners would not work for more than what they are doing at present? Also they said that they would not fill more tubs per day as they are doing at present under any improvement in conditions? There would not be increase in the earnings than what is at present, i.e., annas 6 or annas 7 per tub? Is that a fact?

*A.*—Not at all. I do not think that it is correct. It cannot be a fact. I have got reasons to say that under the conditions they work they cannot improve and if the conditions are improved they will earn double than what they are earning at present.

*Q.*—That has been attempted by the colliery owners?

*A.*—No, not at all. My view is quite different. If there are facilities given and conditions regulated, the miners will surely improve.

*Q.*—But the coal owners say otherwise?

*A.*—I do not agree with them, as a matter of fact.

*Q.*—You may not agree but that is on paper before us. Mr. Leech, predecessor of Mr. Tarlton, declared this.

*A.*—Mr. Leech discussed this question with me one day. I said that if the miners did 4 tubs a day working for 8 hours a day and if the facilities were extended to them in the shape of supply of tubs at the right time then they were sure to cut more than 4 tubs a day working for the same number of hours a day. Mr. Leech agreed to this.

Q.—But not now?

A.—The arrangement is difficult.

Q.—Workers do that?

A.—They do not get proper facilities. The area is bad, there is water underground, and no proper ventilation.

Mr. Saran.—In the next shift also there is the same *sardar*?

A.—Generally, not.

Q.—Some sort of arrangement will not do?

A.—This is not possible.

Q.—Is it due to the fact that there are less number of tubs and the difficulty of supply of tubs can be overcome if there are more tubs?

A.—The tubs are fairly costly things.

Mr. Tarlton.—Do you think that the reason is that there are more miners and less tubs? The miners are more than the number of tubs?

A.—Naturally, there are more miners and less tubs.

Q.—You say that there is no proper supply of tubs and there are no proper facilities for work and so they work less. Is it not due to the fact that in some collieries there are more tubs but the same work?

A.—No, this is not the case. The fact is that the workers go to the mine at 8 A.M. but it is found that up till 9 or 10 A.M. there is no supply of tub. He has got to wait. Due to these things the wages are low.

Q.—Is it not due to the inefficiency of the workers?

A.—No.

Q.—Why not they make representation to the management?

A.—Recently I had gone to see the Manager on behalf of the workers and complained to him about the supply of tubs, but no orders have been passed for the regulation of the supply of tubs.

Q.—Was it a workers' representation to the management?

A.—Yes.

Chairman.—Now coming to the wages, you have definitely said that there has been reduction of wages since 1929. (*Reads.*)

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is that true that the wages in the year 1921-22, were higher? What is the prevalent rate?

A.—Annas 5 to annas 8.

Q.—What is the size of the tub for annas 5 rate?



A.—The size for the rate of annas 5 is 30 c. ft. of 15 cwt. capacity.

Q.—You have said that the tub has been increased; has that happened in many collieries?

A.—Almost in all collieries.

Q.—Has there been any increase last year or so?

A.—For the cutters in 1937 there has been increase of one anna, annas 2 per tub in 1937 for the increased size of the tub. There has been no reduction of wages.

Q.—You have suggested that Rs. 30 per month should be the minimum wages in the industrial centres. What you have taken into consideration in suggesting this thing?

A.—Our idea of this minimum is derived from the fact that there should be sufficient for the man to maintain himself and his family. I have based my idea on these lines:—

70 per cent on food and other materials,

10 per cent on clothing,

Rs. 1-8-0 per month on washing,

Rs. 1-8-0 per month on miscellaneous expenses,

Rs. 1-8-0 per month on travelling expenses, etc.

Taking all the above items I have put the figure at Rs. 30 per month as the minimum. This I think will be sufficient for the Jharia area considering the cost of living at this place. I have also considered other places in Bihar and Bengal. In places like Cawnpore and Ahmedabad the cost of living is half than that at Jharia and Jamshedpur. In places like Patna and Gaya the cost is still less.

Mr. Saran.—Do you think that the cost of living at Jamshedpur is double than that at Cawnpore?

A.—Yes, the cost of living at Cawnpore is cheaper.

Q.—In fixing this minimum of Rs. 30 have you calculated the cost of production and what effect it would have on the wages bill?

A.—I have calculated that. It will have 70 per cent on the necessaries and 30 per cent on others.

Chairman.—You have complained about the lack of facilities in the medical treatment to the miners in the hospitals. Do you think that there is not sufficient arrangement for the patients in the hospitals?

A.—Yes, there is no sufficient arrangement for hospitals in many collieries. Excepting one or two collieries hospitals are not adequate. If anyone suffers from serious diseases he is sent to the hospital at Dhanbad. In the case of serious accidents also they are sent to Dhanbad. In this way considerable time elapses and the man is almost dead before he reaches the Dhanbad hospital.

Q.—Is the Dhanbad hospital maintained by the District Board and also by the colliery owners? I do not know how much the owners contribute to it? Do they actually pay?

A.—The colliery owners pay according to the size of their colliery per month or per year. There is no indoor arrangement for the patients. There should be indoor arrangement.

Q.—What is your suggestion?

A.—My suggestion is that there should be hospitals in each colliery area at different centres and there should be arrangement for proper outdoor and indoor treatment. All the hospitals should be maintained by the colliery proprietors and the treatment and the medicines should be given free. The accident cases should be promptly and properly looked into. It is absolutely necessary in the areas like KATRAS, JHARIA and KENDRADIH. Every hospital should possess an ambulance car for the transport of injured workers quickly to the Dhanbad hospital.

Mr. Tarlton.—The ambulance car is provided at present in the collieries like Jairampur, and Bird collieries, and also at Pathradih.

A.—No, not to my knowledge.

Then there should always be two or three beds in each of the dispensaries for giving prompt aid to the injured. The number of doctors should also be increased.

Chairman.—Are there not proper rules for all these in the collieries?

A.—Yes, the rules are observed in breaches. In the Bhadra Chak colliery medicines are given mixed with water filled in bottles.

Dr. Mukherjee.—Do the women employees get at least the maternity benefit?

A.—No, at least there should be one lady doctor and nurse for each colliery for the benefit of maternity cases. There should be maternity beds. There is also dearth of compounders. For quick distribution of medicines compounders should be increased. Medicines are distributed on tickets.

Chairman.—In this connection you have said that there should be "sickness insurance" scheme and the contribution should be paid by the employers; on the other hand some of the employers have said that they have no objection to paying the contribution if some contributions are also made by the workers themselves. How do you take this idea? Do you think that the workers will be agreeable to this sort of arrangement?

A.—Yes, that expense may be deducted from them, after the increment in wages is given.

Prof. Saran.—Do you maintain that as the *khoraki* is deducted from the compensation money, in the same way this also should be deducted from their money?

A.—No, this cannot be unless the wages are increased. If the wages are increased I would have no objection to this payment and deductions.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—As they pay their subscription to the trade union, in the same way they can also pay their contribution to the Sickness Insurance Fund which will be compulsory for the workers to pay? Do you approve of such a scheme?

A.—Yes.

*Prof. Saran.*—Do you want this as an experiment or as a rule?

A.—No, no experiment. There must not be experiments.

Q.—Or it can be done as it is done in the Mines Board of Health in Singhbhum? What do you say?

A.—Yes.

*Chairman.*—Then you mean to say that for the sickness scheme there should be some subscription and part of that should be contributed by the employers?

A.—May be.

Q.—Do you like the Government to take powers for that?

A.—In the industrial reconstruction everybody should pay for the upkeep of the industry.

Q.—Now I come to the question of indebtedness. Is indebtedness very much in the coalfields?

A.—Yes, there is very much indebtedness in the mining areas. As a matter of fact the indebtedness is to the extent of 3 or 4 months' pay. They are highly indebted to the *Kabulis* at a very high rate of interest.

Q.—Dr. Seth has made investigations in the question of indebtedness. He says that 44 per cent of the families whose income is below Rs. 5 are in debt. The higher the income, the greater the debt. What do you say?

A.—Yes, the figure is like that.

Q.—From whom they take loans?

A.—Generally from the collieries *Chaprasis*; they are money-lenders; also from the *Kabulis*. They charge 300 per cent to 650 per cent as interest.

*Mr. Hayman.*—What are the causes of indebtedness?

A.—There are 15 causes for indebtedness. Sickness is the greatest cause.

Q.—Is it absenteeism also?

A.—No.

Q.—Is 'drink' also one of the causes of loans?

A.—No, they drink what they get but do not take loans for drinking. They also borrow for food, when the earning is exhausted. When they are unemployed they borrow.

Mr. Tarlton.—Yet doing work for 4½ days in the week?

A.—If you give proper facilities and adequate wages, then I guarantee that they will work for full 6 days in the week.

Mr. Ojha.—Please explain what do you mean by 'proper'?

A.—The supply of tubs in proper time and no jobbery.

Chairman.—In the question of drink, there must have been much relief since the introduction of prohibition? What is the position now, since the last two months?

A.—Yes, there is decrease but there is somewhat run towards drinking by illegal means.

Mr. Ojha.—Even if facilities are present in some of the bigger collieries, do you think that the work is satisfactory?

A.—In the Tata collieries, the thing is quite alright.

Q.—Do you guarantee that if all the facilities are present they will work for full 6 days in the week? I put it to you that it is impossible.

A.—Yes (to the first part of the question). No (to the second part of the question).

Chairman.—Is the tendency to drink by illegal means to a larger extent or to a smaller extent?

A.—Not larger. Majority have given up drink. Some go to Dhanbad and adjoining areas where there is no prohibition.

Q.—Is there discontent among the workers for prohibition?

A.—There is no discontent. Larger number of people are jubilant over prohibition; especially the women folk are very happy.

Q.—Do they like that prohibition should be maintained and extended?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is there distinct sign of improvement and the greed for drink is being eliminated?

A.—Yes.

Mr. Hayman.—What proportion of wages goes to drinking?

A.—20 per cent. In some cases it may be 40 per cent, in some cases it is 10 per cent but on the average it is 20 per cent.

*Chairman.*—Now I pass on to the question of Trade Unionism. What method you suggest to bring about the settlement between the workers and employers before any strike or lock-out has actually taken place?

A.—I suggest the 'Conciliation Board' under the Trade Disputes Act as it has been tried in the cases of Tinsplate, and Iron Foundry companies at Jamshedpur. Any important local officer like the A. D. C. should act as the deciding officer.

Q.—Do you think that it is possible to apply the Trade Disputes Act to settle the disputes?

A.—Yes, my suggestion is that the Government should have right to appoint the Board and the parties should agree to it.

Q.—Under the T. D. A. even if both the parties do not agree the Government can appoint?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You do not want anything more than the present method?

A.—In the cases of smaller grievances there should be Labour Officers to look after them which might be referred to them from time to time; but in case of bigger disputes, the Conciliation Board should be there.

Q.—Do you like that the award of the Conciliation Board should be binding upon the parties?

A.—Yes, the award of the Conciliation Board appointed by the Government must be binding upon the parties.

Q.—Then you are in favour of 'Compulsory Arbitration'?

A.—Yes.

Q.—But there is difficulty in this. How will you enforce the terms of the award? It is very easy to enforce it on the employers but how can you enforce upon the vast bulk of the employees? There are two parties, on the one side the employers and on the other side the employees? Supposing one of them does not agree to follow? What will you do?

A.—In that case the mechanism of 'Penalisation' should be taken recourse to.

Q.—In the case of employers you can very easily penalise them but how will you penalise the workers, if they do not abide by the terms of the award?

A.—But how can this position arrive? The arbitrator will be appointed by the wishes of both the parties. If both the parties agree then the award will be given. In that case how can they not abide by the terms.

Q.—Supposing that they do not abide by the terms. How can you penalise the vast bulk? Supposing we take the biggest factory of the province, the TISCO where there are 34,000 workers, or any bigger mines; how can you penalise the entire body of thousands?

A.—If the Committee finds that they are adhered to, then they can penalise the executives of the trade unions and the trade unions can be punished, as is done in United Provinces.

Q.—But the matter of the United Provinces Government is different.

A.—It is better to punish the executive of the unions.

Dr. Mukherjee.—There may be no executive at all? Or the executive might resign from the office? What will happen then?

A.—So far as the workers are concerned they will be agreeable to the Government's decision. There shall be no difficulty in accepting the terms of the compulsory award.

Q.—In connection with the question of the industrial disputes you have suggested that there should be a labour officer for the settlement of day-to-day grievances? You have also suggested that there should be compulsory award. But in connection with the day to day settlement do you know that there is one procedure called the Shop Committees, in which there will be representatives of the Labour Union, management and the government labour officer? Do you approve of this thing?

A.—Yes, but there must be the conciliation officer in the Works Committee.

Q.—Now I should like you to consider one aspect of the decision which is called 'Unfair Labour Practices' in other countries like America. During the time of industrial disputes the management engage in certain unfair practices, e.g., they ask the strikers to quit the *dhowaras* or again they stop the use of fuel, electricity and water supplied by them. Such things are protected by legislation in other countries. Do you like that such legislation should be passed here also in India?

A.—Yes, such things should be discouraged. There should be a fair dealing between the labour and the management in time of strike. Those should be declared illegal and unfair.

Q.—Do you think that cutting of water-supply and electricity, etc., during the time of strikes should be restricted by law?

A.—Yes, that should be restricted by law. Facilities to the employees should not be taken away; that is a very bad practice.

Q.—There is also another aspect of the fact. It is that the strikers are dismissed without giving proper notice. Do you like that this should also be restricted?

A.—Yes.

Mr. Tarlton.—But do you know that strikes are resorted to by giving proper notice?

A.—In the proper strikes 4 weeks' notice is given.

Dr. Mukherjee.—So long as he is in the service of the Company, he is entitled to occupy the house?

A.—Yes, in Bengal Nagpur Railway it is so.

Dr. Mukherjee.—Now as regards the minimum wage fixation. You suggest some kind of machinery for fixation of the minimum wage. Do you think that the minimum wage should be fixed according to the industrial area? How far the industrial competition in Bihar will affect that of Bengal? Before the co-ordination of other provinces do you think it wise in the interest of the province to fix the minimum wage?

A.—Yes. The competition is already there. The Jharia coal is of different species than that of Raniganj. It does not make much difference. Raniganj wage is already high.

Q.—Do you not think that the price of coal in Bihar is higher than that of Bengal coal? And that will be harmful to the coal industry?

A.—In Bihar miners are a permanent labour force. There will be increase of efficiency.

Q.—Do you think that the increase of efficiency of the labour force will mean increase in the social amenities of housing and the conditions of life?

A.—Yes.

Chairman.—Up to what extent there will be difference in the economic value?

A.—There may be very small difference in the raising cost.

Q.—What do you mean by small?

A.—Difference may be 30 per cent or 60 per cent of the total cost of production. It may mean a few annas per ton.

Mr. Sengupta.—Is it not a fact that labourers are realised fines and those fines are spent in theatrical performances rather than for the benefit of the workers?

A.—Yes, it is a fact.

Q.—Are you aware that the fine system have been abolished?

A.—Yes, it is against the Payment of Wages Act. The fine is permitted under the Act up to a certain limit.

Q.—Is there much corruption in the coal-fields. The miners have to pay to the *munshis* for the supply of tubs. If they do not pay, then the supply is intentionally delayed?

A.—Yes, that is a fact.

Q.—Are you in favour of the removal of corruption by legislation?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is it not a fact that labour is not adequately represented in the local boards.

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you think that the system of nomination is good?

A.—No.

Q.—You want that representation in local bodies should be done by election?

A.—Yes, there should be change in the rules.

Q.—Do you want that the labour should be given leave in the year for a certain number of days? If so for how many days?

A.—Yes, I have given in my memorandum.

Q.—Is it one month privilege leave with pay?

A.—Yes, in the year.

Dr. Mukherjee.—Do you want that the Payment of Wages Act should be extended to the mines?

A.—Yes, a resolution has been sent to the Government.

Q.—You have a larger number of women now in the work on the surface of the collieries. Would you suggest some legislation for the demand of maternity benefits for women?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you consider that some amendment should be made in the existing mining regulation that there should be adequate representation of labour in the Water Board?

A.—Yes.

Mr. Ojha.—If the cost of Bihar coal goes up by the recommendation of this Committee and if the purchase of coal decrease in comparison of the Raniganj coal as a result of the difference in prices, would you not say that it would be unfair?



A.—The minimum standard of living wage must be paid to the workers and that must be fixed at Rs. 30 for the man.

Q.—What the man earns now?

A.—Maximum Rs. 15 and minimum Rs. 8 per month.

Q.—If you fix at Rs. 30 what would be the percentage per ton?

A.—60 per cent and the production cost 30 per cent, that will be made up by the increase of efficiency.

Q.—At present what is the cost of production per ton?

A.—Rs. 2.

Q.—If the wage is increased by 30 per cent what is that going to be?

A.—We have said that if the minimum is fixed at Rs. 30 the production cost will be increased by 60 per cent.

Q.—Do you think that it would be possible to do that?

A.—Yes.

Q.—If 30 per cent go out of the profits?

A.—No, it would be exactly 1 anna or 2 annas more, in the items.

Q.—Would you tell those 'items'?

A.—Office charges, supervisory charges.

Q.—In that case can you give to the General Managers and Managers the travelling allowances of their motor cars? They say that they cannot work unless they get fat salaries. Would you be able to do that?

A.—I have not stated the balance sheet of the companies. I do not think the Managers will be affected by more than 10 per cent.

Q.—If the suggested increment is given to workers, can you say whether the companies will be able to pay Rs. 800 or Rs. 1,000 per month in case of European Managers and Rs. 150 or Rs. 200 in case of first class Indian Managers?

A.—As regards the higher officers why should you pay them so much? You should see that the starving labourers must get their living wages at least. You cannot exploit the labour for the payment of the higher officers.

Q.—Do you think that best remedy would be to fix the rate of minimum pay and also the minimum price of coal?

A.—Yes, I have said that.

Q.—How can it be done?

A.—By combination.

*Mr. Sengupta.*—The rise in price of coal per ton was 7 s. in other countries in 1936.

*Mr. Ojha.*—That was not in India where the conditions are quite different.

Is it your considered opinion that by giving increment it would be fair if the mines are closed down?

*A.*—My opinion is that the Government should arrange. Some sort of arrangement should be made.

*Q.*—With regard to the Bengal and Bihar mines, there are many common proprietors and there are organisations like the Indian Mining Federation and Mining Association with representations from Bihar also. What would be the effect? It is inter-provincial question?

*A.*—The inter-provincial question is a difficult question.

*Mr. Tarlton.*—You say that the minimum wage should be fixed at Rs. 30. Have you any idea of the wage that Government pay to their workers?

*A.*—It is about Rs. 15 or Rs. 16.

*Q.*—Do you not know that some employers are already paying Rs. 15 or Rs. 16.

*A.*—No.

*Q.*—Do you know that the policy of the representative Government is to reduce the wages?

*A.*—I do not know this.

*Q.*—Do you know that the Government have reduced the wage from Rs. 11 to Rs. 9?

*A.*—No.

*Q.*—Can you tell me which is better whether the *Sarkari* system or the contractors' system of employment?

*A.*—The *Sarkari* is far better. In this the workers get more money. Under the contractors there is the violation of the Acts. In Bihar the *Sarkari* system has proved to be good.

*Q.*—Do you know that in the Government and railways also there is contract system and there is bribery and corruption in them also?

*A.*—Yes, there is some in the Public Works Department where the work is done by contractors.

*Q.*—Referring to the Labour Exchange, you mean that the miners and the labourers will be appointed by the Labour Exchange? Can you say how miners can be classified by them?

*A.*—The idea is that the Labour Exchange will keep information of the different kind of men of the local labourers, and those who will

require the labour will write to the office and will get. They will write the kind of labour they want, whether skilled and unskilled. Men will be supplied by the Labour Officer.

Q.—Will it not be the duplication of recruitment by the Labour Exchange?

A.—No, there will not be duplication.

Q.—As regards the pay of the Labour office you suggest the miners should pay?

A.—No, if the employers want labour they will pay.

Q.—When you say that the sardars take 2 annas per tub, do you mean that it is *bakshis*?

A.—I do not know whether it is *bakshis* or something else.

Q.—Can you give us an idea as to what percentage of value the miners pay on whole?

A.—No, I do not know.

Q.—Do you not think that the *sardars* who take this *bakshis* do some service to the miners?

A.—In what way?

Q.—They see that there is proper loading, proper weighing and the like?

A.—It is very smaller percentage.

Q.—As regards fines do you consider that fines are severe and are in violation of the Payment of Wages Act? Are you aware that the workmen do such things which put the company to severe loss and they do so intentionally. Do you not think that for these, fines should be made?

A.—Fines which are very small are under the Payment of Wages Act and in the Act it is also laid down that the fines realised should be spent for the benefit of workers. But if the fine exceeds the limit then surely it is in contravention of the Payments of Wages Act.

Q.—But do you agree that in lieu of fines, the punishment of suspension and dismissals should be applied?

A.—No, I do not agree. The amount of fines should not exceed annas 8.

Q.—Is it the opinion of the trade unions that the working hours in the mines should be reduced?

A.—Yes, the workmen should have some leisure hours. Unless a man gets leisure after strenuous work, his conditions cannot improve. It is the view held by people that shorter hours of work are more beneficial than longer hours of work.

Q.—Do you think that the present working hours are excessive?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you think that the present hours of work are excessive when the workers do not work for 8 hours in actual practice?

A.—Yes, it should not exceed more than 40 hours a week.

*Mr. Saran.*—Do you think that coal mining in India is harder?

A.—From the practical point of view the work is not harder but the work is longer, and there is the lack of efficiency.

Q.—Do you agree that in a country like India there is much leisure?

A.—No, I do not agree.

Q.—It is said that the miners actually do not work for more than 5 or 6 hours a day. Can you tell how many hours they actually work?

A.—The thing is that tubs are not available in time and they have got to wait long and that wastes time. There is no regular supply of tubs.

Q.—Tubs were started in 1931 and since then there has been definite increase in its number?

A.—Yes, there may be.

Q.—Is there the tendency of further increase?

*Mr. Hayman.*—In connection with the increase in the minimum wage for the labour I understand that there will be increase of a few annas per ton. Is that so?

A.—Yes, it will be a few annas per ton.

*Mr. Saran.*—There was a strike last year in the Jharia area. What was it due to?

A.—On account of the contractors' labour. There is great labour competition in Jharia.

Q.—Was the labour competition responsible for the strike?

A.—Yes.

Q.—As regards the earnings of the workers has there been natural increase since 5 or 6 years in the normal case? Is the earning greater now than six years before?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Are the raising contractors responsible for the migratory character of labour?

A.—Yes, they do not want a stable labour force.

Q.—Would not they settle down in the mining areas?

'A.—I do not know.

*Mr. Bakhale.*—Do you consider it feasible that the trade union representatives will be called upon by the management for the discussion of the grievances?

'A.—No.

Q.—Do you consider it possible that the trade union officers and the workers' representative will be allowed by the mines managers to visit?

'A.—No.

Q.—Are you aware that there is a section in the Mines Act that the workers' representative or officials are allowed for inspection in the mines as ex-officio visitors?

'A.—Yes, there is one clause.

Q.—Advantage is taken of that?

'A.—Yes.

Q.—With regard to the inter-provincial question do you consider that the fact should be taken into consideration?

A.—May be done.

Q.—In the matter of coal and mining there is something central and something provincial, so do you think it desirable that there should be some co-ordination between the provinces by some inter-provincial agreement?

'A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you like that it should be established on the lines of the National Planning Committee with the help of the Congress Government and co-operation of the Indian States and steps should be taken for this agreement?

'A.—Yes.

*Mr. Ojha.*—Do you mean the joint committee by the Government of India in which the coal is the central subject?

*Mr. Bakhale.*—I am talking of that. The Provincial Government has got the right to do that.

The Committee resumed its sitting in the Giridih Sub-Jail on the 23rd February 1939 at 2-30 P.M.

The following members were present :—

- |                            |     |  |
|----------------------------|-----|--|
| 1. Mr. R. R. Bakhale ...   | ... | <i>Deputy Chairman,<br/>Presiding.</i> |
| 2. Dr. R. K. Mukherjee ... | ... | <i>Member.</i>                         |
| 3. Prof. R. K. Saran ...   | ... | <i>Secretary.</i>                      |
| 4. Mr. J. E. Phelps ...    | ... | <i>(Co-opted Member).</i>              |
| 5. Mr. A. L. Ojha ...      | ... | <i>(Co-opted Member).</i>              |
| 6. Mr. K. N. Sen Gupta ... | ... | <i>(Co-opted Member).</i>              |

**Oral evidence of Dr. Satyanarain, Ph.D., President, Coal Workers' Union, Giridih (Hazaribagh) assisted by Shri Sarat Chandra Patnaik, Vice-President.**

*Chairman.*—When did you form your Union here?

*A.*—Last year, in July 1938.

*Q.*—Is your Union registered under the Act?

*A.*—Yes, it was registered this year, in the month of January.

*Q.*—What is the total membership at present?

*A.*—Well, in the coal industry we have got 5,000 and odd.

*Q.*—What is the name of your Union?

*A.*—Coal Workers' Union.

*Q.*—It does not cater for any other kind of industry?

*A.*—No, only colliery labour.

*Q.*—Have you prepared a constitution for the Union?

*A.*—Yes, we have.

*Q.*—Can we have a copy of that constitution for our record?

*A.*—Of course, we have got two unions here, one for the coal industry and another for the mica industry.

*(A copy of the constitution of the coal union was supplied to the Committee.)*

*Q.*—What is the minimum subscription that you collect from each worker?

*A.*—Minimum is two pice a month (half anna).

*Q.*—You collect monthly?

A.—Yes, sometimes weekly. It depends on the workers.

Q.—How do you collect your contributions, by going to their homes?

A.—We do not go; we have representatives from among the workers themselves. We have an Executive Committee which is represented by 20 workers. Then we have Shop Committees and the representatives of the Shop Committee. They collect the money and pay it on to us.

Q.—Have you got a treasurer?

A.—Yes, at present the functions of the treasurer is performed by the Secretary, Mr. Brahmadeo Singh.

Q.—So, he combines in himself the two offices?

A.—Yes, for the time being.

Q.—Where do you keep all the money; in some Bank?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What is your balance at present?

A.—We have got Rs. 100.

Q.—How much have you spent so far?

A.—Nearly Rs. 700.

Q.—How, one what work?

A.—On propaganda work, on organization and sometimes helping the workers.

Q.—You are the President?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Are any of the executive officers of the Union paid by the Union?

A.—No, all are honorary workers.

Q.—Conveyance charges and other expenses to members are paid?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Have you got a regular register of the members?

A.—Yes, we have.

Q.—Have you got a printed receipt book?

A.—Yes, then we enter it in another register also.

Q.—A minutes book?

A.—Yes, we have.

Q.—How many meetings have you held since your formation?

A.—Not less than 20.

Q.—What is the general character of the work you do in the Executive?

A.—Our first work was to classify the workers in as many groups as possible. We have got at present three groups according to the standard of living. We judge their standard by what is called the Law of Engels. We find out the income of the worker and then calculate what percentage of it he spends on food and accordingly group him. We also try to find out how much spends on other items.

Dr. Mukherjee.—You said you have at present three groups?

A.—Yes. The first is the poorest group, the Kamins, who spend about 90 per cent of their income on food and other 10 per cent on other items.

Chairman.—But that is not the work of the Executive, I believe?

A.—Yes, it is, that is the basis on which we proceed. Next come the *malkatas* (coal-cutters) who work hard. They spend about 80 per cent on food. Their income is nearly Rs. 1-9-0 a week. The third group is that of the trolley-men and the like who spend nearly 75 per cent on food. Thus we classify the workers into these three groups. Nearly 10 per cent of the workers here come under the first group, 30 per cent are in the second and 50 per cent in the last which includes also a large number of workers working on the surface. They get nearly Rs. 3-2-0 a week. The clerical staff and others who get high salaries are not included in this classification. This work took nearly two months for us to complete. The first thing that we did was to go to the houses of the workers and actually find out their income and then calculate the percentage. We prepared a regular statistics of the workers' budget. We were able to find out the reasons why the workers were forced to live under such circumstances. If, for example, we take the third group which represents nearly 50 per cent, they actually get only Rs. 3-2-0 a week. The *sirdars* and other middle men take Rs. 2-2-0 for every Rs. 3-2-0 paid to the worker. There are so many middle men besides the *sirdars*. There is the compoter, the head-gangmen and the *munshi* and so on. The head-gangmen are not paid by the Company at all. They depend upon the coal-cutter for their remuneration.

Mr. Saran.—Do they take Rs. 2 and odd from each coal-cutter?

A.—Yes, from each coal-cutter they get Rs. 2-2-0 a week. We actually began our fight first against this exploitation by the middleman.

Chairman.—I was asking you what kind of work you transact at the Executive of your Union?

A.—We have got separate departments. One department will look to the economic activities, the other will investigate into the conditions of the workers, etc., called the investigation department, a third for



finance, a fourth for propoganda work and so on. Yet another department will look to outside contract with the workers, another department will organize welfare work and we have recently added two departments—one for the women workers and the other miscellaneous.

Q.—How many general meetings do you have in the executive?

A.—At least one in a month we must hold according to our constitution.

Q.—You must have rules and regulations with regard to the declaration of strikes, etc. Just point out some of the relevant provisions relating to them. Suppose for instance at a particular colliery the workers have got certain grievances. You carry on negotiations and if the Executive feels justified that a strike is the only alternative to fight with the employers, you adopt that procedure. What is the procedure that you have under your rules?

A.—We have no such rigid rules laid down under our constitution.

Q.—Did you have any strike here?

A.—Yes, the mica workers went on strike, but I think we deal with coal only here.

Mr. Saran.—What do you do during strikes generally?

A.—We try our best to arrive at a settlement fair to both parties. There have been many occasions when we have intervened and stopped at the last moment when the workers were about to go on strike. We are willing to give two weeks' time for the management to decide before the workers go on strike. That is the procedure we propose to follow.

Chairman.—What do you do during lightning strikes?

A.—Well, that has been discouraged all along. We will advise the workers that if they want to strike, let them give due notice and then stop work. An occasion for this has not yet arisen.

Q.—Suppose there happens a strike without the knowledge of the Executive of the Union?

A.—No, such a thing can never happen in our unions

Q.—I mean spontaneous strikes?

A.—That can never happen. Even if it happens it will be dealt with in the manner in which the situation demands. It all depends on the particular circumstances.

Q.—Suppose the situation to be something like this:—A strike is declared and the major issue is with regard to wages. The people go on strike and they afterwards inform the Union. What will the Union do, rather how will the Union act under such a situation.

A.—We will examine the situation both from the subjective and the objective side and if we find that the time is ripe for the strike, then of course, we cannot help supporting.

Q.—And at the same time try to negotiate with the employers?

A.—Of course, that will be done in all cases, if they are ready to hear us.

Q.—During the period the Union is in existence, have you held any meetings to make propaganda?

A.—So many. Not less than 200. We go about in villages and I think that not less than 200 meetings have taken place during the last seven months.

*Mr. Saran.*—Just a moment ago you said with regard to lightning strikes that the Union should be informed before the strike is actually begun. At least that is what you expect. You had not had that experience so far. But I think, there was such a strike at Giridih sometime back?

A.—Yes, in mica. But I thought we were discussing only coal here today.

Q.—I ask that question from the point of view of trade unions.

A.—Yes, we had a recent strike in the mica factory here. It was not declared by the Union at all. It was a spontaneous strike, and because we were here and working for labour, we asked the workers what their grievances were. They said 'such and such grievances should be settled.' We wanted to render all our help to them and carried their grievances to the management for their consideration. We approached the management and laid before them the grievances of the workers. The management heard us. The demand of the workers were that their wages should be increased by two pice which the management were ready to do. But I am sorry to say that the attitude of the Subdivisional Officer here was responsible to a very great extent for spoiling the arrangement with the management. When we were discussing with the management they were only too willing to give the 2 pice demanded and end the strike.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—To each worker?

A.—Yes. Then the Subdivisional Officer intervened and afterwards they refused to give the increase of 2 pice and the strike continued. When once the management refused to be reasonable there was nothing left but to carry on the strike. Our main business then was to see that nobody broke the law and peace prevailed throughout. We were seeing to the perfect non-violent way in which the strike should be conducted. We sought the help of the Subdivisional Officer also.

*Mr. Saran.*—The management gave you an unconditional understanding that they were going to raise the wages by 2 pice?

A.—They did, and we were about to call off the strike. Then they consulted the Subdivisional Officer.

Mr. Saran.—After giving you that assurance? Why?

A.—That is their business, I do not know why. Probably they had the Subdivisional Officer in their confidence. There was an order from the London Market and the Company was going to supply. It all happened suddenly. We sought the help of the Subdivisional Officer. He said that he was only to see to law and order and had nothing to do with the affair. According to him it was perfectly legal for the management to have refused to pay higher wages to the workers.

Q.—Suppose, as Mr. Bakhale put it, there happens a strike against the wishes of the Executive, how will you control the situation then?

A.—I cannot suppose such a thing.

Q.—Can you not conceive of such a case happening? It is only a supposition; we want to know exactly how you will proceed under such situations?

A.—I cannot conceive of such a situation. We cannot believe that it will happen. We are never so weak. To a man we are disciplined. Our organization is not like other trade unions. From top to bottom it is worked on military lines. So everybody must obey the Executive as in an army.

Q.—Can you not imagine a situation where they act against the wishes of the Executive?

A.—Our constitution is so democratic that it is inconceivable. When there is a vote of censure against us, we resign. But there can never happen a strike against the wishes of our Executive. I am sorry I cannot even imagine a situation as contemplated by you.

Q.—It is said that there is great deal of corruption in the collieries?

A.—Oh, yes, in Mica it is still more.

Q.—You said that about 70 per cent of the earnings of a coal-cutter goes into the hands of middlemen?

A.—I did not say that, I said that a worker gets actually in his hands only Rs. 3-2-0 while the other Rs. 2-2-0 goes into the hands of middlemen.

Q.—It comes to the same thing. Is it not so?

A.—The sirdar and others easily get Rs. 2-2-0 every week.

Q.—From whom?

A.—Of course, from the wages of these workers.

Q.—How?

A.—Mostly it happens in the third category of groups I gave before. The average earning in the third group is nearly Rs. 3-2-0 a week. This is what actually comes into his hands. I will tell you one thing. In the register of the colliery we have seen the names of the workers and the entry against his name is Rs. 5-2-0. You go to the worker and see how much he actually gets. It was only Rs. 3. We found that out. There are so many middlemen who take their share out of the workers' wages that the Company is supposed to pay to him.

Q.—How are you sure that the wages paid to the worker is Rs. 5-2-0?

A.—The register kept by the Company will prove that. I can give you the exact figures as to how much the headgangman gets, how much the *sirdar* and so on. I have got them. We have collected these minute details also.

Q.—The wages are not paid directly to each worker, I think? It is paid to the headgangman. He takes his share and then pays the worker. The management cannot be responsible for this?

A.—Sometimes it happens but the management is also involved. The European Managers here stoop to accept a bribe of even two annas.

Q.—Why don't you prosecute in a court of law?

A.—I will tell you. There was actually a prosecution against the predecessor of the present Manager of Coke-ovens, Mr. Bailey. It went on for two months. You know the spirit of the Subdivisional Officer and the other Indian officers here. If in every instance we undertake prosecution, the lawyer has got to be paid, and there are ever so many expenses and the trial will last for a long period. It is really a tedious and highly-expensive process. We do not believe in courts.

Q.—You believe in Union?

A.—Yes, we do not believe in British courts. Our point is that even the Administration backs the Colliery Managers. They are not existing for the workers. The Government backs the proprietors and not the workers. These are our definite charges. They intend to crush our Unions.

Chairman.—I request you to answer to the question only. Let us not deviate to other topics.

Mr. Saran.—Let us proceed. When accidents occur are you allowed to visit the place of accident on behalf of the Union?

A.—No. Neither from the side of the Union nor even when authorised by the relatives of the injured man. We should like to see for ourselves the causes of accident. In the colliery they usually tie a string around a certain place prohibiting entry into the area. When *sirdar* ties another rope much farther off than the present one with a an accident happens, the first thing the management does is that the

view to creating an impression on the visitor or the Mining Inspector, as the case may be, that the victim's plight was due to his having crossed the barrier and entered the prohibited area. This shifts the responsibility of the management to the shoulders of the unfortunate workers. Thus they avoid paying compensation, as happened in the case of Kolimaran Pit accident in October last.

Q.—How do you know that?

A.—We can easily verify that. The people who work in the neighbourhood will testify about it. There are methods.

Q.—Are the wage levels the same in Serampore and Karharbari?

A.—There is little difference in certain departments. In Karharbari the trollymen get a little less than what they get here in Serampore.

Q.—And the hours of work also are more or less the same.

A.—Yes, the same for both. They have *sirkari* system at Serampore. The slight difference in wages may be due to that.

Dr. Mukherjee.—Since you are the President of the Trade Union, we are anxious to know the obstacles that you generally meet with in the development of organized unions and increasing the strength of the Union. You are aware that in some industrial countries in Europe there are very stringent laws against what are called unfair labour practices?

A.—Yes. I was in Germany for a couple of years. Such unfair labour practices that were in vogue there and also in England I believe, have been prevented by legislation and the right type of trade unionism is highly developed there.

Q.—Have you or have you not come across instances here, in Bihar, where the management have prevented say, the holdings of meetings in the premises of a factory and so on?

A.—Of course, there are many instances. We have restraints.

Q.—What kind of restraints?

A.—Well, we cannot hold any meetings, sometimes notice is served against us, you are not allowed mere entry into the colliery area.

Q.—These notices come from the employers?

A.—Yes. We are prohibited to meet the workers in their homes even as it often happens that they are in the factory area.

Mr. Phelps.—Against you or against the workers?

A.—Against the Executive of the Union.

Q.—Workers are permitted?

A.—Not all. We have no freedom to enter the factory area at all, which means all their territories. We cannot walk on their roads.

Mr. Mukherjee.—Have you any instances where during a strike, the men in the *dhowrahs* are served with notices to quit the *dhowrahs*?

A.—One or two instances, during the last 7 months. Activity in the Union is sufficient cause for the notice.

Q.—Is there any victimisation or discrimination of any kind?

A.—Of course.

Q.—Do you think that it must be prohibited?

A.—Undoubtedly, yes.

Q.—Do you think it desirable to have legislation to the effect, to prevent unfair labour practices, so that the workers may have, say, a Government of labour by labour, organize themselves effectively for collective bargaining?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What about peaceful picketing? In some countries, I am thinking of the States in America, there is a law to that effect. Should peaceful picketing be allowed? Obstruction of any kind to that should be prohibited?

A.—Yes. It must be prohibited by Government. The Government and the management think alike. They think that the labourers only are at fault. That is the tendency now-a-days.

Q.—You call it bourgeois tendency?

A.—Of course. (*Laughter.*)

Q.—So you consider that obstruction of peaceful picketing should be prevented by legislation.

A.—Yes.

Q.—Public opinion in this country is not so advanced?

A.—Public opinion is more advanced than the opinion of the Government.

Q.—Now, I come to another point. As the executive of the Trade Union perhaps you feel that social welfare activities are more calculated to the development of solidarity of labour than mere organization?

A.—Of course, yes.

Q.—I want to know how far is social welfare being attended to by your Union?

A.—Yes, for that purpose we have two departments—one deals with the education side and the other with the organisation of a disciplined volunteer corps.

Q.—Night schools?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How many?

A.—At present we have two. The other is the most important item of work, about prohibition. We do not think that the Bihar Government is correct in the way they are proceeding, because the economic aspect of the question with reference to the class that drinks is not looked by them at all. We have made a thorough enquiry into the matter with respect to the worker and we have come to the conclusion on the basis of facts that when they are unemployed they drink more than when they are employed. In fact insecurity of service is largely responsible for drink habit.

Q.—What is your attitude with regard to the introduction of prohibition in this area?

A.—The first thing that must be done is with reference to their standard of living. Their economic condition must be bettered. Conditions of work and payment must be improved. The very first step towards prohibition is that the worker should have peace of mind. It is on account of such psychological defects that he drinks. Unless and until these things are set right, there is no use in introducing prohibition.

Q.—Therefore you are against prohibition?

A.—Far from it. Preaching prohibition will not do. During the weeks of unemployment and low wages, drinking habit is increasing; crimes are more numerous. There are a number of reports to that effect. The workers must be assured a permanent job. Their conditions of payment should definitely improve. You see, as I said before, it is the middlemen, the head-gangmen, the *sirdar* and others, that take away most of the wages of the actual coal-cutter. Nowadays bills are made payable to the head-gangmen :—

			Rs.	a.	p.
The head-gangman takes	...	...	1	0	0
The deputy takes	...	...	0	4	0
The <i>munshi</i> takes	...	...	0	2	0
The compters take	...	...	0	8	0
The 2nd <i>munshi</i> takes	...	...	0	4	0 (in the pit).
			<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
			2	2	0

The total is Rs. 2-2-0 and the worker actually gets only Rs. 3 in his hands for his work. I have examined this system carefully as an economist.

Q.—Now, in such a case are you not against the system of raising contractors? What do you think, in the first place, of the introduction of weighment?

A.—The best thing will be direct payment as in *sirkari* system. That is one suggestion. Another system which to me is more sound, is in the Tub Repairing Department where the workers are grouped as 10, 20, 30 and the like and they are made to elect their own gang-men. In this case the whole thing is managed by the workers themselves, as they have got a right to choose their gangman. What each group of workers get. They should divide amongst themselves. That would solve the difficulty to a very great extent.

Q.—In mines safety is the most important thing?

A.—Of course, an experienced worker can be a head-gangman.

Q.—Now, let me ask you one question about the causes of indebtedness of the workers?

A.—Yes, low wages and insecurity of employment are the causes.

Q.—Are the *banya* shops in this place giving things at the fair market price or are they charging exorbitant rates from the workers?

A.—Yes, the rates are very much higher.

Q.—What do you consider about the establishment of co-operative societies as they have in Germany and other places? Do you think it will solve the problem to some extent?

A.—Yes, of course, it will. The indebtedness will, of course, decrease. There is no doubt about that. We are ourselves moving in that direction.

Q.—Have you prepared a family budget of the workers?

A.—Yes, we have.

Q.—Can you send them to the Committee, later on?

A.—Yes, if you want them we shall give you exact figures. If you so require I can give you an approximate idea now.

Dr. Mukherjee.—No; you may send it afterwards to the Secretary of the Committee. You must mention therein, the income, the sources, rates of credit, the difference with other places, the market rates and all that.

Q.—In other countries coal owners have established a basic rate and the coal hewers and other workers underground are thus assured of a certain wage immediately they go underground. In considering this question you must consider the wage of a worker as split up into two items. The basic rate and the piece rate. The total of these two factors should give you the minimum wage that we are trying to understand. I want you to answer what should be the basic rate, which would be fixed once for all and to which a miner will be entitled to immediately he goes underground. The other factor is not fixed so that the miner may be encouraged to earn more and not waste his time.



A.—I think Rs. 25 per month should be the minimum wage.

Q.—No, I want you to give me two answers. How do you fix the basic rate? This is guaranteed to the worker. For instance, take the two factors to be *A* (the basic rate) and *B* (the piece rate). *A plus B* as you say, should be Rs. 25. I want to know in that what is *A* and what is *B*. In other words, what should be the minimum basic rate *A*?

Witness.—How many hours does the miner work?

Q.—Consider an average miner working for 8 hours?

A.—Then, he must earn Re. 1-4-0 a day.

Q.—But your total is Rs. 25 only?

A.—But they are not working the whole week.

Q.—You have not understood my question correctly. *A plus B* is equal to Rs. 25. What should be *A* and what *B*?

A.—The basic rate should be annas fourteen. The basic wages of a miner should on no account be less than Rs. 15 per month. This is the least that you require for bare maintenance of a working class family at Giridih.

Mr. Phelps, (Co-opted Member).—You said just a while ago about the Shop Committees you have under your Union. Will you just explain to me a little more about them in the colliery area?

A.—We have divided the whole area into groups and we have a central body and also a Committee at the pits.

Q.—A Committee for every pit?

A.—No, we have made a rough division of the entire coal area. The first division about the labourers I gave before, how we have divided them into three groups according to their income and expenditure.

Q.—How many men have you in the Shop Committee?

A.—It depends; in the workshop we have 40. We have several committees within the Shop Committee also.

Mr. Bakhale.—Can you give us an idea as to the proportion of the total membership in your Union and the membership in the Shop Committees?

A.—That is decided by the representative of the Committee. In the Executive we have one man for every two hundred members.

Mr. Phelps.—If you have so many committees and so many committee-men in each, will not that appreciably hinder the smooth workings? There are so many men and it is easy for trouble to start from the members themselves.

A.—They are very peaceful.

Q.—I did not quite follow the grouping of the workers you mentioned in the beginning? Will you please repeat it so that I may note them down?

*(Witness gave the figures already noted in the beginning.)*

Q.—You said you have military discipline amongst your workers?

A.—Yes.

Q.—So it is after all one mind that works?

A.—No, in the military there are as many minds as there are men. They all work in the same direction. They have a common objective, that is all.

Q.—I mean to say that you have only one mind in the Union and that is yourself?

A.—How can you say that? One mind, one aim, that is how we work. For your understanding how a military works, and how it should work I shall give you some details regarding the working of it.

*Chairman.*—No please, let us confine ourselves to the point.

*Mr. Phelps.*—My point is this, you rule your men with such strong hand that there can be no mind outside yours? That is so I believe?

A.—Of course not. The executive of the union decides the course of action and they carry it out, that is all. It is a collective mind, not a single mind.

Q.—Let us leave it at that, you said—gave us some figures—regarding the bribes taken by the head-gangmen, the deputy and others. Kindly repeat them for me to write down. I was not able to follow you. *(Witness repeats what had been already said).*

Now, how were you able to get at these actual figures? You say that they are the exact figures of the amount that each middleman takes out of the wages of a coal-cutter?

A.—Yes. I went to the Serampore colliery and got those figures. I went to the office of the management on 6th July 1938 and asked the man in charge to show me the accounts book and other books. He showed me the payment book and from that I note down the payments made to a worker according to the Company. Against a man's name (Subdhi) the number of days he worked and the wages earned by him were written. The figure was Rs. 5-10-0. Then I went to the individual worker against whose name that amount was written and found out what he actually got. It was only Rs. 3-2-0.

Q.—You got help from the clerks privately, was it not?

A.—I do not know whether it was private or not.

Q.—You made this checking?

A.—Not in one case or two, but many and what I have given are the actual earnings of the workers. It is an average more or less.

Mr. Mukherjee.—Random samples?

A.—Yes.

Mr. Phelps.—You wanted security of employment to the workers in the coalfields. Now, coalcutting is a profession which cannot be compared to a factory or a mill. How can we give security of employment when we are everyday taking away coal from the mine. The quantity of coal will be getting less and less and the mine itself will automatically be exhausted. Under such circumstances, in the coalfields, how can you secure permanency of employment?

A.—The workers here are mostly permanent workers. They, a large majority, have no land of their own and the payment that they are getting now is hopelessly insufficient.

Q.—That is not my question?

A.—I hope you can do that if you want. Most of the workers do not go back. You are not giving them any facility or encouragement to stick on.

Mr. Sengupta (Co-opted Member).

Q.—You say that the *sardar* should be elected by the miners themselves?

A.—Yes, exactly so. This will do away with the corruption which is prevalent in the system, because, if the workers elect their own *sardar* they will select the right man.

Q.—Do you agree that miners can carry on the labour unions without the help of enlightened outsiders?

A.—No, the labour unions must have to be sided by them in order to work properly.

Q.—How? Do you feel that the workers of a Union must have some training?

A.—I have got personal experience of the work of the unions. I have formed the unions at Kararbari and other mines. The Trade Unions must be run on economic lines. It will no doubt be an advantage to the unions if they are assisted by trained students of economics.

Q.—Do you think that there should be some sort of institution for training intending workers of trade unionism?

A.—Such training will undoubtedly be a help to the working of unions if that is taken up by economists like Dr. Mukherjee. Training classes may be conducted on the line of summer school of politics or the like.

Q.—I think you should have no objection if a Trade Disputes Act in Bihar is made on the lines of the Bombay Act?

A.—I want more than that. I do not agree that the Government can do anything for the workers' union. In India the Government is out to crush the unions. The officers' attitude.....

(At this stage he was speaking something irrelevant when he was stopped by the Chairman.)

Q.—You are perfectly sure that the workers cannot go against their leaders? They have perfect faith in them?

A.—Yes.

Q.—It was said by the management that contractors have got an agreement with the workers regarding strikes and the payment of the wages and the workers have full faith in them. What is your idea about it?

A.—No, it is not the case.

Q.—Now coming to the Karharbari Mines, is it not a fact that there the work is done by contractors?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What are the methods of employment by them?

A.—Some of the *sirdars* employ 50 workers, some employ 30 workers and some employ 40 workers. Each *sirdar* will employ his own men. I like that the *sirdar* should be from the workers themselves.

Q.—Is there any provision for *dhowras* for the workers and do you think them to be sufficient?

A.—I do not think them to be sufficient.

Q.—Is there any provision for the workers to provide them with books, libraries and schools to give them education?

A.—No, not at all.

Q.—Do you think that there is proper arrangement of ventilation in the *dhowras*?

A.—No arrangements, same *dhowras* are just like cow-sheds.

Q.—Is there any arrangement for the supply of fuel, etc.?

A.—No.

Q.—Can you say that the health of the workers is perfect in those *dhowras*?

A.—No, the condition is miserable.

Mr. Ojha.—Just a while ago you gave us a statement of the earnings of individual workers. You said that they actually got only Rs. 3 whereas they ought to get Rs. 5-2-0. Are you sure that each gangman according to your calculation easily makes Rs. 250 a month?

A.—Rs. 250 a week would be more correct if a gang is composed of 250 men.

Q.—So a miner actually gets how much a day? I think he must get annas 12 a day that was what I was given to understand. Is that correct?

A.—May be but he works only half the week. Roughly speaking he must get annas 5 to annas 6 a day. The figures I gave you are not hypothetical. They are taken from individual cases.

Q.—The head-gang is not paid by the Company?

A.—No.

Q.—Do you know the actual wages paid per day at the different collieries?

A.—Yes, but I have not got the information now with me. I shall give you later on.

Q.—What does a trolley-man get here?

A.—In the central pit he gets on an average annas 8 to annas 9 a day.

Q.—They are daily wage earners?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you mean to say that deductions are made from the daily wages?

A.—Yes.

Q.—To what extent and by whom?

A.—From the trolley-man the *sardar* takes, and the foreman also.

Q.—How much?

A.—The *sardar* takes, say, annas 2.

Q.—How many days do they work?

A.—6 days they formerly used to work; now only 3 to 4 days.

Q.—I take it that most of the workers here are members of your union. A good many *sirdars* and head-gangmen also are members of your union?

A.—Yes. The head-gangmen came and told us that they would also join the union and fight the employers. They said that when once they be began to be paid by the Company, they would not take anything from the wages of the workers. On that basis we enrolled them as members.

Q.—That means that you are helping them to get more money?

A.—Not exactly. They joined us to fight the employers. They requested us to fight for them and get them monthly wages from the company so that they may cease taking from the coal-cutters. That is the idea.

Q.—Are you sure that when once they get their wages from the Company they will cease taking from the coal-cutters?

A.—That is what they promised. I think they were really serious when they so told us.

Q.—How do you say that the workers are not getting reasonable wages? How do you judge?

A.—Well, you also know about it, of course, from what they eat. They need ever so many other things.

Q.—If you say that it is not at all reasonable, that it is insufficient, why should they continue to work?

A.—Because they are forced to it on account of the economic situation of the country.

Chairman.—You say there are 5 middle men between the contractor and the miner?

A.—Yes.

Mr. Phelps.—5 intermediaries you say, between the contractor and the worker.

A.—Yes.

Q.—Now you see, they work under gangmen and we understand that in collieries miners are controlled by gangmen and are not prepared to disclose what they get per day. Considering this what remedy do you suggest to eliminate this?

A.—They do disclose.

Q.—What remedy do you suggest?

A.—They must be employed under the Company itself. Direct employment, that is a good remedy.

Q.—What do you think, is the cost of production of this colliery? Is it high, low or, reasonable?

A.—Well, how can I say that, I have no reports and no balance sheet. The cost of production may be high because the salaries of the officers are high. The officers are getting over Rs. 1,500. There is wastage of materials and money to a horrible extent.

Q.—If as you say the cost of production is high do you not think that increasing the wages of the workers will still make the cost of production higher?

A.—Of course not. In the same way the salary of the upper strata must be reduced.

*Mr. Phelps.*—Very good, then the cost of production will remain the same? Do you know the cost of production in the smaller collieries in Bihar? And also the price of coal obtaining now in the market? Can you compare them with this Railway colliery?

A.—No, that is not the basis of my answer. I am speaking in general. For price you must consider the quality also. Giridih turns out the best coal in India.

The Committee resumed its sitting in the Guest House, Bokaro, on the 25th February 1939, at 3-15 P.M.

The following members were present :—

1. Mr. R. R. Bakhale ... *Deputy Chairman, Presiding.*
2. Dr. R. K. Mukherjee ... *Member.*
3. Prof. R. K. Saran ... *Secretary.*
4. Mr. K. Sen Gupta ... *(Co-opted Member.)*
5. Mr. J. E. Phelps ... *(Co-opted Member.)*
6. Mr. K. N. Bhattacharya ... *(Co-opted Member.)*
7. Mr. A. L. Ojha ... *(Co-opted Member.)*

**Oral evidence\* of Mr. Ramanugrah Prasad, Secretary, and Mr. Moti Lal, Assistant Secretary, Labour Union, Bokaro.**

*Mr. Bakhale.*—What are your names and what do you do?

*A.*—We are workers of the Labour Union. I am the General Secretary and Moti Lal is the Assistant Secretary of the Labour Union.

*Q.*—What is the name of your Labour Union?

*A.*—The name is Bokaro Labour Union of the coal workers.

*Q.*—Since what time is your Labour Union in existence?

*A.*—It is in existence since about a year.

*Q.*—Is your Labour Union registered under the Act?

*A.*—No, we are trying to get it registered.

*Q.*—Have you framed the constitution of the union?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—Can you supply a copy of the constitution?

*A.*—Yes. I have not brought it here but I will send it to you at Patna.

*Q.*—How many members are there in the Union?

*A.*—There are 500 members of the Union.

*Q.*—What is the subscription of the Union?

*A.*—At present there is no subscription. We have not put subscription; the membership is free at present. We propose to put 1 pice as the membership fee per week. Those who get monthly pay, will give two annas as fee.

(\*This evidence is not corrected by the witness Vidyabhushan Shukla.)



Q.—How much money have you got in cash in hand?

A.—It is about Rs. 25 or Rs. 30. It is our principle that first the man should become a Congress member by paying annas 4, then become the member of the Union.

Q.—The President and the Secretary and other office bearers were elected in the meeting of the general body?

A.—Yes, there was a public meeting held last year and in that meeting the executives were elected and the office bearers.

Q.—This year there has been no fresh election?

A.—It will be held shortly.

Q.—Have you got the register of the members? How many are there on the list?

A.—Yes, I have brought the register. (*Shows the register.*) There are 800 on the list.

Q.—Have you given receipt for the money received?

A.—Yes, we have given receipt written by hand. We have no printed receipts yet.

Q.—From what collieries you get your members?

A.—We have members from Jerandih, Ramgarh, and 3 or 4 other collieries.

Q.—Are there any women members of the Union?

A.—No, there is no women member of the Union?

Q.—When does the meeting of the managing committee takes place?

A.—It takes place once in six months.

Q.—Who is the president of the Union?

A.—Babu Ram Narayan Singh, M.L.A. (Central).

Q.—Who is the Vice-President?

A.—Babu Sukhlal, M.L.A.

Q.—Are you not trying for the registration of the Union because without the registration of the Union, it is not possible to carry on the work in right earnest?

A.—We are trying for it.

Q.—As the Secretary of the Union, do you go to visit the *dhowras* and do you go under the mines to see the conditions of the workers?

A.—Yes, we do go, but when the management come to know, they do not allow us. They say that under the Mines Act there is no

provision for us to go. Not only this, but the officials also restrict our activities by promulgating section 144 against the workers.

Q.—Have you put your grievances about the inadequacy of the *dhawras* and other things to the management and, if so, with what result?

A.—Yes, three months ago in the colliery of Mr. Campbell we put our grievances, but he did not pay heed to them.

Dr. Mukherjee.—Has there been any deduction of wages between 1933 and 1938?

A.—Four months before there was the rate of annas 5 but now it has been reduced to 4 annas 6 pies. This is the case for the *coolies*.

Q.—Is there any deduction for *dasturi*?

A.—Yes, there is deduction as *dasturi*. The mate and the *sardar* deduct some part of the wages as *dasturi*, the mate takes 1 anna 6 pies and the *sardar* 6 pies.

Q.—Is there also underweighment?

A.—The workers are asked to fill the tub above the brim and if in the transit the coal falls away, they do not pay for that and there is deduction in wages due to that. One-fourth coal is deducted. Deductions are the greatest evils.

Q.—Now coming to the hours of work under the Mining Act, it is about 8 hours?

A.—The man who goes inside the mine at 10 A.M. comes out at 12 or 1 P.M. He is not allowed to go out of the pit before that. There is no fixed time for the *khalasis*.

Q.—Do you get wages for the time when you are ill?

A.—No.

Q.—Do you get overtime wage?

A.—No. Under the Mines Act overtime work is not allowed.

Q.—Do you know anything about the indebtedness of the workers?

A.—Yes, there is, the interest is anna 1 or annas 2 per rupee. Generally the contractors themselves give loan to the workers and take interest from them.

Q.—Do you know anything about corruption at the time of recruitment of the workers?

A.—Yes, when a worker is recruited the contractors take Rs. 40 or Rs. 50. The result is that the men borrow money and pay to them. The contractors take also domestic service from the workers in lieu of interest.

Q.—Is there any case of victimisation of the workers who take active part in the Union?

A.—Yes, there is. Not only this, labourers are victimised for taking part in the Congress also. Sometime ago when Babu Krishna Ballabh Sahay, the Parliamentary Secretary came, the workers put their grievances before him and gave him a welcome address. As a result of this they were beaten and abused.

Q.—From what part of the province or the country generally the workers come and how are they treated?

A.—Generally the workers are from Rewa and Bilaspur. They are so treated that they cannot go back home. They also become indebted to them. Their wages are also kept in arrears. If they ask for the wage they are beaten. So, out of fear, they do not ask for wages. Not only this, the police also is in league with the contractors. If any case is brought to the police, they evade the matter instead of taking cognizance. With the aid of section 144 they are sent to jail.

Mr. Bakhale.—Is Mr. Manoranjan the member of the executive committee?

A.—Yes.

Mr. Mukherjee.—It has been brought to our notice that the contractors keep shops and sell things dearer than the market rate. They compell the workers to purchase from their shops.

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is it true that the Bilaspuri workers have got more than one wife?

A.—Yes, it is a fact, but not all; some of them have got.

Q.—Is it also true that both men and women in this part drink heavily?

A.—Yes, it is a fact.

Q.—Do you think that the scheme of prohibition will be very useful here?

A.—Yes, that would very useful.

Q.—Is it also true that women and men here are in the habit of gambling much? Do you think that the Gambling Act will do much good?

A.—Yes. The Subdivisional Officer once wrote to the Government for that but nothing has been done for that.

Mr. Sen Gupta.—You have formed the Union; there are members of the executive; what qualification you have put for that?

A.—No, any man and every man who is a worker can be a member. The man who will work more and impartially for the welfare of the workers will be elected for the executive.

Q.—In the *dhawras* there is much overcrowding. In one room 8 or 10 persons live. Some of them are in delapidated condition.

A.—Yes, they live like cattle.

Q.—Do you think that the wages of annas 8 or annas 7 are very less for the workers?

A.—Yes. The attendance is also reduced.

Dr. Mukherjee.—How that happens? How the attendance is reduced?

A.—There are *munshis* who take *hazri* and the workers are illiterate; they do not and cannot make out what is written. Every labourer is in the hand of the time-keeper. It is up to him to record the time correctly or not. There is another difficulty about the supply of tubs. Both these men do their work only when they are tipped by the labourers. Unless they are tipped there will neither be the supply of tub at proper time nor correct *hazri*. Suppose one man has extracted the coal; he has to sit for the tub.

Q.—What is the average earning per week?

A.—It is about Re. 1-8-0 or Re. 1-4-0 or Rs. 2 utmost per week. It is not more than that.

Q.—What is the average expenditure on drinking wine out of this sum of money earned?

A.—One-third of the money earned is spent in drinking. They drink wine to their heart's content. Out of the remaining income some is taken away by the contractor, and some is spent in the payment of debt. There is practically nothing left for them to eat or to maintain the family.

Q.—Can you tell the evils done by the *Kabulis*?

A.—Yes, the *Kabulis* are so independent in this side of the collieries that they snatch away money from them and oppress them much. There is nobody to look after them. They also charge whatever interest they like, four pice per rupee per week they realise as interest. If they do not get exorbitant interest then they beat them. Besides that the workers take commodities on credit from the *bantias* for which they also have got to pay more money because they give the things dear. All this makes them miserable and that is the cause of debt.

Q.—Do you get medical or hospital facilities by the colliery proprietors?

A.—That is also miserable. When any worker falls ill and goes to the hospital, the authorities say that there is no medicine, it has gone out of stock. (*One of the workers present said that once he was down with fever for 27 or 28 days; he was not treated by the doctors of the collieries. At last he had to go to Dhanbad for treatment.*) If there is any serious case then they have to go to Dhanbad. If any colliery worker suffers from a disease like cholera he is turned out of the village or the surroundings.

Q.—The coolie gets Re. 1-8-0 or Rs. 2 per week on the average. His family consists of himself, wife and children. Do you think it to be sufficient?

A.—No, not at all.

Q.—Does the railway company gives pass for the workers to go back if any one likes to go away home?

A.—No, they bring the workers from distant places and give pass but at the time of going they do not give. Once about 3,000 workers were rendered unemployed. They wanted to go. But they were not given pass. At last they had to go by their own money.

Q.—The company gives the figures which are as follows:—

For January about 5,000 workers got pass. In February the figure of persons who were given pass is 6,000.

A.—I do not think that is correct.

Mr. Phelps.—Do you work in any colliery or are you an outsider?

A.—I do not work in any colliery but I am a worker of the union. Sometimes I come here. I live in Hazaribagh.

Q.—What is the subscription per week?

A.—2 pice per week.

Q.—Do you give the subscription?

A.—Yes, I do. (*Laughter.*)

Q.—Do you get anything from the union for your work?

A.—No I work in honorary capacity. (*Laughter.*)

Mr. Bhattacharya.—If any worker is injured, does he get compensation?

A.—What to speak of compensation, if any body is injured he is left uncared for. No body takes care to send him even to the hospital. The workers are under contractors and the latter are so wicked that they manage any how to avoid paying compensation.

Q.—Do you bring this case to the notice of the management?

A.—Yes, but they also do not care. They say that it is a matter for the contractor to decide and they have nothing to do with it.

Q.—Why do you not take this on behalf of the Union?

A.—The thing is that our union is not yet registered and so they do not care for the Union and nobody takes cognizance of it.

There is one case here before you. He is Ramchandra Babu who got injury on the body. His case was taken up. But he did not get any compensation.

Q.—What actions are taken against the workers who take part in the Union?

A.—The Managers of the collieries put all sorts of difficulties in the way. They spread communal dissention against the Union workers. They say that the Union is not for the workers and advise them not to join the Union.

Q.—Does any contractor do money lending business and takes interest?

A.—At the time of recruiting he gives money and that is loan on which interest is charged.

Q.—You have said that there is no medical facility? Do you know that there is Mines Board of Health which looks after that and if any case is brought to its notice, the doctor can be taken to task?

A.—I do not know that. But we find that there is no proper medical arrangement. The doctors and hospitals are meant for the *babus* and those of the upper class.

Q.—You have said that in the case of accident you do not get compensation?

Do you know that in every case of accident the employers are bound under the Workmen's Compensation Act to inform the Mines' Inspector and send a report to him? The compensation is paid through the Inspector, if the award is granted by the Compensation Commissioner? If the Commissioner does not grant the award then in that case no compensation is allowed. But the employers cannot withhold the report?

A.—Yes, I know that but even then the compensation is not given. I have got several cases to prove that.

Q.—Do you admit that the report is sent to the Inspector and the compensation is paid?

A.—Yes, in a limited number of cases.

Mr. Sengupta.—Under the Mines Act and the Workmen's Compensation Act only the serious cases of accidents are reported. Is it not; and not the ordinary cases?

A.—Yes. Many of the compensation cases are concealed.

Q.—Do you know that *coolies* are not allowed to go to the management and put their grievances before them?

A.—Yes. If they go they are beaten and dogged.

Q.—Is it a fact that the workers are compelled to purchase goods from the shops of the contracts only?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Where do you work?

A.—I am working in the office of the Hazaribagh District Committee since a year.

Mr. Saran.—Has your Union worked any thing since a year?

A.—Yes. It has enlisted members, about 500, and has so far done the spade work only.

Q.—Regarding the purchase of goods, can you not purchase goods from other shops than the company's shops.

A.—No, if they do, they are victimised.

Q.—Those who have become members of the Union, is there any victimisation on them?

A.—Yes, two or three days ago three or four persons were victimised.

Q.—Who is more strict, the company or the contractor?

A.—The contractor is more strict.

Q.—Out of the four collieries which is hard and strenuous?

A.—Jerandih, there water for drinking purpose is given from the pits which is very dirty and filthy.

Q.—How many days in the week there is work?

A.—6 days.

Q.—Is there also underweighment?

Yes. The *sardar* does the weighment himself and he is always dishonest. If the weight is 12 tons it will be recorded 10 tons.

Q.—Can the Union representative be present at the time of weighment and try to remove this evil?

A.—Yes. But the Union representative is not allowed to go near the colliery.

Q.—Why, not the workers present this grievance to the management. They know that they have produced so much?

A.—The thing is that the workers are kept in bondage like slaves. If they go to the management and if the contractors come to know of that, the latter will beat them out of their senses.

The Committee resumed its sitting in the Tata Institute, Jamshedpur, on the 4th April 1939.

The following members were present :—

- |                            |     |                             |
|----------------------------|-----|-----------------------------|
| 1. Dr. Rajendra Prasad ... | ... | <i>Chairman, Presiding.</i> |
| 2. Mr. R. R. Bakhale ...   | ... | <i>Deputy Chairman.</i>     |
| 3. Dr. R. K. Mukherjee ... | ... | <i>Member.</i>              |
| 4. Mr. A. M. Hayman ...    | ... | <i>Member.</i>              |
| 5. Mr. H. B. Chandra ...   | ... | <i>Member.</i>              |
| 6. Mr. J. N. Lal ...       | ... | <i>Member.</i>              |
| 7. Prof. Abdul Bari ...    | ... | <i>Member.</i>              |
| 8. Prof. R. K. Saran ...   | ... | <i>Secretary.</i>           |

**Oral evidence of the following workers of the Noamundi Iron Ore Mines. (Labourers of the Company): Matri, Loco Driver, Rupa Nayak, Lines Mate, Lines linking Jamadar and others.**

*Mr. Saran.*—What are your respective wages?

*A.*—(1) 14 annas.

(2) 10 annas.

(3) 1 rupee 14 annas.

(4) 14 annas.

(5) 1 rupee 4 annas.

*Q.*—Have you got Company's quarters?

*A.*—No.

*Q.*—Do you get other bonus?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—Do you get other bonuses.

*A.*—No.

*Q.*—You have said that you should get bonus as other employees of the Tatas at Jamshedpur do?

*A.*—Yes. We want it like Tata Co. at Jamshedpur.

*Q.*—You give raw materials to Tatas. Is it not?

*A.*—Yes, we give raw materials to Tatas. Our conditions of service and pay should be like other employees at Jamshedpur.

*Q.*—Do you get shipping bonus.



A.—No, we want it.

Q.—When you joined the service?

A.—In 1934 some 4 or 5 years before.

Q.—At what rate you were appointed and what is the present rate?

A.—I started with 6 annas and at present I am getting 14 annas.

(The other said that he started with 12 annas but at present was getting 14 annas.)

Q.—So there is increase from 12 to 14 annas?

A.—Yes.

Q.—For how many years you worked on 6 annas?

A.—4 months.

Then went to 8 and then to 12 and finally to 14 annas.

Q.—Next?

A.—I am a survey mate, started on 14 annas and am now getting 1 rupee 4 annas.

Q.—Since how many years you are working (to the fifth witness)?

A.—8 years or 9 years, started on 6 annas and getting 1 rupee 4 annas.

Q.—Is there any reduction or discharge?

A.—Yes, there are cases of reduction and also some discharges.

Q.—Have you got loan?

A.—Yes. (1) Rs. 35, (2) Rs. 20, (4) Rs. 175 and so on.

Q.—From where did you take loan? Have you got a Society?

A.—No, there is no Society; we have taken from the *kabulis* and *mahajans*.

Q.—Do you get leave?

A.—Yes, 14 days leave plus 2 days festival leave.

Q.—Do you live here? Is there any disease prevalent?

A.—Malaria is rampant here. 2 or 4 days in a month one usually falls ill.

All of us suffer. Besides this there are frequent cases of black water fever and meningitis.

Q.—How do you pay off the loan?

A.—When we get the profit sharing bonus, we pay the loan.

Q.—Do you send home also?

A.—Yes, sometimes.

Q.—Why do you take loan?

A.—We take the loan for marriage and other ceremonies. Some also take due to the reduction of rates. Some take because the salary is low and they cannot manage.

Q.—Is there any doctor? What is his treatment towards workers?

A.—Yes, there is only one doctor and the total labour force is 3,000 or 4,000.

Q.—Have you got your family?

A.—Yes, some have.

Q.—Where is your home?

A.—Some come from Patna district, some from the neighbouring districts.

Q.—Is there any grade?

A.—No, the rates are 4 annas, 3 annas, 6 annas 6 pies, 5 annas; *Rejas* 6 annas.

Q.—Do you work also in the night?

A.—Yes. If they do not work, the management gives them wine to drink and in intoxication they work without caring for anything. They go on working till morning.

Q.—In the daily work also, there is loading and unloading?

A.—Yes, *Rejas* get 4 annas, colliers 5 annas, (of the company).

In loading and unloading the contractors pay more than the management. The contractors take work for 12 hours whereas the Company takes work only for 8 hours.

Q.—Female workers also work for 12 hours?

A.—Yes, with the contractors.

Q.—How much they are paid?

A.—The company pays 4 annas 6 pies to the *rejas*.

Q.—When we went to the quarters we found that in one house there were 8 or 12 men?

A.—Yes, there are 12 men including both males and females.

Q.—Do they go home in one or two years?

A.—No.

Q.—Is it a fact that the price of the food materials is high?

A.—Yes, the price especially of rice is high. I have got the list. (*Supplies the list of comparative prices of commodities in Noamundi and Jamshedpur.*)

Q.—The cost of living is higher in Noamundi?

A.—Yes, because the things are dearer at Noamundi than at Jamshedpur. The cost of electricity is 6 pies per unit in Jamshedpur and it is a fixed rate of 6 annas per point in Noamundi.

Q.—From the rates given it appears that there has been increment since 1937?

A.—In 1937 it was 5 annas and now it is 5 annas 6 pies.

Q.—What rate of pay do you want?

A.—We want the same rate of scale as at Jamshedpur.

Q.—Is there any trouble or grievances in the matter of recruitment?

A.—Yes, old men are not given the jobs and new men are taken in. There is no system in the matter of recruitment.

Q.—Have you got any concrete case?

A.—Yes, there are *coolies* who were not taken and in their place new men were taken.

Q.—Can you give names?

A.—I will search out and give. Those who apply for the jobs do not get them but those do not apply get. Incompetent men are taken.

Q.—In promotion also there is any grievance?

A.—Yes, the same; the deserving men do not get.

There is no increment. Some times 1 pice or 2 pice is given.

Q.—So you want that the number of doctors should be increased?

A.—Yes. For getting medicines from the hospitals we have to wait for 3 to 4 hours. There is only one compounder.

Q.—Any other troubles?

A.—Yes, about housing. There is open house system without sufficient verandah. The result is that there is no privacy. It is not fit for family. There is no compound wall. It is very troublesome to take food. There are many people but the quarters are inadequate.

Q.—What is the arrangement for education?

A.—English, Hindi, Oria, and Bengali were taught in one M. E. School when it was private. But since the company has taken charge of it only Hindi is being taught.

Q.—You want that the number of schools should be increased?

A.—Yes, and other languages also should be taught as there are children speaking other languages also.

Q.—How many masters and students are there in the school?

A.—There are 4 masters and 20 students in each class on the average. There are 3,000 or 4,000 workers.

Q.—You want the contractor's labour to be transferred under the company?

A.—We do not want the contractors at all.

Mr. Hayman.—Are you aware that there is training arrangement in the office.

A.—No. I do not know.

Q.—You have said that the man who was getting 9 annas gets 12 annas and so on. In how many years?

A.—10 years, 5 annas to 10 annas in 3 years.

Q.—You have said that in the case of injury there is no compensation. Did you complain to the authorities?

A.—Yes, many applications were given but without effect.

Q.—Have you got any case?

A.—There is one case in which no compensation was given.

Mr. Chandra.—You are the member of the union at Jamshedpur?

A.—We have asked for affiliation as a branch—of the Tata Workers union at Jamshedpur.

Q.—Have you given your grievances through the Union.

A.—Yes. The president had a talk with Sir A. R. Dalal on our grievances.

Q.—What is the change in the condition?

A.—Before the talk the conditions were very bad but now it is somewhat better.

Q.—Have you got sufficient water supply?

A.—No.

Q.—Do you like a Co-operative Store?

A.—Yes. The water arrangement is at a distance of one mile.

Q.—What is the treatment with those who take part in the Union.

A.—They are victimised and those who take part in the Congress activities are also victimised. Recently we were not allowed to hoist the Congress flag even.

Q.—Is there arrangement for light?

A.—No, we want that electric light should be given in the huttings.

Q.—Is there departmental bonus?

A.—No.

Q.—Do you get acting allowance?

A.—No.

The Committee resumed its sitting in the Tata Institute, Jamshedpur, on the 4th April 1939.

The following members were present :—

Dr. Rajendra Frasad	...	...	<i>Chairman, Presiding.</i>
Mr. R. R. Bakhale	...	...	<i>Deputy Chairman.</i>
Dr. R. K. Mukerjee	...	...	<i>Member.</i>
Mr. A. M. Hayman	...	...	<i>Member.</i>
Mr. H. B. Chandra	...	...	<i>Member.</i>
Prof. Abdul Bari	...	...	<i>Member.</i>
Prof. R. K. Saran	...	...	<i>Secretary.</i>

**Oral evidence of the following workers of the Noamundi Iron and Ore Mines. (Contractors' Labour), Daitri, Women workers, Saitri, Women workers, S. P. Ganguli, Miner, Dubraj Samanta, Miner, Sanatan Das.**

*Chairman.*—What is the name of the contractor under whom you all work?

*A.*—Mr. S. C. Diwakar.

*Q.*—Is there any sub-contractor?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—Who is he?

*A.*—Mr. Abdul Rezak is main contractor and there are other sub-contractors.

*Q.*—What do you do?

*A.*—We do the cutting business.

*Q.*—What is the daily wage of the Rejas?

*A.*—11 pice per box.

*Q.*—What is the size of the box?

*A.*— $4\frac{1}{2}' \times 3\frac{1}{2}' \times 14''$ .

*Q.*—How much each contains.

*A.*— $10 \times 10 \times 3$  makes one *Chattas*.

*Q.*—Is there weighing?

*A.*—No.

Q.—Do you fill the box in presence of the contractor's men?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How much you fill?

A.—It is filled higher than the boxes—4" higher, sometimes 5" higher, sometimes 8" higher. But generally it is 4".

Q.—What are the hours of work?

A.—The hours of work are from 7 A.M. to 4 P.M.

Q.—Is there interval between the period?

A.—Yes, one hour rest at 12 noon.

Q.—Do you live inside the mine during the interval period?

A.—No, on the surface.

Q.—Where you work, is there any arrangement for water?

A.—No. At some distance from where we work, there is arrangement for water.

Q.—What is the distance at which you get water from where you work.

A.—Up to a distance of 9,000 ft., there is water.

Q.—What is the total lines?

A.—24,000 ft.

Q.—So you have got to go 9,000 ft. or 300 yds. to drink water?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How many days in the week you work and get wages?

A.—5 days.

Q.—For the rest two days, Monday and Tuesday, do you get wages?

A.—No. At that time there is no excavation, so no wages.

Q.—How many days in the week do you take rest?

A.—2 days.

Q.—How many boxes in one day you excavate?

A.—2 or 3 boxes in one day.

Q.—You fill the excavated ore daily in the boxes?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What do you do on days on which you do not fill boxes.

A.—We remove overburden and bad materials. The day on which there is no ore excavation, there is Mati excavation.

Q.—Do you get anything for that?

A.—We do not get anything for that.

Q.—What did you earn in the last week?

A.—I filled 11 boxes and got Rs. 1-13-0, taking two men together.

Q.—What are wages for 11 boxes?

A.—Rs. 1-13-0.

Q.—Can you count and make account?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How much did you get in the week before? How many boxes you filled?

A.—12 boxes before last week. 3 boxes plus 9 boxes and I got Rs. 1-11-0 at the rate of 11 pice.

Q.—The total for 3 boxes is Re. 0-8-3 and the total for the whole becomes Rs. 2-3-9. How do you say Rs. 1-11-0 only.

A.—I do not know. That is what I got.

Q.—Pointing to the other man. How much did you get?

A.—Rs. 2-3-0.

Q.—How?

A.—I cannot say.

Q.—Have you got any other man with you?

A.—Yes, there is one *Patidar*.

Q.—What rate he gets?

A.—Do not know.

Q.—Do you account what you get in the week by your daily earning?

A.—No, I do not know accounting, I only account from memory.

Q.—Do you know writing or reading.

A.—No, I am illiterate. Cannot say exactly what I get and what I ought to get.

Q.—Do you live in the company's house?

A.—Yes, in the house of the contractor.

Q.—What is the condition of the quarters provided by the contractor.

A.—The rooms are very small. They contain 4 or 5 men.

Q.—The workers are village people?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you not go home?

A.—Our home is very far.

Q.—Have you got land or fields for cultivation?

A.—Yes, some have got.

Q.—Do you get medicine.

A.—Yes, the doctor gives medicine.

Q.—Do you pay the rent for the house?

A.—No.

Q.—Have you got debt?

A.—Yes.

Q.—From whom you have taken this loan?

A.—From the contractors.

Q.—What is the amount of loan and what is the rate of interest?

A.—We have got loan of Rs. 7 or Rs. 8. There is no interest. When we are in the necessity we take from the contractor and he deducts from the wages.

Q.—From where you take the rice and other necessities?

A.—We borrow and purchase from the shop at rate of 10 seers per rupee, sometimes less than 9 or 8 seers. The shops belong to the contractors.

Q.—Do you drink wine also?

A.—Yes, some people drink. In the Singhbhum district there is system of drinking *Handia*. We make ourselves and take.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—How many holes one man can make in order to make the work right?

A.—In the week at least 14 for 11 boxes. We dig 14 ft. So it comes to 14 holes.

Q.—How many holes did you dig in the last week?

A.—At least 12. We cannot do more because the land is hard.

Q.—How many you are capable of doing in the week?

A.—12 or 14 ft.

Q.—Can you mine more ore?

A.—Yes, if we get more blasting powder.



Q.—Do you get gunpowder for blasting?

A.—Yes, the Company gives it for the blasting.

Q.—Does the Company blow the holes with gun powder just after you finish digging them?

A.—No, we dig them but the Company does not blow all of them after we finish.

(Prof. Bari explained that the Company does not blow all the holes dug by the workers.)

Q.—They blow with gunpowder and you break after that?

A.—Yes. It is stopped sometimes.

Q.—When it is not stopped, what happens?

A.—We remove the earth (*mati*) and fill the boxes.

Q.—What do you do on Tuesday and Wednesday?

A.—Do not get work. Only clean the surface.

Q.—Why do you not throw the *mati* daily and earn on those days also?

A.—Two days are fixed by the Company for throwing the *mati* and they ask us to clean on those two days. There is absolutely no work on those two days except this.

Q.—Do you think that the work is hard?

A.—Yes, work under contractors is hard.

Q.—Do you give any *dasturi* to the contractor or to any body else?

A.—No, there is no *dasturi* system.

Q.—You always do about 12 boxes along with the *Rejas*?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How much you think you can do on those two off days?

A.—3 boxes.

Q.—How much money in the week you want?

A.—At least Rs 4; at present we get half of this.

Q.—Where is your home?

A.—In the jungles.

Q.—Is there any arrangement for water?

A.—Where we work, there is no arrangement.

Q.—Since how many years you are working?

A.—12 years.

Q.—Before 12 years what were you doing? You seem to be pretty old man.

A.—We were working in house building and worked on the fields of the landlord. We came in thousands but many fled away as we were promised annas four but we are getting only 3 annas.

Q.—Formerly you were getting less but now you are getting more?

A.—Since five or six months we are getting more than before.

Q.—You are paid by boxes.

A.—Yes, paid by boxes.

Q.—For breaking and loading in boxes you get annas 3?

A.—Yes, formerly 3 annas but now only 11 pice.

Q.—Are some men unemployed?

A.—No, it is not like that.

Q.—Do you go home?

A.—Yes, sometimes.

Q.—Have you got land?

A.—No.

Q.—You live in the house of the contractors; do you pay rent?

A.—There is no rent.

Q.—How many men live in one house?

A.—5, 6, 9, 10.

Q.—10 men in the small house or in the quarters?

A.—The quarters have only one room.

Q.—Are there children also?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What is the size of the room?

A.—4 ft. x 6 ft.

Q.—Have you complained about this congestion to the Company?

A.—No, when we go to say, we are driven away.

Q.—Do you like contractor's work or the Company's work?

A.—We prefer Company's work. It is very good in comparison with that of the contractors.

Q.—Why do you like that kind of work?

A.—In the work of the Company we can work more and can get more money.

Q.—What is the difference between the labour of the Company and the labour of the contractor?

A.—In the contractor's work we have to clean *mati*, we have to make holes, and sufficient blasting is not provided.

Q.—Is there difference in rates also?

A.—Yes.

Q.—When you are injured, do you get compensation? Is there difference in this also?

A.—In the case of the contractor we are paid less and in the company we are paid more.

Q.—Do you give bribe?

A.—No.

Q.—At the time of recruitment?

A.—No.

Q.—Do you give *dasturi* at the time of payment?

A.—No, *dasturi* but they take commission.

Q.—How the rate has been within 3 or 4 years?

A.—We do not know. Formerly we used to get Rs. 2-13-0, sometimes Rs. 2-8-0 per week, but only Rs. 2 or Rs. 1-12-0; sometimes even Re. 1.

Q.—Is there any deduction?

A.—Yes, there is one deduction called *Marka*.

Q.—Do you get proper medicine and doctor's service?

A.—Yes.

Mr. Saran.—Is there any disease prevalent there in that part?

A.—Yes, malaria and fever.

Q.—When you dig do you remove the *mati* daily?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Then why Tuesday and Wednesday are fixed for clearing? Why not clear on Saturday and Sunday?

A.—That is the day for measurement. The earth excavated is so much that it cannot be cleared in two days also. Both works go simultaneously.

Q.—How many hours of work?

A.—We come at 6 A.M. and go at 12 noon and then again come after 1 hour and go at 4 P.M. There is half work on Tuesday.

Q.—Why do you not work on Tuesday?

A.—We take rest.

Q.—If you work you will get more wages?

A.—We make our purchases on Tuesday, because Monday is the pay day. Gudri Bazar is held on Tuesday.

Q.—Did you get injury any time?

A.—Yes, many times.

Q.—What kind of injury?

A.—Fracture.

Q.—Did you get compensation for that?

A.—Not to my knowledge.

Q.—How many people have died in the course of the work?

A.—Many.

Q.—Is there work in the night also?

A.—Yes. If any man does not consent to do, he is taken by force. Sometimes from 2 P.M. to 1 in the night. Sometimes up to 4 A.M.

Q.—Do you work both at night and in the day or only in the night?

A.—Both. In the night the work is frightening and there is every danger of being bitten by snake or being devoured by a tiger. There are many snakes and tigers there. There is also work on the ladder. If the ladder slips the labourer dies. It is tremendously hard.

Q.—In the week you work on ore for 4 days and for 2 days you throw *mati*. Do you get anything for throwing the *mati* (earth)?

A.—No.

Q.—Then you are paid Rs. 1-13-0 for six days working?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What food do you take?

A.—We take *bhat* (rice) with salt and sometimes vegetables from the jungle.

Q.—Do you take this daily?

A.—Not daily.

Q.—What about the treatment of the contractors towards workers?

A.—It is very bad.

Q.—Do they abuse and beat.

A.—Yes, they abuse very often.

Q.—You have said that in the case of injury you do not get any compensation. Have you applied for it.

A.—No, I have not applied.

Q.—How many days you fall ill?

A.—Three months or two months in the year.

Q.—Do you get leave for that? Are you paid for that?

A.—No.

Q.—Do you want leave with pay?

A.—Yes.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Did I understand aright when he said that he wanted for himself Rs. 4 or he meant to say for himself and his wife?

A.—For himself.

Q.—Will that satisfy him?

A.—Yes, he says he is happy with it.

*Chairman.*—Have you got family?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You and your wife should get Rs. 4 for each; will you like that?

A.—Yes, I will like that. We will be very glad and fully satisfied.

Q.—The Company says that you do not put labour in the work and if you do in the present circumstances also you can earn Rs. 4 without raising the level of wages?

A.—No, we do hard and laborious work.

Q.—They say that you work for only 3 or 4 days and do not work for full 7 days.

A.—No. It is not correct.

Q.—You do not work for the full day. You are asked to clean daily but you keep it stored for Tuesday?

A.—No. It is the order of the management to dig and clean on different days and not on the same day. It is not a fact that we do not work for the full day.

Q.—It is said that you get sufficient wage but you spend it on wine and so do not work on Tuesday and Wednesday as you get money on Monday.

A.—Yes, some people do take wine.

Q.—Not the larger majority?

A.—No, some people only.

Q.—Often you go away to the village for agricultural purposes?

A.—No, some people only go. They go only when they fell ill.

Q.—It is said that you work only for 4 hours?

A.—No.

Q.—You have said that you do not get compensation for the injury. Can you give any name of the man who did not get?

A.—I do not remember names.

The Committee met in the Secretariat, Patna, on the 25th April at 8-15 A.M.

The following members were present :—

1. Dr. R. K. Mukherjee ... *Member, presiding.*
2. Mr. A. M. Hayman ... *Member.*
3. Mr. J. N. Lal ... *Member.*
4. Prof. R. K. Saran ... *Secretary.*

**Oral evidence of Mr. Basawan Singh, President, assisted by Mr. A. Rahman Khan and Mr. Md. Hassan, on behalf of the Boulia Labour Union, Boulia (Shahabad).**

Mr. Basawan Singh was the spokesman.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—You are the representative of the Boulia Labour Union, Mr. Basawan Singh?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—Are you connected with both the unions? What is your position in both the unions?

*A.*—Yes, I am the President of both the Boulia and Japla Labour Unions. Mr. Habib Khan is the Vice-President of the Japla Labour Union, and others (*pointing to other gentlemen*) are the members of the executive of the Boulia Labour Union.

*Q.*—With regard to the quarries and the quarry workers, I would like you to give us some details regarding the system of recruitment, payment of wages and contract system? Has there been reduction of wages under the contractors?

*A.*—In Boulia there were contractors and under them were the sub-contractors. We are of opinion that the contract system should be abolished in connection with the quarry work and the company should undertake the work directly. We feel that by this method the workers would be benefited because the money which goes to the pocket of middlemen would be saved to the advantage of the workers. Though no uniform system of wage-earning methods are followed, we want that there should be fixation of time wage.

*Prof. Saran.*—Is there any contractor who does quarrying himself?

*A.*—There are some contractors who work the quarries and there are some who work quarries through the sub-contractors. There are 150 sub-contractors and there are few contractors.

*Q.*—Mostly the work is done through sub-contractors?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—What is the rate paid by the company to the contractors?

A.—Contractors are paid according to the tonnage of lime-stone they supply to the company.

Q.—The company pays to the contractors at the rate of Rs. 1-1-0 per ton and the contractors pay to the sub-contractors at the rate of annas 10 per ton. Is it not so?

A.—No, it is not a fixed rate like this. The contractors get Rs. 1-1-0 per ton at Boulia quarries and those working at Chunhatta and Baraicha under the same company get annas 12 per ton. At Boulia the contractors pay at the rate of annas 12 to annas 15 per truck or trolley to sub-contractors and at Chunhatta and Baraicha the sub-contractors are paid at the rate of annas 7 to annas 10 per truck. In this connection it is necessary to mention that one truck or trolley contains 1 ton and 4 to 6 cwts. In this way the contractors enjoy double benefit.

Q.—Suppose you get Rs. 1-1-0 from the company, how much you will give to the sub-contractors?

A.—In this connection, there may be a difference in rates with consideration of the facilities of haulage load, etc. But ordinarily if the facilities are similar, the sub-contractors at Boulia quarries should get at least annas 15 per ton (and not per truck). It will not be out of place to add that if this rate is fixed, the sub-contractors will agree to arrange for the explosives, huts, injury charges (not for fatal accidents) and tools, baskets, etc. And such contractors at the new quarries may get annas 10 per ton. Thus a contractor, without any trouble, saves annas 2 per ton.

Q.—The contractors are supposed to provide the sub-contractors with quarters, tools, instruments, etc.?

A.—No, they are provided by the sub-contractors themselves.

Q.—But the contractor gets one *munshi* and one clerk?

A.—No, he does not get anything.

Q.—Drilling charge only the sub-contractors get from the contractors?

A.—No, it is not necessary, it is deducted from the money payable to them.

Q.—Actually a contractor gives annas 10 or annas 12 per trolley to them?

A.—Sub-contractors get annas 9, annas 8, annas 7 per trolley and the hut is provided by them.

Q.—Suppose there is one who gives annas 12 and does not provide anything?

A.—There is only an expense of annas 2 per ton as cost of administration.



Q.—What is the necessity of retaining the contractors?

A.—The company is in advantage; it saves the arrangement cost. There is one man who takes work at the least rate possible and he helps the company in keeping the workers disorganized and for this purpose he keeps a number of sub-contractors. Hence it would be difficult for the workers to organise and form a union.

Q.—But I do not think it is the motive?

A.—But that is my view.

Q.—Tools, etc., are supplied by the contractors?

A.—Sub-contractors ordinarily provide the tools, etc., but where the contractors provide they deduct the price from the sub-contractors' money.

Q.—What about the housing accommodation?

A.—There are huts but insufficient in number and very bad.

Q.—The sub-contractors depend upon the bigger contractors who subscribe the capital?

A.—Contractors are men of substance and some sub-contractors too.

Q.—He gets Rs. 1-1-0 and he pays annas 7?

A.—If the contractors are removed and the company continues the work departmentally, the amount of their profit will go to the workers.

Q.—Now, method of wage payment; how wages are paid to the workers? What is the rate of payment?

A.—There was an agreement with the Labour Union before the strike in the company. The wage payment was like this. The contractors and the sub-contractors used to pay not in cash but in kind; on the pay day they used to give to the workers a *chit* and the workers got the things from the shops of the contractors. But as the result of the agreement, it is supposed to have been abolished.

Q.—Is the piece payment according to the trolley? What is the wage?

A.—According to the agreement the contractors and the sub-contractors were to pay annas 6 to women and annas 7 to men.

Q.—What is the maximum?

A.—It depends upon the nature of work.

Q.—Suppose there is skilled worker in the quarry and there are *Beldars*, etc., who are not on piece but on time rate. What do they get?

A.—They get from annas 7 to annas 11. *Beldars* get at least annas 14.

Q.—What is the wage earning? Is it according to the number of trolleys or tubs?

A.—Yes, both. There are 8 hours work throughout the day and according to the rule they should get annas 6 and annas 7 as minimum. There are some workers who get according to the trolleys; there are some who fill 2, 3, or 4 trolleys and there are some who fill 1, 1½ or 2, so you will get according to the trolleys and loading.

Q.—Agreement is that they should not get less than annas 7 if they fill 4 tubs in a day?

A.—Yes, now the work has been increased. Formerly they used to fill 3 tubs but now 4 trolleys.

Q.—How actually the earnings have been reduced?

A.—For loading 3 tubs they received annas 7 and now they fill 4 tubs. The wages per tub have then been reduced now. For 4 tubs they get only annas 6 at the rate of annas 2 per trolley. So the earning is less.

Q.—Do you like that there should be standardisation by which both piece-work and time-work should get same wages?

A.—Could not follow the question.

Q.—I should like to explain it. Do you want some kind of standardisation in mining as regards the trolleys and payment by trolleys. There should be one basic rate in the minimum wage. Suppose the minimum according to the agreement is annas 7 then there should be a basic rate of annas 5.

*Prof. Saran.*—(Explaining the previous point).—The question is that you should be given annas 5 in any case, it does not matter how many tubs you load because you have got to pay annas 5 as it is the basic minimum?

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—That can be done by better management on the part of the company and there will be quick supply of tubs. Do you approve of this basic rate of minimum?

*Mr. B. Singh.*—According to the agreement the minimum is annas 7.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—It might be annas 7 minimum rate if he must get annas 7; but how much more than annas 7 he will get depends upon how many tubs he loads. Is it not? So there should be some standardisation of tubs?

A.—Yes, standardisation is good.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Time-scale is absolutely unsuitable for some reasons in the quarry work. In time-scale there cannot be more loading. Throughout the world there is the system of piece payment in the mining and quarry work?

A.—I do not know of the foreign countries but in India we find that miners are very badly paid and do the hardest work possible. There is much exploitation in the piece system of payment.

Q.—Do you know that there is any kind of deductions like *dasturi* by the *sardars*? What are the wage deductions?

A.—There are Pathan drillers in the quarries and in their case and in the case of other drillers there is *dasturi* of annas 2 in the rupee. One-eighth of the wages is taken away by the *sardars*.

Q.—Are there any other kind of deductions?

A.—No.

Q.—Is there any delay in the wage payment?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What are the causes of this delay? What is the period of delay?

A.—It depends upon the will but generally it is given after one month or 2 weeks; in some cases there is long delay.

Q.—Are there also cases of payment of advances by the sub-contractors to the workers?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is it not a fact that any sub-contractors or contractors do not pay less than annas 7 or annas 8?

A.—No.

*Prof. Saran.*—Rate is the same as before?

A.—The rate is virtually the same at some places as since the piece contract system of work has been introduced (because it is hard) the labourers are incapable of earning the minimum wages per last agreement with the contractor and the company (7 annas for male and 6 annas for females). At only some places they are able to secure this minimum.

Q.—The contractors say that they have instructions from the company that they should not pay less than 6 annas?

A.—It might be a fact that the contractors (not sub-contractors) are instructed by the Company to pay the workers not less than 7 annas for males (not 6 annas as mentioned in question) and 6 annas for females. But so far the practice is concerned it may be inferred that they are not instructed for it.

Q.—You say that the sub-contractors have taken part in the formation of the Unions. How they have taken sympathy with the labourers?

A.—Yes, only a fraction has sympathies with the Union.

Q.—The contractors do not know larger number of the workers because in quarries the sub-contractors are the real employers of labour so that the real exploitation is by the sub-contractors and not by the contractors. But how do they do when the agreement is there? Because in that case the labour union will take cognisance of the fact and there will be strike?

A.—Yes, I want that contractors should be removed.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Now, coming to the standardisation of the head loads for women, in many countries the head loads for women are restricted by law. I would like you to consider what should be the maximum load that a woman should carry on her head. Do you think that women carry more than what they should carry? The over-loading does much harm to them? Whether they are compelled to carry more weight or they carry wilfully? What is your suggestion regarding that?

A.—But that would vary according to the health of the women.

Q.—Taking the average what should it be? In this case I wish to tell you that in Russia investigations were made and as a result of the investigation it was reduced?

A.—I cannot reply to this question off-hand without enquiry. I will submit my reply to this later after enquiry. I have no experience of that.

Q.—What are the conditions of housing?

A.—There is much complaint about the insanitary condition of housing.

*Prof. Saran.*—Do the workers live with their family? What are the castes to which they generally belong? Are they regular people?

A.—Yes, they live with family. They are generally Kole, Bhuians, Chamars, Chero, Nonia, Dhangar, etc.

Q.—With the wages that they get, do they live happily?

A.—No, that is not sufficient for themselves and their family. They do not get work always.

Q.—Do you know that there are many unemployed?

A.—Yes, 300 or 400 are always waiting for work at the gates of the factory.

Q.—What are the hours of work?

A.—There is no fixed time for work. Sometimes the work is 12 hours, sometimes 16 hours.

Q.—Do you not complain to the management about the overwork?

A.—Yes, it is done, but who listens.

Q.—Are maternity benefits given to the women workers?

A.—There is lack of maternity benefits and hospital arrangements. It should be given by the company.

Q.—Do you mean that women who work in the company are entitled to get maternity benefits?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What should be the period of maternity leave? In Japan the period is 6 to 9 months? What you like here?

A.—There is no leave at all.

Q.—The contractors say that the women workers do not like this leave?

A.—But that is not true.

Q.—Do you think that the responsibility is on them?

A.—Yes.

Q.—In your written statement you have said that (*READS*), there are dangerous accidents in the quarries; is that a general fact? In some countries there are provisions in the Factory Act and the Quarries Act. Do you want such provisions here also?

A.—Yes.

*Prof. Saran.*—It was brought to our notice at Boulia that under agreement serious cases are sent to the district hospital and the most serious case to Patna and Calcutta?

A.—Yes, there is no provision of a well-equipped hospital at Boulia.

Q.—Do you know some cases where the injury has been serious and has not been properly treated?

A.—There are many such cases.

The chief reason is that the hospital arrangement is inadequate.

Q.—Is the doctor qualified?

A.—No, he has no medical qualifications. So far as I know he is very old.

A.—Is he a good doctor?

A.—No. Before, it was the system that one pice was taken from the patients. No *chit* used to be given and if any one went to the hospital 3 annas were charged. But this practice has been abolished after the agreement.

*Prof. Saran.*—We have already examined you at Gaya and Dalmianagar and you have expressed your views, so we shall put general questions to you and if there is any change in your views you will please tell. Have you got the same view about the relations between the Trade Unions and the management?

A.—Yes, the same.

Q.—One question about the Labour Officer of the Company; what is the relation between the Labour Officer and the Trade Union?

A.—The Company has appointed a Labour Officer who always tries to break the Union. He always tries to create feeling and difference between the workers. He creates the communal feeling of Hindus and Muhammadans among the workers. He disturbs the religious performances like the Harikirtan and Ramlila. He is very jealous of the solidarity of the workers.

Q.—At present what is the relation between the management and the employer?

A.—Ordinary—unfriendly relations.

*Prof. Saran.*—(READS). You have said something about the views of settlement of disputes. Do you hold the same view?

A.—No, there is some change.

Q.—Have you had any occasion of settlement of disputes with the management?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is your union registered?

A.—No.

Q.—Are you in favour of arbitration?

A.—Yes, I am.

Q.—Are you in favour of compulsory arbitration in cases of industrial disputes?

A.—I am not in favour of *compulsory* arbitration.

Q.—Do you like that the award should be binding on both the parties by law?

A.—No, I do not want that.

Q.—Are you in favour of the appointment of a Labour Commissioner by the Government?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you like that there should be labour officers under him for settlement of day to day disputes?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Officers will be of two kinds, viz. (1) Labour Commissioner, and (2) Labour Officer. The second kind of officer will be the final man to arbitrate. Do you like it?

A.—Yes.

Q.—When the grievances will be put to him he will decide?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What do you want, compulsory arbitration or voluntary?

A.—I want the latter.

Q.—At Dalmianagar you said that Bombay Act should be applied in Bihar. Before a decision has been given by arbitration, do you want to reserve your right to strike?

A.—At present I have changed my view. I am not at all in favour of compulsory arbitration.

Q.—What is your view about 'lock-out' or 'strikes'?

A.—We do not want that there should be any lock-out at all.

Q.—What is your view about 'lightning strike'?

A.—I want to reserve the right of lightning strike, because experience has shown that when notice to strike is given to the employer he prepares himself to face the strike with new hands. So we must reserve the power of lightning strike.

Mr. Lal.—But in the same way you should have no objection if the same right is given to the employers for 'lightning lock-out'? What do you say?

A.—No, I strongly disapprove this because the employers are already too strong and this provision will make them still stronger.

Q.—Why do you say so? What is your idea behind this view?

A.—The object of strike is not only to redress the grievances of the workers but it has also certain political and economic motive behind it.

Q.—Do you not think that it would be bad to the employers?

A.—No, it would not be.

Q.—You want that grievances should be redressed by strikes. In the same way the management may say that they should know the grievances before strike?

A.—Yes, that is always done. That is why lightning strike is necessary.

Q.—Are you in favour of the appointment of 'black legs'?

A.—No, they should not be employed. In no case I can give the employers the right to appoint black legs.

Mr. Hayman.—How many hours the workers really work?

A.—Work for 8 hours ordinarily.

Q.—Is there any interval?

A.—Yes, 1 hour.

Q.—How many days in the week they work?

A.—6 days.

Q.—Do they not do work like the miners, talking, sleeping, standing, etc.?

A.—No, they do regular work for the whole day.

Q.—What is the average earning in the week?

A.—The difficulty is that they do not get work regularly.

Q.—What is the average?

A.—Rs. 6 a month for the females and Rs. 8 to Rs. 10 for the males, because they do not get work always.

Q.—Mostly women are the wives of the male workers?

A.—Not necessarily.



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**MICA**

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The Committee resumed its sitting in the Dak Bungalow, Kodarma, on the 15th April 1939.

The following members were present :—

- |                            |     |                             |
|----------------------------|-----|-----------------------------|
| 1. Dr. Rajendra Prasad ... | ... | <i>Chairman, Presiding.</i> |
| 2. Dr. R. K. Mukherjee ... | ... | <i>Member.</i>              |
| 3. Mr. H. B. Chandra ...   | ... | <i>Member.</i>              |
| 4. Mr. J. N. Lal ...       | ... | <i>Member.</i>              |
| 5. Prof R. K. Saran ...    | ... | <i>Secretary.</i>           |

**Oral evidence of Dr. Satyanarain Singh, Ph.D., President, Bihar Mica Workers' Union, Giridih (Hazaribagh).**

*Mr. J. N. Lal.*—Your union represents the labourers of the Giridih and the neighbouring factories?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—How many factories are represented through your union?

*A.*—Nearly 60.

*Q.*—What may be the total number of labourers represented?

*A.*—About 5,000.

*Q.*—What is the strength of your union?

*A.*—1,400.

*Q.*—When was it established?

*A.*—We were working in Giridih since last July, but the Union was formally established during December last.

*Q.*—Is it registered?

*A.*—Not yet, but we have got everything ready for registration and we are going to apply in the near future.

*Q.*—Have you got rules and regulations, properly framed?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—We heard just now the evidence from one of the witnesses regarding the conditions of work in mica factories, the sanitary conditions and other conditions. Can you give us your opinion about it?

*A.*—So far as the living conditions are concerned they have to depend upon themselves and they are anything but healthy. Out of nearly 80 factories in Giridih only 3 or 4 are situated in healthy places.

*Q.*—What I want to know is, is it a fact that most of the factories are housed in residential houses where there is no adequate provision for latrines and also suitable work-places protected from the rain and sun, etc.?

A.—Exactly so, that is the position.

Q.—What do you suggest for that?

A.—It must be located in better and well protected work-places; well-constructed latrines and proper sanitary arrangements should be provided.

Q.—To be achieved from the pocket of the employers?

A.—Of course.

Q.—What are your impressions about the employment of child labour? What are its effects and how far do you like them to be remedied?

A.—The chief benefit in the employment of child labour is that it profits the employer because wages go down considerably. The whole system of employment should be thoroughly overhauled.

Q.—How? My question is particularly with regard to children. I want to know what effects the employment of children has on their health and morality. Would you like a child labour to be employed? If so, what should be the age limit that you would prescribe?

A.—Not below 12.

Q.—(*The previous question was repeated.*)

A.—The health of the children is rather very bad because of the bad working hours. The hours are rather very long. We account for time the children leave their houses in the morning and again go back to their homes in the evening. The interval is sometimes very long; in most cases it is between 12 to 15 hours. The average would be 12 hours. They are of very tender age and cannot possibly stand the strain.

Q.—For that reason you suggest shorter hours? How much?

A.—8 hours from the time they leave their house and go back again. Children below 12 should not be employed at all.

Q.—What about the moral effect on women working with men?

A.—Regarding effect on their morals it is neither good nor bad.

Q.—You don't attach any importance to that at all?

A.—No. There is nothing harmful, because they sit in the verandah and it does not affect them in any way, from the moral point of view.

Q.—But there are other witnesses who feel.....?

A.—I do not attach any importance to it at all; others may. The only thing that I find is that they have to undergo much exertion.

Q.—Now, coming to the question of wages, you have stated in the memorandum you have submitted that the wages were at much higher level sometime before?

A.—Yes. During the years 1925—27 the wages were very much higher than they are at present. For example for no. 6 book they were getting 12 to 14 annas per seer, but since the economic crisis of 1929 we find a downward tendency. Wages went down to the lowest level in 1931 to about 4 annas per seer. Since 1931 they rose up gradually to 6 annas in 1936. Compared to 1926 wages which I have taken as a standard, the present wages are very much lower.

Q.—What do you mean by ' book no. 6 ' ?

A.—That is a special quality of mica.

Chairman.—You mean the 1936 level of 4 annas is for the same quality of mica?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What are the present rates?

A.—I have given the figures in the statement. It is about 6 or 7 annas, practically the same as 1936.

Q.—Can you tell us the corresponding prices of that commodity in the years previous to 1929 and after 1929?

A.—Before 1929 the price per maund was Rs. 130. During 1929 crisis it went down to about Rs. 80 a maund and the present market prices of that commodity is Rs. 145.

Q.—That means it has gone up by about 15 rupees beyond the pre-1929 prices?

A.—That is so. You will notice that in the same period the wages have gone down considerably. It was annas 14 then and 6 annas now.

Q.—Could you give us figures for different sizes and qualities of mica as you have given for book no. 6?

A.—For book no. 5 the prices are more or less the same.

Q.—Could you provide the Committee with a chart of the market prices of the different varieties of mica against the wages that are paid for that quality?

A.—I shall try to gather them. What I have given in the statement here, is for no. 5 and no. 6, which represents about 75 per cent of the whole export.

Q.—You say that books nos. 5 and 6 constitute about 75 per cent of the total export from India?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What were the wages for book no. 5 before?

A.—Nearly a rupee, I think.

Q.—The present rates?

A.—Practically the same. There will be a difference of one anna or so. That is all.

Q.—What about the prices of the commodity previous to 1929 and after?

A.—It has gone up by about 8 per cent.

Q.—In these calculations that you have made, have you taken into account the prices of raw mica?

A.—You mean unsplit mica? No. There are no statistics available for that.

Q.—Don't you think that is an important factor?

A.—I do not think so, because that is not for export.

Q.—What I mean is that you must take into account the cost of the crude mica also. That might have been also varying and therefore the cost of production of different varieties of mica might have been varying and the margin of profit would have been very small? Can you get us some figures for that also.

A.—I can only give you a rough idea. I would better ask you to get it from the employers.

*Mr. Saran.*—The Government will give us figures?

A.—I am not sure. I don't think the Government keep any such statistics.

Q.—What is the minimum wage you suggest for the mica workers?

A.—Rs. 15 and for boys Rs. 12.

Q.—You also want to keep a margin of 5 to 10 rupees for efficiency?

A.—Yes.

Q.—The basic minimum rate, if you will allow me to put it that way, is Rs. 15 and Rs. 12. This does not include the margin of Rs. 5?

A.—We made this calculation on the family statistics that we collected. We took the family budgets of nearly 100 families, five from each village. It was done on the basis of their expenditure. They were grouped according to the expenditure on food. Those who spend nearly 85 per cent of their income on food come in the first category. They spent about 8 per cent of their income on clothing and 7 per cent on other miscellaneous expenditure. Those who spent the greatest part of their income on food form the lowest cadre in this scale. Their standard of living is also at the lowest. A better standard of living will be of those who spend 60 per cent of their income on food and the rest on other items. This is Dr. Engel's law. When the

standard of life increases, we find, according to this law, that the total percentage of expenditure on food becomes shorter and shorter as their income increases.

Q.—Do you think that your minimum of Rs. 15 will be sufficient to raise their standard of life? Do I understand you to say that if you pay them Rs. 15 they will spend only 60 per cent of this on food?

A.—I should say so. That is our figure according to the calculations that we made. Now they are on the brink of starvation. At least this minimum should be guaranteed to them?

Q.—This should be the absolute minimum according to you and you also leave a margin of 5 to 10 rupees for them to earn which depends on the skill and efficiency of individual workers?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Now, coming to the different categories of work in a mica factory, you have said that some persons may be found working for years at one particular rate, say 4 annas. Can you suggest some solution for remedying that state of affairs and at the same time taking into account the position of the industry?

A.—I would suggest that there should be a system of bonus. That is, when the factory makes more profit in a particular year, they should be asked to give a portion of that bonus to the labourers at a certain percentage. The percentage should depend upon the service that the labourer has put in that factory. That will make the workers also more efficient and the tendency to stick to one and the same factory will develop.

Q.—That was not my question. I want to know, if you can suggest any remedy to overcome this difficulty that we generally find, namely, a worker getting a fixed rate of 4 annas for 10 or 15 years. I want you to devise a method whereby he can be given an increment without involving the factory in extraordinary expenditure.

A.—Have already answered that question. You want the workers to be given more than the present level of wages without burdening the industry.

Q.—Yes, apart from the fixation of a minimum wage?

A.—That can be done only through the medium of bonuses. There is a very limited scope for grade scales in the mica industry because I do not think the efficiency of the worker will increase as years go on. The number of jobs also is limited and the work very much the same throughout. For instance, some of the jobs are, sorting, splitting, etc. A worker cannot be said to increase in efficiency at all. He does it with the same efficiency throughout. You would have seen some of the children working in the factory. They will work with the same speed and in the same manner after, say 10 years. I mean, there is no scope for increasing efficiency as the nature of the work does not demand it.

Q.—How a bonus going to solve the question? I want to know whether you can suggest something whereby a worker getting a fixed rate for the last 10 years may be made to get something more, that is, little increases as years go by, apart from the question of the fixation of a minimum wage?

A.—I have already answered that question. My suggestion is that a system of bonus should be introduced. A worker who has worked for 5 years will get a certain percentage, another who has worked for 10 years will receive a higher percentage, etc.

Q.—What type of bonus have you in mind?

A.—General profit sharing bonus. A certain percentage of the profit should be set apart for the labourers. Something like what they are doing in the Tata Iron and Steel Company at Jamshedpur.

Q.—So the period of service is linked with the percentage of bonus?

A.—Yes, that is my point. I think that will take away the stationery nature of the workers' present day wages.

Q.—Now, with regard to security of service, do you want a man who has been working for a number of years to be treated as a permanent hand?

A.—Yes.

Q.—And in the case of reduction of hands from a factory, do you think that notice of the intention should be given to the worker?

A.—Certainly. Two weeks clear notice is essential.

Q.—What do you say should be the criterion in deciding re-employment after retrenchment?

A.—I should suggest that re-employment should be decided according to the seniority of the man retrenched.

Q.—What are working hours that you suggest?

A.—Eight hours from the time of entering the factory and to the time of leaving the factory. Even now the working hours are 8, but when you calculate the length of time which a worker spends inside the factory, it is more than 12 hours. After finishing their work they have to wait till the mica in their hands is weighed and entered.

Q.—You want the whole process to be confined in this 8 hours.

A.—Yes.

Q.—You have said that the *sardars* take a bribe of one anna per worker from the wages?

A.—Yes that cannot be helped. If the labourer refuses to pay, the consequence will be that he will be turned out on some pretext. With regard to this industry in particular there is no security of work. Today

he will have work, tomorrow he may not have anything. Paying one anna to these *sardars* assures him of some continuous employment, at whatever rates.

Q.—What remedy do you suggest?

A.—I suggest that in the first place the worker should be assured of some permanency in the factory. This must be controlled not by the contractors or *sardars* but by the management themselves. The *sardars* should not be entrusted with supervision inside the factory at all. Recruiting and supervision must be managed by different departments of the factory. Bribery becomes all the more severe because both the departments are under one man. Supervisors should not have a hand in recruitment. That will reduce this bribery to some extent.

Q.—In such a case would not the worker be made to bribe two persons instead of one?

A.—No. It will be rather difficult to give trouble to the worker who does not pay.

Chairman.—Perhaps the old bribe of one anna will be divided between the two officers. (*Laughter.*)

Q.—Now, with regard to child labour, do you think that the employers of a sufficient number of children should be made to maintain some sort of school for giving them a few hours of teaching everyday?

A.—Not only that I like it, but I will insist upon its introduction as early as possible. You suggested that when you visited Giridih last time, nothing has been done. There are some schools near about and we wanted the employers to pay a certain amount, say one rupee for every 100 children employed by them. There are about 86 factories in Giridih and the children employed by them number a good deal. At least 20 to 25 schools there should be in Giridih for these boys.

Q.—Would you like a system which compels the employer to take less work from children for, say, 4 hours and then to give them some education for 2 hours.

A.—I would welcome such legislation. It would be something like what they are having in Russia.

Q.—Now, in regard to labourers in general, are you in favour of establishing night schools in the villages?

A.—They are also essential. We are doing it today. One department, viz., the welfare department of our Union looks to adult education and other social welfare works. We spend some money also for this purpose.

Q.—Now, with regard to trade unions, you have said that the growth of healthy trade unionism is necessary for every industry. I want you to tell us what your idea is about the settlement of industrial disputes. What machinery do you like to be constituted for this purpose?



A.—Some sort of Conciliation or Arbitration Boards. There is a provision in the Trade Disputes Act and I find that nothing has been done anywhere in pursuance of that regulation.

Q.—You mean that it will be better to settle disputes through the medium of conciliation or arbitration?

A.—Yes.

Q.—And you agree that strikes should be resorted to only as the last remedy when every other thing has failed?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Very well, you want a standing Board of Arbitration for the whole of the mica industry or one particular district or area? Should it be composed of the representatives of the employers and labourers? Is that your view?

A.—Yes. And the Board to function for the whole of the industry.

Q.—Do you think that the introduction of prohibition will improve the standard of living of the people?

A.—Certainly. I have given you figures to show how poor the people of the industry are in general. They spent 85 per cent of their income on food. If you increase their wages, they will automatically stop drinking to the extreme to which they are doing today, with the poor wages that they earn. We have found that when the wages of the workers improve they are less subject to drinks than when they get low wages.

Q.—You seem to suggest that generally drinks are resorted to only to forget the misery of the individual?

A.—Certainly.

Q.—You think that if wages are increased today, drinking will automatically go down? That seems to me to be a queer opinion. Our experience has been just the reverse.

A.—That is the general wrong impression that people have. You imagine that if you give more wages to a worker, he will spend more on drink. No, we made practical experiments with regard to 70 tub-repairers. We found that actually when they were out of work they used to drink. When they were having employment and good wages they very rarely drink. I know it is rather a difficult proposition to understand at first. That is the result of our experiment. You can see today that the proportion of workers who drink more will be from the side of those who are paid less. The two annas worker will drink more than the 8. annas worker and much more than the one rupee labourer. If the general level of wages is increased not only the proportion will go down, but the absolute figures also. This experiment was conducted, as I said some time back, by the Union. We actually followed the workers and found out that when they got better wages during the week, viz., Rs. 3 and odd they did not go to the liquor shops

at all. The same worker who after some time was thrown out of work, frequents the place of drink more. (*Witness read some figures from the statement he had in his possession.*)

From these observations, I came to the conclusion that wages have a great deal to do with drink. It is also because of the insecurity of employment, the very inadequate wages that they get, that the workers are addicted to this habit.

Q.—Do you suggest that with the introduction of prohibition wages also should be increased? Otherwise prohibition will not do any good to them?

A.—Exactly, that is my point. Prohibition may be a subsidiary item. If you increase the wages first you can see a remarkable change in the drink habit of these workmen.

Chairman.—Don't you think that the experiment that you have made cannot give you a generalized conclusion? Are you sure that such a general conclusion can be drawn from your experience and experimentation?

A.—This experiment was not carried out for the first time in Giridih. We had performed this experiment on workmen of different classes at Brussels and found out that the lower the income the more they spent on drink. (*Witness mentioned the name of a Professor of the Brussels University.*)

Dr. Mukherjee.—Exactly so. The poorer the man the greater is the misery and to forget that misery he drinks more.

A.—Yes, Sir, you have formulated it correctly. If you raise the wages of the workers today, I can guarantee to stop the habit of drink more easily than prohibition can achieve. (*Laughter.*)

Dr. Mukherjee.—Along with the fixation of minimum wage you must have also systematic employment—I mean security of service should also be guaranteed?

A.—Yes.

Chairman.—Are you aware that quite the contrary to what you state here was our experience at Jharia? What we found was that while wages were being increased the drink habit also was growing? That is also the experience of many workers in different industrial centres we have visited. What you say is absolutely imponderable?

A.—I would like the Chairman to see our figures also in this connection. I do not mean an increment of half an anna. What I mean is that if you assure him secure service and give him a minimum standard of wages, he will not drink as much as he is doing today and it will be possible for us to stop him from drink altogether. I can assure you, Sir, that this habit will automatically stop if you introduce minimum wage legislation to-morrow.

*Mr. Chandra.*—You do not think that increase in wages will increase the habit?

*A.*—No, Sir, that is impossible. The result will be opposite.

*Chairman.*—Were your experiments and observations performed under the most scientific conditions?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—Could you give us the figures of your observations—I mean your general report which lead you to this conclusion?

*A.*—Most certainly. I shall send them to the Committee.

*Mr. Lal.*—One more question. About the indebtedness of the workers. What is the present extent of indebtedness? Is it very large?

*A.*—Yes, it is very large. The labourers are dead-slaves.

*Q.*—Due, of course, to low wages?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—And the remedy is increase in wages?

*A.*—Of course.

*Q.*—How can you remedy that by increase in wages?

*A.*—Well, I would suggest that mere increase in wages will not take away the indebtedness of the workers. The Government must realise that the present condition is due to deflation of currency. There should be inflation. Unless the currency question is satisfactorily settled it is bound to continue. This is what many economists all over the world advocate and I think that that is the only solution of this problem. Also the people must be kept away from the money-lenders. They are a terrible nuisance in industrial places. That is one of the activities of our Union—driving away these money-lenders. In about few years' time the money-lenders take, in the shape of interest, 10 or 12 times more than the principal amount and still beset the workmen and collect regular interest. We know of many such cases, and our union is trying their best to drive them out of Giridih.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—In your memorandum referring to the conditions in the Mica Industry, you say (*reads*).

*A.*—That is a fact. It happened in the I. M. S. Co., after the strike last year. Three of our comrades have been arrested and convicted under section 107. Since they went to jail 500 workers have been turned out. And the reason given was that they participated in the strike rather actively.

*Q.*—Were any of them re-employed?

*A.*—Yes, very few of them were taken back.

Q.—Apart from the strike situation and the consequent unemployment do you think employment in mica factories in Giridih very irregular?

A.—Yes, there is no security of service at all. I have given figures also in the statement. The I. M. S. Co. turned out 500 workers out of 750.

Q.—You promised the Chairman yesterday that you would give him some figures relating to wages in mica industry in relation to employment and the prices of mica? Have you got them today?

A.—No, I shall send it on to the Committee after going back to Giridih.

Q.—Now in connection with your suggestion of a basic minimum rate, I find the figures you have given are Rs. 15 for adult daily workers and Rs. 12 for boys. Now if boys are withdrawn from employment altogether, that suggestion of yours may still hold good—or do you want to suggest another figure?

A.—Yes Sir. What I mean is this. Crude mica can never be exported from India and therefore labour to split mica is essential. No other country in the world can split mica as our labourers can do. Mica mines are there in America and other countries as was given in evidence this morning. But there is considerable difference in the quality of these two micas. Foreigners cannot dispense with our mica at all as was feared by the employers this morning.

Q.—Do you say that the Indian Market cannot be lost, and that it is stable?

A.—Quite so. Mica industry will remain in India till they discover pure quality of mica elsewhere, which they have not done so far.

Q.—Referring to your memorandum with regard to hours of work on pages 6 and 7 you say that :—(Reads) Does this happen almost every day or it is only casual?

A.—What I have said there is very general. If you calculate from the time the workers leave their homes and come to the factory it will be found that they start for work by about 7 in the morning and go back very late in the evening. I, therefore, suggest that the factory should work by at least two shifts of 8 hours each. The fear of the employers that if the working hours are reduced there will be considerable fall in the output is not correct. If you regulate the working hours instead of the production being lessened, I should submit that it will be increased. At least it will not go down as they seem to fear. You cannot expect the children to concentrate for 8 hours they sit before the baskets of mica.

Q.—You suggest that they must be protected by the Factories Act?

A.—Yes. There is also another fact. They are not given any interval during the course of this 8 hours' work. They just go out for 5 or 6 minutes and return.

Q.—Very well. Let us now turn to another aspect, viz., the relation between the management and your union. Your union, I understand comprises a large number of miners?

A.—Yes, we have 1,400 members at present.

Q.—I would like to know if the management uses any method of discrimination with regard to these members?

A.—Not only the management but also the local Subdivisional Officer.

Q.—I would like you to treat it as a general proposition and tell me what, if any, are the methods adopted by the management to discourage union activity.

A.—The first thing that they did when a mica workers' Association was formed at Giridih was that they became unfair towards the labourers. People who took a leading part in the activities of the union were turned out and the employers prevented them from getting work anywhere else.

*Chairman.*—When was the Union formed?

A.—Last December.

Q.—In some countries there is a legislation against this discrimination and victimisation. Would you consider that such a legislation which labels all these as 'Unfair Labour Practices' would be useful here also?

A.—Absolutely necessary.

*Mr. Chandra.*—If child labour is completely taken away would that affect the industry?

A.—Very much, Sir. We can lay down that children below a certain age, say 12 or thereabouts should not be employed in mica factories.

Q.—What are the considerations which have led you to suggest Rs. 15 as the minimum wage for adult workers?

A.—The living condition of the worker and his family which forces the labourers to work at such a small rate of wages.

Q.—And the minimum of Rs. 12 for the child labour is based on similar considerations?

A.—Yes.

Q.—There was a suggestion this morning that children should not be employed for more than 4 hours in a factory. If that is introduced

will your figure be altered? Also, if piece-rate payment is introduced, you must fix a basic to minimum wage and leave the rest to work itself out according to efficiency and the actual work turned out. What will be your basic minimum?

A.—I should put the figure of Rs. 12 itself as a basic minimum, considering the present position of the industry and also the condition of the labourers today.

Q.—Would you pay the child Rs. 12 all at once? Would it not be better if you fix a basic minimum and then leave the child to earn the rest for itself?

A.—Children below 12 should not be allowed to work at all. And for children between the age of 12 and 16 I think Rs. 12 can be given. Now, if the working hours are reduced to 4 hours a day, the wage may be fixed say at Rs. 7 or thereabouts.

Q.—What are the factors governing this fixation of Rs. 7 as the wage for 4 hours' work for a child between 12 and 16?

A.—I have split up this Rs. 7 into two factors, the first one is the basic rate which is Rs. 4 and the margin of Rs. 3 which he can earn by his work. Four rupees should be guaranteed to him. I have arrived at that figure according to considerations of family budgets we have examined at Giridih. Our statistics have shown us that this should be the minimum wage for a child and Rs. 15 for an adult worker.

Q.—Taking into consideration the requirements of a family, I think you have taken an average family as consisting of 5 members? When you fixed the minimum for the adult labourer at Rs. 15 and the child labour at Rs. 7 did you consider the fact that the total earnings of the family will be Rs. 22, if the child also earns? Have you considered all these aspects when you arrived at the figure of Rs. 15 and Rs. 7?

A.—Yes, we have considered all these factors.

Q.—Coming to the question of Trade Unions, there has been many complaints regarding the leadership of labour, that it is not what it should be and trade unions are not working on really efficient lines. It is said that in respect to accounts and also the general working of the regulations the Unions are far from satisfactory? I would like you to give us your views in regard to this aspect of the question.

A.—Our experience in this district is rather very sad. Not because we are not getting sufficient response from the side of the labourers, but the trouble is from the side of the employers.....

Q.—That was not my question. You see, trade union leaders have been, in certain places, prosecuted for embezzlement; they do not render proper accounts when called for; no body knows how the money they collect is being utilized and so on. I want you to examine the question in the light of the regulations governing the activities of the trade unions, and tell me whether they need amendments or do you consider

that further regulations in this respect are necessary? If so, what should be their general aim?

A.—Any regulation that gives more right to the workers is welcome. (Laughter.)

Q.—I shall try to be more clear. It has been suggested in various quarters that the so-called trade unions of this province are not being worked properly, that their leaders are not workers of the industry, that in short they have been running a regular show and not a proper, well-conducted and well-organized union, calculated to secure the right of collective bargaining for the workers of any one particular industry. Would you like to have any further legislation to control the activities of trade unions of this province?

A.—I do not think that the workers in this country are properly aware of what a trade union should be. Until then, I think, outside help is necessary. You cannot say that the trade union leaders are outsiders and therefore, they should not be permitted to the same. It is permissible even under the present Act.

Q.—I will give you a correct example: A, is the president of a trade union and is convicted of mis-appropriation or of moral turpitude, in a court established by the Government.....

A.—One moment Sir, I do not believe in the courts—the British courts, and I do not know whether that conviction was impartial.

Q.—Never mind your faith in the British courts or the local Sub-divisional Officer. Let us for the moment consider a concrete case. I will tell you yet another instance. Government called for a report of the working of the trade unions. There are today in this province more than 10 trade unions, and will you believe me when I say that in response to that order only one or two unions submitted their report? Only one or two have submitted their accounts to the Registrar of Trade Unions in Bihar.

A.—Unless somebody came and taught us how to keep accounts in the form in which Government wants, we cannot be expected to know that. We are prepared to submit for inspection our books, that is all what is possible. It is impossible to expect of us to keep accounts in any particular form, unless that form is shown to us.

Q.—Therefore, don't you think that the leadership must be sufficiently responsible to all these. In order to inspire confidence in the union and also for proper organization and recognition, don't you think that keeping correct and true accounts is essential? The very common complaint from the side of the employers is that the leaders are taking away the money they collect in the shape of subscription and so on. To avoid such slur and also to conduct the union on efficient and proper lines, do you realize your responsibility to keep correct accounts and submit them to Government when called for?

A.—Yes, Sir. The very same kind of attack was made on us by an article in the *Searchlight* and we have also replied to that. But the charges upon us were false and malicious. So whatever the employers say or the Government allege is not necessarily correct.

Q.—Therefore it is absolutely desirable that the union should keep and maintain proper accounts and that the leaders should be sufficiently responsible to this?

A.—Certainly.

Chairman.—You are keeping accounts, etc., according to the Act?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Would you like the regulations relating to keeping of accounts strengthened so that charges of that sort becomes impossible?

A.—I will welcome that.

Q.—As regards the employment of child labour, you referred to some family budgets. May I know from you how many families are there where all the children and the male members work?

A.—About 50 families we know. We took the statistics of these families also.

Q.—Now, having considered the family budgets of these 50 families are you in a position to say what effect the earnings of the child has on the family budget? Is it generally added on to the income of the family? It was suggested that part of the earnings of the child is spent by the child in the factory in purchasing estables and part is given to the head of the family. Now, this 10 per cent you have mentioned in your statement in this connection, is calculated on the entire earning or only that portion which gets into the pockets of the head of the family?

A.—I have taken the entire earning into account. In one or two cases the percentage may be higher, but that is the average.

Q.—The whole earnings of the child?

A.—Yes the whole earning.

Q.—In the case of these poor people 10 and 12 per cent forms quite a considerable figure?

A.—Yes, it does.

Q.—If therefore, this earning is excluded, the state of the family would be reduced to that extent? On the other hand, would it not, therefore, be better to increase the wages of the adult workers, the father and the mother—which would increase the income of the family by about 25 to 30 per cent and abolish child labour altogether? You have also said that adult wages are low because of child labour. So when child labour is prevented, automatically the adult labourers will get much better wages? Production will also go up?



A.—No, there is a limited scope in this industry and production will generally depend upon the market conditions. I do not think that child labour can be taken away altogether. It is not advisable, because they are the expert workers. It will be very difficult for adult workers to study the work. He cannot get at it quickly and can never be as efficient as these children are. I would, therefore, only suggest that children below a certain age should be excluded—say below the age of 12. I am not for taking child labour away altogether.

Q.—If production will not be affected why not prohibit child labour altogether? You said that the industry can afford to pay even three times the present wages, because they can realize that from the market? Have you considered what the proportion of wages is to the total cost of production of mica?

A.—That we have not calculated as yet.

Q.—Could you get us some figures showing the cost of production of the various qualities of mica?

A.—I shall try, but the employers will be able to provide you with figures from their books.

Q.—Have you also considered the wastage that results in the operation of preparing marketable mica? I want to know what that will be, when added to the cost of production, and then decide whether the margin of profit that the employers are making is sufficiently high as you have shown in your statement.

A.—We have considered all that, Sir. There is waste, of course, but even the waste mica is made into discs and sold as such. It has its own industrial uses.

Q.—I find that there are various qualities of mica—mica which costs Rs. 140 a maund and mica selling Rs. 40 a maund. The wages that is paid for these two categories are the same. Is it not?

A.—Yes, Sir, but I have already submitted that nearly 75 per cent of the export of mica is covered by nos. 5 and 6 books.

Q.—Suppose a manufacturer buys nos. 5 and 6 books from the mines and carries on the splitting and other operations in his factory. I want to know how the wage cost would react on the total cost?

A.—(No reply.)

Q.—Out of Rs. 140 that he gets for no. 6 book, what price would he have paid for the crude mica?

A.—That I can tell you only roughly. It will have cost him nearly Rs. 100 to get the mica to that condition.

Q.—I would like to know what actually he paid for the crude mica?

A.—In that Rs. 100 and so, it is included.

Q.—Have you also taken into account the capital employed in running a factory?

A.—I have included almost every available item. Moreover that is only a rough idea, it may be a little more or less.

Q.—What is the labour cost for the Rs. 145 worth of marketable mica?

A.—Not more than Rs. 15.

Q.—Now, if we accept your figure of Rs. 100, then the worker is paid Rs. 15 and the balance is the price of crude mica, the wastage in the process of splitting, the capital-outlay and other incidental expenses?

A.—I shall submit to the Chairman a statement showing the various items of expenditure against the total selling price.

Mr. R. K. Saran.—Could you supply the Committee with a list of the export of the various qualities of mica?

A.—It is published annually by the Government. I think I have got here a report up to December last.

Q.—In connection with trade unions, I suppose you are aware of the recent legislation of the Bombay Government. I would like to have your opinion upon that enactment. Have you any objection to have such legislation introduced in Bihar?

A.—Yes. The first objection is that Government have got the power to appoint a labour officer and they have got the right to declare any strike as illegal. (*Section 21 was referred to.*) Then, Section 55 of the Act is not wholesome (*industrial court's decision and its constitution was objected to by the witness*). No court appointed by the British Government can, in my opinion, be impartial. (*Laughter.*)

Q.—Any other objection?

A.—Well, there are many. I shall read the Act in the light of your question and submit to you a written statement on it if you so desire? (*Reads Section 62*) 6 months is a big margin for the employers to get ready for the fight.

Q.—There is one more question I want to ask you. I was struck by your evidence last evening in regard to a question about prohibition. You said that the worker, if he is paid more, will not drink as he is doing today.

A.—I believe so, at least that is what we have seen.

Q.—I do not object to your believing at all (*laughter*). I am not putting this question for the sake of mere argument. I want the reasons which lead you to that conclusion. I have not heard of such a thing so far. You are all socio-psychologists I understand. But there are others too who have worked on these lines before; they have not given

any such reasoning. Could you kindly refer me to any books, or journals that you have from which we can get support to your theory?

(Witness mentioned some German literature on the point and said that he will send some of them to the Chairman for perusal.)

*Mr. Saran.*—You would not accept any limitation on the right to strike?

*A.*—The right of the workers to strike should not be limited at all.

*Q.*—Not from the side of the State?

*A.*—No, unless it is equally restricted on other sides also—I mean from the side of the employers. I would not accept any limitation imposed by the British Courts and Laws. (*Laughter.*)

*Q.*—Would you accept any limitation arrived at by mutual settlement between employers and trade unions?

*A.*—Yes, I am prepared to come to any reasonable agreement with the employers.

*Q.*—That you would not resort to strikes unless the situation demands, or unless the conditions of the agreement are violated by the other party, etc., is it?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—You believe in settling disputes through conciliation and arbitration?

*A.*—Yes, that is what we are doing at Giridih at present.

The Committee met in the Dak Bungalow, Kodarma on 15th April 1939 at 3-10 P.M.

Members present :—

- |                        |     |                             |
|------------------------|-----|-----------------------------|
| 1. Dr. Rajendra Prasad | ... | <i>Chairman, Presiding.</i> |
| 2. Dr. R. K. Mukherjee | ... | } <i>Members.</i>           |
| 3. Mr. J. N. Lall      | ... |                             |
| 4. Mr. H. B. Chandra   | ... |                             |
| 5. Prof. R. K. Saran   | ... | <i>Secretary.</i>           |

**Oral evidence of Mr. S. Nasiruddin, M.A., B.L., Pleader and Secretary, Hazaribagh Labour Welfare Society, Giridih.**

*Mr. J. Lall.*—With which organization of labour you are connected? What is your position in the Society?

*A.*—I am connected with the Union which has been formed as a Society of Welfare of Labour. I am working as the Secretary of the Society. It was formed in 1937.

*Q.*—Will you kindly explain the nature of work of your Society?

*A.*—My society is concerned with the conditions of labour and the methods to ameliorate their miserable lot, their work and progress in the industrial atmosphere. I have also to see the morale of the workers, to the maternity benefits and to the health of the child labour. I know that the workers are in the hands of bad leaders who for their own gain take the leadership of the union and lead them to strike. I want to have the grievances redressed by constitutional, peaceful and progressive means. I wish to discourage strikes. A few months back there was a strike in the Giridih Mica Factory. I approached the Subdivisional Officer and Deputy Superintendent of Police and settled the dispute by negotiation. The result was that the workers resumed their work.

*Q.*—What is the membership of the Society?

*A.*—We have no fixed membership as it is not a labour union; those who can do welfare work are members, who can mix with the workers and work in the Society.

*Q.*—Are your members recruited from among the workers?

*A.*—No, not all; there are 2 or 3 labourers and rest are respectable people who have knowledge of the labour problem and who can solve difficulties of the workers.

*Q.*—So this society can not be called the representative association of the labourers; it is welfare society only.

A.—Yes, it is meant for welfare work and to safeguard the interests of labourers. It is an association concerned with that object.

Q.—How are the members elected?

A.—The members are not elected but are nominated by the president. Only those are nominated who have got the welfare of labourers at heart.

Q.—Who is the president of the society?

A.—Mr. Abdus Subhan. But this year Babu Bhagwati Prasad is the president and I am the Secretary of the Society.

Q.—Who are the labour members?

A.—One Sirdar named Abdul Karim, Baboo Lall, Mahender Prasad and Ali Hasan.

Q.—Do you maintain some school?

A.—No regular school, but instructive lectures are occasionally given to workers. We maintain some literacy centres and give lectures by lantern slides sometimes. We have not got our own but we take them from the Municipality. Lantern lectures are delivered on sanitation and education.

Q.—Are you taking interest in hospitals?

A.—Yes, we formed a branch of the Red Cross Society last year at Giridih and give aid to the workers and lend our services to them when they need.

Q.—There is a Union at Giridih formed last year under Dr. Sat Narain. What are the relations of your Society with that Union?

A.—There is no enmity with that union. It is doing work and our Society also doing welfare work but that union is leading the workers towards strike which our society does not want.

Q.—Is there sufficient arrangement for water, urinals, and latrines in the mica mines?

A.—No. There is no sufficient arrangement.

Q.—What about child labour?

A.—Children below 15 years should not be employed. They have to work for 8 or 9 hours and it injures their health. They go at 8 in the morning and come back at 5 in the evening and there is only half an hour's rest in the noon. There is no housing accommodation for the workers of the factory. In some factories work is done up to 5½ P.M. and somewhere even during night. There is no medical arrangement in the factory and if there is any case of injury or sudden illness, it is left uncared for. Due to young men and women working together,

there is very bad moral effect on them. There is also another defect. At the time of recruitment there is illegal payment to the *sirdars*.

Q.—Have you examined cases of this?

A.—It is very difficult to do so or to prove it but it is a fact. Another point in connection with child labour is that they get only 2 annas or so as wages and that too is not paid at the right time.

Q.—From children's point of view should their education be the primary consideration and then their work?

A.—Yes, certainly. Every employer in the mica factory should be advised to give general and technical education to the children employed.

Q.—Do you suggest that children below 15 should not be employed and some educational facilities be provided for them?

A.—Yes, as I have given in my memorandum. In this connection I have also given my opinion on the Geneva Convention regarding the age of child labour in the mica industry. In the International Labour Conference at Geneva the minimum age for children working in factory was suggested to be 10. As regards the hours of work for children it should not be more than  $4\frac{1}{2}$  hours a day and an hour or two should be spent in giving them primary education.

Mr. Chandra.—Now the question naturally arises why you chose the minimum age to be ten and not twelve. On what principle do you base this limit?

A.—The reason is that Indian boys are not susceptible to doing proper work before ten years of age. They are not fit for work before this age and twelve years would be somewhat late in doing work of a factory.

Q.—If the conditions alter, you will, I think, advocate 12 years to be the minimum age?

A.—It depends upon the development of situation and also whether children will be inclined to receive more education.

Q.—Then the question arises why you say  $4\frac{1}{2}$  hours of work and why not more or less without any interval?

A.—No, I have not said that there should be  $4\frac{1}{2}$  hours' work for children without any interval. I want that there should be an interval after  $2\frac{1}{2}$  hours for 15 minutes as in schools. I have made this suggestion of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  hours for working and one or one and half hours for education in mica or *biri* factories.

Mr. J. Lall.—Have you any suggestions to make about the distances of housing of the workers from the factory?

A.—Yes, this is a very difficult question to solve. The workers come from 3 or 4 miles on foot to work in factory and some provision should be made to cope with this difficulty as it entails loss of time and energy.

Q.—But how to provide sufficient accommodation to the workers?

A.—Regulated factories should be made to provide houses near about for those who come from a distance, as other industries do.

Q.—You want that the hours of work for child labour should be  $4\frac{1}{2}$  hours; why?

A.—This should be only for child workers and not for adults. If a child worker is late by five or 15 minutes in entering the factory, he is not admitted and thus he loses his wages for the day. He passes his day merely in loitering about in the *bazar*. A margin of half an hour should be allowed and be compensated by extra work at the end or proportionate deduction in wages. I have mentioned in my memorandum that there are about five hundred factories in Giridih alone and they have different hours of work with different rates of wages. A uniform system should be adopted in all factories.

Q.—As regards sanitation, have you any suggestions to make?

A.—Every factory which employes more than 25 labourers should provide proper latrine, urinals, houses, ventilation and drinking water and other facilities.

Q.—Do you like the employers to do this or the Government or local boards and the employers to pay some contribution?

A.—Yes. If the municipality or any Government body make these arrangements, it would be all right. I am not in favour of leaving these arrangements in the hands of employers. They will only contribute towards it.

Q.—Have you any suggestion with regard to wages and other matters?

A.—Yes, I have got some suggestions which I have mentioned in my memorandum. They are :

(1) No young woman should be allowed to work side by side with the male sex. There should be separate arrangement for women workers.

(2) There should be maternity benefit for women. They should not be allowed to work 3 weeks before and three weeks after delivery and for these six weeks they should get benefit or allowance.

(3) As regards wages it is very difficult to suggest what should be the scale as I have not calculated the data or the family budget. The minimum wages should be according to the standard of living and prevailing price in the industrial area. As a welfare worker I have seen

that workers spend their money after cinemas; they take delight in songs and films. What is the use of these things that spoil morale of the workers? Mere increase in wages will not improve their condition. They should be first made to understand where to spend and how to live.

Q.—Do you like that there should be some fixed minimum wages?

A.—Yes, I have seen in factories that children are paid as low as one anna a day and women 2 annas to 4 annas a day and the wages of men do not go beyond 4 or 5 annas. There should be some standard rate of wages.

Q.—What is your suggestion regarding the amount of minimum wage?

A.—It should be 3 to 4 annas for children above ten. For females 4 annas to 6 annas a day and for men 6 annas to 8 annas a day.

Q.—Are the evils of drink prevalent here to a great extent? Do you like the introduction of prohibition?

A.—Yes. There should be total prohibition.

Q.—You want prohibition for only wine?

A.—I want prohibition for wine, toddy and gambling.

Mr. Saran.—Are you speaking for mica factories only or you have got experience of mines also?

A.—No, I am not speaking of mines.

Q.—You have said that there are jobbers in the factory; do you mean jobbers or *sirdars*?

A.—Those who recruit labour. These are the persons who pick up labourers from the field. In Kodarma and Giridih labour is available in large number and there is no necessity of these intermediaries.

Q.—Do you think that mica work is hard?

A.—Not hard. This kind of work does not require strength but it does require skill and so the control of labour is necessary.

Q.—You have said that children below ten should not be employed. Suppose they do not go to the factory; then they will do mischief and spoil their time?

A.—Children below ten will not go to the factory but they will go to school.

Q.—Then you like to make education compulsory. If it is not made compulsory then some of them may not go to school at all?

A.—Yes, it must be made compulsory for children below ten.



Q.—But in the present case they earn some thing and they are additional source of income to the family?

A.—Yes, but that can not be helped. The elder members earn; their wages should be increased and that will equalise the loss thus sustained. Besides, by prohibition of drink and gambling they should save some thing.

Q.—It is reported that by under-weighment unjust deductions are made. What remedy do you suggest for that?

A.—This should be stopped by spervision. Labour Inspector should be appointed who will keep an eye on such things and on notice or report of wrong weighment or illegal deductions, he will take steps. He should have office at each industrial area and he will occasionally inspect such places and hear grievances of the workers and take steps.

Q.—Would you maintain different wages for different employers, small and big?

A.—No. That should not be. A uniform scale is necessary.

Q.—Are the workers of mica wholetime workers? Do they depend upon this earning alone?

A.—The women workers do some domestic works also and they do mica work for additional income. The male workers wholly depend upon this except some who do agricultural work in cultivating season.

Chairman.—You are not the representative of the labour union, so you would be able to give an independent view as how to solve disputes between labour and capital.

A.—I have suggested in my memorandum that there should be an Arbitration Board of the Government to decide cases of disputes.

Q.—Do you like that this kind of conciliation should be provided by law?

A.—Yes. Certainly.

Q.—Have you seen the Bombay Act recently passed?. Can you give your opinion on that Act?

A.—Yes. I have seen the Bombay Trade Disputes Act but I am not in a position to make any comment upon that unless I read it carefully.

Q.—As regards corruption, have you any personal experience of all sorts of deductions prevalent in the factories, e.g., *dasturi dharmadha*, *gowshala*, *diwali puja*. Is there any *gowshala* here. Is there any *puja* in the factories.

A.—I have no personal knowledge of these but I have been told by wrkcers that such things do exist. There is some deduction as *dasturi* by *sirdars*. They generally deduct 2 pice in the rupee at the time of

payment of wages and in weightment. In case of women workers it is more prevalent. Some contribution towards *puja* and *gowshala* is taken.

Q.—As regards recruitment of labour I understand that employers take workers from the adjoining area?

A.—Yes, the *sirdars* employ labour; they go to villages and bring workers.

Q.—Do they get anything by way of bribe?

A.—Yes, one anna or so in the rupee every week.

Q.—What proportion will it be?

A.—No fixed proportion; one anna or so in the rupee.

Q.—Suppose the week's earning is Rs. 1/8; how much will he take?

A.—One and a half anna.

Q.—In Giridih there are no houses for factory workers. Where do they live?

A.—They live in sheds and huts and mud houses or in rented rooms.

Q.—Do you find any special diseases among workers and what are the reasons?

A.—Yes, phthisis and general debility. I have been told by the Assistant Surgeon that it is due to bad sanitation and foul condition of the factory and malnutrition. They do not get proper food throughout the day and merely live upon one pice worth of boiled gram (*ghooghni*).

Q.—Do you think that if some arrangement is made by the employers they will eat?

A.—Yes, why not. They will pay for the food which should be supervised by the Inspector of Labour.

Q.—Have you looked into case of indebtedness? What are the reasons?

A.—There is great indebtedness among the workers and it is due to low wages, uncertainty of employment, strikes and long illness. I think workers' Co-operative Societies can do the work by the supply of cheap credit on a low rate of interest. But Co-operative movement in this province is a failure. At present they take loan on high rates of interest from money-lenders. Employers should advance some loan against their wages.

Dr. Mukherjee.—Referring to your memorandum you mention the case of child labour by landlords. Is this system prevalent widely?

A.—Yes, it is only in the case of petty *zamindars* who hold factories.

Q.—You have said that children sometimes get as low as six pice as wages. If they work half day they get 3 pice?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You say there are forty thousand mica workers. How many children are there?

A.—Twenty-four thousand are miners as given by the Inspector of Mines and about 20,000 are children.

Q.—I have experienced that in some European countries children are employed.

A.—Yes. In Giridih also it is so but they have no such facilities as in other countries.

Q.—The cottage splitters, women, go to factories for weighment. Have they got to wait for hours and is deduction made from them also?

A.—Yes. They are put to a lot of inconvenience. They wait for hours and deductions also are made from them.

Q.—Is there any holiday in the mica factory for any festival or similar occasion?

A.—No holiday of any sort. On festival days like *dasahara* or *Moharram* or *Holi*, workers do not go and so they lose wages. Sunday also is not a holiday with wages. Workers do not work on Sundays and so they do not get wages for that day.

Q.—In case of women workers they bring their babies. Where do they keep them? Is there any shed for keeping their babies?

A.—No. There should be some provision for nursing mothers and creches and sheds should be provided. These things can be supervised by Labour Inspectors.

Q.—What do young boys do with the money they get?

A.—They smoke *biris*, go to cinemas and drink; they do not give to the family for maintenance. They purchase a torch, a cigarette box, etc.

Mr. Chandra.—The *sirdars* bring labourers from villages. Do they give any advance at the time of recruitment?

A.—Yes. There is some proportion of daily wages which is rarely given.

Q.—Who are monthly and who are daily-rated men?

A.—The monthly-rated are sorters, gate keepers and packers and the rest are daily.

Q.—Are managers of factories not aware of bribery?

A.—They know all about it but they do not take any steps towards it.

Q.—Are women workers employed by contractors?

A.—No. They are piece workers employed in factories.

Q.—Is the system of fine prevalent here? What is its shape and extent?

A.—There are many causes of fines such as bad worksmanship, negligence and waste, half an anna or one is imposed as fine.

Q.—You have said that advances are paid to workers. How are they repair?

A.—By deductions from wages in instalments.

Q.—I think you are aware of the Jharia Mines Board of Health and another established at Hazaribagh recently. What is your idea of the same. Do you want it to be established here also?

A.—These institutions are not doing any work. I am not in favour of them. All these are the paraphernalia of old administrative machinery where mere paper transaction and *red tapism* is carried on. Nothing substantial is done to improve the workers' health.

Q.—Then what machinery you suggest for that?

A.—Any machinery that will help the cause of the workers and remove the difficulties in matters of health and sanitation. Centres for the control of labour area should be formed and each centre should be equipped with a Welfare Board consisting of a Labour Inspector and a Medical Officer, and staff for giving instructions to workers. The Inspector should occasionally visit factories, hear grievances from labourers, advise the employers and try to remove complaints of workers. The Medical Officer shall occasionally visit factories, examine the health of the workers and look into sanitation and other questions. This Welfare Board should be controlled by Government and contribution from the factories by way of registration fees should be charged for running the organisation.

The Committee met in the Dak Bungalow, Kodarma on the 15th April, 1939, at 5-5 P.M.

The following members were present :—

- |                          |     |                             |
|--------------------------|-----|-----------------------------|
| 1. Dr. Rajendra Prasad   | ... | <i>Chairman, Presiding.</i> |
| 2. Dr. R. K. Mukherjee   | ... | } <i>Members.</i>           |
| 3. Mr. Jagat Narayan Lal | ... |                             |
| 4. Mr. H. B. Chandra     | ... |                             |
| 5. Prof. R. K. Saran     | ... | <i>Secretary.</i>           |

**Oral evidence of Sm. Saraswati Devi, M.L.A., Vice-President, Labour Union, assisted by Mr. Ramanugrah Prasad, Secretary and Mr. Bhaia Kedar Nath Sahay, Member, Executive Committee, Kodarma Mica Labour Union.**

*Chairman.*—Since how many years you have formed your union?

*A.*—Since two months. It was started in the month of February 1939.

*Q.*—Where is the office of the union?

*A.*—In Jhumri Telaiya.

*Q.*—Do you take members from the Mica Factories only or from the mica mines?

*A.*—We take members from both the factories and mines.

*Q.*—Is your membership confined to only Jhumri Telaiya or it extends to places throughout Kodarma?

*A.*—Throughout the factories and mines of Kodarma, though mines are very far.

*Q.*—How many workers are members of your union?

*A.*—The total membership of our union to 1,500.

*Q.*—That is to say you have made 1,500 members in the course of two months?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—How many workers from the mines are members of your union?

From how many mines you have taken members?

*A.*—We have got about 1,000 members from the mines only and there are 25 mines from which we have got members.

*Q.*—How many members are there from the factories?

A.—We have got members from the two big factories only. We have not taken any from the smaller factories so far.

Q.—What is the rate of subscription for the members; please tell both the entry fees and the monthly fees?

A.—The entry fee is one anna and the regular subscription is one pice per week.

Q.—Those who are members, do they regularly pay their fees and subscriptions?

A.—Yes, some have given and some have not given. There was some slackness in collecting the subscriptions, as we were engaged in other work.

Q.—How do you realise your subscription?

A.—We have got one representative in every factory and he is given the receipt book to realise from the members in his factory.

Q.—What about the rates of wages?

A.—The rates are very small compared to the hazardous nature of work inside the mines.

Q.—Do you say that there is no security of life and service in the mines?

A.—I do not know exactly as I have never been inside the mines, but the rates are very small indeed.

Q.—Now, you have said in your memorandum that...(READS)?

A.—2½ lacks in the number I have given of the mica workers actually engaged.

Q.—For this figure you have taken all the registered and unregistered factories?

A.—Yes, there are many unregistered factories, I think there are only two or three registered factories which use power.

Q.—You have said in the memorandum that—(READS) in several mines of Dhab. miners have to work in the mines at an average of 12 hours for days? Can you site an example of that?

A.—Oh, yes, Premier Mica Factory Co. In this there are 2 batches working alternate shifts of 8 hours each; so in 48 hours the worker has to put in 12 hours per day.

Q.—In all these do you mean to say that there is violation of the Factory Act?

A.—Yes, there is clear breach of the law.

Q.—What do you want then?

A.—The want of the workers is that there should be 9 hours work in 24 hours.

Q.—Have you drawn the attention of the Government?

A.—No, not yet.

Q.—When there is accident, is there proper arrangement for medicines?

A.—No, nothing absolutely.

Q.—Under the Act is it necessary for every employer to keep first-aid arrangement?

A.—Yes, some of the big employers keep the first-aid arrangements but many do not. Even those who keep, do not provide full equipment. At some places there is absolutely no arrangement.

Q.—When any accident occurs is the patient given first aid?

A.—The injured patient is sent to the far off hospital or the district board dispensary. Some of them are sent to the hospital at hospital at Jhumri-Telaiya, even for the purpose of first aid. It takes considerable time to reach a patient to a hospital because he is generally carried on a *khatoli*; the result is that by the time he reaches the hospital, his condition becomes precarious.

Q.—Is it not a fact that when an accident occurs they are taken on the cars of the employers?

A.—So far as my information goes, not.

Q.—Generally how many miles are the patients taken on the *khatoli* for treatment?

A.—It is not less than 10 to 20 miles.

Q.—Is there no hospital near the mines.

A.—No.

Q.—So you mean to say that when an injury occurs, many hours elapses before actually medical aid is given?

A.—Yes. The mines are situated so far away in the hills that no other conveyance is available and the employers do not keep buses or ambulance cars for early transport of the injured.

Q.—From how many miles generally do the daily workers come to work in the mines?

A.—Generally they come from 2 to 3 miles.

Q.—Do the workers live in houses or quarters provided by the Company? If not where and how they live?

A.—No housing arrangement is there for the workers. They have got houses made of leaves of the tree or of mats where they live.

These also are situated at distances of 2 or 3 miles from the mines. The great difficulty in these houses of leaves is that sometimes in summer, due to intense heat, fire breaks out and all the houses and the poor belongings of the workers are burnt away.

Q.—Are the workers all local people from the surrounding villages or they come from distance places or adjoining districts?

A.—The workers come from, say, Gaya, Hazaribagh, and other districts. Some also come from Arrah or Patna and some are local people of adjoining villages. Those who come from distant places also live in the houses built of leaves. There is no provision of housing from the side of the company.

Q.—Those who come from villages come from how many miles?

A.—Generally from 4 or 5 miles from the jungles.

Q.—Are the roads from where they come motorable?

A.—Yes, they are all motorable roads.

Q.—Is there any arrangement for the workers to be brought from their destinations and to reach them back to the place?

A.—Yes, in one factory there is bus system for conveyance of the workers. That is the factory of Messrs. Horil Ram Chhotu Ram & Co. It is not done in other factories.

Q.—Are they charged anything for conveyance?

A.—No.

Q.—What is the increase in this way?

A.—It is about 25 per cent.

Q.—Now coming to the water arrangement, it seems that there is no proper arrangement for water-supply?

A.—There is no water arrangement. The workers in mines drink water from ditches and pools and pits which is dirty consequently they suffer from cough, malaria, etc. They are made to drink the pit water because no arrangement for water other than that has been made.

Q.—What arrangement do you suggest should be made for drinking water?

A.—Wells may be dug. Experts can say whether water work scheme can be taken up and also whether the water that it pumped out from the mines can be filtered and made fit for drinking purposes. Any way, water arrangement has to be made for the workers.

Q.—Now coming to wages, you have give some figures. (READS.) Do they apply to mines only or also to factories?

A.—The figures in the memorandum are for the mines, but they are applicable to factories also.



Q.—You have said that they get annas 10. Have you taken into consideration the family budget of the workers?

A.—I have taken a family consisting of wife, husband and two children and made the calculation on that basis.

Q.—Have you considered the average family budget?

A.—No.

Q.—It has been reported that the workers are compelled to purchase clothes, rice and *dal* from the shops of the employers.

A.—Yes, labourers have complained to us.

Q.—Are things in these shops sold at the *bazar* rate?

A.—No, there the goods are very dear; the rate is high.

Q.—Then why they purchase?

A.—They are compelled to purchase.

Q.—Are there many factories which own shops?

A.—There are several.

Q.—How are they compelled?

A.—The wages are not given to them and instead they are asked to go to the shop and take what articles of food, etc., they require.

Q.—A man can be compelled to buy goods which he requires daily but how can he be compelled to buy clothes which is not his daily need?

A.—When he does not require clothes, he is paid in cash.

Q.—Have you yourself inquired into the matter or you are depending on the version given by the workers only?

A.—I have not enquired myself. I have got these informations from the workers. There was a labourer named Jagarnath whose statement was that his wage was 10 annas but he got only 6 annas 6 pies. For the balance of the money, he is asked to take clothes.

Q.—Where does he live?

A.—In Jhumri Telaiya.

Q.—In Kodarma there are already many shops; even then they keep shops?

A.—Ys, in spite of that they keep shops.

Q.—Can you say whether within 4 or 5 years the wages have been reduced?

A.—Yes, during 8 or 9 years the wages have been reduced.

Q.—Is it in every kind of work?

A.—Yes, also in mines.

Q.—In how many kinds of work?

A.—5 or 6 kinds of work.

Q.—In how many works there is contract system; in how many, are there daily-rated workers?

A.—(1) The splitting and cutting is done on contract system.

(2) In the cutting in sizes contractors work. Sickling, Packing, Mistri closed boxes.

Q.—Are there also contractors in mines?

A.—Yes, for digging.

Q.—The work of dumping is done by women; What is the rate paid by the contractors?

A.—Contractor's rate is Rs. 7-8-0.

Q.—What do the children do in the factory?

A.—They do the manual work.

Q.—What should be the age of the children when they should be allowed to work?

A.—They should be allowed work after 7 or 8 years.

Q.—How much do they get?

A.—They get 2 or 4 pice a day.

Q.—Do they work inside the mines?

A.—No, all outside.

Mr. Saran.—Are they given wages regularly in the end of the week?

A.—In some factories they are and in some they are not.

Q.—Has there been any fight between the union and the employer?

A.—No, there has been no fight as yet. Profound dissatisfaction prevails amongst the workers about various for various grievances. In Mr. Sahana's factories the wages have not been paid for 3 weeks and we have given notice to pay them as early as possible. There may be a fight if the wages are not paid shortly. They have promised to pay in a few days.

Q.—Is it a fact that at some places corruption is prevalent on a large scale?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Have you done or can you do any thing to solve this problem of corruption?

A.—We have just begun and in some time we expect to be able to do something.

Q.—What is your idea with regard to strikes and the solution of disputes between the employer and the employee?

A.—We favour Conciliation Boards appointed by the Government. In the Board, the representative of the labour union should be given a place along with that of the employer.

Q.—With regard to the hours of work, you have said that they work from 9 A.M. to 5 P.M., i.e. 9 hours. Is it a fact that they go one hour late?

A.—Yes, not only that one hour; the time of coming out is 5 P.M. but they never come before 8 P.M.

Q.—Is it also a fact that they come late?

A.—It may be; I do not know.

Q.—That means that they work for more than 11 or 12 hours?

A.—Yes. They maintain two books, one for the Inspector and the other for themselves.

Q.—You have said in the memorandum about the payment of wages Act...(READS) that the payment is made in kind, e.g., grains. Is this practice prevalent to a great extent?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is it prevalent in the mines or the factory?

A.—It is in both.

Mr. Chandra.—Do you take from the market or the shop of the employers on cash or on credit?

A.—Instead of the payment of the wages they ask to take goods from their shops.

Q.—Suppose the wage is Rs. 5 in the week; what is the actual payment in cash and how much is given in kind?

A.—Suppose in the week they get Rs. 1-8-0; out of that they get only annas 8 in cash and Re. 1 is paid in the form of goods.

Q.—Is there any kind of deduction in the name of religion (*dharmadha*) or anything in the shape of *dasturi*?

A.—Yes, one pice in the week for *goshala*.

Q.—In Kodarma is there any *goshala*?

A.—No.

Q.—You have said that the minimum wage should not be less than Rs. 15 what is the basis of that?

A.—They are to do much work of a very hazardous nature.

Q.—This you have said about the piece work?

A.—Yes, also for *hazari* work.

Q.—How many men in the family have you taken to be dependent upon one worker?

A.—I have taken the worker, his wife, and 2 or 3 children.

Q.—But then the wife and the child also work in the mica industry?

A.—In that case there will be some additional income to the family. They may not work also.

Q.—But you want them also to work?

A.—For some additional income and not to maintain a family.

Q.—Have you said that minimum wage should be fixed for children also?

A.—Yes, they should be given work not as regular workers but only for some time.

Q.—You mean that in one family there will be one man to earn and 4 to eat?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you like that child labour should remain?

If so, why?

A.—They should be allowed to work for some time after their study to learn the work and to bring in some additional income.

Q.—You want that payment in kind should be stopped?

A.—Yes. It should be abolished by law.

Mr. Lall.—There are women workers outside the mines and in the factory. Do you want maternity benefit? Do they get maternity leave?

A.—No; they do not get maternity leave. I want that they should be given that leave with pay for two weeks before and three weeks after the confinement.

Q.—Do the child workers in the factory get milk?

A.—No, not at all.

*Mr. Sarān.*—You have said that the workers come very late from the mines? What methods do you suggest to improve this condition?

*A.*—There should be permanent and wholetime inspectors of mines for Mica and for particular areas.

*Q.*—There are many laws to prevent this practice.

*A.*—Only laws will not help; there should be law together with strong public opinion and well organised union.

*Chairman.*—Thank you all.

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**SUGAR**

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The Committee assembled in the Secretariat, Patna on the 11th February 1939 at 1-45.

All members except Mr. M. P. Gandhi and Professor Abdul Bari, were present.

**Oral evidence of Babu Shyamnandan Sinha, M.L.A., President of the  
South Bihar Sugar Mill, Mazdoor Union, Bihta.**

*The Chairman.*—The Sugar Mill Mazdoor Union, Bihta, has come into existence only very recently ?

A.—Yes, in the month of December.

Q.—How many members have you got ?

A.—About 1,300.

Q.—What is your rule regarding subscription ?

A.—We have got a member fee of 2 annas monthly.

Q.—Is that a uniform fee for all ?

A.—Yes, members who work only for 6 months pay only for that period. They are seasonal members.

Q.—Is there not a higher subscription for higher salaried men ?

A.—No, the rate is the same for all, everybody has to pay 2 annas. The highly paid men can subscribe more if they want. The rule is that every member must pay 2 annas.

Q.—You are getting that subscription ever since you started ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You have given a pretty full statement on almost all the points raised by the Questionnaire. I would like to put some questions only to clear some points which you have not mentioned in the statements. Otherwise the statement is pretty full.

A.—Yes.

Q.—In answer to question 3, you say...*(reads)*. Now, assuming that the Bihta Mill is situated in a village, most of the Millworkers must be coming from the village, round about ?

A.—No, Sir.

Q.—Then ?

A.—Most of the workers come from outside.

Q.—Please give us some detailed information. You say somewhere that some come from United Provinces, some from Patna district, etc. I want the proportion that come from United Provinces, Patna district, etc. Have you got such details ?

A.—They employ very few local workers and that also to oblige some one whose help they want. They avoid employing local workers as far as possible. They are employed only for *coolly* work, for unloading wagons, etc.

Q.—What would be the proportion of the local workers to those coming from outside? Out of the total of 1,600 that you have mentioned how many would be from the locality ?

A.—Even *donga coolies* are drawn from the district not proximate to the area. Those who are so drawn live in the villages. Their number is 50 or 60, I think.

Q.—Only 50 or 60 ?

A.—Yes, all the rest come from a distance and therefore they have to live in hired houses or in huts supplied by the Mill. Some even live by the side of railway lines or under trees.

Q.—The 50 or 60 that you said alone live in their own houses out of the total of 1,600?

A.—Yes, the others find accommodation as best as they can. So far as my experience of other factories is concerned, most of the workers who work in sugar factories are drawn from the locality. Only technical people sometimes come from a distance. Those who are unskilled mostly come from the locality.

Q.—You say that is not so in Bihta ?

A.—Yes, not so.

Q.—Can you suggest any reason for this ?

A.—Probably it may be due to this that during strike or some other trouble local workers won't be inconvenienced. They may live in their own homes in the locality. But those that come from a distance will be inconvenienced and they are not likely to go on strike for a long period. It will be difficult for them. That is why the management has taken care to employ such outsiders.

Mr. Tookey.—Is not outside labour very expensive ?

A.—Might be. The condition is such. The unskilled labour they recruit from the locality. They get 2 to 3 annas per day.

Chairman.—Still they employ large number of outsiders and pay higher wages ?

A.—Yes, comparatively higher wages.



Q.—Now, according to your statement the wages used to be something like Rs. 7 previous to the strike and as a result of the strike, it was raised to Rs. 11. If that is so, why not the rate of 2 annas should be also raised?

A.—They can get a worker for 3 annas a day but they cannot undertake such hard work.

Q.—Some class of people could be found; why not they undertake?

A.—Able-bodied men cannot be had for 2 annas a day.

Q.—What do they charge?

A.—Say, 4 annas and two meals. They have to work day to day, month to month. They will have to employ such men.

Q.—Is this an area where there is no unemployment or is it one where people have got complete employment throughout?

A.—There is partial employment and partial unemployment. During the crushing season, all the sugar mills will be employing men.

Have you got any idea of the number of skilled workers in the factory?

A.—About 500, i.e., engineers, electricians, and the like.

Q.—If the labour is largely drawn from outside then naturally many of these people who work in one season may not return in the next season, if they get employment outside?

A.—Yes. If they feel security of service they will return. I think mostly they continue in the next season also.

Q.—You mean the same set of people ordinarily?

A.—Yes.

Q.—In answer to question no. 5, you say the proportion is 5:11. I cannot understand that. What exactly is meant by that proportion?

A.—I mean 5 permanent and 11 are seasonal.

Mr. Bakhale.—That means 1/3 permanently employed and 2/3 are recruited every year?

A.—Yes.

Chairman.—Some who are paid for the whole year on a permanent basis and others only for the season. He means 1/3 permanently and 2/3 only during the crushing season. They have no employment for the remaining period.

*Mr. Chandra.*—There seems to be some confusion. It does not refer to the contract of employment, the actual number of people who leave, etc. There is really some confusion in the answer.

*Chairman.*—The proportion of 5: 11 refers to the number of people who are permanently employed throughout the year to the number of persons employed for four or five months during the seasons. That is five or six work permanently and eleven during the seasons only. That is the idea?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—Out of a total of 11 persons how many are taken over again for the next season and how many left over?

*A.*—Almost all people return.

*Q.*—That is, some people are employed from year to year?

*A.*—Yes.

*Mr. Bakhale.*—When they return, is it necessarily under a reduced pay?

*A.*—Yes.

*Chairman.*—We shall come to that. You have said about that also somewhere.

In answer to question (6) you have stated (*reads*). How have you got these figures? Are they collected for a particular year? By collecting the names, etc., or is it mere guess work?

*A.*—I have received the necessary details from the members of the Union who are employees.

*Q.*—How did they get at that? Did they get at the names of the persons who left or what?

*A.*—Yes, they have worked it out on individual cases.

*Q.*—Have you got the statement on which this was worked?

*A.*—No, I have not got it.

*Chairman.*—It seems the dismissal of 10 per cent is rather heavy.

*Mr. Bakhale.*—Yes.

*Witness.*—When the management wants to get rid of some one they raise false reports and thus get rid of him.

*Q.*—Is this figure for one year?

*A.*—It is the average.

*Q.*—So in arriving at the figure you have taken into account 3 or 4 or 5 years at least?

A.—Yes. 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937 and 1938. It is an average collected for five years.

Q.—Can you give us the figures for each year ?

A.—I have not got the figures now. I shall give it later. I can only give approximate figures of how many were dismissed.

Chairman.—Yes. We want that which leads you to this conclusion.

Mr. Bakhale.—Five are permanently employed, and 11 are seasonal workers and you also told us that the 11 persons are generally taken over for the next and subsequent years also. Now in this you say that 10 per cent dismissals are made. That means that these 10 persons cannot be taken up again.

A.—The number that remains at the end of the season and when they again come, they are taken in that proportion.

Mr. Bakhale.—From the 10 per cent of those who leave? That means the turn-over also is great.

Mr. J. N. Lal.—Make the position a little more clear. Out of those who leave the factory at the end of the season 10 per cent are retrenched ?

A.—Yes. The answer to question (6) refers to 1936-37 only.

Mr. Bakhale.—The question requires the number and not the percentage. You may please give the number.

A.—I shall give later on. Some names could be supplied, not all. I shall send some for verification. Other names cannot be supplied as the register is with the management.

Chairman.—How are you able to know then that so many are dismissed ?

A.—Yes. I cannot give names of all. I can give names of many. As much as we can get we shall give. The difficulty is that the season is going to be over on the 14th of February.

Chairman.—So it is very short season?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Have you collected the statements of workers that will be leaving by the 15th February ?

A.—(No answer.)

Q.—When you made this statement you might have had that information in your possession ?

A.—The difficulty is that the reply had to be made in a hurry. All these cannot be given in black and white.

*Chairman.*—That is why I started this question by saying whether you arrived at the figures from information actually gathered or it was a mere guess work ?

*A.*—No, they were actually collected. They were worked out.

*Q.*—It is that which we want. Please give what you have collected.

*A.*—The difficulty is that the higher officers have not co-operated with me in this matter. I shall give you the figures later.

*Chairman.*—What are the works within your factory which are done through contractors ?

*A.*—The *coolies* employed for carrying the bags of sugar from the factory to the godown (*palladars*). They work under outside contractors. But the *coolies* who unload the wagons,—there are a good number of them—work under contract system under the management. They are contract labourers.

*Q.*—No. I am making a distinction. The latter may be called piece-work and the management pays them. There no contractor or intermediary comes in. I mean works in which contractors are employed who keeps a certain number of workers under him. I want to know what are the works, which are done through contractors.

*A.*—I see. (1) One kind of work is that of the *palladars* who carry bags from the factory to the godowns. (2) The second class of work is in connection with the making of tins for the confectionary section, and preparing tins and things of that sort. (3) Another kind of contractors are employed for making sugar-candy out of sugar. (4) A fourth is for removing the press mud.

*Mr. Tooke.*—The actual wage is paid to the mate or to the individuals ?

*A.*—It is paid through mates who also are workers.

*Q.*—Each individual is not paid by the management ?

*A.*—They are paid a lump sum for unloading and they distribute. The unloading is done collectively. So many waggons—So many *coolies*, etc. Unloading includes bringing the waggons from the station. They have to push it.

*Q.*—That is part of the same contract ?

*A.*—Yes. The unloading work is pretty arduous. They are exposed to the weather and keep standing in winter nights.

*Chairman.*—What do you suggest for that ?

*Mr. Saran.*—Are they not provided with jersies, or blankets or something like that ?

*A.*—No.

*Mr. Tookey.*—What is the capacity in maunds ?

*A.*—It will be about 1,000 tons. That is the quantity that comes out of the station.

*Mr. Saran.*—You mean the total amount that comes for crushing.

*A.*—Yes, but there are more men than are actually required.

*Mr. Tockey.*—Yes said that their work is arduous; now you say that there are more men for that work. So necessarily the men do not work hard ?

*A.*—Sometimes they get 50 waggons, sometimes 30, and sometimes 20. They do not know on what date the number of waggons will be more; so all the 111 have to be kept.

*Mr. Tockey.*—Do not they know the total amount of cane coming in a day ? Don't they have sometimes to unload local supply also ?

*A.*—There is a separate arrangement for that. This is done by cartmen and by separate *coolies* who are paid monthly.

*Chairman.*—That means local supply is dealt with in another manner by another batch of *coolies*.

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—What are they paid, these cart men ?

*A.*—Formerly they were paid 13 annas per waggon; now they are getting 14 annas.

*Q.*—What is the size of a waggon ?

*A.*—400 maunds i.e., 16 tons. During the first season they were getting Rs. 2-8-0 per waggon, i.e., when the factory was started. It was then reduced to 13 annas and now it is 14 annas.

*Q.*—What is the number of carts that are unloaded every day ?

*A.*—About 700 to 900. It all depends on the circumstances.

*Q.*—As regards jobbers, for what particular kind of work are they employed ?

*A.*—Jobbers are contractors, say a *sirdar*, or a headman.

*Chairman.*—Take for example a cotton Mill. Suppose there are 50 workers employed in spinning section. There may be a jobber looking after, say, 10 or these workers, mainly supervising their work.

*Witness.*—You mean supervisors.

*Chairman.*—Yes.

*Witness.*—In the sugar factory I think there are such men only in the centrifugal section.

*Mr. Bakhale.*—The mates and jobbers are more or less analogous?

*A.*—There are some such men also who bring the workers with them. I could not understand the sense in which the term was used in the Questionnaire.

*Chairman.*—As regards recruitment, I understand that these workers are mostly old workers who go out of the factory during a particular season; yet, some new hand may be taken in now and then?

*A.*—Yes, new hands are taken in.

*Q.*—Who appoints them?

*A.*—The secretary.

*Q.*—He looks after the employment of even ordinary labourers, say, for loading and unloading? Are these also appointed through the secretary?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—Are no official intermediaries below him?

*A.*—Yes. But if they appoint, they must get the sanction of the secretary.

*Q.*—So, every appointment is made through the secretary? That is a good arrangement?

*A.*—Yes.

*Mr. Saran.*—In answers to questions 8 and 12, different replies are given. There is a contradiction. In one case you give power to the management and in the other case to the Trade Unions?

*A.*—The answer to 8 refers to particular factories. So long as 12 is not brought into existence, the power must vest in the management. In answer to 12, I speak generally.

*Mr. Bakhale.*—Supposing Labour Exchanges are brought into existence. All factories are supplied through these Labour Exchanges and not through any other agency. Should it be obligatory or voluntary for the management to get their hands supplied through them?

*A.*—I should like to make it obligatory. The Exchange must be big enough to supply all labour necessary.

*Q.*—It means that the obligation is on both the sides. It is not even done in England.

*Mr. Saran.*—Suppose that the trade unions have the control,

*Mr. Bakhale.*—The Labour Exchange recommends the names, of persons for employment to the factories who are in need of hands. Beyond that the Labour Exchange does not do anything at all. Suppose the Trade Unions do not exist at all but only Labour Exchanges?

*A.*—I mean such things only for a future date, not for the present. If the secretary continues to make appointments, in course of time, he becomes a tyrant. I want the trade unions to regulate all appointments so that trouble and discontent can, to a great extent, be avoided.

*Chairman.*—(Reads answer to question 17.) Now you state individual examples?

*A.*—I have got the applications of the individuals.

*Q.*—I would like to have the names of the people who have been so degraded.

*A.*—Yes, I shall read them from the applications.

(reads.)

1. Gokharan Gosain. He was appointed on Rs. 10 but now he is getting Rs. 9.

						Rs.	a.	p.
2. Raman Khelari	...	10	0	0	reduced to	8	0	0
3. Ram Prasad	...	40	0	0	"	30	0	0
4. Kripa Rau ...	...	28	0	0	"	10	0	0
5. Surgan Singh ...	...	12	0	0	"	10	0	0
6. Chhotak Ram ...	...	14	0	0	"	10	0	0
7. Harihar Singh	...	14	0	0	"	10	0	0
8. Sarju Prasad Mistri	...	61	0	0	"	45	0	0
9. Jatadhari Singh	...	30	0	0	"	20	0	0
10. Lakshman Barhi	...	0	10	0	"	0	7	0
11. Mukhram Singh	...	11	0	0	"	10	0	0
12. Jugal Kishore Chandra	...	12	0	0	"	9	0	0
13. Hira Mistri Barhi	...	10	0	0	"	8	0	0
14. Baij Nath Singh	...	12	0	0	"	10	0	0
15. Bulak Chand Ram	...	10	0	0	"	8	0	0
16. Dukhlal Ram	...	16	0	0	"	9	0	0
17. Ram Ekbal Singh	...	20	0	0	"	15	0	0
18. Ram Bilas ...	...	12	0	0	"	10	0	0
19. Baleshwar ...	...	20	0	0	"	10	0	0
20. Jadu Mahto	...	12	0	0	"	10	0	0
21. Mahadeo Singh	...	34	0	0	"	14	0	0
22. Satrughan Prasad	...	25	0	0	"	20	0	0
23. Ram Bilas Singh	...	13	0	0	"	10	0	0
24. Ram Lakhan Prasad	...	20	0	0	"	15	0	0

*Chairman.*—Please give us a detailed list later on.

*Mr. Tookey.*—Have you enquired fully into these individual cases?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—Are the facts stated in those applications verified and ground correct?

*A.*—Of courses, yes.

*Mr. Tookey.*—Is it possible that the reductions that are now found are due to the fact that the local labour was found to be both efficient and sufficient and these labourers were given the option of leaving or working for a lesser wage and so the reductions are consequent on such action by the management?

*A.*—That is not the fact in these cases.

*Mr. Chandra.*—Have you got cases where an inferior or a subordinate is getting a higher salary than the superior officer?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—What may that be due to? Favouritism, communal or something?

*A.*—Yes, favouritism.

*Q.*—Have you also come across cases where junior men are taken in on some job on a better start than persons who are already there for a long period? If so, what would be the reason you suggest for such action?

*A.*—Yes, due to favouritism. Preference is given to Jains, particularly relatives of the Managing Agents over others. They are employed for high wages and learn the jobs from their subordinates.

*Q.*—Don't you think that in such cases the discipline of the work shop, the morale of the workers will be considerably affected?

*A.*—Yes.

*Mr. J. N. Lal.*—Give us a few instances, one or two.

*A.*—Panchand, Puran Chand, Nanchand, Rishav Chand, Jivan Das.

*Q.*—When did they get employment and on what scale of pay?

*A.*—Jivandas—he was appointed for Rs. 45 and now he is getting Rs. 200. Another man with nearly 30 years experience is getting only Rs. 30, and he is doing the same kind of job.

*Q.*—Can you give the Committee a list of such cases where undue favouritism has been shown, cases where experienced men have been superseded?

*A.*—Yes, we can give a list.



*Mr. Saran.*—What exactly is the nature of the Government machinery that will consider dismissals, etc.

*A.*—Let me give an illustration. In the educational department, if for some reason a teacher is dismissed the teacher can appeal to the Inspector and bring to his notice the action of the Committee and the Inspector can give a decision binding on the Committee. Some such machinery should be created. You may entrust the work to the District Magistrate, or another authority.

*Q.*—Would you like the management to dismiss the worker and then give the right to the worker to take his case to the Magistrate or you would not let the management dismiss him unless the matter has been heard by the Magistrate?

*A.*—I think, the management can dismiss in some cases. If the Magistrate feels that injustice has been done he may reinstate the worker or can order compensation.

*Q.*—If the management insists on dismissing the worker and the Magistrate wants him to be reinstated—then?

*A.*—Compensation should be paid to the worker.

*Chairman.*—Suppose for taking part in the activities of trade unions, a worker is dismissed by the management. The management has got rid of the worker. But the Magistrate wants reinstatement. The management refuses. How are you to solve the difficulty?

*A.*—I say that the authority set up for this purpose should have the discretion to order compensation in such cases.

*Mr. Bakhale.*—Do you think the employers will agree? How are they to get rid of the workers whom they do not want? If such a law is passed it cannot operate. The machinery that you set up cannot work. Your example of an educational Committee is quite different. The Committee is in that case below the Government Inspector. The District Boards and Local Boards are managing with the grants given by Government. That analogy cannot be applied in this case.

Witness proceeded to apply the same analogy of an educational Committee with reference to the dismissal of a student, and mentioned the rights of appeal the student possesses.

*Chairman.*—That case is also different from that of a worker in a factory. There is an employer to get work out of him. In a school that is not the case.

*Mr. Saran.*—So, when an employer does not want a man, he cannot be forced to have him. He cannot get work out of him. In that case how can you force the employer to pay compensation? Suppose also that the dismissal was not wrongful with reference to the employer. He does not want him now.

*Mr. Bakhale.*—In all cases of wrongful dismissals law is already there for the worker. The law would help him to get some remedy in a court of law.

*A.*—What I say is that there must be an authority to decide the right or wrong in cases of dismissals, compensation or re-instatement as the case may be. Unless a good case is made out he cannot be dismissed.

*Mr. Tookey.*—The employer is not satisfied with the man. Is that not a sufficient case?

*A.*—But he must give definite reasons.

*Chairman.*—Take the case of my personal servant. I dismiss him. How is the court to know whether it was wrongful or rightful?

*Mr. Saran.*—Industry cannot be run on such lines (*laughter*).

*Chairman.*—But, I must be free to employ my own man as a personal servant.

*Mr. Chandra.*—That is different question altogether. He is not to be controlled by law, while a factory worker has and ought to be.

*Chairman.*—I mean to say that when he raised the question of compensation for wrongful dismissal. How can you force a man to pay for a person whom he does not want any more?

*Mr. Bakhale.*—Also specific performance is impossible in his case, in re-instatement.

*Mr. Saran.*—You cannot dismiss him rightaway. You can only suspend him until the proper authorities make their enquiries and decide the issue.

*Witness.*—Yes. The ultimate decision should be from the Magistrate.

*Mr. Bakhale.*—Let us come to specific instances. Suppose an employer wants to get rid of a man for his activities with the trade unions. What happens then? Is the court to order reinstatement or compensation?

*A.*—It all depends on particular circumstances. A third party must adjudicate in the rightness or wrongness of the dismissal.

*Mr. Saran.*—Therefore until that decision, he should be only suspended. This should be the course to be provided for?

*A.*—Yes.

*Mr. Bakhale.*—Then the whole thing comes to this. You take away the power of dismissal from the management altogether. You pay him compensation. I think suspension means that?

*Mr. Saran.*—No.

*Mr. Bakhale.*—Yes, it must mean that and nothing else. The payment of compensation is done even under ordinary law. People do not generally sue, that is all. I am not speaking about the harmony in a factory. I only mean that the proposed object in view will be frustrated.

*Witness.*—There must be an arbitration.

*Chairman.*—The Committee will think about the arbitration and the necessary powers, and suggest definite rules about it.

*Witness.*—Say, a week suspension may be restored to instead of dismissal outright.

*Chairman.*—Coming to question no. 28 you have stated in your answer.....(*reads the answer*). Please try to give me some details, specific instances.

*A.*—I shall place the information later on. (*Witness noted down what was wanted.*)

*Mr. Chandra.*—You have stated in reference to question no. 29 that there are instances of fines. Are you aware that they are entered in any register as required by the Payment of Wages Act?

*A.*—This season there is no system of fines. Formerly there used to be. There was no register kept.

*Q.*—You have said about reduction in respect of medical aid. Is medical aid free?

*A.*—That is free.

*Chairman.*—Fines are utilised for charity, you have said. They are not entered in a separate book and kept as a separate fund?

*A.*—Regular registers are not kept.

*Q.*—Are you for abolishing fines altogether?

*A.*—Yes.

*Mr. Tookey.*—If there are no fines imposed on the employees are you for stronger action, i.e., stronger punishment?

*A.*—The difficulty is that if fines are allowed, the tendency will be that even without sufficient cause and for even trivial matters they will begin to fine. That, I think, will be too bad.

*Chairman.*—Fines are utilised for charity. What sort of charity?

*A.*—The charity is there but that does not benefit the public, that is all (*laughter*).

*Chairman.*—Have there been cases in your factory where a worker is made to work for a certain period and the wages for that period have not been paid. Say during a suspension or something like that?

A.—You mean overtime? Yes, there are cases where he works extra and is not paid.

Chairman.—No, that is not what I mean. (*Chairman repeated the question.*)

A.—No such cases.

Chairman.—Take question no. 34, I would like you to give me the shifts that prevail in your factory?

A.—Shifts?

Q.—Yes, you have given, 2 to 10, 10 to 6 and 6 to 2. Is there no interval between one shift and the other?

Mr. Saran.—He is referring to continuous shifts.

A.—In our case it is continuous, till the other batch comes and takes charge.

Mr. Chandra.—Six to 2 in the night, is it? then 2 to 10 and 10 to 6? In North Bihar, we found that they started at 8 A.M. and ended at 12 in the night which shift ends in the morning. They have got three shifts 8 to 4, 4 to 12 in the night and then 12 to 8. There are the starting and ending times. Your times are pretty inconvenient to the workers? Ordinarily in sugar mills we are told they start at 8 A.M. In the Tatas they have got 6 A.M. to 2 P.M., 2 P.M. to 10 A.M. and 10 P.M. to 6 P.M.

(*Witness noted these facts.*)

Mr. Chandra.—Which of these do you prefer?

A.—North Bihar times are preferable. They are better for the workers, in my opinion.

Chairman.—Now, you have suggested that the reduction in the working hours will mean employment for more hands and relief for the other workers (*reads the answer given by the witness in the memoranda*). Thus, reduction of hours of work and employment of more will mean more expense. Is it not so?

A.—Yes, I do not want reduction of wages.

Mr. Bakhale.—You want the same wages for lower hours of work? Then it means additional cost of labour on the part of the manufacturers and additional cost of sugar.

A.—Yes.

Mr. Bakhale.—There are three elements in the manufacture of sugar. There is the cost of sugarcane, then the payment to the labourers, and thirdly, the profit of the management. You want the 1st and the 2nd to be increased and the profit item to be reduced. To what extent?

A.—I want only 6 hours work daily.

*Mr. Bakhale.*—So that means nearly 25 per cent increase in the cost of manufacture?

A.—I do not think so, it all depends on the percentage of labour cost to the total expenditure.

*Mr. Chandra.*—It comes to nearly 1 pice increase.

*Mr. Saran.*—Do you want the workers to work 8 hours a day with one months privilege leave or do you want them to work 6 hours with no privilege leave?

A.—I want 6 hours work and one month's privilege leave.  
(*Laughter.*)

*Chairman.*—In this factory you have 8 months privilege leave.  
(*Continued laughter.*)

*Mr. Saran.*—Which do you prefer? 6 hours without any leave?

A.—6 hours.

Q.—Don't you think that one month's rest is better than 2 hours rest daily?

A.—No, two hours rest a day is better than one month's rest.

*Mr. Bakhale.*—Do you like such a system to be introduced for the whole of India or are you speaking for one province only?

*Mr. Chandra.*—We are not taking into account all other provinces.

Q.—Have you come across cases where the people are made to work two shifts in the course of 24 hours?

A.—Yes, they have to work two shifts when duty changes, say, workers in shift 6-2 go out at 2 and come for the 10-6 shift.

*Mr. J. N. Lal.*—Regarding overtime wages you have stated they are not paid?

A.—Yes, there is no separate rate for over-time and no demand has been put forward so far as the workers were not conscious of their rights.

*Mr. Chandra.*—Suppose a man due to arrive for a shift does not come. His colleague working in the shift goes up and picks up his ticket also and does the work of his colleague and thus earns for himself and for the other worker, and they mutually agree to share it. The factory is not aware that the second worker is absent and that the 1st worker has put in over-time. How do you prevent that?

A.—Can it be prevented when two such workers agree mutually?

*Chairman.*—(*Reads the answer to question no. 42 given by the witness in the memorandum.*) Try to make it a little clearer.

A.—Some particular kind of work, say, dangerous machinery.

Mr. Chandra.—Where loose clothing is not allowed?

Witness.—Here they are not supplying any clothing, though they have agreed to supply.

Chairman.—It is this kind of thing that you have referred to in the answer?

A.—Yes.

Mr. Saran.—Also those where there is injury to health.

Chairman.—What is the kind of work that requires special dress in a sugar factory?

A.—Sulphur, filter, press, etc. The *Donga coolies* who unload the cane also require special clothing. They have to remain exposed to the wintry nights.

Q.—What other kinds of work?

A.—Those who work on the centrifugal, engines, etc.

Chairman.—Referring to question no. 43 give us a few instances where cases of accidents have occurred and no action has been taken by the management.

A.—(Witness noted down the point, and said that he would supply the list later on.)

Q.—Read the answer to question no. 47. Here it seems to me that you are confusing the Factories Act with the other law that relates to Trade Unions.

A.—I mean there only the payment of over-time wages.

Q.—But the question is definite (reads the question). Can you give us some instances of such evasion of the Factory Act?

Mr. Chandra.—Non-payment of wages would come under the Wages Act, I think.

Chairman.—Non-payment of wages is one thing.

A.—The Act requires that it should be regularly paid. Months pass before payments are actually made.

Q.—How long?

A.—Sometimes even two months.

Q.—Another thing is the Workmens' Compensation Act. The factories have to report. So long as they keep the worker it is alright. But here you say that they are making the persons wait, some times months, before payment is made?

A.—Yes, they first transfer it to a suspense account and it takes weeks and weeks to re-transfer the amount to the other account.

Q.—But there is the Factory Inspector who visits the factory from time to time and through him such kinds of mismanagement can be rectified?

A.—The Inspectors generally do not know either the rules or the laws. They pay flying visits, that is all. I do not think they visit very often. They go and sit with the management. They have no touch with the workers at all.

Mr. J. N. Lal.—Have you any specific suggestions to make as to the amendment of the Factory Act?

A.—Yes, but I cannot give the details here.

Q.—Draw attention to some important changes that you want to be made.

A.—I have suggested something, e.g., security of services, etc.

Q.—Nothing more?

A.—It is a bit difficult to say now.

Mr. Chandra.—Do you want the scope of the Factories Act to be extended to include persons employed on non-power plants?

A.—One thing particularly I want to mention is about recruitment of labour.

Mr. Saran.—Do I take it from the reply to question no. 47, that you like the Subdivisional Officer to be deprived of the powers of factory inspection?

A.—I say that they must be made more efficient. Some of them do not know even the tenancy laws, which they have to administer. (Laughter.)

Mr. Bakhale.—You have suggested that payment of wages should be made weekly? In most of the factories the demand is that it should be made monthly. You know that most accounts are discharged only monthly, say the milkman, the house rent, etc. Do you really mean that payment should be made 4 times a week?

A.—Yes.

Mr. Chandra.—Or, do you want only weekly advances to be made to meet the necessary expenditure and the payment of the wages, as such to be made only monthly?

A.—Yes, weekly advances would be better.

Mr. Bakhale.—The question is as to how exactly are the payments to be made.

A.—They should be calculated on a monthly basis and paid actually weekly.

Q.—Do you know that generally the workers do not like weekly payments at all? They are all for having monthly payments. How is it that you hold a different view?

A.—Weekly advances may be made.

Q.—That is a different thing altogether. There were weekly payments. The Government of India instituted an enquiry some years ago with regard to the payment of wages and came to the conclusion on the basis of the evidence that generally people like to get monthly wages. The case in Europe is different. There every payment is made weekly. So the wages are also paid weekly. But in India we make payments only every month. Therefore, monthly wage system would be more suited to India.

Mr. Chandra.—He means that the basis should of course, be monthly and wants some weekly payments to be also made, say in the nature of an advance.

A.—Yes.

Chairman.—Now with regard to the fixing of minimum wage, what are the items you would like to take into consideration in arriving at a minimum wage?

A.—I think I have given that somewhere in my answer. Yes, in answer to question no. 60.

Q.—The Chairman pointed out that the answer is not intelligible.

A.—(Witness read the items enumerated in the answer.) A fair living wage—expenses for food and clothing, marriage, birth, death, housing, etc.

Chairman.—For how many persons should one worker be provided for?

A.—Himself, his wife and three children. .

Q.—Altogether 5. What is the amount required?

A.—The minimum amount according to the standard of our people would be Rs. 20 a month.

Q.—But you have also said that in no case should the sum go down below Rs. 15.

A.—Yes, if the management could not afford to pay Rs. 20, it must at least pay Rs. 15 as minimum wage.

Mr. Saran.—Now you are taking the capacity of the industry to pay and in the previous case you considered the cost of living?

A.—Labour legislation should cover all these points. In the latter case it may be difficult if the wage is fixed at Rs. 20. So the capacity of the industry must be taken and they should be made to pay at least Rs. 15.



Mr. Bakhale.—Your Rs. 20 is confined to sugar industry alone?

A.—Yes.

Chairman.—The minimum wage you suggest, how does it compare with the wages in the villages round about? What does a field labourer get?

A.—He is getting 4 annas ordinarily and sometimes 5 annas to 6 annas plus two meals, that is one seer of rice or *sattu*.

Q.—That is what an agricultural labourer near about Bihta gets?

A.—Yes, different kinds of labour and different wages. But this is an average. In sugarcane plantations they get 4 annas.

Q.—Suppose I have 2 bighas of land, how much will I have to pay a labourer?

A.—You will have to pay at least 4 annas exclusive of meals.

Q.—This is for a spade worker?

A.—Yes, 4 annas to 6 annas and two meals.

Q.—Some work there is also carried on by women and boys. How much do they get?

A.—Well, they get 2 annas and one meal.

Q.—Now, taking the sugar plantation worker, how many hours a day does he work in the fields?

A.—He works 6 hours.

Q.—The spade worker also works 6 hours a day?

A.—Yes. Three hours in the morning and 3 hours in the evening. The lot of these people cannot be improved due to the increase of population and the consequent unemployment. It is also to some extent due to the paying capacity of the employer. In the harvesting season, he gets *bojha* and *panja*.

Chairman.—That is altogether different. We are here trying to compare the agricultural wages with those of the factory. I hope the factory wages are any day higher than the agricultural wages?

A.—Of course yes, near Bihta, any way.

Chairman.—Can you give the difference between the wages of a Bihar factory worker and a field worker of Bihta?

A.—You want them in percentage?

Q.—No, give it in annas and pies.

A.—At present the minimum wage a factory worker gets and what a field worker gets is almost the same.

Q.—You mean the Rs. 11?

A.—Yes, a field labourer also ordinarily gets Rs. 11 a month.

Q.—According to 4 annas and 2 meals a day?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You generally agree that factory wages, if, a minimum is fixed, are better than the field workers wages?

A.—Yes, in cases where there is continuous employment in the factory also.

Q.—In the case of the field workers how many days do you think he works in a month?

A.—Say twenty to twenty-five days.

Q.—So the workers are employed more or less regularly?

A.—In the Bihta locality, yes.

Q.—So their wages can more or less be calculated on a monthly basis?

A.—Yes.

Q.—In the case of the factory it is for 4 or 5 months and calculated 30 days for each month. Then it will make a difference of something like 33 per cent, probably even more. So a field worker ordinarily gets 2/3rd of a factory worker, in the Bihta area?

A.—Yes, that is correct.

Q.—With regard to these wages, I think you are not correctly informed?

A.—In our locality it is true.

Q.—Do you contend that the capacity of the employer should be also considered and that when he is better off, the condition of the workers should be bettered? Do you want him to be a sharer in production?

Mr. Chandra.—As a major partner.

A.—Yes.

Mr. Saran.—How are you to fix the minimum wage?

A.—Well the Government should fix them taking into account all these factors, according to the general conditions and circumstances.

Q.—Suppose the others do not agree to that, what happens?

A.—The Government should fix a minimum wage and enforce it. It must be regulated according to the fall or rise in prices. A Board

must do the work. It must always be above the minimum fixed, never below. If there is a general boom, then the Government may alter. Not until then.

Q.—Considerations there will be in respect of particular factories. How can you expect the Government to take into account all these instances before they take action?

A.—Some such machinery and methods must be set up.

Q.—Suppose a factory is not able to pay. Do you want it to be closed or go a little down the minimum and pay the wages and carry on the work?

A.—It must be closed and the Government must take it up.

Q.—Do you like it to be closed or pay some starvation wages, and somehow keep on working?

A.—If it cannot pay the minimum wage, it must be closed down.

Q.—Then you are for the collapse of the industry as a whole and would not allow it to continue under any circumstances and work paying some wages below the minimum, say even in emergencies? What about the field workers? Instead of paying 4 annas one may be able to pay 2 annas and carry on the work?

A.—I want a minimum wage to be fixed for the field workers also.

*Mr. Bakhale.*—There is yet another point of view. There are factories that make profits and pay dividends. What you call a Dividend Equalization Fund is sometimes set up. When the industry makes a large profit in a certain period, instead of paying greater dividends, a certain amount of money which they call the Dividend Equalization Fund, is set apart, something like a reserve. This Fund is kept at a certain figure. They draw upon this Fund in cases of adverse years. Would you like some such Wages Equalization Fund to be set up and thus maintain the wage level under depressed conditions?

A.—I don't know anything about that. I think it is a concern of the Company?

*Mr. Bakhale.*—No, if suppose a definite charge is made on the industry?

*Chairman.*—Does it mean something paid out of the wages of the labourers for the benefit of the workers of to-morrow?

*Mr. Bakhale.*—No. It is really the profit of a particular year exceeding the average profit and this is set apart. It has nothing to do with the wages at all. This is to maintain the minimum wage in times of distress and the like.

*Witness.*—It may be done.

*Chairman.*—As regards rationalization, you could not say whether there are any schemes within the factory. You have given your answer (*reads the answer*). Rationalization is different from victimization. It means introduction of new machinery in order to reduce the cost of production and consequently reduction in the number of hands employed.

*Mr. Saran.*—It is also called intensification of labour, that is reducing the cost of manufacture by reducing the number of hands. One such method is by introducing machinery to do the work now done by manual labour.

*Chairman.*—Do you or do you not like that kind of thing?

*A.*—I do not like it. The wages will go down. It may also result in unemployment. If at all, it must be introduced after taking into account the cases of re-employment also. Those who lose their jobs as a consequence of intensification should be compensated.

*Chairman.*—Take for example the loading and unloading of cane. It pays the employer to set up cranes to do the work. Suppose the number of men is reduced and cranes are set up; what do you say to that? Mind you it pays the employer to set up machinery to do the work.

*A.*—Some method should be found out to absorb the workers who are turned out. The question must be thoroughly examined by the Government.

*Chairman.*—Have you some across any diseases due to malnutrition?

*A.*—Yes. There have been cases of T. B.

*Mr. Chandra.*—It may also be due to work in the factory? Not necessarily malnutrition? Have there been several cases?

*A.*—No. Only very few cases. It is so difficult to find out how many have got diseases.

*Q.*—I find that there is often a medical officer, qualified or unqualified. What are his duties. For what purpose do the workers go to the doctor?

*A.*—They go to the doctor for medical certificates for leave. Very often the medical officer refuses.

*Mr. Saran.*—Also for accidents, I suppose?

*A.*—Yes. Generally we find that the doctors are sympathetic to the workers.

*Q.*—Would you like an agency to be appointed to look to the medical aid of the workers?

*A.*—Yes.

*Mr. Saran.*—You have said, you are in favour of sickness insurance?

*A.*—The employer should make some contribution. At least the contribution for medical aid should not be levied from men getting below a certain salary.

*Q.*—What is the limit you fix?

*A.*—Say, below Rs. 30 should be exempted from payment.

*Chairman.*—Does it not come to a reduction of wages then? To that extent?

*A.*—It will mean some relief also. Where there is free medical aid by the employers, it should continue. Only in other cases should contribution be levied.

*Q.*—Should not the employer also contribute something?

*A.*—Yes, he also must be made to pay his share.

*Mr. J. N. Lal.*—Is there any private school being maintained by the management?

*A.*—No, they have not started it yet.

*Q.*—No reading room?

*A.*—No.

*Q.*—The Union, has it started any adult school?

*A.*—No, the Union is only just begun. We have not attempted that yet. It proposes to pay attention to that also.

*Chairman.*—Can you give some idea of the number of people who have got houses? I want some more definite detail. Out of about 1,600 workers how many are accommodated in houses?

*A.*—About 400, accommodated by the factory. The 1,200 have no accommodation. Some 60 people are of the locality. All the rest are from outside. Some live in rented houses, others by railway lines, huts, etc.

*Q.*—Do the factory pay any rent for those who live in rented houses?

*A.*—No. The management have agreed to pay, but they have not so far done anything.

*Q.*—How much are the labourers paying as rent, do you know?

*A.*—Say, about Rs. 3 a month. The management have agreed to pay only 8 annas a month.

*Mr. Saran.*—Do you find the workers living in shifts?

*A.*—No, that is not done in our place. They have no facilities at all. 4, 5, 6 persons live in a small room. In a large hall some 50, 60, 70 persons live.

*Mr. J. N. Lal.*—Is it a fact that there is some scheme for extension of further housing facilities for the labourers in the factory?

*A.*—Of course, I have seen the marks of the quarters to be built. But nothing has been so far done. It may be a scheme after all.

*Q.*—How do you find the factory quarters?

*A.*—Very bad.

*Chairman.*—We have found them to be better than most of the other factories, why do you say they are very bad.

*A.*—I am positive; they are not at all convenient.

*Chairman.*—With regard to indebtedness, have you made any investigation into the cases of workers?

*A.*—I think, with reference to the Bihta factory no indebtedness exists. What they take from the *bazar* they pay off when they get their pay. There is only credit, no indebtedness.

*Chairman.*—(Reads answer to question no. 100.) Has there not been award of compensation in cases of accidents?

*A.*—So far as I have enquired, there has been no case of payment of compensation for accidents. There may have been cases of accidents; they may not have been reported at all.

*Q.*—Serious action could be taken if such cases are not reported. The labourers can take action.

*A.*—How would they dare take action?

*Chairman.*—It is their right.

*A.*—The assertion of that right is difficult. Mostly they are not conscious of their rights. They might not have made any enquiries for fear of losing the job.

*Chairman.*—Now, coming to the Trade Unions, how are you spending the subscription of 2 annas that you collect from the members of your Unions? How do you propose to spend it?

*A.*—We have received subscription for the month of January. The amount is not very much. We have not yet formulated any scheme either.

*Q.*—It is nearly 150 rupees?

*A.*—Yes.

*Mr. Chandra.*—Do you desire that the subscription may be realised by the employers and paid to the Union?

*A.*—No, I do not like that method.

*Chairman.*—Now, in answer to the last question you have stated (*reads the answer*). Give me the reasons which have lead you to that conclusion?

*A.*—Our experience is that. I did not mean the present Government.

*Mr. Chandra.*—The present Government came into existence in 1937, and you have discussed matters of 1938.

*Chairman.*—We are not blaming your answer or the conclusions. I only want the data which lead you to such conclusion.

*Witness mentioned strikes and began to cite a few instances where, in his opinion, the Government were taking sides with the employers.*

*He concluded by saying that some method of arbitration should be arrived at after careful and impartial investigation. The aid of the Government should be to bring in a peaceful settlement. Some machinery to that effect should be brought into existence.*

The Committee resumed its sitting at the Riga Station, Riga, on the 2nd February 1939.

The following members were present :—

- |                        |     |                                    |
|------------------------|-----|------------------------------------|
| 1. Mr. R. R. Bakhale   | ... | <i>Deputy Chairman, Presiding.</i> |
| 2. Dr. R. K. Mukherjee | ... | <i>Member.</i>                     |
| 3. Mr. H. B. Chandra   | ... | <i>Member.</i>                     |
| 4. Mr. J. N. Lal       | ... | <i>Member.</i>                     |
| 5. Prof. R. K. Saran   | ... | <i>Secretary.</i>                  |

**Oral evidence of Thakur Yogul Kishore Sinha, Secretary of the Riga Labour Union, Riga.**

*Mr. Bakhale.*—What is your name? What do you do? When you started this Union? How many workers are in the Union?

*A.*—My name is Thakur Yugal Kishore Sinha. I am the Secretary of the Labour Union. I am a Congressman and live at Sitamarhi. The union was started in September 1938. Almost all the workers of the factory unanimously formed the union and there are 17 members in the Working Committee. A general meeting of the workers was held in which these members of the Working Committee were elected. Re.1 annually is the subscription for annual members. Up till now only 11 members have paid their subscriptions. Others have promised to pay.

*Q.*—When did you hold your General meeting in which you were elected Secretary?

*A.*—I was elected General Secretary in the meeting held on the 25th September 1938.

*Mr. Saran.*—Is your union registered under the Trade Unions Act?

*A.*—No, it is not yet registered but there is a proposal to get it registered shortly.

*Mr. Bakhale.*—Have you had any meeting of the Managing Committee so far held?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—What do you do in the Managing Committee?

*A.*—We framed the general constitution of the union and appointed sub-committee to enrol more members of the union.

*Q.*—What is the official address of the unions?

*A.*—Riga P. O.



*Q.*—Is your union recognised by the employers?

*A.*—As the Secretary of the union I had been corresponding with the manager with reasonable response but since recently I am not getting any reply so much so that on the 1st of January Dr. Ramashis Thakur, M.L.A., who is the President of the union wrote a letter to the Manager demanding redress of some grievances of the labourers in the form of a representation on behalf of the union directly but he has not received any reply to the representation up till now.

*Mr. Chandra.*—Where is the President of the union?

*A.*—He has gone to Calcutta this morning.

*Mr. Bakhale.*—Have you compared wages of this factory with the wages of other factories?

*A.*—As far as I have been able to gather from reading the newspaper regarding the minimum wages as contained in some of the awards of the conciliation boards, I think the wage level here is lower than at other factories.

*Q.*—Are you in favour of getting these wages standardised? Do you think it possible?

*A.*—Yes, I think it is possible so far as I can see.

*Mr. Saran.*—You have stated in your memorandum that the workers work for full 12 hours but yet they get very low wages. Is that so?

*A.*—Yes, it is so.

*Q.*—You have said that there are cases of corruption in the factories, What do you exactly mean?

*A.*—The workers who were in employment in previous year are not as a rule engaged in the current year. To re-engage old hands in this factory there is great difficulty and the question of illegal gratification comes in.

*Q.*—Do you mean to say that it is a general practice?

*A.*—No, it is not a general practice, so far as I know.

*Mr. Chandra.*—How many of those who were engaged last year are not working this year?

*A.*—The number is large but I cannot say exactly.

*Q.*—Suppose there are 500 workers. How many are those who were working last year?

*A.*—I cannot give you exact figures.

*Mr. Saran.*—You say that there are 21 demands of the workers which you submitted to the employers in your representation. Can you give the copy of the same?

A.—I did not submit any representation but the workers did it. I have not got it but I can supply it afterwards. I wrote to the employers to give us the copy but they did not reply to it. Workers have got no copy with them.

*Mr. Saran.*—You say that some members of the union have resigned and have formed a separate union. Why is this?

A.—I have never said that they have formed a separate union. The reason of resignation, as they say, is that the interest of the workers clashes with that of the staff and those who have resigned are chiefly heads of the departments.

Q.—My question is that you say that some members have resigned. These are those who are skilled workers or are of higher staff and the ordinary workers have not resigned.

A.—Yes that is so. Heads of the departments have resigned. They are 2 in number. They willingly did so and have not formed another union. They were afraid in the beginning that this union was formed for political purposes under the presidentship of Dr. Ramashis Thakur, M.L.A. Later on the doctor saw the management and explained the aims and objects to the manager and extended his good wishes. Then we got the co-operation of the workers of all sections. But after some time it was said that the workers wanted separate union. They were impressed about the futility of another union and the agitation subsided. They did not do anything against us.

*Mr. Saran.*—Have your demands changed since that time?

A.—Before the preparation of the memorandum, I wrote a letter to the management that I wanted in our memorandum, to give the report of the grievances that had been redressed but when they did not reply I gave some of the grievances in the memorandum. I do not think there has been any change in it.

*Mr. Jagat Lal.*—You have mentioned in your memorandum that there are no rules like those of the Government for appointment or dismissal. Do you mean to say that so far as dismissal is concerned it is done without any notice and without some explanation?

A.—Yes, the labourer who is dismissed is not given any opportunity to explain his conduct. One Shital Prasad Singh was dismissed but he was not given any opportunity to explain the charges brought against him.

Q.—Can you give instances of the victimisation of labourers? Have you given it in the representation on behalf of the labour union?

A.—No cases of victimisation have come to my knowledge so far.

Q.—You have also mentioned that compensation is not paid to the workers in case of an injury?

A.—Yes, there was one Mr. Hussain who got his leg fractured. When he came back from the hospital after some months his leg had shortened and so he was removed from his previous post and was given a post of small salary. Prior to his being injured he was getting Rs. 17 but after his injury he was appointed on Rs. 10 only.

Dr. Mukherjee.—Under the rules of the Workmens' Compensation Act a worker who has been declared unfit by the medical authority cannot be given the same post after unfitness and the same scale of wages. This man Hussain was declared unfit by the Medical Officer for the post in which he was working and therefore he was made to suffer.

A.—I have no knowledge of it.

Mr. J. N. Lal.—You have said that there are twelve hours of work and the average wage is annas three a day under the contract system.

A.—Yes, some *coolies* get Rs. 7 per month under the contract. Those who are gate-keepers and work for twelve hours continually get only Rs. 8 per month.

Dr. Mukherjee.—You have said that certain *coolies* were dismissed because they refused to work at the rate of twelve hours?

A.—Yes, that is so. I introduced those labourers before you. I have said that the contract system should be abolished because the contractors take from the factory annas 7 per head but they actually pay at the rate of annas 6 to these *coolies* and make profit at the cost of the labourers. Similar is the case with mates. They do not look to the interest of the *coolies*. The employment of the labourers is in the hands of the mates. They get money from the labourer as bribe and only then they employ him. So far as the question of supervision by the mates is concerned I have no objection. But this much I should like to say that they should not be given the power of employing *coolies*.

Mr. Chandra.—Are you in favour of the abolition of the contract system?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How many people work in the contract system?

A.—About hundred or so.

Q.—Then would you suggest that out of 100 people 60 may be taken as permanent staff and the rest may be regarded as daily *coolies*.

A.—Yes, in some proportion like that to suit the need of the company.

Q.—Can you give us any idea of cases that have not been redressed?

A.—Yes, they are about housing, etc.

Q.—To what extent wages should be increased?

A.—We suggest for the present that the grade should be at least Rs. 10. That is the general demand.

Q.—Is there any other labour association?

A.—I know that there is no such labour association and if there be any such thing, it would be only a tool in the hands of the employers and I do not think it to be a representative one.

The Committee resumed its sitting at the Riga Station, Riga, on the 2nd February, 1939.

The following members were present :—

- |                        |     |                                    |
|------------------------|-----|------------------------------------|
| 1. Mr. R. R. Bakhale   | ... | <i>Deputy Chairman, Presiding.</i> |
| 2. Dr. R. K. Mukherjee | ... | <i>Member.</i>                     |
| 3. Mr. H. B. Chandra   | ... | <i>Member.</i>                     |
| 4. Mr. J. N. Lal       | ... | <i>Member.</i>                     |
| 5. Prof. R. K. Saran   | ... | <i>Secretary.</i>                  |

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**Oral evidence of Mr. N. C. Kumar, Head Clerk, Belsund Sugar Factory, Riga.**

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*Mr. Bakhale.*—May I know your name?

*A.*—My name is N. C. Kumar. I am a Head Clerk in the Factory. I have read up to B.Sc. and B.Com. standards. I have been a Head Clerk since the last 5 years. I held several meetings and have informed the management of 21 grievances.

*Q.*—Is there any union of some name of which you are an office bearer?

*A.*—We have no such union as yet. Practically all the labourers are the members of the employees' Association which I propose to start independently. They do not pay any contribution.

*Q.*—When the members do not pay any contribution, how can you say that you have formed an Association?

*A.*—It is only in the initial stages. We are making an attempt to make it properly organised.

*Q.*—Have you formed any constitution for your Association?

*A.*—I have not yet formed any rules or constitution for our Association.

*Q.*—How were you elected the Secretary of the Union?

*A.*—The members elected me by means of votes at a meeting held in January 1939.

*Q.*—What is your idea of forming an Association?

*A.*—My idea is to form an Association with the labourers who are to be the members of that body. I do not like to have outsiders. I think that if the Association is formed, the grievances of the labourers could be redressed by agreements with the employers and not through strikes.

Q.—What would be your action if the workers demanded annas 7 or annas 8 a day and the management refused by peaceful negotiations to agree?

A.—It would be possible to exercise our right to strike but I have every reason to believe that all our justifiable grievances could be removed by peaceful negotiation without resorting to strikes and without interference from or influence of outsiders.

Q.—What is your opinions on minimum wage?

A.—I should say that a rate of  $5\frac{1}{2}$  annas is adequate and would satisfy the workers.

Q.—How many meetings of the Managing Committee were held?

A.—No meeting has so far been held.

Q.—Is your union registered under the Trade Unions' Act?

A.—No, it is not registered.

Q.—How many members have paid subscriptions?

A.—Subscriptions have not been paid as yet.

Q.—Do you know there is any other union besides yourselves?

A.—Yes, there is and I was a Vice-President of that Union, but I have resigned because in the first place, there were many outsiders and my objection was that there should be no outsiders. There were 8 outsiders and nine workers of the mill. The management dismisses a labourer without the consent of the Union. We want that all dismissals should be approved by the Union; that should be the procedure in every case. If a person is wrongfully dismissed, the Union can take action. The Union will not take action if any one is rightly dismissed.

Q.—In this sort of Union, will you be able to resort to strikes?

A.—Yes if necessary.

The Committee resumed its sitting in the Dak Bangalow, Gopalgunj on the 28th January 1939.

The following members were present :—

1. Mr. R. R. Bakhale ... Deputy Chairman, Presiding.
2. Dr. R. K. Mukherjee ... Member.
3. Mr. H. B. Chandra ... Member.
4. Prof. R. K. Saran ... Secretary.

### Summary of the oral evidence of Babu Nathuni Singh, Secretary Labour Union, Gopalgunj (Chapra).

The name of the Union is Gopalgunj Subdivisional Congress Labour Union. It has been established since a month. It has not been registered. I am the Secretary of the Union. I do not get pay from the Union. I am a cultivator by profession. The yearly subscription of the Union is anna 2. I am not a labourer myself. It has been named Congress Union because Babu Kamala Rai who is an influential Congress man founded this Union and it is run on Congress lines. There are about one thousand members in the Union. They belong to four factories of the locality. We have got about 75 rupees from subscription. The money is deposited with a *mahajan* and it is not in the Bank. I have read up to the Matric standard. The members are distributed as follows :—

	Mill.
1. Sidhwalia ... ..	125
2. Hathwa ... ..	300
3. Sasamusa ... ..	250
4. Gopalgunj ... ..	250

We have also got a Managing Committee consisting of 15. I have framed the rules of the Union but it is not yet printed. In the beginning this Union was formed with 75 members and by and by members increased to about 1,000. We have got three general rules. Firstly, to get our grievances redressed by peaceful and non-violent means. Secondly, to remain united and thirdly to organise the labourers. I have got some list of members but I have not got the register here. I give them receipts for the subscription realised. The *pucca* receipts are being printed which I will give them afterwards. Four or 5 meetings of the Managing Committee have been held. First meeting was held at

Harakhua in which three or four labourers working in Sribishnu Sugar Mills attended. In the second meeting the number increased to 60 or 75. In the third meeting the number increased to 150 and in the fourth meeting the number increased to 400. In all these meetings the workers who attended were threatened with dismissal, fines, etc. The Chemists of the Factory tried to dissuade the workers from joining the Union. The leaders of the workers were also asked not allow their workers to join the meeting. At Sidhwalia at the time of the meeting there was no interference directly but indirectly they were disturbed. Those workers who were inside the Factory were threatened and the employers told them not to join these meetings because the organisers of the meetings were not doing for their good. At Sasamusa there was the same case. The employers said that they would inform the police and they would be arrested. We, the organisers of the meeting, told the workers that we were doing for their good and if they thought it good they might accept.

Asked by Mr. Chandra whether any workers were turned out for attending the meeting the witness said that the workers were turned out under some pretexts, e.g., that they had taken away sugar, they had spoiled some machinery and so on. But the real cause was their attending the meeting. The clerks of the Factory also interfered by clapping and making noises, etc.

At Sasamusa the Factory is owned by a Mohammadan and there also some Mohammadans became member. The employers asked the Mohammadans not to join the Union otherwise they would be dismissed. At this time the Labour Enquiry Committee came and while the people were disturbing the meeting I explained to the workers that I was doing for their own good and if they thought it reasonable they should follow us and resort to peaceful strike for their demands. I teach them unity among themselves.

*Mr. Bakhale.*—Now we come to hours of work. What are hours of work and what are your demands regarding the hours of work?

*A.*—In these Factories works are taken generally for 9 to 10 hours but in some Factories there are 11 and 12 hours also. Over and above this, there are overtime works and the employers do not pay for the overtime. I have passed a resolution regarding the hours of work. The hours should be six hours and for overtime work they should be paid  $1\frac{1}{2}$  times on average wages. I think the workers may also accept to work for eight hours but in certain places such as near the boilers, the steam, the settling pan, the filter, or the juice extracting plant, it would not be possible for them to work for more than six hours. Formerly on these places workers used to work in batches of 12 or 13 but now it has been reduced to 5 or 6 (at Harkhua). In the too hot or too cold places we cannot work for more than six hours.

*Mr. Mukherjee.*—Is there any wage cut?

*A.*—Sometimes wages are cut. It is not written on the register but if a man is to be punished he is marked absent when he goes out for responding to the call of nature or for any other necessity. He is made



to work for the whole day and is not given anything for that day. This is the rule. This is done even when the *sirdar* gives us leave to go out. Only when we get our wages we come to know of this. Formerly when we used to come back after the off season, we were employed but now we are not employed. The minimum wage of the workers must be at least Rs. 15. Some of the workers were turned out on the pretext of being old. At the time of our appointment we have to pay a rupee or two as a bribe to the Time-keepers in ready cash. They take it secretly. The Chemists and the Time-keepers are in league with one another. If any worker is injured while on work, no medical relief is given and the wages for the period the worker sits at home on account of the injury are cut.

We are in favour of the formation of Labour Unions so that atrocities on the labourers may be lessened. The Union should be entirely in charge of the labourers. Our demand is that hours of work should be reduced but the wages should remain at Rs. 15. Another grievance is that the workers are paid different wages for the same kind of work they do.

The Committee resumed its sitting in the Dak Bungalow, Gopalganj, on the 28th January 1939.

The following members were present :—

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|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Mr. R. R. Bakhale   | <i>Deputy Chairman, Presiding.</i> |
| 2. Dr. R. K. Mukherjee | ... <i>Member.</i>                 |
| 3. Mr. H. B. Chandra   | ... <i>Member.</i>                 |
| 4. Prof. R. K. Saran   | ... <i>Secretary.</i>              |

**Summary of the oral evidence of Messrs. Bindhyachal Prasad, Sarjug Prasad Mokhtars and Babu Nathuni Singh, Gopalganj.**

We have submitted replies to the questionnaire issued by the Bihar Labour Enquiry Committee. We are not directly connected with any labour movement but we know something about it because some of our villagers are employed in the mills.

As there is bribery and corruption at the time of recruitment, there should be a Board consisting of a representative of the employers, a representative of the employees and some responsible non-officials to control recruitment and other matters affecting recruitment. This measure should be introduced by the Government. It is better that responsibility of recruitment is taken from the hands of intermediaries who take share from the earnings of the workers.

We suggest that those workers who have been in employment before should be given first preference at the time of appointment. If recruitment is done directly by the managers or the heads of the department much of the malpractices will stop. In factories near Gopalganj the standard of wages is very low. It has been varying in the last 5 years. The minimum wage for unskilled workers goes as low as Rs. 5 or Rs. 6. There has been also reduction in wages. People who were appointed at Rs. 8 or Rs. 9 were, later on, given only about Rs. 6. Advantage of acute unemployment is taken by the employers. There is no security of service because no worker is kept on permanent basis. Unless there is a solid organisation of the workers we do not think legislation alone can help in increasing the wages.

Though I have no personal experience, it is reported that overtime work without payment is a general practice. In the mills here workers are subjected to abuses, slapping and other such humiliating treatment by the employers. There were some cases by the workers in the court also.

The Inspectors of Factories, due to negligence, are not very careful about the inspections they make. Inadequacy of staff may be a cause of this negligence.

There should be convenient shifts of work in the sugar factories so that workers may get time to take their meals. The workers, we think, will like split shifts and not 8 hours continuous work.

Comparing the factory wages with those prevailing in agriculture areas, we feel that the factory earnings are unfavourable.

The workers have got a large number of people to maintain. Therefore this point should be considered in fixing the minimum wage. The present wage being given to the worker is not at all sufficient to maintain him and his family. There is no doubt that he is addicted to *biri*, cigarettes, toddy and other injurious practices.

The minimum wage necessary to maintain the worker and his family should be Rs. 20 but we are doubtful if the factories in their present condition will be able to pay it.

There is no proper arrangement of quarters by the mills. Even after finishing their night shifts the workers have, some how or other, to pass their time because of inadequacy of quarters provided by the factory. The rent in the locality also is very high compared to the wages the workers get.

The Committee met in the Inspection Bungalow, Dehri-on-Sone on the 19th December 1938.

Members present :—

1. Mr. R. R. Bakhale ... *Deputy Chairman, Presiding.*
2. Dr. R. K. Mukherjee ... *Member.*
3. Mr. Jagat Narayan Lal, *Member.*  
M.L.A.
4. Mr. H. B. Chandra, M.L.A. *Member.*
5. Mr. M. P. Gandhi ... *Member.*
6. Mr. R. K. Saran ... *Secretary.*
7. Mr. Shanti Prasad Jain ... (*Co-opted Member, Management.*)

Oral evidence of Mr. Basawan Singh\*, President, Rohtas Industries-Mazdoor Sangh, Dehri-on-Sone.

*Chairman.*—May I know your name?

*Mr. Basawan Singh.*—My name is Basawan Singh.

*Q.*—What is your official position in the Union?

*A.*—I am the president of the Rohtas Industries Mazdoor Sangh.

*Q.*—When was this Union started?

*A.*—It was started on the 4th September 1938.

*Q.*—How many members have you got?

*A.*—1,700.

*Q.*—What is the subscription?

*A.*—Two annas.

*Q.*—Monthly or yearly?

*A.*—Yearly.

*Q.*—Have all the 1,700 of them paid their subscriptions?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—Is your Union registered under the Trade Unions Act?

*A.*—Not upto now.

*Q.*—Have you made any application?

*A.*—Not yet.

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\* The witness replied to questions in vernacular.

Q.—Is your Union recognized by the employers?

A.—Yes.

*Mr. Shanti Prasad Jain.*—Was there any election of the President?

A.—Yes.

Q.—When was that election held?

A.—I do not remember the exact date.

Q.—What is the procedure adopted in electing the President?

A.—By taking votes, of course.

Q.—How many members were present, approximately, at the meeting held for the purpose?

A.—I cannot give the exact number, but the election was done by a majority of votes.

*Dr. R. K. Mukherjee.*—Mr. Singh, cases have come to our notice in the quarry which we inspected yesterday where a number of emigrant labourers cannot leave the quarry even though they cannot be given work. We found that some of them have been idle for nearly two months. Now what are the dangers, difficulties and drawbacks of unorganized recruitment?

A.—What is the meaning of unorganized recruitment?

Q.—In the case of immigrant labour, for instance for the tea gardens in Assam and other places. The Assam Labour Immigrant Act insists upon organized recruitment. There are local depots and they are approved by the local Government concerned, and before immigrants are sent out there are certain formalities maintained. Now, do you consider that recruitment of quarry labour should be controlled somewhat similarly?

A.—I generally agree.

Q.—After the immigrants arrive in Bihar, what authority do you suggest for securing them adequate protection in the different quarries? In Assam they have got the Protector of Immigrants. Do you think that an Officer of that kind or somebody connected with the Government should be there to protect them? I think Government should take the responsibility in this matter and appoint some protector of this kind. In Assam according to the Act they have the right of repatriation, that is after two years of employment the workers have the right to go back. I think Government should make arrangement for these poor people so that they may not have to starve and remain idle in the quarries. What would be the number of immigrant labourers in the quarries?

A.—It will be somewhere near 7 to 8 thousand.

Q.—But they are not all outsiders?

A.—More than half of them are, at least that is so in Dumarkhar.

Q.—Can you give us an idea of the total number of the immigrant coolies?

A.—The number varies at different places, such as in Bowlia most of the workers come from the neighbouring places.

Q.—Do the quarry managers, not merely here but elsewhere as well, observe holidays?

A.—Sunday is a holiday at different places, but that is not so here.

Q.—What about other holidays?

A.—I do not know about them.

*Mr. H. B. Chandra.*—Babu Basawan Singh, you say in your memorandum that no waiting list is maintained and dismissals are frequent for the flimsiest of mistake. Is it your allegation that before inflicting punishment proper investigations are not made?

A.—Some time back an understanding was reached with the Company. It is just possible that some changes may have been made. I am not in day to day touch with the affairs and so I do not know the exact position today, but the condition was very bad before so that those who got even high salaries had no security of service. For example a man was appointed on, say, Rs. 20 and after a few months he was told that his pay had been reduced by Rs. 5. If he protested, he was informed that if he wanted to remain he could work on that reduced pay or was free to go away. This means that he was not given any notice at all and was turned out, so that nobody knew how long he would continue in service. In the factories which have come under the Factories Act the position is, of course, different, but in the paper factory wholesale retrenchment was effected.

*Chairman.*—The paper factory is not yet working.

A.—But the construction work is going on and labourers are employed.

*Mr. H. B. Chandra.*—I am referring to punishment while he is referring to retrenchment. What I want to know is whether there is not a likelihood of misunderstanding the attitude of the Company, for while the Company might be retrenching hands you might take this to be a case of punishment and dismissal.

A.—I know for a fact that those who are turned out are replaced by others, so that the vacancy is filled, though it is said that it is retrenchment, in practice it is dismissal for which there can be no justification.

Q.—You suggest that standing orders should be framed by Government and made applicable to these factories? Do you refer to the conditions of employment?

A.—Yes

Q.—Would you not give this right to the employers of determining the conditions of employment?

A.—I want that, in view of the corruption prevailing in different factories, Government should take a hand and stop the abuses.

Q.—Then is it your suggestion that the standing orders may be finally settled by Government in consultation with the employers or in consultation with the Union? I want to be clear about how these standing orders will operate.

A.—I want that the Union should have a strong hand in the matter of employment.

Q.—About contractor's labour you say that the workers are not regularly paid and their accounts are kept outstanding for weeks and sometimes months after cessation of work. There have been cases where contractors have run away without paying the workers. This kind of labour is usually employed for less than six months. Is that not so?

A.—It has often been found that contractors are given work at a particular rate. According to that rate the contractor calculates his profit and employs labourers. After a few days the contractor is told that his rate is reduced. Therefore he finds it difficult to pay his labourers at the rate agreed upon originally.

Q.—Is he told that the rate is reduced after the work is actually in progress?

A.—Yes.

Q.—I think this is not so as a rule, but this has happened sometimes.

A.—The contractor has to take work from the labourers, but he has no money to pay them with, and whatever he has he runs away with. In this way the labourers are put to trouble, and the Company is in the main to blame for this state of affairs.

Q.—So, you suggest that the rates settled with the contractors are sometimes subject to reduction while the work is in progress or after the work has been completed and the margin of profit left with the contractor is so small that there is hardly anything left with him for himself if he has to meet the regular wage-bill?

A.—Yes.

*Mr. R. K. Saran.*—Do you think that many of the difficulties to which reference has been made just now will disappear if the Company was made to sign a written contract with the contractors or with the workers detailing all the conditions of employment?

A.—I think that an experiment should be made so that contractors and labourers may be able to feel some security.

Q.—Do you mean to say that when a worker is engaged by the Company both the worker and the Company should sign an agreement?

A.—Yes.

Q.—The idea is that if there is any violation of the terms of the agreement, either party can seek redress in a Court of law.

A.—Yes.

Q.—Seeking redress in a Court of law is an expensive business; would you suggest, in order to make justice more economical and more expeditious, that there should be something like an industrial Court, in other words, there should be a magistrate whose business will be to look after such cases only?

A.—I think Government should appoint an officer like that.

Q.—You complain that there are many unjustified dismissals by the Company. Now, would you suggest that there should be a Committee on which there should be a representative of the employers and a representative of the workers with the District Magistrate as Chairman? This Committee should have the power of reviewing the dismissals, and if the Committee finds that a dismissal is unjustified, it may either compel the employer to take back the worker or compel him to pay the worker some compensation, say, six months' wages.

A.—I think all this should be done before actual dismissal.

Q.—You mean that before any action is taken, the matter may be referred to the Committee?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Dr. Mukherjee has referred to you some cases of workers who were brought here to work in quarries. These workers are stranded; the contractors do not find money for them so that they may go back to their homes. Would this difficulty be solved if Government insisted on every contractor depositing a certain amount of money for every worker brought by him for this purpose?

A.—A certain amount of money only will not be enough. One hundred for every labourer should be deposited.

Q.—There was an agreement between you and the Company as a consequence of which certain privileges or benefits are to be conferred upon permanent employees. What is exactly meant by a "permanent employee"?

A.—Those who have worked for one year in a running factory.

Q.—This means that workers in a sugar factory will be disqualified from being permanent? In the award a permanent labourer has been defined as one who has worked for one year. The workers in a sugar factory will remain unemployed for five to seven months. How are they to be classified?



A.—They are considered to be on leave, but in the case of only those who are given work when the factory starts work in the next season.

Q.—Supposing you are discharged in slack season and if you are re-engaged then you are considered to be in service throughout the year, but if you are not re-engaged what will be the position? This has not been made clear.

A.—I shall have to be re-engaged; that is the agreement. After the agreement there is a supplementary agreement which guarantees this to a labourer, so that he gets all the advantages which a permanent employee does, as he is considered to be one of them.

*Mr. Shanti Prashad Jain.*—Do you know that there is a special class of workers, known as stone-cutters not only in Bihar but in the whole country?

A.—There is such a class, but those who work in the quarry are not all of that class.

Q.—Do you know that Government in the Public Works Department and Railways who require ballast for their road construction and railways, employ this class of labour?

A.—They employ all classes of workers and it is possible that this particular caste is also employed.

Q.—Do you know the system of their employment?

A.—I do not know.

Q.—You have referred to Rs. 100 as deposit with Government for each worker employed. Do you know what the sum will amount to?

A.—That will depend on the number of labourers you employ.

Q.—Do you know that the District Board of Arrah which employs more than 10,000 workers of this kind will be required to deposit about 10 lakhs of rupees with Government?

A.—If the District Board are employers they will have to deposit that amount.

*Chairman.*—Mr. Jain's point is that if the deposit comes to, say, thousands of rupees, it is not a practicable proposition.

A.—It may seem to be an impracticable proposition, but this should be reduced to a practicable one when the people are starving and their lives are being trifled with.

*Dr. R. K. Mukherjee.*—Perhaps you are referring to immigrant labour from other provinces?

A.—Yes.

*Mr. Shanti Prashad Jain.*—Do you know that there is a system in the country operating at present under which those labourers who

have got money also want some advance from the contractors and under this system when any other contractor wants those labourers he pays the advance money outstanding against the labourers to the contractor whereby his advance is repaid and then they go with the other contractor?

A.—On enquiry I have learnt this.

Q.—Do you know that in almost all quarries, even in other provinces like Madras, this system prevails?

A.—It is not applicable to all labourers; it may be that with some of them this may be so.

Q.—Do you know that contractors are compelled to advance money not because they want to do so but because the system exists?

A.—As there is unemployment in this country, it is not difficult to get workers, but in order to bind down the labourers the contractors advance money so that they may not go away.

Q.—Do you know that if the contractors do not make advance of money to the labourers, no labourers would be forthcoming?

A.—I think they will be able to get sufficient number of them if they look for them.

Q.—Have you made any enquiry in that direction?

A.—No. But I am sure when people are starving in this country, they would be willing to work without this advance.

Q.—What changes do you propose in the Factories Act?

A.—I cannot say anything at present.

*Mr. M. P. Gandhi.*—Now, Mr. Singh, with regard to your suggestion for sick leave, that is one month with pay and one month with half pay and two months without pay, four months in all, for each year of service, do you think that the industry will be able to bear it normally?

A.—My point is that when a rule is going to be framed, it should take account of contingencies which can occur.

Q.—But why do you want that this provision should be made applicable to all workers?

A.—I want the provision to be there, so that when necessity arises it may be made use of. This provision is to come into play only when a worker falls ill for such a long period.

Q.—But surely every worker will not fall ill for so long?

A.—I agree. That is why I say that this provision will be for those who will fall ill for a long time. My point is that the man should get back to his work after recovery.

Q.—Do you know of any commercial concern where such leave rules as you propose are in existence?

A.—The fact that they are not in existence at present should not be any reason why this Committee should not recommended to Government that a man who falls ill for four months should get back to his work.

Q.—Do you think that, in the event of this leave rule being framed for workers in Bihar, it should be made applicable to workers in other provinces also, because after all conditions in different provinces are not wholly dissimilar?

A.—I think the Committee should recommend to Government that this leave rule should be made applicable to all industries in the province. I want that the whole country should be industrialised and be prosperous and that is why I want that labour should be kept in good condition.

*Chairman.*—The only point is that, taking an industry like sugar or cement, both of which are of competitive character, the element of cost of production plays a very important part. Suppose if you produce a ton of sugar here, say, at the cost of Rs. 500, and if the cost of production of a ton of sugar in the United Provinces is, say, Rs. 400, then the Bihar factory loses, so far as the market is concerned, to the extent of Rs. 100. Therefore the point is that there are certain industries which are of competitive character and are spread over the whole of India. So, so far as these industries are concerned, conditions should more or less be the same everywhere. Do you hold this view or not?

A.—No. I do not hold this view. My point is that humanity has got a better claim over competition and deserves better treatment. I admit there are difficulties, but they have got to be surmounted.

*Mr. H. B. Chandra.*—Mr. Singh, the point is whether the rules which you propose for the workers of Bihar in the matter of leave should be applicable to the whole of India or not?

A.—I would like that they should be applicable to workers all over the country.

Q.—So that our industries should not suffer?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What I want to know is that labourers seem to be under the control, or clutches if you like to say so, of contractors who advance money to them, and how do you propose to avoid this? Would you like some co-operative societies to be started which should advance money to them, or just in the beginning when they start work and are in need of money there should be some method to help them. What should be the process you suggest for this? To clear my point, I suppose I should explain my question. You want to avoid the fact that the labourers should be under the control of contractors. Then you want that they should not been need of money. Now what do you suggest?

*Mr. H. B. Chandra.*—But he is not against advance. He wants control generally over the dealings of the contractors. I think he wants that a method may be found out whereby a very limited advance may be made to the labourers and that advance may be recovered gradually from their wages, leaving them a fair margin for their subsistence, month by month. Is not that so, Mr. Singh?

*A.*—Yes, I want that a minimum should be fixed first, and then deductions may be made from their earnings keeping in view that the labourers may get enough for their subsistence.

*Mr. R. K. Saran.*—You want that much should not be deducted from their wages. Does it not mean that it will take a long time for the money to be repaid, and the longer it takes for the advance to be repaid, the longer the labourer will be under the control of the contractor?

*A.*—That is why I say that the wages should be more than at present so that the advance may be repaid in a shorter time.

*Mr. H. B. Chandra.*—Do you really desire that the payment should be made as an advance or it should be an outright payment just enough to cover the expenses? Ordinarily, I understand, the money is taken as a recoverable loan. Is it your suggestion that only such sum should be paid which would be recovered gradually as the labourer earns?

*A.*—Yes.

*Mr. J. N. Lal.*—Would you like a co-operative credit society to be started in their midst?

*A.*—Yes, that might be helpful to them to some extent.

*Mr. R. K. Saran.*—But where they are not permanent, how the society is to exist or flourish? That difficulty is there.

*Mr. Jain.*—From what source the funds for the society will be available?

*A.*—Where they are permanent a certain portion from the wages of the labourers can be deducted and the employers may also contribute.

*Mr. Lal.*—What about contractors? Would you like them to continue, or would you like that system to discontinue for quarries?

*A.*—I want that if the mill-owners think that it is necessary to keep this system, they may employ contractors, but the labourers should be under the control of the Company and the contractors should get some commission from the Company. What I mean is that the payment to the labourers, should be made by the Company so that there may be no deduction in their wages.

*Mr. Jain.*—What would be the position of District Board quarries?

A.—The District Boards should also do the same. They should work without contractors; that is the officials of the District Boards should take over the charge of quarries, but if they feel the necessity of employing contractors they may have them but where the payment of wages is to be made or hours of work are concerned, the Company should get this done under its own supervision.

*Mr. Lal.*—What abuses have you noticed in the matter of recruitment of labour here in the factories and there in the quarries?

A.—The applicants are not employed according to priority. It is clear that those who are employed get their employment at the sweet will of the authorities, that is, only favourites get employment, and those who are retrenched are not taken back when vacancies occur.

Q.—In answer to question 9, it has been stated that recently a system has been introduced for keeping a list of persons who have been retrenched and when there is necessity the same persons are re-employed. Do you think that this practice is not being followed so far as you are aware.

A.—Not uptill now.

Q.—Have you considered what amendments might be made in the Factories Act to ameliorate the condition of the labourers?

A.—I have not yet considered that point.

Q.—Could you consider it and give us a considered opinion?

A.—Yes, later on.

*Mr. Chandra.*—About hours of work, Mr. Singh, you state that in places where more strenuous work is necessary than elsewhere, there should be shifts of six hours each instead of eight as a present. Do you mean to say that, as stated in your memorandum in the earlier part of it, these conditions should apply to the cement factory at the limestone pit, the coal mill, the mill house, the kiln and the packing house?

A.—Wherever shifts work.

Q.—Could you tell us, how the work in these places is more strenuous than elsewhere?

A.—You might have noticed in the course of your visit that where the stone is taken out and crushed clouds of dust come out and it is very harmful to health. The work is very strenuous and is very dangerous. So the hours of work there should be less with more wages.

Q.—This will mean that the number of labourers will have to be increased in the proportion of 3:4 and that will react on the cost of production. So, what is your definite suggestion—do you suggest that the cost of production should be increased or that the wages should be reduced proportionately?

A.—I want that wages should not be reduced.

Q.—Do you feel that there is a margin for increase in the cost of production?

A.—I think so.

Q.—I gather that the cement factory is running at a loss. So, I want to know exactly whether your suggestion can be put into practice without affecting the cost of production.

A.—I think wages should be increased according to work or the hours of work should be reduced but the wages should remain what they are.

Q.—Is it your suggestion then that irrespective of cost of production there should be a limit beyond which the wages should not be reduced?

A.—The minimum at Dumarkhar is Rs. 11 and it is a very low figure indeed. I have suggested a minimum of Rs. 20.

Q.—You suggest that work should start in all seasons at 8 A.M. and end at 12 A.M. and then again it should start at 1 P.M. and end at 5 P.M., that is, 8 hours in all. In the end you say that the present hours sometimes lead to continuous work from 6 A.M. to 5-30 P.M. with just enough time for meal in between. There should be no loophole for such an abuse.

A.—Yes.

Q.—Would you suggest the same hours for summer and winter?

A.—Yes.

*Dr. R. K. Mukherjee.*—Is it not desirable to change hours according to seasons? It would not be disadvantageous, I think?

A.—Hours of work should be less and the interval should be less because those who come from distant places start at about 4 or 5 in the morning to be able to come to their work at 6 A.M. They feel inconvenienced if the beginning hour is an early one. Besides they take more than two hours to come and go to their homes. That is why I have suggested those hours of work.

Q.—Then about wages, you say that a minimum wage of Rs. 20 should be fixed. How is it that you agreed to a minimum wage of only Rs. 11 very recently.

A.—I had to accept the decision of the Arbitration Board.

*Mr. Gandhi.*—Was not your representative on the Board?

A.—That is why I say I had to accept the decision of the Board.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Is it your suggestion that you have been put into that position?

A.—Yes.

*Mr. Jain.*—What was the minimum wage you proposed to the Board?

*A.*—Rs. 15.

*Mr. Saran.*—Now you ask Rs. 20 for quarries also, because you think that the work there is also arduous?

*A.*—Yes. In the beginning we thought that as the industries were being started and were very much in their infancy, we might accept a lower wage, but as the minimum wage was going to be provided for by legislation, we think it advisable that Rs. 20 should be the minimum wage.

*Mr. Chandra.*—He feels that the minimum wage for this place should be Rs. 20 because the cost of living here is higher than elsewhere in the province. Is that not so, Mr. Singh?

*A.*—Yes, that is so.

*Mr. M. P. Gandhi.*—Then your suggestion is that in other places it can be lower, because the cost of living elsewhere is lower than that of this place?

*A.*—Yes.

*Mr. Jain.*—What would you propose for Patna?

*A.*—I do not know the conditions prevailing there, so I am not in a position to propose any sum.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Is it not that when you speak of a minimum you speak of the rock-bottom limit which does not admit of any further reduction, and that when there is a rise in the price of necessaries of life, the workers will have the right to demand and increase proportionately in their wages?

*A.*—Yes, that is my intention.

*Q.*—But if there is a fall in the prices of necessaries of life, do you consider that there is a case for lowering the wages?

*Mr. Chandra.*—In that case the allowance, that is the increase over the minimum, will go but the minimum will always remain. Do you not mean that?

*A.*—Yes, that is what I mean.

*Q.*—Do you mean to suggest that in the event of a fall in the cost of living, the factories are anxious to adjust wages according to the fall in prices?

*A.*—That may be so, but we do not want it. We want that a worker should not always be working, but he should get some off days and rest.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Cases have come to our notice during investigation that some contractors of labour have been delaying payment of wages to workers by sometimes even a fortnight or a month. Are you aware of such cases? Is it not a violation of the Payment of Wages Act?

A.—Yes. I do not know whether the Payment of Wages Act has been violated so far as the quarries are concerned, because I am not sure if this Act applies to them.

Q.—Do you know that in the quarries also there is similar delay in payment of wages?

A.—Yes, there is.

Q.—With reference to the living scale of wages, you suggest a living minimum wage of Rs. 20. Now, what are the average earnings in the quarries?

A.—Three and a half annas *per capita* and sometimes even less than this.

Q.—If that be the scale in the quarry, what would it be here in Dalmianagar?

A.—Here also it varies between two to three and a half annas for children and those who are under contractors; for adult females and males it goes up to four annas.

Q.—So, it comes to about six or seven rupees in a month?

A.—Yes.

Q.—At Jamshedpur the average earning per month for coolies is Rs. 12-7-0 and at Jamalpur it is Rs. 11. Is the cost of living here higher than what it is at Jamalpur?

A.—Yes, it is.

*Chairman.*—What makes you think so?

A.—Because fish, rice, vegetables, etc., are dearer here than in Calcutta.

Q.—Are they dearer here than Jamalpur?

A.—Yes. The reason is that owing to the advent of factories in this area, these articles have become dear during the last three years.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—I have come across, during my investigations here certain cases in which wage-earners are charged a higher rate if they purchase on credit any food stuffs. That is the case at Dumarkhar. Is that correct?

A.—Yes.

Q.—So the scale of wages is further reduced due to postponement of payment by contractors?



A.—Yes.

Q.—You have given some instances that contractors finding themselves running at a loss sometimes decamp and the coolies are deprived of their wages. Have you come across cases of this sort here in Dalmianagar?

A.—Yes, sometimes this happens here also.

Q.—You think this to be a fact, though not a general one?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Taking the quarries, where conditions seem to be at their lowest ebb and level, how do you think the piece-work is settled when there is so much of over-burden work for which the stone-cutters do not get any payment?

A.—For about half or even one-third of the time that a cutter spends on his work, he gets wages.

Q.—Can you make any suggestions to make this arrangement more equitable?

A.—I think the worker should get for over-burden work also, as is done in the Bowlia quarry.

Q.—Are you of opinion that over-burden work should also be charged at the same rate or at a lower rate?

A.—This should also be charged at full rate.

Mr. Chandra.—The rate is settled on the actual *mal* produced. So you suggest that the rate for actual *mal* should be increased?

A.—Yes.

Mr. Saran.—Do you think that if a minimum wage is fixed, it is likely that a company might evade its obligation by getting the work done on contract?

A.—For this reason I said before that the work should not be done on contract and that if the company considers it necessary it should pay commission to the contractors but wages should be fixed and paid by the company itself.

Q.—So, you suggest that the contractors should be compelled by the company to pay fair wages as is done in Jamshedpur?

A.—Yes. Such is also the case at Japla.

Q.—Would you like that the piece-work rate in Dumarkhar should be substituted by time-work?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Has that been done anywhere here?

A.—Rather the opposite has been done here : time-rate has been substituted by piece-work.

Q.—If there is night-work in quarries, would you insist on higher wages for night-work than for day work?

A.—Yes.

Q.—As regards workers the nature of whose work is permanent, would you suggest that they should be monthly-rated?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Have trolley rates been reduced recently?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Why were they reduced?

A.—Obviously to save money. Formerly the workers used to get fifteen annas per ton, but now only thirteen annas are paid for loading a truck which means that the weight is increased to two tons. If a truck is loaded in the usual way, the weight is one and a half tons, but because it is overloaded the weight comes to two tons; so that while, on the one hand, work has increased; on the other the wages have gone down by fifty per cent.

Q.—Do you think that this reduction has anything to do with the price of cement or adverse conditions of trade?

A.—This was done when the price of cement was higher.

Q.—Is it your experience that many trollies are rejected as containing bad materials, on grounds which are not quite satisfactory?

A.—I have been informed that those who are in charge of checking materials often reject the *mal* of those labourers who have any grievances to ventilate, which means that the labourers are really at their mercy.

Q.—Have you reason to believe that the same materials are used by the company actually?

A.—Yes.

Mr. Shanti Prashad Jain.—May I ask Mr. Singh how many times he has visited the quarry in order to elicit information?

A.—I went there once, but people from there generally come to me and give me information.

Q.—I want to know how many times have you visited the quarry to elicit information on the spot?

A.—Is it necessary for me to reply to this question, Sir?

Chairman.—I do not think so. You are quite entitled to get information from workers or from any other source.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Do you get absolute free access to study conditions there?

*Mr. Chandra.*—He is appearing in a representative capacity just now.

*Mr. Jain.*—Mr. Singh, you have mentioned in the memorandum that in the cement factory there is more strenuous work than elsewhere—at the lime stone pit, the coal mill, the mill house, the kiln and the packing house. May I know the exact work the nature of which is strenuous?

*A.*—It is dangerous work.

*Q.*—Not dangerous, I wanted to know what is “strenuous”.

*A.*—The workers have to work very carefully, so that it involves mental strain and concentration. Similar is the case with the coal mill where dust and soot are very much to be found.

*Q.*—Is there more dust than where coal is loaded?

*A.*—I do not keep an exact account of it, but surely the place is abnormally dusty.

*Q.*—I may correct you that at the coal mill and mill house the workers never touch any part of the machine, but they simply oil it and if anything goes wrong they repair it. You have mentioned that 2/3rds of the total number of workers come from the surrounding villages. Now, could you tell us what is the average income of the man who works in the field?

*A.*—In village Makrain the minimum is more than what is here in the factories.

*Chairman.*—Can you tell us what the minimum wage is?

*A.*—A ploughman gets five annas in addition to fooding.

*Mr. Jain.*—Do you mean to suggest that the worker who works in the field gets more than the worker who works in the factory under the same circumstances?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—Are you aware that the factory worker has to spend more than the field worker?

*A.*—No, the expenses are the same.

*Q.*—Then don't you think that the equilibrium of the village society will get disturbed if there is disparity in the earnings of two workers of the same class?

*A.*—No, I do not think so. As a matter of fact everybody in a village suffers or prospers according to his income: the incomes and expenditures of all are not equal.

*Dr. R. K. Mukherjee.*—Do you recognise the recommendation of the Royal Commission on Labour that labourers in India should not be centralised in places and their status as villagers should be maintained?

*A.*—I am not aware of the reasons of their recommendations.

*Q.*—The Royal Commission recommended that in Europe there is a separate class of industrial workers. In India there is no such separate class. Do you subscribe to this view?

*A.*—I have not given thought to this question.

*Mr. Jain.*—You have already stated that a trolley when loaded full weighs two tons. Can you prove it by actual measurement? In my opinion it can never weigh more than 10 per cent. in addition to the usual weight. The trolley is only 5' by 3' and when it is loaded the height may increase by one foot. I do not understand how it can contain double the usual weight when it is over-loaded.

*A.*—It contains about one and a half ton generally. There is no doubt about it. But when it is over-loaded it comes to two tons.

*Mr. Chandra.*—You have stated that the contractors are violating the Payment of Wages Act here at Dalmianagar. Do you mean this?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—Your suggestion is that even if payment is made after ten days it is violation of the Act?

*A.*—Yes.

*Mr. Lal.*—The system of wage payment in the factory is for certain workers daily-rated and for others it is monthly-rated. Are you in favour of some other system?

*A.*—I want the system to be one, namely, monthly-rated and monthly paid for all class of labourers.

*Q.*—Do you propose this system for casual labourers also, who are those who have worked for six months or less?

*A.*—I want this system for all, including casual labourers, because there are people who have worked for years and yet they are treated as casual.

*Q.*—Is that the system even now after the last settlement?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—Do you want a change in that system as well? If so, what?

*A.*—I want that those who have worked for less than six months should be treated as casual, but those who work for six months and more should be treated as permanent.

*Mr. Saran.*—But would not the classification depend on the nature of work? Supposing a building lasts for six months, would you call the labourers permanent hands?

*Mr. Chandra.*—Mr. Singh means that the labourer should get the same wages and advantages as permanent labourers.

*A.*—My idea is that there should be no differentiation, because in my opinion in the domain of industries there is no such thing as permanency. In a factory which is considered to be of a permanent nature, thousands of hands are retrenched in consideration of the profit and loss account. Therefore I want that labourers who have worked for six months or more should be permanent labourers and paid monthly.

*Mr. Lal.*—Is there any provident fund or bonus system here?

*A.*—No.

*Q.*—Do you want any such system?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—You have said in your memorandum that you want security of service, a system of graded promotion, leave, gratuity, provident fund and old age pension. Do you want any system of bonus as well?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—Do you want all these combined, because provident fund, old age pension and bonus is given to all, whereas gratuity is only given to those who can be called permanent? Those who receive gratuity should not receive bonus. Gratuity is paid generally to labourers who have worked for a long number of years and are being retired. Gratuity is only paid where provident fund is not given. So, all these things have been combined in your memorandum. A clear indication should have been given as to which should be given to which class of labourers.

*A.*—I think those who get provident fund and old age pension should not get gratuity, but those who do not get them they should be given gratuity.

*Q.*—Are there fines inflicted on labourers and other deductions made from their wages?

*A.*—I think fines are inflicted, but as regards other deductions, I am not in a position to say anything.

*Mr. Gandhi.*—If the level of wages for agricultural labourers in some villages nearby is higher than even in the factory, then such labourers should not come to the factory. Do you accept that position, Mr. Singh?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—You will also admit then that whatever wages such a labourer gets he gets these only for a certain part of the year?

A.—No. In the neighbouring villages of a factory, the labourers work throughout the year, because they are occupied for nearly six months in the fields and then they do odd jobs during the remaining months of the year.

Q.—Do they work for 12 months in the fields in an industrialised village?

A.—They are not wholly occupied in doing field work throughout the year, but what I mean is that they do other work also.

Q.—In view of the statement in the report made by the Royal Commission on Labour that the link with the village is a distinct asset and that the general aim should be to encourage this, would you agree to support this view or would you rather like that the labourers should stay in a house provided by the factory within their precincts?

A.—I think in majority of cases it is not possible to stay in the village and come to work in the factory. But wherever it is possible owing to the village being in close proximity to the factory, it would be advantageous to stay in the village. In my opinion it is best to stay in a house within the factory precincts in the interest of not only the factory itself but the workers also.

Q.—You do not consider then that the labourers staying in their own surroundings is more advantageous to them?

A.—No.

Q.—Have you given serious thought to the question as to whether it is possible for any factory—I am not talking of the Dalmia factories particularly, but I am stating a general proposition—to provide housing accommodation for all its labour?

A.—This has not been done uptill now, but, in my opinion, this should be done.

Q.—Have you thought of the cost that such a scheme will involve?

A.—Of course it is a difficult thing, but certainly it is not impossible.

*Chairman.*—Is your Union recognized by the employers?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you think that it would be advantageous if the representatives of the labour union and those of the management met occasionally to discuss the grievances of labourers and try to effect a settlement so that the discontent prevailing amongst workers today may to a great extent be reduced?

A.—Yes, I am in favour of such an arrangement.

Q.—What I mean is that in big factories like cement and sugar there are bound to be some grievances and if you met once a month it is

possible to reduce these grievances to a minimum at any rate. Now, if in spite of your discussions no settlement is arrived at, then in that case you are free to declare a strike or the management are free to declare a lockout. But so long as negotiations are going on would you rather favour the idea that there should be no strike? Not by law, of course, but by agreement?

A.—Yes.

*Mr. Saran.*—You have stated that the membership of a trade union should be compulsory, in other words every worker is to be compelled to join the trade union. You have stated further that employers should be compelled by law to collect subscriptions from members of the trade union. Evidently you feel that the strength of the union depends upon its number and finances?

A.—Yes, that is so.

Q.—Do you think that unity of action is more important than number and finances?

A.—The number will show that so many are with us.

Q.—Not necessarily. There may be persons in the union, but they may be holding different views.

A.—But the majority opinion is binding upon the members.

Q.—But the minority can give a lot of trouble. Legally the majority can carry anything against the minority and prevent unity of action.

A.—I want that democratic right to be given to them.

Q.—You are compelling a man to be member whether he wants it or not. That is surely not democratic?

A.—The entity of workers has to be preserved and that is why we want to have this provision. For the sake of unity amongst the working class it is necessary to have such a provision, and I think to bring this about there should be some legislation.

Q.—If the membership is not one which is provided by law, then if a member becomes refractory he can be turned out. But in the event of membership being compulsory, he cannot be turned out, and so long as he is there he is going to give you trouble.

A.—Such a member can be turned out by virtue of legal provisions.

Q.—The point is this : I do not want to be a member of the union ; I am compelled to be a member. Very well, I will do such things as will compel you to take action against me and turn me out. That may be the result of making membership compulsory.

A.—May be.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Mr. Singh, you have stated just now that conciliation is a better means of settling industrial disputes. Now, supposing,

the period during which the negotiation proceedings are going on may prolong for a week or a fortnight or even a month, do you think in that case that the right of strike should be with the workers, or do you think some limitation as regards period should be there?

A.—I want that the labourers should be free to declare a strike when they think that it is necessary. In my opinion their right to strike should be invariable. But if a limit is fixed for the period of negotiation, this difficulty can be solved.

Q.—So you want a limit for the period of negotiation and also something like a change of heart, as it were?

A.—Yes, that is so.

Q.—You give the union this right because of their low bargaining power, or is it for any other reason?

A.—It is because of their low bargaining power.

Q.—Are you against compulsory arbitration?

A.—Yes.

Q.—But why, considering that there will be a High Court Judge or an equally highly placed judicial official, as president of the Arbitration Board?

A.—I have already given my answer that because of the low bargaining power of labourers, such a Board will not be able to do full justice to their claims. The decision of the Arbitration Board will have to be carried out and in many cases the decision of such a Board will not be favourable to the workers.

Q.—You have stated that the right to strike can be exercised by workers during the process of conciliation, and you now state that compulsory arbitration is not desirable.

*Mr. Lal.*—Mr. Singh is against compulsory arbitration in the preliminary stages. But it may be resorted to only after a prolonged strike or lock-out. Is not that so, Mr. Singh?

A.—Yes, that may be the position.

*Mr. Saran.*—But after a prolonged strike you have compulsory arbitration?

A.—May be.

Q.—Are you in favour of compulsory arbitration at all?

A.—No, not at all.

Q.—At no stage?

A.—At no stage.



*Chairman.*—His position is this : he is not in favour of compulsory arbitration at all, but when there is a strike which continues for six months or four months or eight months and if the resources either of the union or of the management are completely exhausted a stage might be reached when compulsory arbitration might be thought of.

*Mr. R. K. Saran.*—When your resources are exhausted, will you agree to arbitration?

*A.*—We agree to arbitration which is voluntary, but not to compulsory arbitration.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—There is difference between voluntary arbitration and compulsory arbitration. In the case of the latter the decisions of the Board will be binding upon the parties.

*Chairman.*—As soon as you enter the region of arbitration, the award is binding absolutely. The only point is that when you enter that region you should enter it by legislation as a matter of compulsion, or as a matter of voluntary action on the part of management and the labour.

*Mr. Lal.*—Is he prepared to give this power to Government?

*A.*—No.

*Mr. H. B. Chandra.*—Mr. Singh, I think you do not want your right to strike to be fettered at any stage. Am I right?

*A.*—Yes.

*Mr. Lal.*—Item no. 17 of the award of the Board recently appointed lays down certain rules to be followed by the union in which there are certain points concerning provisions for arbitration and so on. Are you in agreement with that?

*A.*—This is an award of the Arbitration Board, and I am following it, though I am not in agreement with it.

*Q.*—Are you in favour of or against a permanent machinery like an Arbitration Board for this particular area which might decide all points of difference between the labour and management?

*A.*—I am not in favour of such a machinery.

*Q.*—It is not like a permanent Board of Arbitration which obtains at a place like Ahmedabad where there is a nominee of the employers and a nominee of labour and a third person selected by both. There is a regular machinery of conciliation which goes through different stages. First there is the ordinary talk, then there are meetings between the two parties. In this way they go on from stage to stage and then in the end there is a provision for compulsory arbitration. If during the

early stages the dispute is not settled amicably, and no settlement agreeable to both parties is reached, then there is a provision to the effect that the whole dispute shall be referred to arbitration, consisting of one man from each side. So it is both a conciliation and arbitration machinery combined. Do you approve of such a machinery?

A.—I am not in favour of such a machinery for this place.

Q.—Supposing the management is bent upon not yielding to the demands of labour and strike goes on as a result of which the labourers get their resources exhausted, would you not even in that case be in favour of compulsory arbitration being enforced by Government?

A.—No. Under no circumstance can I agree to such arbitration.

Q.—You have made a remark in the statement that the Government *thana* (police-station) should not be prostituted for the purpose of converting it into a recruiting ground for black leg labour nor the Government officers be made to turn into hirelings of employers. I do not know if this language is happy enough, but have you had an occasion in this area for experiencing such a thing?

A.—Yes.

Q.—At what stage?

A.—The *mehtars* were compelled by *thana* officers to work.

Q.—What type of officers were working as hirelings?

A.—Police officers.

Q.—Would you agree or not that Government should have the power to prevent a breach of peace, whether it originates from the labour or management side?

A.—There should not be breach of peace from any quarter.

Q.—Government owes it as part of its duty to prevent it?

A.—But people should not be oppressed. "Breach of peace" should be defined. Collection of workers should not be breach of peace; picketing should not be considered a breach of peace; slogans are not a breach of peace.

Q.—When the law as it stands is broken, have you objection to Government taking steps which are provided for enforcing the law?

A.—Laws which are there to suppress people from exercising their rights should be amended.

Q.—So you want the law at present in force to be amended?

A.—Yes.

*Mr. Jain.*—Supposing there is a bad law and you do not like it, should not Government have power to enforce that law?

A.—Then the Government will not be for the people but for robbers.

Q.—The law so long as it has not been amended or changed by the democratic representatives of the people has to be protected by Government or not?

*Chairman.*—What is exactly the point?

*Mr. Shanti Prashad Jain.*—The point is that even when Government does enforce the ordinary provisions of the law, should it come in for criticism either at the hands of the management or the labour?

*Chairman.*—Of course, it should. The public is perfectly entitled to criticise the law, but this is a different matter.

*Mr. Lal.*—The point is whether the management or the labour are willing to give this right or option to Government to enforce the law as it stands at present.

*Chairman.*—It is a question of right, and certainly Government has got every right to enforce the law as it stands.

*Mr. Jain.*—What do you consider the constitution of the labour union should be with regard to its members, that is, whether the members who are members of the executive should be members of any other association or political organization other than the trade union, e.g. Hindu Mahasabha, Muslim League or Congress? Do you hold the opinion that the members of the labour union may, if they like, join other organizations also?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How the executive should be elected?

A.—By vote.

Q.—What procedure do you propose for the executive of trade union?

A.—It should be on the democratic principle and on the adult franchise basis.

*Mr. R. K. Saran.*—There may be different class of workers. Do you want the executive to be elected by the different classes or by the whole body?

A.—By the whole body.

*Mr. Jain.*—How would you like the minority to be represented on the executive board?

A.—Amongst labourers there are no majorities or minorities.

Q.—Suppose in a group of workshops in Calcutta an employer has got two different types of workers. Do you want them all to be members of one union?

A.—Yes. But if they are not at one place there should be two unions.

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**CEMENT**

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The Committee met in the Secretariat, Patna, on the 25th April 1939.

Members present :—

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|------------------------|-----|-------------------|
| 1. Dr. R. K. Mukherjee | ... | <i>Presiding.</i> |
| 2. Mr. J. N. Lal.      |     |                   |
| 3. Prof. R. K. Saran   | ... | <i>Secretary.</i> |

**Oral evidence of Mr. Basawan Singh, President and Mr. Mohammed Habib Khan, Vice-President on behalf of the Japla Labour Union.**

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—With regard to the Japla Labour Union, I understand that you are the President and Mr. Habib Khan is the Vice-President. How many workers are members of this Union?

A.—Yes, the number of members is 1,100 but because some of the members have been discharged from the service the membership has decreased.

Q.—Have you got fixed subscription?

A.—Yes, 4 annas per year.

Q.—Is it a registered Union?

A.—No.

Q.—How many outsiders are in the executive of the Union?

A.—Only one.

Q.—Do the workers get regular employment?

A.—Yes, the permanent employers get Rs. 15 a month. This is the minimum that they get.

Q.—Have you any idea of the average wage of the workmen?

A.—I cannot tell you exactly.

Q.—Have the workers got quarters? Do they pay rent?

A.—Yes, they have quarters, but they do not pay rent.

Q.—Do you get payment for 6 days excluding the Sunday which is off day?

A.—Yes, there are people who work on shifts and the shift worker does not get any off day in the week.

Q.—You have suggested in the written statement that there should be some change in the hours of work. What change do you suggest?

A.—My idea is that working hours should be reduced and leisure hours increased. There should not be the same shifts throughout the year.

Q.—And that the employment is regular?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What is the method of the recruitment of the workers; whether it is done by the contractors or by the company?

A.—The recruitment is done by the contractors.

Q.—What remedy do you suggest?

A.—My view is that this kind of practice takes away the amount of earnings of the workers who are not contractors.

Q.—Do you prefer employment by the management than by the contractors?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You have suggested the fixation of the minimum wages, do you maintain the same view in this case also?

A.—Yes, the minimum should be Rs. 15 a month.

Q.—What kind of change in the hours of work do you suggest?

A.—I want a change in the shift and that the working hours should be less than 8 hours during the summer. The Company was doing very well, so it can very well do that.

Q.—Is there any system of fines and other kinds of punishment?

A.—Yes, there is suspension and dismissal as punishment.

*Prof. Saran.*—Are you not in a position to say the profits of the Company?

A.—We cannot say it definitely but I can say this much that the Company was doing very well.

Q.—In spite of the serious reduction in the Company as shown in the balance sheet, you say that there are large profits?

A.—Yes.

Q.—About quarters the Company has provided 'D' type quarters recently, do you like that type of quarters?

A.—Yes.

Q.—I think Mr. Harvey told us that it was done at the cost of Rs. 25,000.

A.—But according to the agreement it was to be done at the cost of Rs. 40,000.

Q.—In the coal section, we were told by Mr. Harvey that due to bad work of the workmen there were gas marks on the machinery.

A.—No, there is no such thing. Some kind of protection should be given for the gas workers. Soap and water should be supplied to them.

Q.—But they say that they cannot give them now; what is the reason? Is it because the Company is losing?

A.—No, they are not losing. Soaps are provided in the Mining Act.

Q.—Can the Union take the responsibility? They say that if the Union takes the responsibility then they can give. Formerly it was given but the workers did not use them.

A.—The wages are so inadequate that it is not possible for the Union to take the responsibility.

Q.—But they say that the wages are so fixed that every one gets at least Rs. 15? Is that so?

A.—Yes, the permanent workers get Rs. 15.

Q.—Is there facility of sick leave and privilege leave?

A.—Yes, 14 days' leave has been given in a year of service. There is no sick leave.

Q.—Is there any thing like retiring gratuity?

A.—No.

Q.—Are all the workers on daily basis?

A.—Yes, not monthly basis.

Q.—Would you like them to be on monthly basis?

A.—Yes, we like that all should be on the monthly basis because the privileges enjoyed by the monthly? are more.

Q.—But in doing all the workers on monthly basis, it may not be possible for the Company to give all the privileges as given to the monthly-rated?

A.—No, in that case we will not take.

Q.—Why?

A.—Because we wait to enjoy those privileges.

Q.—What are those privileges?

A.—They get 4 Sundays leave with pay.

Q.—But under the Factory Act they are allowed to have one day's weekly rest. They do not get overtime payment for the overtime work but the daily paid are entitled to overtime payment?



A.—But that does not matter. Under the Factory Act they get one day off in the week but without payment. In the case of monthly paid workers they work for 26 days and get payment for 30 days but in the case of daily, they work for 30 days but get for 26 days.

To get the daily earning for monthly it is divided by 30 but in the case of the daily it is divided by 26 only.

Q.—You want 4 days' rest on every Sunday? Do you get pay for off day?

A.—No.

Q.—On the rate of Rs. 15 monthly it is 9 annas 3 pies a day excluding the 4 days?

A.—Yes .

Q.—Is the leave of 15 days in the month with pay?

A.—No, without pay.

Q.—Is it a case that instead of old men new men are taken?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is it a fact that the proportion of the European officers great?

A.—Excepting 4 all are Indians.

Q.—Is there any provident fund system?

A.—No, it is for the staff and not for the labourers. They say that it is not profitable.

Q.—Is there any school?

A.—There is one M. E. school.

Q.—Is there any adult labour school?

A.—There is a night school. The same M. E. school has been given under the charge of a teacher who teaches students but that is not particularly for the labourers.

Q.—Is there any club or library where papers or books are provided for the workers? Is there any arrangement for games?

A.—No, nothing of this sort. There is one club room but not for the labourers.

Q.—Is there any scheme for Mass Literacy Campaign for adult literacy?

A.—No.

Chairman—Thank you.

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**TEXTILE**

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The Committee met in the Circuit House, Gaya, at 12-15 P.M. on 1st March 1939.

Dr. R. K. Mukerji and Mr. R. K. Saran were alone present.

Dr. Mukerji presided.

**Oral evidence of Mr. Basawan Singh, President, Gaya Cotton and Jute Mills Labour Union.**

*Dr. Mukerji.*—You are the President of the Gaya Cotton and Jute Mills Association?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—When was that started?

*A.*—It was started in the month of September. I do not exactly remember the date. I can give you later on.

*Q.*—Have you got any membership subscription?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—What is the strength of your Union?

*A.*—560 members have been enrolled so far.

*Q.*—What is the amount of your subscription?

*A.*—Two annas per month, i.e., Rs. 1-8-0 a year.

*Q.*—Have you formed an executive? If so, was it done at a general meeting of the workers?

*A.*—Yes. It was formed at a general meeting of the members of the Union.

*Q.*—Have you provided a constitution?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—It is not registered I think?

*A.*—No. But it has been recognised by the management.

*Q.*—How many workers are represented in the Executive?

*A.*—More than 50 per cent.

*Q.*—You said that your Union has been recognised by the management. Was there any labour trouble, after which this recognition was given or was it spontaneous?

*A.*—There was an industrial strike on the 30th of December and the strike continued for a week. At the end of the week an agreement was reached between the Union and the management and recognition of the Union was one of the terms agreed upon.

Q.—Was it a signed agreement on both sides?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Could you please send a copy of that agreement to the Secretary of the Committee?

A.—Yes, I shall. The terms of the dispute were not settled by that agreement. It was referred to a Board of Arbitration. Only minor details were settled then.

Q.—Some of them are yet to be settled, is it?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Will you please give us a general idea of the causes that led to the strike, etc.?

A.—There was discontentment amongst the workers for a pretty long time. The wages were low. Besides, one custom of the Factory was that they employed a good many apprentices; nearly 200 in number were given opportunity to learn the work. They were not paid anything for the work they were doing, and the policy behind their entertainment was that the apprentices worked for the Company without taking anything and the Company saved a lot of money. Then there came a time as the management told us, when an accident occurred to some of the apprentices, and the apprentices were not given compensation or something like that. (*Dr. Mukherjee—You see the Act does not apply.*) Yes. Yet, the Managing Director had to pay something to them and the other directors and share-holders had nothing to do with this act of the Managing Director. So the Managing Director was put to a loss on account of this. He said 'Why should I take the responsibility of taking so many apprentices and why should the Company profit by it'. He, therefore, refused to have that responsibility and discharged the apprentices. This can be said to be the starting point in the discontentment that prevailed amongst the workers. The apprentices struck work and gave the lead. The others followed. The strike was spontaneous. Before that we had sent some points to the Company for their consideration and we were waiting for a reply. In the meantime all this happened. We were taken unprepared and unawares and had to support our comrades. Various mill-hands were arrested and taken into custody and the strike continued. There was some outburst of violence. (*Mr. R. K. Saran—On both sides.*) Yes, on both sides. The arrested persons were belaboured while under the custody of the police.

Q.—What was the consequence of the settlement?

A.—An agreement was arrived at between the management and the Union.

Q.—What was the result of that agreement?

A.—The dispute was referred to a Board of Arbitration.

Q.—There are many points not yet settled?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What happened to the apprentices?

A.—They were taken in, some of them. The management also said that they would be entertained, those not taken in then, as vacancy arose.

Q.—Were they to get some wages?

A.—Yes. They were given small wages, some stipend of Rs. 5 a month, I think.

Q.—And for workers?

A.—The management agreed to abide by the decision of the Board of Arbitration. They say that compared to Calcutta, the wages at Gaya are much better. The arbitrators will enquire into the whole matter, gather the rates of wages and other conditions that prevail at Calcutta and other industrial centres and arrive at a proper figure. That term in the agreement, therefore remains yet to be settled.

Q.—Is there any understanding as to the time to be taken by the Board?

A.—Yes, it was decided that the Board should give their verdict in about a month's time.

Q.—Have you any idea as to the wage movement here? Has there been any improvement on the whole or respecting any particular department?

A.—Yes, it has been reported that some of the workers in the Silk Department were to be discharged by the end of the month.

Mr. Saran.—For want of work or.....?

A.—My information is only that they are to be discharged. I do not know anything more.

Q.—What can be the reason?

A.—I don't know definitely. All I know is that they are to be discharged by the end of the month.

Q.—Are they installing any machinery there?

A.—I do not know how far the information is correct. Do you mean constructional work?

Q.—Yes.

A.—But that would apply to the unskilled workers only.

Q.—Not necessarily, it may apply to skilled workers also. Then again, those employed in constructional work also are discharged at some time or other, say, when the work is finished. The number of hands would then be naturally reduced when the work is finished.

A.—I do admit that. But you see in a factory, like one we have here, some constructional work will be going on throughout the year.

Q.—Then it is re-employment.

A.—But they are not re-employed.

Mr. Saran.—Is that the constructional work is done by contractors. Then of course, we can understand the reason to some extent. But so far as I know most of the work is done by the management directly.

Dr. Mukerji.—Even constructional work?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is there any system here by which old hands' names are recorded in a register and when they come again they are re-employed?

A.—But they are not taken usually, and particularly after some industrial dispute.

Q.—I find that the shifts here are 7 to 12, 4 to 8 for some workers and for others 12 to 4 and 8 to 12. Now do the workers take to this sort of division with complaint? I mean do they like the present arrangement?

A.—Yes, they do because of the fact that over 90 per cent of the workers have not been provided with quarters and they have to go to their own houses for their food. Between the shifts they go to their home and come back. Until and unless they are provided with quarters the present arrangement may continue.

Q.—Our point is this. At present there is a long interval of 4 hours. Now they go home, take their meals and come back to work again. Will it not be better if they are given some rest at the Mill itself and allowed to go home after their work in the Mill is completely finished? You see now they would have to come back in the hot sun. They will have to work 8 hours continuously, of course, allowing for some rest. Won't you think that some such arrangement will be better liked by the workers?

A.—I cannot see how it will be better to the workers. They go home for their food in the afternoon and the workers here like the present arrangement. I have not had any complaints so far, as far as the present arrangement is concerned.

Q.—How many holidays including Sundays are allowed here?

A.—All the Sundays and 4 holidays are allowed. Nothing comes out of this for the wages are on piece-rate. They lose their wages; so strictly it is no leave at all.

Q.—As regards monthly-rated workers?

A.—There are very few.

Q.—What is the proportion of the monthly-rated workers to those employed on piece-rate?

A.—I cannot say exactly. Most of the workers are piece-rate workers. The whole of the winding section is piece-rate. A great many time-rated workers are getting very low wages, as for instance in the winding section.

Q.—What is the lowest wage?

A.—The minimum wage now fixed is Rs. 12.

Q.—We found quite a number of workers getting Rs. 8 like doffer boys?

A.—Yes, there are many. The Board of Arbitration will settle all that.

Q.—And some of the piece-rate workers, they are also getting wages below Rs. 8-4-0.

A.—True, a great many workers who could earn more are also getting less wages because of the piece-wage system. The management are adopting the piece-rate system in the name of efficiency and are giving more incentive to the workers to earn more. Actually they are earning much less. They cannot even earn the minimum that has been fixed.

Q.—Is this low earning in piece-work, due sometimes to the fact that, for instance, the bobbins or raw materials are not supplied in time and consequently the workers have to wait for a pretty long time and they lose a good part of their wages?

A.—Of course, sometimes the machinery is not working, there is a breakdown and for a couple of hours the workers will have nothing to do and they sit idle.

Q.—So you have also found that on account of the machinery or the inadequacy of materials, the piece-rated earners get much less than they would otherwise have got?

A.—Yes, it often happens.

Mr. Saran.—You see, there is also the advantage in piece-work. A worker who is efficient will earn much more than the minimum fixed?

A.—Yes, that is what they say. So far as my experience goes, they, to a great extent, interfere with earning more.

Q.—Why so?

A.—Well, the machinery fails, the inadequacy of bobbins, raw materials, etc., also affects production.

Dr. Mukerji.—I found that a great many of the workers here are imported from other places like Calcutta, etc. What do you think is

the proportion of outside labour to that of local labour? Do you think that local labour is slowly drawn up to take the place of the labourers now drawn from outside?

A.—All the apprentices are taken from the local villages and the towns. I do not know what will happen. The present arrangement is that they will be trained in the line and gradually take the place of others. Now some of the apprentices themselves are unemployed. They will be taken in as vacancy arises. That is what the management has given us to understand.

Mr. Saran.—So you say that at present there are more men than the Company want?

A.—The Company is responsible for that. It was very helpful to them in the beginning; they were getting work done for nothing. Now they pay a stipend as I said before.

Q.—Do you know any cases of overtime? The shift may be finished, the relieving hand may not have come up and the man in the shift may be working extra time. Is that person given any overtime wages?

A.—No, I have not received any information.

Q.—Have you any cases of accident here?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Fatal?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Was any compensation paid?

A.—I do not know whether the Act is observed here.

Dr. Mukerji.—There is inadequate housing accommodation here?

A.—Yes, very inadequate.

Q.—Have you any idea of the rents that the workers are now paying?

A.—They are really paying high rates of rent.

Q.—Can you give us an exact figure?

A.—Say, something like 12 annas a month. The rent for a room will be Rs. 2 a month and two or three of them share it.

Q.—I would like to get the exact rate of rent that the workers are paying.

A.—I do not know what they are actually paying, those living in the *bazars* do really pay higher rent.

Q.—What about the outside labourers from Calcutta and the like?



A.—Some of them do live in the quarters provided by the Company.

Q.—Is there adequate arrangement for supplying drinking water?

A.—The water-supply is often very inadequate. They supply from tube-wells on the roadside.

Mr. Saran.—What about the people who have come from different parts? Have they been given any advances to come to Gaya?

A.—No, they have come on their own accord.

Q.—Are they addicted to drink?

A.—Yes, some of them are.

Q.—Have they come with their families?

A.—I find that those coming from Calcutta or Cawnpore have not got their families with them, but those from Mirzapur are with their families.

Q.—Are they on contract for some years?

A.—No, there is no definite contract.

Dr. Mukerjee.—Regarding the marketing facilities, do you come across any difficulty that are usually found in many industrial centres that when the workers go to *Baniya* shops, the rates charged are often higher than in the general market?

A.—The position here is different from other industrial centres. Gaya is not yet an industrial town and so conditions are different here. The shops here are mostly having the same rate.

Q.—Do you consider the rate to be fair?

A.—Yes, I consider them to be fair.

Q.—I would like to ask you now a few questions about the trade unions. You gave us a preliminary description of the labour trouble here. Have you come across obstacles in the development of the unions? Any victimisation and the like?

A.—Those employed in constructional work have been discharged.

Q.—Were they all members of your Union? Moreover, when once the work on which they were employed gets finished, there is no option but that they will be discharged. Is that not so? As for instance those employed in the construction of a building get themselves discharged soon after the building is completed.

A.—How can I differentiate between a building being built and other items of constructional work? I say that new buildings are being built everyday.

Q.—Do you mean to say that constructional work is still continuing? Then why were the workers employed before discharged?

A.—I cannot give you the exact reason why they were discharged.

Q.—When the factory was being built and machinery installed, the Company might have employed a large number of men. Now that the factory is complete do you want the Company to provide for all those workers who were then engaged in the construction of the factory? There might have been a large extra labour employed then?

A.—But the factory is now complete and yet it is not working in full swing, and at the same time construction work is still proceeding.

Q.—Installation of machinery also?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Now my question was what are the reasons that has prevented the development of a stronger union, namely, has there been any discrimination or victimisation of the workers because they took part in the activities of the trade union? Has any such thing been brought to your notice.

A.—One thing that I said before was about the apprentices being asked to go away. They have now discharged a large number of them. That has stood in the way to a considerable extent, of the formation of a proper trade union, organised on proper lines.

Q.—Your point is different from ours. What I ask is this. The factory, it is true, has discharged a large number of apprentices; they were not paid anything in the first instance, and that led to the strike and so on. But has there been any direct victimisation of those who took part in the trade union activities?

A.—I cannot say anything definite now. It all happened so suddenly and moreover the facts are in the hands of arbitrators. Until the award of the Board of Arbitration is out finally, I cannot say anything definite about it.

Mr. Saran.—Do you think that the workers coming from outside show any unwillingness to join your union?

A.—I have not found them unwilling.

Q.—Are they all the members of your Union?

A.—Not all of them. You see I have not had the time to go to them, to approach them individually and enrol them. If I had the time I would work on that line. At the general meetings we have held so far, I think the attendance is definitely satisfactory.

Dr. Mukerjee.—Do you think that any labour legislation as in other industrial countries like America, will be desirable here also. There they have prohibited by legislation employers from discriminating and victimising. Do you think that such a thing will be desirable here also?

A.—Yes, it is necessary.

Q.—In a similar manner do you want the employers to be prohibited by legislation from discouraging the holding of meetings of the Union in the vicinity of the factory and prohibiting registration of unions? Have you free access to the factory area here?

A.—Well, there is no factory area excepting the places where the machinery is kept. But we have got extensive space outside. The Company does not allow even the holding of meetings at the gate of the factory.

Q.—Do you think that the law should prohibit the employers from doing such things, discouraging the formation of trade unions, as they have done in other countries?

A.—Yes. It is imminently necessary.

Q.—Or again giving notice to quit the houses of the Company during a strike?

A.—I think that also should be stopped by special legislation.

Q.—Interfering with peaceful picketing?

A.—Yes, that also should be declared unlawful?

Q.—Now, I would like you to treat my question not with reference to the local situations, but as a general proposition. To what extent the executives of the police force interfere with peaceful picketing by counteracts and interfering with the organisation of the workers for their collective rights of bargaining? Do you want the law to be modified or a new legislation enacted?

A.—I am connected with the labour movement in this province very intimately and I have come to know that the police force in Bihar, in the name of preserving law and order do really help the capitalists and oppress the labourers and try their best to undermine their unity and force them to submission. They are also the agents of the capitalists in some places. I have found this fact in my experience and so a special legislation should be brought in to stop all this.

Mr. Saran.—Now, you are blaming the police and the magistracy. They are kept and maintained by the State to preserve law and order, and to prevent the destruction of property. The capitalists have to be very careful during a strike. They are the persons who have invested a large amount and they are in possession of property. It is to their interest that it should not be destroyed. The police, you say, are siding with them. True. They have to see that the costly machinery and other things are not destroyed. Is that not so?

A.—I am of opinion that the State today exists only for the vested interest.

Q.—So, you cannot blame the police or the magistracy because they are doing the thing that is required of them.

A.—The State exists for the propertied classes. To some extent it is true that they do preserve law and order. But should they not similarly protect the peace of the workers? This does not happen at all.

Q.—I would like you to consider this a bit more carefully. Now during a strike there may be sabotage. The machinery is in danger. There are places, as for instance, the mines, where the act of one striker will be such a dangerous act as to cause immense loss to many—loss of life even—to a very great extent.

A.—That may be. But if the strikers are away—a considerable distance away,—from the area of the factory, why should the police then declare section 144 and ban demonstration as unlawful and the like?

Dr. Mukherjee.—In some countries in Europe, this kind of activity of the employer, apart from the police, is declared illegal, such as taking outside labour, etc. Do you think that a procedure like the one should be provided for in this country also?

A.—Yes. It should be.

Mr. Saran.—You have said that the management has recognised your Union. What exactly do you mean by that?

A.—The Union can take the grievances of the employees to the management direct.

Dr. Mukherjee.—And recognition means that the management will investigate into the grievances and try to find out a remedy?

A.—Yes.

*(The witness at this stage presented the Chairman with a copy of a petition from the Union.)*

Q.—This is a copy of the petition submitted to the management, which contains the present grievances of the workers?

A.—Yes.

Chairman.—Thank you very much, Mr. Basawan Singh.

The Committee resumed its sitting in the Inspection Bungalow, Samastipur, on the 6th February, 1939.

The following members were present :—

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|------------------------|-----|-----|--|
| 1. Mr. R. R. Bakhale   | ... | ... | <i>Deputy Chairman,<br/>Presiding.</i> |
| 2. Dr. R. K. Mukherjee | ... | ... | <i>Member.</i>                         |
| 3. Prof. R. K. Saran   | ... | ... | <i>Secretary.</i>                      |

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**Summary of the oral evidence of Mr. Anisur Rahman, the President of the Mukhtapur Jute Factory Union, Samastipur.**

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My name is Anisur Rahman. I am the President of the Mukhtapur Jute Factory Workers' Union. This Union was formed on the 16th January 1939. There are about 1,800 or 2,000 workers. There are 1,189 members of my Union. They pay 1 anna per month each. The contribution is collected monthly. We have not yet formed the constitution. We have elected a Managing Committee but it is provisional. There are 17 members of the Managing Committee. There are only 3 members who are outsiders. The Union has not been registered under the Trade Unions Act. We want to frame our constitution according to the Trade Unions Act. There are several grievances of the Jute Mill workers. We have submitted a copy of the grievances to the employer. The greatest grievance is that there is no security of service. One man works for two months and is turned out. Again he comes in after paying a bribe later on; again after sometime he is turned out, and so on. There is bribery and corruption. No body knows that he is employed permanently. The bribe is given to the Head Clerk. At first the *sardars* used to get bribe for appointment but now it is not the case. The appointments and dismissals are in the hands of the *sardars*. The bribe ranges from 10 rupees to 15 rupees.

The third demand is about wages. We want Rs. 15 per month as the minimum wage.

There are no holidays. The factory remains closed on Sundays but the labourers do not get wages of that day. On Saturdays they are paid only half day's wages. They are required to work for 50 hours per week. The whole Mill is not closed on Saturday but only that portion of the Mill is closed where work is taken on piece-rate.

The fine varies from 2 annas to one rupee. The fine is taken on the ground of bad work. We are also fined when the threads are broken.

We want general increment in wages. Those who used to get Rs. 15 per month are now given only Rs. 10 per month. We want that we should be given wages on a graded scale.

We want one month's privilege leave and holidays on other festivals. All the gazetted holidays should be given to the workers. We want monthly system of wage payment. There are quarters but they are not sufficient. Those who do not go to their village homes have to remain in their quarters which are no better than small cells and they have to pay annas 8 per month. So, we want quarters furnished with electricity, bathing place, water pipes and a good number of latrines. The quarters for *Babus* are good and they have not to pay any rent.

About education it is a fact that there is one L. F. School and about 20 students read there. They are the sons of *Babus*. There is only one master. The sons of the workers are not admitted in that school. There is no proper medical arrangement for the workers. There should be reading rooms and library for the workers.

There has been a wage cut. Formerly workers used to get Re. 1-2-6 for weaving but now they get only 10 annas. The rate for stitching also has been reduced. They used to get three pies for 15 bags, but now they get only 2 pice for the same amount of work. At first the *coolies* used to get Rs. 2-4-0 per week but now they get Rs. 1-14-0 for the same work. There has been reduction in the hours of work also. I cannot say whether the reduction of wage is due to the reduction of the hours of work. It might be so.

In sewing department the fine has gone up to Rs. 7. There are many instances in sewing and other departments where instead of four workers three workers have to do the work and they are not given leave even to go to the latrine. Children are employed in the sewing department.

The employment of children is done with the knowledge of the management. The name is not registered. There are about 12 or 13 boys in the sewing department. For the same kind of work somebody gets Rs. 5 while the others get Rs. 6. For the same kind of work different persons get different wages.

The appointment is in the hands of the Head Clerk and so he gets bribes. The *sardars* are simply as the departmental heads and they have nothing to do with appointments. Any worker who comes late is marked absent and is not given the wage of that day.

The attitude of the employers towards the Union is hostile. They do not want that the Union should flourish and they put all sorts of interference. Sometimes they take thumb impression from the workers and threaten them with dismissal if they join the Union. On the 27th January I wrote a letter to the employer to discuss the grievances of the labourers but he did not acknowledge the letter, what to speak of redressing the grievances.

The Committee met in the Dak Bungalow, Katihar, on the 7th February 1939 at 3 P.M.

Mr. R. R. Bakhale, Dr. R. K. Mukherjee and Prof. R. K. Saran were present.

Mr. Bakhale, Deputy Chairman, presided.

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**Oral evidence of Dr. K. L. Kundu, President, Katihar Labour Union, Katihar (Purnea).**

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*Mr. Bakhale.*—Are you the President of the Katihar Labour Union?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—When did you form the Union?

*A.*—At about two years ago.

*Q.*—What is the total membership of the Union?

*A.*—This Union was started about two years ago but it failed and now it has been recently started afresh. So I cannot say the exact number of the members. There is no regular register at present. It was doing work before. It has started to work this year recently.

*Q.*—Has your Union got constitution and rules framed to guide the Union?

*A.*—At present I have not got the rules or the constitution of the Union. I will send a copy of the same in due course.

*Q.*—Is your Union registered under the Trade Unions Act?

*A.*—No. We are trying to get it registered but it has not been registered yet. It would be registered shortly.

*Q.*—From what factories you take the members of the Union? Do you take the members from all the factories or from some particular industry?

*A.*—I take the members of the Union from all the factories in Katihar, e.g., Jute, Flour, Oil, etc. Our activities are not confined to any particular factory.

*Q.*—What is the relation of the management with the employees?

*A.*—It is not friendly. They try to put all sorts of obstacles, to prevent the Union. The condition of the labourers is worst in the Jute Mills.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—I find that the condition of the workers in the Jute Mills is very bad, the minimum wage is Rs. 1-10-0 per week and in one factory the minimum wage is Rs. 2-1-0 per week? How do they manage in the Jute Mill?

A.—The condition of the workers is so bad and the workers are so poor here that in order to keep their body and soul together, they are compelled to accept whatever wages they get. They do not want to go on strike, otherwise they will have to starve. Here there is so much poverty.

Q.—Have you represented this fact to the mill authorities?

A.—Yes, but they do not pay heed. The workers are compelled to accept very low wages.

Q.—Was there any reduction of rates or this rate is coming from before?

A.—The rates are quite different in the two mills. These are lower in the R. B. H. M. Jute Mills than the Katihar Jute Mills, for which there was a strike in the R. B. H. M. Jute Mills about a year ago.

Q.—We gather from our visit to the mills that there is very much discontentment about the rates of wages. Can you give any substantial instance of such a case brought to you?

A.—I cannot give you instances. Many times representations are brought to us complaining about the rates.

Q.—Is it a fact that when some old labourers go out on leave and when they come back after the expiry of the term, they are not given the job or even if given in some cases, they are given on reduced rates?

A.—Yes, there are cases like that.

Q.—Do they get sickness leave with pay?

A.—No.

Q.—What are the hours of work in the flour and the Jute Mills? Are they longer than the hours prescribed under the Act? Do you think that they work for longer hours?

A.—Yes. The work that the employers take is longer in hours than that prescribed. In the Jute Mills the work taken is for  $11\frac{1}{2}$  hours in the day but in the Oil and Flour Mills the hours are a little less than that. It is one hour less.

*Mr. Bakhale.*—Do you know that the work for  $11\frac{1}{2}$  hours is the violation of the Factory Act? The Factory Act provides that the work should not be more than 54 hours in the week?

A.—Yes. That I know.

Q.—When you knew that the employers were violating the Factory Act did you bring it to the notice of the court? Did you inform the Government about it?

A.—Yes, I have brought it to the notice of the Government. Once when the Factory Inspector had come my workers told him that



such things were happening. I also wrote to the Government but none of them took any steps towards it.

Q.—Did you bring it to the notice of the Factory Inspector orally or in writing?

A.—These things were said to him verbally and not in writing. Once when the Factory Inspector came to visit the factory my workers were present there and told him of the same. He gave them to understand that he would look into the matter but nothing has been done till now.

Dr. Mukherjee.—You have said that the hours of work is  $11\frac{1}{2}$  hours but when we visited the Factory we were told by the workers that the hours of work were 12 hours?

A.—The thing is that when we include the half hour of rest period it will be 12 hours but when we exclude the rest period, it would be  $11\frac{1}{2}$  hours.

Q.—Regarding the houses for the workers, it has been observed that the rent for the houses are 6 annas per week. Is it not a high rent?

A.—Yes, in majority of cases it is 6 annas per week or Rs. 1-8-0 per month. It is almost the general case.

Q.—The working in the Jute Mills is very strenuous. Do you think that the working under such circumstances results in disease to the workers? If so, what are the common diseases?

A.—Yes, many diseases are common. Generally they get asthma, bronchitis, tuberculosis, desepsia, etc.

Q.—When a worker suffers is he treated properly? Is there any provision of proper and adequate medical facility from the side of the mills?

A.—I do not know (*after asking a worker*). There is no such medical arrangement for the workers. There are two doctors in the mill area. One is a qualified L.M.P. and the other is unqualified. There is one hospital doctor who is perhaps paid by the management a monthly subscription for the treatment of mill workers. He too is overworked and has not got much time to look after the general patients and the mill patients.

Q.—Do you know whether any compensation is allowed to the workers who are injured during the course of the work of the factory?

A.—No compensation is given.

Q.—Did you apply to the Magistrate who is the Compensation Commissioner to award the compensation?

A.—No. We have not done so as there is no money.

Q.—Under the Act it is provided that those who avoid giving compensation can be prosecuted.

A.—Yes.

Q.—There is no question of fighting the case but only the District Magistrate should know of the case?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is there any child employed in the Mills who is under 12 years of age?

A.—In the Jute Mills I do not think there is any but I think that in the Flour and Oil Mills there are some.

Q.—As regards the hours of work and the split shifts, the workers say that they work from 7½ A.M. to 11½ A.M. and again from 4½ P.M. to 8½ P.M., i.e., they work in two shifts. Is it a fact? What is your idea of the same?

A.—Yes, that is correct.

Q.—So there is a big gap of four hours between the two shifts. Are you in favour of this big gap between the two shifts?

A.—The thing which I want is that if the workers are allowed to work for only eight hours and if the employers take work strictly for 8 hours then I am not in favour of such long intervals of four hours. I am in favour of shorter intervals if the work is of shorter duration. If long hours of work will be taken then naturally they will require long hours of interval. In that case I am in favour of that big gap. So if the hours of work is reduced then the interval period may also be reduced. I prefer 8 hours' work and short interval.

Q.—Do the workers belong to the town or they come from distant villages?

A.—Majority of the workers are of the town but some of them come from the villages also.

Q.—Have they got quarters to live in?

A.—No, they have not got sufficient number of quarters. Some go back to their homes after completing the work in the night.

Q.—I have come to know that there is great corruption in the Mills?

A.—I cannot say much about this. I do not know how far it is true. But I have heard many cases of that nature.

Q.—I have come to know that the wages have been reduced very much?

A.—Yes, since a year or so there has been much reduction of wages. Because the workers here are very poor so they choose to work on reduced rate also.

Q.—Is it a fact that some of the workers are treated very badly or victimised for their taking part in the labour unions.

A.—Yes. There are many cases of that nature.

Q.—Now coming to the medical aid and adequacy of the doctors for the treatment of the injured persons. Do you think that the injured persons are properly treated and looked after?

A.—This is one of the greatest difficulties which the workers have to face. There is no separate hospital for the workers. All injured persons are sent to the general hospital for treatment. There is only one doctor in the general hospital and he is to look after the public and the workers.

Q.—Regarding the water-supply to the workers, do you think that the workers are provided with adequate water?

A.—No, there is no source of supply of pure water. The water is not at all drinkable. It is impure and carries germs of so many diseases.

Q.—How is drinking water supplied?

A.—It is supplied from open well which too dries up in the spring and early summer.

Q.—You would like that there should be houses for the workers provided with pure water-supply?

A.—Yes, there should be good houses fit for living and adequate pure water-supply.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—I have noticed that there is great drunkenness in the workers. Can you give an idea of the proportion of the workers who drink and the proportion of wages that are spent on this?

A.—Yes, the evil is wide spread on this side. But the habit of drinking toddy is more prevalent than that of wine.

Q.—How far do you think that the scheme of prohibition will help the cause of labourers?

A.—That would help much. This is the thing which is mostly needed. The municipal authorities should be also asked to help the removal of the sale of toddy in its limit.

Q.—Are you in favour of total prohibition or partial prohibition?

A.—I am in favour of total prohibition.

Q.—What kind of venereal diseases are prevalent in the workers?

A.—There is a large number of people in the working class who suffer from syphilis and gonorrhoea. I am a doctor and as a doctor I can say that most of them have come to me for treatment. This is in greater number in Katihār.

Q.—Do the workers live here with their families and from what parts of the province the workers come?

A.—Those labourers who belong to this part, i.e., to this district live with their families. But large number of labourers come from districts of Chapra, Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga, Bhagalpur and generally they do not live with their families. And they are seen to suffer from the diseases more. They go home after six months or a year. There is also another reason that there are no houses for them and so they cannot live with their families and for private houses they have to pay more rent which they cannot afford.

Q.—You like the idea of legislation for prohibition and other evils on the factory areas?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is it a fact that the cases of injury are not properly treated?

A.—Yes.

*(The witness showed one of the labourers who had injury in the hand and who was not given any compensation nor his injuries were treated. The witness himself got him admitted into the hospital.)*

Chairman.—Thank you.

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**SHELLAC**

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The Committee met in the Inspection Bungalow, Jhalda (Manbhum), on the 22nd March 1939 at 3-30 P.M.

Dr. Radha Kamal Mukherjee and Prof. R. K. Saran were present.

Dr. Mukherjee presided.

**Oral evidence of Mr. Kali Pada Haldar, President, Jhalda Thana Congress Committee, and Dr. Prafulla Chandra Mitra, Congress Worker, Jhalda.**

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—We find that the rate of *Karigars* is less in Tulin than in Jhalda?

*A.*—The *Karigars* prepare shellac from seed-lac which is sold at a higher price here, at Jhalda, than at Tulin because of competition. The margin of profit is less at Tulin. There are other facilities, e.g., marketing facility, at Jhalda which are not available at Tulin. The production at Jhalda also is more compared to that at Tulin. Therefore workers at Tulin do not work all the time and earn less. At Tulin they sometimes work in their homes at a small scale.

*Q.*—What is the condition of the workers at Tulin?

*A.*—It is very bad, because they collect seed-lac and extract shellac at their own homes with their own cost.

*Q.*—What is the value of the seed-lac?

*A.*—The value of the seed-lac is Rs. 3 or Rs. 4 per maund. In turning Rs. 4 worth of seed-lac into shellac the average labour charge will be about 12 annas.

*Q.*—Did the employers keep a portion of the wages due?

*A.*—Yes. Tuesday is supposed to be the pay day but payment is actually never made on that day. Employers, on one pretext or the other, prolong period of payment till the end of the next week and thus keep the wages of 3 or 4 days in their hands.

*Q.*—What are the hours of work?

*A.*—8 hours. The *Belwais* and *Pherwais* do work on contract system.

*Prof. Saran.*—There is no holiday even on Sundays?

*A.*—Yes. There are no holidays even on *Durga Puja*, *Moharram* or *Holi*. If the labourers do not come on such occasions they are searched out of their homes and brought out to the factory for work.

*Q.*—Does the work last all the year round?

*A.*—No. There is no work in the month of *Sawan*. There is half work in *Baisakh*, *Jeth* and *Asarh*. In the months of *Kartik*, *Aghan*

Q.—From which part do the *Ghasandars* and other workers come?

A.—They come from Bengal. They come in hope of work and again go back in off-season. The proportion of the unemployed workers is greater than those who are employed. The number swells to 3,000.

Q.—Workers catch hot lac by the teeth and stretch it. Does it produce any disease?

A.—No, in our knowledge it does not.

Q.—Those who work near the fire get some disease?

A.—Lac workers generally get urinary troubles but majority of them suffer from conjunctivitis.

Q.—Do you suggest any protective measures?

A.—It is very difficult to say off-hand.

Q.—Is there any provision for the lac water to be drained off?

A.—It is drained in the river.

Q.—Do the farmers purchase lac water for irrigation purposes?

A.—It may serve as manure but it is not utilised.

Q.—Wages differ in different shellac factories?

A.—Yes. Mr. Gregory gives comparatively better wages. He pays 4 annas to 5 annas higher rate than other employers.

Q.—Will a minimum wage legislation help the stabilisation of wages?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What about of hours of work?

A.—They also vary from factory to factory. Generally they work from 5 A.M. to 6 P.M. There is no fixed time for the workers to come nor any prescribed hours of work. As the work is on contract basis and payment is made on the amount turned out, it depends on the individual workers to put in the number of hours they desire.

Q.—What is your idea if the hours of work are fixed?

A.—In that case there should be provision of payment of overtime. If that is not done they will be losers. The *Karigars* have to wait additional hours for weighing of the seed-lac in the morning and of the finished lac in the evening and thus they are kept up till late at night.

Q.—We have seen that the *Ghasandars* work in open spaces having no sheds. It is very difficult in the hot weather and during the rains?

A.—Yes. There must be some arrangement to protect them. Mr. Gregory has erected a shed for them. Workers complain that there is no arrangement for sheds to take food or places for children to rest

or to play. There is no arrangement for adequate drinking water. There is no provision for the education of the children of workers.

Q.—Do the workers keep account of what they get and how they get?

A.—They are not literate enough to keep accounts. They all keep their accounts in their memory. They are given one maund of seed-lac and they give back 30 to 32 seers of shellac and they know how much remuneration they will get.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—I have heard that they waste money on wine and dance?

A.—All the workers do not take wine but most of them do. On festival occasions they engage dancing parties and spend money on them. Some, no doubt, keep concubines. There is one festival *Ashtami* on which they spend some money.

Q.—Is venereal disease very common among the workers.

A.—Yes, it is very common because corruption is prevalent. There is a very low standard of general morality among men and women.

Q.—Is leprosy also very common?

A.—Yes.

*Chairman.*—Thank you.



The Committee met at the Inspection Bungalow, Jhalda, at 3-15 P.M., on the 20th March 1939.

Dr. Radha Kamal Mukherjee and Prof. R. K. Saran were present.

Dr. Mukherjee presided.

**Oral evidence of the workers from different Lac and Biri Factories at Jhalda and Tulia.**

I. *Karigars* represented by—

(1) Pallu.

(2) Punarman Mahto.

Dr. Mukherjee.—What is the nature of your work and in which factory are you employed.

A.—(Pallu) I am a *Karigar* and I work in the factory of Mr. Bhairab Prasad. I have been working since 36 years and have experience of over 36 years.

(Punarman Mahto)—I work in Tulin Factory and I am also a *Karigar*. I have been working since 15 years. Formerly, I was a *Belwai*; later on I became a *Karigar*.

Q.—What are the grievances which you want to put before us?

A.—(Pallu) There is no urinal or lafrine in the factory where we work. The employers beat, abuse and even sometimes kick us with their shoes. There is always a threat of dismissal even for the slightest mistake.

Q.—What are the wages you get?

A.—Previously it was Rs. 3 to Rs. 4 but now only about Re. 1-2-0 or Re. 1-3-0 for the group of three workers. Out of this about 9 annas is the share of the *Karigar* and the rest goes to the other two. The practice is that a band of three workers, a *Karigar*, a *Belwai* and a *Pherwai*, get wages collectively; 50 per cent of which is the share of the *Karigar*.

Q.—Do you get your wages at the right time? Is there regular payment?

A.—In this also we are treated very unfairly. We never get our wages in time, at the end of week, but payment is always made late by 8 or 10 days.

Q.—Do you keep the account of what you get and what you should get.

A.—No. We are illiterate and do not know how to keep accounts. The employers keep a portion of our wages in arrear. We suspect that the entries in the registers are not correct.

Q.—Are you fined?

A.—The fines are very heavy, even for a slight mistake we are fined. Sometimes even half of our wages are kept back as fine. We are also fined if there is any defect in the quality of the lac produced.

(*Punarman Mahto*).—At Tulin also wages are not paid in time. Even if the output is dirty wages are cut. I get annas 12 per *Bhatta* out of that 6 annas are taken away by the *Karigar*. Formerly, I used to get Re. 1 but now I get only annas 10 or 12 annas.

Q.—How much finished lac you produce from the seed-lac?

A.—If we get one maund, we produce 35 to 36 seers of seed-lac in a day.

Q.—What are the hours of work in the factory?

A.—We come at about 6 A.M. and go back at about 2 P.M., if by that time the production is finished. There is another difficulty with us. Suppose the *Belwai* has come and the *Karigar* has not turned up, the *Belwai* has to sit idle or to go back.

If we are supplied bad raw material it takes longer time and we are not free before 6 P.M.

Q.—If your companion is not efficient can you change him?

A.—No, that is not allowed. Deductions are made from the wages of the whole group for inefficiency of one man.

II.—*Belwais* representer by—

(1) Govind Seth,

(2) Rahman Sheikh, and

(3) Shreekand Gorai.

*Dr. Mukherjee*.—Since how many years are you working? What is your experience and in whose factory you work?

A.—*Govind Seth*.—I am working since 8 years. My experience as *Belwai* is of about 7 or 8 years. I work in Mr. Amin's factory.

*Rahman Sheikh*.—I have experience of about 12 to 13 years and I work in the factory of Mr. Aratoon.

*Shreekand Gorai*.—I am also working in the Factory and has experience of 8 years.

Q.—What are the wages you get?

A.—For the produce from one maund and five seers of raw material the total *mazdoori* is Re. 1-6-0 out of which my share is about annas 6.

(The third man said that his share was 4 annas). Out of the raw material of one maund and five seers we produce 35 seers of finished lac.

Q.—Is there any ill-treatment or victimisation towards you?

A.—Yes. We are abused, beaten and slapped. We come to the Factory very early and go at about 2 P.M.

Q.—Is there any proper arrangement for drinking water?

A.—No. The Factory has not made any arrangement. We drink the same water which we bring for washing the lac.

Q.—What are the hours of work?

A.—We come at 6 A.M. and are supposed to go at 3 P.M. but as a matter of fact we are never free before 4 or 5 P.M.

Q.—What is the system of wage payment?

A.—We are paid weekly but never in full and a portion of our wages is kept back.

Q.—Do you keep any account of the wages you should get?

A.—No, we do not know accounting.

Q.—Is there any fine?

A.—Fines are considerably high. Even when the work turns out to be bad, we are fined. Saturday is the pay day but almost invariably the payment is made 3 or 4 days after.

Q.—Do you take loan also?

A.—Because we do not get our wages timely, we have got to borrow from the market and purchase our food stuffs. For that we pay interest. When payment is made we are delayed up to 9 or 10 P.M. when we cannot make any purchase.

Q.—Have you got anything else to say?

A.—We want more wages and less hours of work. There should be proper arrangement of drinking water and behaviour of the employers should not be humiliating.

Q.—Have you got any land for cultivation?

A.—No, none of us have got our own fields.

III.—*Pherwaris* represented by—

(1) Prannath Lahiri and others.

Q.—What are your wages.

A.—I get 11 pice (2. At Tulin I get only annas 2.

Q.—Have you got any fines?

A.—Yes, there are heavy fines. If the work turns out to be bad or if we are late in coming to the Factory we are fined heavily, annas 2 to annas 4 a week.

Q.—Do you get your wages in time?

A.—No. It is never paid in time. There is always a delay of 3 or 4 days.

Q.—What about the treatment of the employers towards the workers?

A.—It is very bad. They abuse, beat and slap us.

Q.—What is the amount of production and the hours of work?

A.—We are given one maund and five seers of raw material and we produce about 35 to 36 seers of the finished lac. We come at 6 A.M. and go at 2 or 3 P.M. but in case the raw material is bad, it takes till 6 P.M. to finish the work.

Q.—Do you get work for the whole week?

A.—No, sometimes there is no work for two days or three days and even for the whole week. In a month there is work for about 20 days.

Q.—Have you got any land for cultivation?

A.—Most of us have not got any land.

IV.—*Ghasandars* represented by—

(1) Sambhunath, and

(2) Subhan Nayak.

Q.—What are your wages?

A.—(1) Five pice per basket which contains about 25 to 30 seers.  
(2) 9 pice. The *Ghasandars* get about annas 8 or annas 10 per week if they get work for all the 6 days.

Q.—What is the treatment of the employers towards you?

A.—It is very bad. We are abused and beaten. We work from 7 or 8 A.M. to 5 or 6 P.M.

V.—*Birtwallas* represented by—

(1) Chandra, and

(2) Prankisto, etc.

Q.—Where do you work?

A.—(*Chandra*) I work in the house of Ban Babu. (*Prankisto*) I am in the factory of Puran Babu.

Q.—How many *biris* you prepare in a day?

A.—In two days we prepare 2,500 or 3,000 *biris*.

The rate is annas 3 per thousand.

Q.—Is any *dasturi* taken from you?

A.—Yes, two *bundles* of *biris* (50 *biris*) and one pice is cut for the *Thakur*. Ten *biris* are given for personal use.

Q.—Is it a fact that all *biri* makers smoke *biris*.

A.—Yes, almost all smoke.

Q.—When do you come to your work?

A.—We come at about 8 or 9 A.M. but the materials are never given before noon. The prepared bundles are counted very late in the night say at 10 or 11 P.M. and when we come out from our work, the whole market is closed. Three men combined get 6 annas a day. Our weekly earnings are Re. 1-2-0 because we do not get work for more than three days in a week.

Q.—Have you got any land in the village?

A.—Yes, some of us have got.

Q.—How many *biris* are rejected?

A.—About 500 to 700 *biris* are rejected per day. Before the bundle is sent out for disposal, out of 3,000 *biris* about 600 are rejected.

Q.—Do they fine for bad *biris*?

A.—Yes, our wages are cut. The refused *biris* are mixed up with old *biris*. Even if the leaves are bad our wages are cut. We are in a miserable plight.

Q.—Do you get your wages daily?

A.—No, it is generally given two to three days after. If the *biris* are not counted we have sometimes to sit for the whole night. We have to be present till the counting is over.

Q.—Do they keep back any portion of the wages?

A.—Yes. Out of 6 annas they keep back 4 pice.

Q.—Do you take any food in the middle of the work.

A.—We take *moori* worth of a pice or two at noon, and have got to remain without any food till late at night when we take boiled rice.

The Committee met at the Dak Bungalow, Pakur, on the 9th April, 1939 at 10 A.M.

Dr. R. K. Mukherjee and Messrs. H. B. Chandra and R. K. Saran were present.

Dr. Mukherjee presided.

Oral evidence of the following Kotalpukur workers were taken, Phagu, Karigar, Kotalpukur, Madan, Karigar, Kotalpukur, Somar, Karigar, Kotalpukur.

Dr. Mukherjee.—You all belong to the Kotalpukur factories of lac. Please give your names and designations ?

A.—Yes, we all are of the Kotalpukur factories of lac. We have given our names.

Q.—Are you all *Karigars*? What do you get and how do you distribute among the three constituents in the production, viz., *Karigars*, *Belwaja*, and *Pherwaia* ?

A.—We get Re. 1 only for all the three men and we distribute in the following ways:—*Belwaja* gets annas 5, *Pherwaia* gets annas 3 and the *Karigar* gets annas 8.

Q.—Do you get all your wages in the end of the week or is there any delay in payment ?

A.—There is no fixed day for the payment in the week. As soon as the week is finished we are not paid in full cash, but we are paid in kind and that too not full. Suppose that we have earned Re. 1 in the week, we are paid annas four or annas two in cash and we get grain, *Makai*, *Khesari*, etc.

Q.—You do not get money ?

A.—When we require money we are given one rupee or two rupees or twelve annas as temporary loan and two annas interest is charged on that. That interest is deducted from the wage.

Q.—Does it happen in all factories ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Have the factory employers also got shops and you take your necessities from there ?

A.—Yes, they have got shops and we purchase our daily necessities from them and the price is deducted from the wages. In those shops the commodities are sold very dear. The things which are sold in the market, say at 12 seers per rupee are sold in their shops at 9 seers per rupee.

Q.—Is there any deduction from the wages as *Dasturi* or *Goshala* fund ?

A.—Yes, and if we protest to take in kind and not to pay the deductions they ask us to go out. They say if you do not want to follow this practice then go out and do not work.

Q.—What is the rate of those deductions ?

A.—It is four pice or one anna in the rupee. (Later on the workers corrected that the Goshala fund is 2 pice per rupee and the Dastari is one pice per rupee.) That is cut on the week day.

Q.—When you fall ill do you get medicine or any medical aid during time of illness or injury?

A.—No, not at all.

Q.—Do you get work always or is there off-season?

A.—In *Baishakh* there is daily and constant work. In other times sometimes there is work and sometimes there is no work.

Q.—What do you do when there is no work ?

A.—When there is no work we go away to our homes and do the work of digging the earth, and get two annas or four annas daily. Some go away to work in the agricultural fields.

Q.—Have you got agricultural lands ?

A.—Some have got but very less, say, one or two bighas. Majority have not got land. The cases of *Belwaia* and *Pherwaia* are the same.

Q.—Is there any union of the workers ?

A.—No, there is no union of any sort in Kotalpukur.

Q.—Is there abuse or beating or any bad treatment with the workers ?

A.—Yes, all sorts of ill treatment.

Q.—If you are given 1 maund of seed lac, how much of finished good you will prepare ?

A.—About 34 seers, in some cases it is also 32 or 30 seers.

Q.—Is there any system of fines and if so how much and why ?

A.—Yes, there is a system of fines. Supposing that we have been given 1 maund of seed lac and we should give 34 seers and if any one gives 30 or 32 seers or less, then he is fined and also dismissed from the work; also abused and beaten. Wages are cut for bad workmanship.

Q.—At what rate ?

A.—At the rate of shellac sold.

Q.—What time is taken to finish 40 seers of seed-lac?

A.—We come at 4 A.M. and finish the one maund by 2½ or 3 P.M. We start work daily at 4 A.M., and finish at 2½ or 3 P.M. So it takes about 10 hours' work. Some come at 5 A.M. and finish at 4 P.M.

Q.—Is there any holiday or leave on medical grounds for illness or injury ?

A.—No, nothing. Some employers take domestic work also at their own homes, e.g., for guarding work, porters and the like and if we do not do, then we are abused, wages are deducted and are even dismissed.

The Committee resumed its sitting in the Dak Bungalow, Pakur, on the 9th April 1939.

The following members were present :—

- |                          |     |     |                   |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-------------------|
| 1. Dr. R. K. Mukherjee   | ... | ... | <i>Presiding.</i> |
| 2. Mr. H. B. Chandra     | ... | ... | <i>Member.</i>    |
| 3. Professor R. K. Saran | ... | ... | <i>Secretary.</i> |

**Oral evidence of Mr. Hubert Hughes, O.B.E., Engineer, Pakur (S. P.).**

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—You have experience of the conditions in the shellac industry ?

*A.*—I have, to some extent.

*Q.*—What is the difference in the wages between Pakur and Kotalpakur due to?

*A.*—That is because at Kotalpakur the work is only seasonal, practically they consume only the local lac.

*Q.*—They do not import lac at all ?

*A.*—No. More than half the lac used in Pakur is imported lac.

*Q.*—They use only local lac ?

*A.*—Yes. The difference is due to another fact also, that is, the Kotalpakur man can do 2 maunds because the local lac is not hard to work at. Imported lac entails more hard work.

*Q.*—Are there any other factors ?

*A.*—Yes, the Kotalpakur workers get advances in the shape of grain, or cash during slack seasons which keep them going which does not prevail in Pakur. Workers there are mostly paid in kind. I should say that most of them are paid in kind. It is a fact that the two systems of payment, in cash and in kind, exists there.

*Q.*—Do you want standardisation of wages with regard to this industry ? Don't you think that the difference in the wages leads to unfair competition and gradual losing of the market we have at present?

*A.*—I understand your position. I think myself that you must consider that the Pakur man practically works all the year and that at Kotalpakur the work is only seasonal, say for 4 months in the year. In this respect he is worse off than the Pakur man. The difference in the wages can, therefore, be accounted for. The smaller factories here do not work continuously throughout the year. Only the larger factories do. So they would expect higher wages in that respect. I think that if the system of payment in kind is abolished, it would do much good to the workers. They get less in kind than if they are paid in cash. It also ties his hands because he cannot spend what



he earns, in his own way, as he pleases. I understand that lac factories do not come under the Factory Act and therefore they continue this practice. The reason why it does not come under the Act is because they do not use power-driven machinery. I would plead for the extension of that Act to include the Lac Factories also. It is quite simple for a man to be injured by a hand-driven machinery as by a power-driven one.

Q.—Do you know any other reason why the wage difference between Pakur and Kotalpakur is appreciably great? You said that imported lac is difficult to work at. Why?

A.—Local lac is more easily melted than imported lac. They are, generally, I believe.

Q.—Have you come across any cases of *dasturi* being deducted from the workers?

A.—Yes, at the rate of 2 pice per rupee.

Q.—To what extent does the general export of seed-lac affect the employment of the workers here?

A.—If seed-lac is sent away from here our men are to some extent put out of work. When there is no seed-lac, practically there is no work for them.

Q.—But you know that the export is due to the varying nature of the industry. And also because you have no control over the same here?

A.—Yes. The general bad wave of commerce is passing over the whole industry and it needs organisation and control. There must be a control board formed to regulate prices and also production. I certainly think that would solve almost all the difficult problems facing the trade today.

Mr. H. B. Chandra.—You referred to the payment in kind some-time back. Have you an idea of the kind of grain that is given?

A.—Here in Pakur it is always in cash. But at Kotalpakur that is the rule. I do not know the kind of grain that is given, probably some *dal*, rice, etc. I said that the worker has not a chance to buy whatever he likes with his money. In most cases it happens that he is paid less in kind than in cash. That is my experience.

Q.—Have you had any occasion to know anything about the quarries here?

A.—Perhaps you do not know. I am a quarry man, and as far as quarrying labour is concerned, I do not think it needs any special investigation, because they are getting excellent rates just now which is much better than what they were getting for years.

Q.—Now, coming to the shellac industry, can you tell us what the nature of the industry is at present?

A.—I would like to draw the attention of the Committee to a memorandum I submitted to Mr. Davis when he was here a little time ago. I have got a copy of the memorandum here which I shall submit to the Committee. This particular industry is not organized at all. It contains the demands of the workers made through Mr. Manohar and at that time Mr. Davis also happened to be here. (*Witness handed over a paper to Dr. Mukherjee.*) That sums up the position more or less. If you like to have first hand information regarding the various items mentioned therein, there are some of the workers here who would be able to give you the actual state of affairs.

Dr. Mukherjee.—Yes, we shall examine them later on.

A.—The question at present facing the shellac industry here, in Pakur, is that the payment in kind should be abolished; there must be some regulation of working hours, that it must be brought under the Indian Factories Act according to which the payment of wages should be controlled.

Q.—The employers have given their evidence and they say that the workers seldom work for more than 8 hours and that the average period of work is between 6 to 8 hours. I want to know why you said there must be a regulation of working hours?

A.—That is true. But the workers go to the workshop very early in the morning and the time it takes to distribute the seed-lac is rather very long. They get their seed-lac by about 9 and work till the evening. Afterwards the finished shellac is measured and deposited. That takes some time. When they come out of the factory they have spent something like 15 hours inside the place. I should say that 12 hours will be a fair average.

Q.—Are they given any holidays?

A.—Nothing definite. During *Kalipuja* and other festivals they absent themselves, of course without pay. I want the Factory Act to be introduced here because it will also be regulated.

Q.—I hear that they receive burns and other injuries during the course of their work. Are they given any medical aid?

A.—Nothing. That also will be given if the Factory Act is extended to include the lac factories also.

Q.—Will any increase in wages affect the industry at present.

A.—I do not think so. A little increase in wages is not bound to affect the industry, to any appreciable extent. Even with the present market rates I certainly think they can afford to pay a little more.

Q.—Do you think a minimum wage for the industry as a whole should be fixed ?

A.—Yes, I think so, it can safely be done.

Q.—In such a case will not production go down. Simultaneously with the increased wages, don't you also recommend organised selling of shellac and seed-lac?

A.—Yes, Sir. That can also be done, but the payment of better wages is the immediate necessity. As I said before it can be done even under the present market conditions. It is also advisable to organize selling. That will benefit the industry considerably. Selling depôts may be formed and the selling controlled by a Board consisting of the employers of the industry or their representatives.

Q.—You said that the lac at Kotalpakur could be easily converted into shellac than the lac here ? Don't they buy the same kind of lac in the market ?

A.—The people absorb pretty well the local production of seed-lac whereas the people here, at Pakur, use imported lac. I think it comes from Singhbhum district. And this lac is harder to work at.

Q.—The people here import lac throughout the year ? Or do they import only during certain seasons ?

A.—When the local supply which is very small is worked out they buy lac in the market. I think it is available throughout the year.

Q.—Do you get the same quality at the same price throughout?

A.—No. We get different qualities and the prices are also varied.

Q.—Would you like to have a standard rate for seed-lac?

A.—If it could be fixed fairly it is welcome. The quality of the lac differs from district to district. I do not think that it will be fair to put a price for seed-lac to be uniform for all varieties of the product.

Q.—Suppose there is the piece rate for all qualities of lac; how will that react on the industry.

A.—I do not think it will have any considerable effect. It can be tried as an experimental measure.

Mr. Chandra.—It appears from the letter you gave to the Chairman that there was some sort of a strike here. And I also find that complaints of victimisation are numerous.

A.—Yes.

Q.—Have you got any organised union here ?

A.—They tried to establish one, but it was a failure. Now, this agitation has been going on since last year and culminated in the

strike on 20th January this year. They put forth their grievances in the shape of the first memorandum, (I shall supply the Committee, with a copy of the same) and after that they asked me to see what I can do. I drafted the second memorandum and submitted it to Mr. Davis who happened to be here at that time.

Q.—What is the present state of the labour here? Do you find any difficulty in organizing labour? Do you find any obstruction put forward by the employers?

A.—My experience at this place is that there are lot of difficulties to be overcome before labour can be organized on proper lines. There was victimisation before. But I do not think that the employers at present are continuing the same practice. Those workers who were sent out have been re-instated. I think labour also is feeling the want of an organised union for them and it will come into effect very soon.

Q.—I want to know more definitely about any privileges which the workers enjoyed before and which have been withdrawn now.

A.—The only thing that attracted my attention was that this year they did not get the *Holi bakshis*. That has been discontinued, this year. Most of the people are in the habit of receiving it generally.

Q.—What is the amount of the *bakshis*?

A.—I do not know exactly. I think it will be about one rupee per gang.

Q.—What is the total number of men employed in this industry here?

A.—I think between 3 and 5 thousand.

Q.—How many quarry workers are here? Do you know their strength approximately?

A.—That is a very big industry. Their number will be more than 20,000.

Chairman.—Thank you very much.

The Committee resumed its sitting in the Dak Bungalow, Pakur, on the 9th April 1939.

The following members were present :—

- |                            |                |
|----------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Dr. R. K. Mukherjee ... | ... Presiding. |
| 2. Mr. H. B. Chandra ...   | ... Member.    |
| 3. Prof. R. K. Saran ...   | ... Secretary. |

**Oral evidence\* of Manohar Sheikh, Karigar, Pakur Lac Factory, Pakur.**

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Are you a *karigar*? Please give your name and all that.

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—What are the hours of work in the Pakur Factories?

*A.*—4 A.M. to 3 P.M. We generally finish by that time in the summer but in the winter we never finish before 7 or 8 P.M. in the night.

*Q.*—When do you start your work?

*A.*—Generally at 4 A.M. but in the winter it is never before 8 A.M. that the *Bhatta* is started.

*Q.*—Is there any kind of fines?

*A.*—Yes, if in one maund of seed-lac we fail to give 34 seers of finished lac, then we are fined.

*Q.*—Is there any *dasturi* or *Goshala* deduction?

*A.*—No, not here. Before it used to be deducted but now it has been stopped. But now one pice per *Bhatta* is taken by the Union people.

*Q.*—How do you spend the subscription of the Union?

*A.*—In office expenses, papers, typing, writing, etc.

*Q.*—You are starting the Union and spend for the Union?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—Do you get your wages in every week?

*A.*—Yes, the payment is made every week.

*Q.*—What is the amount of wages that you get? :

*A.*—Sometimes it is Re. 1-5-0, Re. 1-8-0 or even Rs. 2-2-6. Since five months it has been Re. 1 but now Re. 1-2-6 for three persons, viz., *Karigar*, *Belwaia* and *Pherwaia*.

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\* (This evidence is not corrected by the witness.

*Vidyabhushan Shukla.)*

Q.—When you get injury or burn in any part of your body in the course of the work, do you get medicines?

A.—No, there is no arrangement for that.

Q.—Have you got to pay anything if you go to the hospital?

A.—Yes, we have got to pay anna 1.

Q.—Is there any arrangement for latrine or urinals?

A.—No, there is no arrangement at all.

Q.—Have you got agricultural lands?

A.—No, we have not got. Some may have got about 1 bigha or 2. That is not sufficient to support us.

Q.—What do you do in the off-season?

A.—Some take up the work of lime stone nad get 4 pice for 1 tin; and in the day we earn annas 2 or annas 3, and in some cases even anna 1.

Q.—There is marked unemployment?

A.—Yes.

Q.—The total earning of the *Karigar*, *Pherwaia* and *Belwaia* is Rs. 1-2-0 or Rs. 1-2-3 and it is distributed in this way annas 9, annas 6 and anns 2 pice 3? If you get more you distribute in this proportion?

A.—Yes, the *Karigar* always takes half, and the rest half the other two take their share.

Q.—Do all the three, viz., *Karigars*, *Belwaia* or *Pherwaia* belong to the same family?

A.—No, all from different families. In some cases they may be of the same family.

Q.—In any case does the *Belwaia* become a *Karigar*?

A.—Yes, in some cases, in 4 or 5 years, they become. There are many cases like that.

Q.—Suppose on one day the *Pherwaia* has not come or has come 2 hours late; then what will happen?

A.—If he comes in 1 hour or 2 hours then we wait and will sit. If he does not come at all then we do not work.

Q.—In the hospital 1 anna is charged from every man?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you pay rent for the houses?

A.—Yes, annas 8 to Re. 1.

Q.—Have you got loan?

A.—Yes.

Q.—From whom you take loan?

A.—From the *Karigars* or the *Mahajans*.

Q.—What is the amount of loan? What is the rate of interest?

A.—Rs. 80 or so. There is no interest but they give us due to friendship. We take it on the occasion of the marriages of the son or daughter. In some cases the interest is anna 1 or annas 2 in the month.

Q.—Do you drink wine?

A.—No.

Q.—What are your main grievances?

A.—There should be provision for doctors, interval for food, export of seed lac should be stopped; *Chauri* should be stopped.

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**MISCELLANEOUS**

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The Committee resumed its sitting in the Circuit House, Monghyr, on the 14th December 1938.

The following members were present :—

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| 1. Mr. R. R. Bakhale  | ... | ... | <i>Deputy Chairman,<br/>Presiding.</i> |
| 2. Dr. R. K. Mukerjee | ... | ... | <i>Member.</i>                         |
| 3. Mr. H. B. Chandra  | ... | ... | <i>Member.</i>                         |
| 4. Mr. J. N. Lal      | ... | ... | <i>Member.</i>                         |
| 5. Mr. M. P. Gandhi   | ... | ... | <i>Member.</i>                         |
| 6. Prof. R. K. Saran  | ... | ... | <i>Secretary.</i>                      |
| 7. Mr. G. W. Browne   | ... | ... | <i>(Co-opted Member,<br/>Capital.)</i> |

**Oral \*evidence of Mr. Nirapado Mukherjee, M.L.A., President, assisted by Mr. Md. Wasim, Vice-President of the Union, Mr. Jogendra Narayan Jadav, Secretary, Babu Surendra Nath Mukherjee, Joint-Secretary on behalf of the Tobacco Manufacturing Workers' Union, Monghyr.**

*The Chairman.*—What position do you hold in the Union?

*Nirapado Mukherjee.*—I am interested in labour questions as any student of economics is and am the President of the Tobacco Manufacturing Workers' Union. There was existence of the Union before also but it has been recognised since the last 8 or 9 months only. I do not exactly remember the date. Nearly 70 per cent of the workers are members of the Union. They pay their contributions regularly. I do not know exactly the rate of contribution. I understand it is one day's wage in the year. The Union was recognised in February last.

*Mr. Chandra.*—Will you please, look into question no. 3 and let us know your views on that?

*A.*—It is very difficult to say the exact proportion of the labourers living in villages and in town, but a considerable proportion of labourers live in the town because they come from distant parts of the district, as well as from other districts.

*Q.*—Would you say that the majority of workers live in the town of Monghyr?

\* (This evidence is not corrected by the witness—

*Vidyabhushan Shukla.)*

A.—It is very difficult to say; but I think nearly 40 per cent of the labourers live in rented houses.

Q.—In the case of rest of the workers, you suggest that they live in their village homes?

A.—Yes, their homes are situated within a radius of 8 or 9 miles.

Q.—What time they take to cover the distance?

A.—Those whose homes are about 8 or 9 miles away take at least 3 hours to cover the distance.

Q.—Are you aware of any conveyance provided by the Company to cover the distance?

A.—No. One of the demands of the labourers is that the Company should provide some sort of conveyance for the labourers in order to facilitate the work.

Q.—In the absence of such facility, would you agree that the worker actually spends longer time in the factory work including the time taken for the journey?

A.—Yes, of course. Their duty is 9 hours a day and they take another 6 hours for the journey. They get hardly any time to look after the welfare of their families.

Q.—Is there any possibility for the Company to get labourers from the Monghyr town itself?

A.—They cannot get labourers in the town itself. The difficulty here is that the labourers belong to landless agriculturist class and, therefore, they generally live in villages and do not reside in the town.

Q.—In the absence of any arrangement for conveyance would you suggest that the hours of attendance at the gates need not be very strictly enforced.

A.—They are generally punished for coming late. They are marked late in the register and if they do like that for several days, they are punished with fine.

Q.—That punishment may also take the form of refusal to allow them to work for the day?

A.—Yes, that also happens.

Q.—Would you suggest that this punishment on workers should not be enforced strictly?

A.—Yes, Sir.

Q.—What latitude of time should be allowed to the workers?

A.—In the case of labourers coming from 8 or 9 miles, the Company should give them concession of at least half an hour.

Mr. Lal.—Do you consider housing facilities necessary for the workers?

A.—Yes.

Q.—To what extent?

A.—About 35 to 40 per cent of the labourers coming from the North Gangetic area as well as from the different parts of the district reside in the town and being very lowly paid they have not the means to rent good houses. Sometimes 7 or 8 persons rent one room and huddle together in it. Therefore, it is necessary that the Company should build suitable houses for the workers residing in the town.

Q.—What is the proportion of labour force that does not come from the interior?

A.—About 35 per cent.

Dr. Mukherjee.—What is the longest distance which the workers have to travel and the longest hours which they have to spend? I understand that in the rains the communication becomes very difficult?

A.—The longest distance is between 7 and 8 miles in the case of those who come from outside. In the rains they suffer most because roads become awfully muddy and they feel great difficulty and therefore take longer time.

Q.—Is not that the fault of the district board?

A.—The district board is not rich enough to make *pucca* roads.

Q.—Do you want the Company to improve the roads?

A.—I do not want the Company to improve the roads.

Q.—To what extent you have casual labourers here?

A.—The permanent hands here are about 1,700 to 1,800. Previous to the strike there was no permanency of service at all. Now, under the agreement, after one year's continuous service they will be considered permanent hands, and will not be discharged except in the case of shortage of work; but even in that case the Company should make all efforts to retain them and should go even to the extent of reducing the hours of work for all.

Q.—Have they agreed to that?

A.—Yes, over and above this, there is always a floating population of labour in this Company and according to pressure of work they take workers temporarily. For instance, for the saw mill they require casual workers.

Q.—What is their proportion?

A.—Their proportion would be 700 to 800. For six months the Company works at a very heavy rate. They manufacture greater quantity of cigarettes. During the rains they only manufacture the amount of cigarette required.

Q.—To what extent would the substitution of wholtime and regular workers for part-time workers diminish employment in the factory? Do you think that it might reduce the number of workers?

A.—They cannot reduce the actual number of workers. By this time the Company must be in a position to know how many workers they require to run the factory. Our demand is that they should be made permanent and the floating population may be termed as casual labourer and permanent vacancies may be filled up by them. So far as I have studied the question and also from enquiry, I have come to know that the present staff which is employed minus the casual labourers is the minimum strength with which the factory can run.

Q.—Do you consider it feasible for the Company to employ the same amount of labour permanently, throughout the year?

A.—I have already submitted before the Committee that for the work they can employ these 1,700 to 1,800 persons as permanent employees in the factory, but so far as the casual workers are concerned, they will be required when there is great pressure of work.

Q.—Do you consider it feasible to fix the maximum permanent strength so that in the off-season the hours of work may be reduced?

A.—I would not like the idea of reducing the hours of permanent staff by bringing in casual labourers on the permanent list.

Q.—Do you find that in some seasons of the year there is rush of surplus agricultural labour to the city and the management utilises that labour?

A.—This Company, as I have already stated, require a certain number of persons for running the factory. Previously the number that they used to employ was 5,000 instead of about 2,000 as it is now. What they did was that they opened other companies in other places and by introducing up-to-date machinery they reduced the figures to the present number. Therefore, there is already a large number of discharged hands waiting for re-engagement and according to the recent agreement a waiting list is to be maintained by the Company and they cannot engage any outsider unless they have engaged the total number of persons on the waiting list. Therefore, I believe that even if there is rush of agricultural labour that will hardly affect us.

Q.—Would you suggest that the order of names in the waiting list should be strictly enforced?

A.—No. Agreement has been reached that a man with longer service should be given preference.

Q.—When a discharged hand is re-employed, is he regarded as a new hand?

A.—He is taken as an unskilled labourer. Even now you will find that skilled labourers are employed as *coolies* and *coolies* as trained hands.

Q.—In order to obviate hardship of discharge, would you suggest that a kind of continuity of service may be maintained by giving the workers compulsory leave?

A.—Yes, I would welcome this.

*Mr. Browne (Co-opted Member)*: Was there a method of computation of the compassionate allowance?

A.—That was absolutely discretionary with the Company. There were two kinds of allowances. Supposing a man died leaving his widow and children. In this case they would call it compassionate allowance. Sometimes a lump sum was paid and sometimes they calculate it on half a month's salary.

*Mr. Lal.*—What is the present system of recruitment in the case of casual labour?

A.—We had the greatest grievance against the system of recruitment followed by the Company before but now, under the new agreement, they have to employ those persons who are in the waiting list as casual labourers. Employment is being given according to the order in the list. This privilege has been conceded to them so recently as October.

Q.—What is the system of recruitment?

A.—Regarding recruitment I want to submit one thing. On principle, preference should be given to the sons or relatives of a worker who has devoted the best part of his life for this Company, but that is not strictly adhered to by the Company. If a skilled man is wanted and such a man is not on the waiting list, the son or the relation of an old employee should be taken in.

Q.—Have you any complaint of malpractices in matters of recruitment in this factory by the subordinates?

A.—Malpractice is not found with the superior staff but with the inferior staff. Some amount of underhand practices are resorted to by the inferior staff whereby the superior staff is misled by them.

Q.—Will you please make some definite suggestions whereby the system could be more thoroughly worked, i.e., the manager could discharge his duties without being misled by the people subordinate to him?

A.—My suggestion is that there should be a recruitment board consisting of the factory manager, the president of the labour union and a third person to be selected by these two persons.

*Prof. Saran.*—You said that the Company maintained a list of retrenched hands and jobs were given in order of seniority?

A.—That is the agreement we have arrived at. We have insisted that a waiting list should be maintained and a copy of it should be given to us, but up till now we have not received the copy.

Q.—How long does it date back?

A.—It is from the year 1936.

Q.—A large number of workers were discharged after the earthquake. Is it not better to begin the list from 1934 or from before?

A.—Yes, I would welcome this.

*The Chairman.*—Perhaps it may not be a practical proposition because the manager and the president have got other duties to perform. Would you, therefore, agree to the establishment of some independent machinery like Labour Exchange to which reference is made in question no. 12, by which corrupt practices may be reduced as far as possible?

A.—My suggestion is that a representative of the union should be associated there because he will be the best man to find out whether the proper person is being employed or not.

*Prof. Saran.*—Has it been done anywhere? If you keep a private servant do you consult an outsider?

A.—There is a good deal of difference between a private individual engaging labour and a big factory engaging labour and therefore you have to associate a man who is conversant with the affair to help the Exchange.

Q.—A Labour Exchange records the qualification, the services, etc. It will be a Government agency.

A.—I have no objection to that, but I would submit that at least during the preparation of that list a trade union representative should be associated.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Do you think that the municipalities should also be represented?

A.—No. They are employers of labour but the number is not large. Only a number of sweepers and a number of clerical staff are there.

*Prof. Saran.*—Would you like the employers to lay down the qualifications for a particular job without any help from anybody? Would you insist that the trade union should discuss that point with the Company?

A.—Yes, but certainly the trade union should be consulted by the management as regards the minimum qualification, because the trade union consists of trained workers also. It is not only the monopoly of the management to know that.

Q.—Suppose there is a new process altogether?

A.—I do not believe that in the matter of cigarette-making any such revolutionary process unknown to the labour can be introduced.

*Mr. Lal.*—What is your idea about labour officer appointed by the Company.

*A.*—I would welcome that but he should be made subordinate to nobody except the factory manager, but I would prefer a Government labour officer.

*Q.*—How can a Government labour officer be responsible for the appointment and dismissal of workers?

*A.*—The labour officer if appointed by Government is expected to look after injustices.

*Prof Saran.*—Don't you think that that would weaken the hands of the trade union?

*A.*—Certainly, it would, to a great extent. Therefore I have suggested that if such a man is in the contemplation of the factory or within the purview of the recommendations of this Committee, then certainly he should not be placed under any other person than the chief manager himself.

*Mr. Lal.*—I think according to the recommendation of the Royal Commission on Labour a labour officer would directly be under the control of the manager and he must be a man specially selected. I do not think you would consider in any way the appointment of this nature otherwise than helpful to the cause of labour?

*A.*—If a labour exchange is set up, then in the matter of recruitment, I think, the post of the labour officer would be redundant. My idea is that, in a well-organized union, this part of the business can be very well done by associating the president of the union with the factory manager, because that would ensure better recruitment.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—If a labour officer does come, would you prefer such labour officer, appointed by the Government, who deals with hard cases?

*A.*—Yes.

*Mr. Nirapādo Mukherjee.*—Before questions are put to me about *conditions of employment*, I may place before the Committee the existing state of affairs. So far as service rules are concerned, we are not still aware of the existence of any such rule in this factory. It was one of our demands that service rules should be framed and a copy of them should be supplied to each labourer.

*Prof. Saran.*—Suppose service rules are prepared, would you like the Company to sign a contract with the workers so that in case of breach of those rules the Company might be sued?

*A.*—There is no harm in that.

*Q.*—Have you got any grievance with regard to apprentices?

A.—Yes, the first grievance is that there is no proper system of training the apprentices in this factory and there is no systematic procedure by which such apprentices are recruited; and they are not given proper allowances.

Q.—Is there any grievances regarding the recruitment of those apprentices?

A.—The children and relations of the employees should be given preference if they come up to the standard.

Q.—What is the present practice?

A.—Some recommendation comes and somebody is taken. There is no regular system.

Q.—I suppose that the question of security of service has been solved to a certain extent? Are there still grievances on this point?

A.—As I have already submitted, the Company after working for 32 years must be in a position to know what the least minimum strength which is required for the running of the factory is and that number should be made permanent.

Q.—Security of service means that if a man has been taken, he should be made permanent after a certain period and not discharged?

A.—So far as the agreement is concerned, I submit that it contains a clause that they will not be entitled to discharge any employee except on the ground of shortage of work and offences meriting dismissal. This safeguard has been incorporated with a view that they would not resort to discharge a man on that ground unless every other effort has been made to retain the services of that man even to the extent of reducing the hours of work for all.

Q.—Is it being followed?

A.—Occasion has not arisen. It will arise in the month of March.

*Prof. Saran.*—Have the Company abolished fines?

A.—No, they are levied.

Q.—I believe there are few cases of fines?

A.—They sometimes levy fines and sometimes discharge. According to the agreement even in the case of disciplinary measures such as fines, they cannot do it without giving a chance of explanation to the worker. After that the Company will be in a position either to discharge or dismiss the man, and the worker has been given the right of appeal to the Board of Directors.

Q.—Would you prefer compulsory leave to fine?

A.—Yes, certainly.



Q.—The Company has recently agreed to grant sick leave to their employees on half pay for 15 days.

A.—Yes, but our demand was for 3 months leave on half pay. In Jamalpur they get 4 months sick leave on half pay. That is discretionary with the medical officer and a man may be allowed sick leave to the extent of 3 years without pay, i.e., for 2½ years without pay and for 6 months on half pay.

Q.—Have the workers any difficulty in getting sick leave?

A.—The difficulty is two-fold. The first is with those who come from outside from a distance of 7 or 8 miles and are not within the easy reach of the Company's doctor. If they produce certificates from registered medical practitioners, they are not accepted by the Company for granting sick leave. They insist on getting them countersigned by their own doctor and sometimes they reject them and in that way the workers suffer. Our demand is that a certificate from any registered medical practitioner should be accepted by the Company for granting sick leave. There are cases where a man falls ill and complains to the foreman who sends him to the doctor. But there are occasions on which such leave is refused. That is very hard. I can give you an instance of a death of a man due to this sort of treatment.

*Prof. Saran.*—The Company have not agreed to grant any casual leave?

A.—No, they have not. Our demand was for 15 days casual leave and privilege leave for one month besides gazetted holidays which should also be allowed to the workers.

Q.—Have they agreed to maternity benefit?

A.—Yes, they have agreed to six weeks maternity leave, three weeks before and three weeks after confinement.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Do you think that the relations between the employers and the labourers might improve if you have a shop committee?

A.—Yes Sir, it is one of my demands that a committee should be constituted from amongst the workers by electing representatives and they should be authorised to discuss matters of dispute.

*Prof. Saran.*—Has this arrangement produced any satisfactory result?

A.—This arrangement does not exist.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—What is the extent of the employment of women in this factory?

A.—Only 65. It is about 3 per cent.

Q.—Was any maternity leave given before?

A.—No.

Q.—What are the uses of the Fine Fund?

A.—We are not still aware of the existence of such a fund.

Q.—Is it not an infringement of the Act?

A.—Certainly, it should be spent on the welfare of a member.

*Mr. Chandra.*—Are the majority of the labourers on daily basis?

A.—Yes.

Q.—With reference to the graded system, would you like an upper limit to be fixed?

A.—An unskilled labourer should begin with Rs. 15 and must go up to Rs. 30.

Q.—Would you agree that any variation in wages should be preceded by a conference?

A.—Up to a certain limit people should be allowed to go on time-scale to ensure a decent living to them and afterwards the increment should be fixed at the rate of Rs. 2 to Rs. 3 annually.

*Mr. Browne.*—What is the justification for an incremental scale of pay?

A.—My demand for increment of pay is based upon the fact that factory labour begins with very low wages. My idea is that the management has perfect liberty to select its own man, but as soon as a man is appointed he must be guaranteed a living wage. The present standard of wages does not come up to that standard.

*Mr. Lal.*—Suppose a minimum wage was given, would you insist for incremental scale?

A.—Certainly, the responsibility increases with age.

Q.—Just as in the case of intellectual people, they have time-scale of pay, would you apply the same reason in the case of labourers?

A.—I think labour is as much in need of money as the intellectual people.

Q.—With regard to the graded scale of pay, have you grievance against its proper administration?

A.—Only in the Printing Department there are fixed salaried people, but there also it is not properly worked.

*Mr. Chandra.*—I understand that 6 days holidays are allowed?

A.—Except the King-Emperor's birthday no other holiday was allowed before. It is only after the agreement that they have agreed to give 6 days and that is inadequate.

Q.—Which holidays in your opinion should be allowed to Muhamadans with pay?

A.—I think all the important holidays on Muhammadan festivals should be given to them as well as to the Hindus.

Q.—At present 1 day holiday is allowed to Muhammadans provided they forego their pay for that day?

A.—That is another matter. A man can get that sort of leave.

Q.—How many Muhammadans are there in the factory?

A.—Not less than 25 per cent and not more than 30 per cent.

Mr. Chandra.—Have you anything to say with regard to late attendance?

A.—I beg to submit that the reply given by the management is not correct. There are 5 gates. Previously there were more employees who used to issue tickets but now they have got only one man with the result that it is not possible for all to get their tickets in time. Those who come within 5 minutes limit are allowed to come in, those who come within half an hour limit lose their half day and those who exceed that limit forego the whole day. Therefore more persons should be utilised for issuing tickets.

Mr. Browne.—Am I to understand that there is one clerk to issue tickets and he moves about from gate to gate?

A.—Yes.

Prof. Saran.—Do workers work 9 hours in winter and 8 hours in summer? Do you think that 9 hours in winter would mean coming in cold and going in cold.

A.—Yes. I want 8 hours throughout the year.

Mr. Browne.—Is there any difference in rates of pay according to the hours of work?

A.—No.

Mr. Lal.—Have you any experience of any relief offered in those periods?

A.—I have no idea of that.

Q.—If there is any enforced idleness, do people get any compensation?

A.—No.

Q.—Have you any concrete suggestion with regard to that?

A.—The suggestion is that they should be given some sort of allowance by the Company.

Prof. Saran.—If they are put on monthly basis that relief would automatically be secured?

A.—Yes.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—What is the proportion of days on which there has been stoppage of work on account of conditions with which the labour has nothing to do, or what is the proportion of part-time work?

A.—There is lot of trouble over that. Sometimes after working for two hours they say that they can go home as there is no work. I cannot give any definite idea of it.

*Mr. Browne.*—Can you give any reasons for it?

A.—I have no definite information about it.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Has the Union collected any figure of part-time employment? Is there any allowance during the period of enforced idleness?

A.—No.

Q.—I find that this factory has skilled artisans and they have to work under microscope?

A.—They should not be allowed to work for more than 7 hours a day. They lose their eyesight. Their lot is very hard. They have to sit down at work for 9 hours.

Q.—You agree that the hours of work for artisans and skilled labourers should be reduced?

A.—They should not be made to work for more than 7 hours.

*Prof. Saran.*—Is it not to the interest of the Company to change the design?

A.—If a surprise visit is paid to the factory you will find that the designers and artisans are busy for 9 hours of the day all the year round. This Company has got 5 other factories in India and all the printing work is done here.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Do you think that adequate protection is provided there in the shape of gloves and other things?

A.—I do not think so.

Q.—Do you think that they should make arrangement for rest pause in the timber sawing room?

A.—Yes. Many people have suffered from asthma.

*Mr. Chandra.*—There is a bronze process which causes cough, and itching and affects the eyes. Would you suggest that they should have interval after an hour or two hours work?

A.—I have not thought over the matter but they should get rest.

*Mr. Browne.*—Do you consider that masks would be more preventive than rest?

A.—It is not there but we shall certainly welcome it.

*Mr. Lal.*—Would you agree to a short change from a difficult work to a less difficult work in hazardous jobs?

A.—I will have no objection to that but that is hardly possible.

*Mr. Browne.*—It can be practicable if it can be done by rotation?

A.—A man trained in one kind of work cannot do another work.

*Mr. Chandra.*—The temperature of the room is 120 degrees. Under these conditions what protection in the hours of work you would suggest?

A.—I was myself suffocated. I think there should be reduction of hours.

Q.—Would you also suggest increase in wages?

A.—Certainly.

Q.—Have accidents occurred in which a man became unconscious?

A.—One case came to my notice.

*Mr. Lal.*—Do you think it desirable to extend the scope of the Factories Act?

A.—It means the extension of the Act over other factories. Apart from the two big industrial concerns here, there are lots of oil mills, flour mills and ice factories. They come under the Factories Act.

The Factories Act should be extended to some other industries to which it is not extended at present.

Q.—Do you consider it necessary to add certain more provisions in the Factories Act?

A.—First of all the Factories Act is never enforced. That is a dead letter. I know of cases where workers are compelled to work for 12 hours. And they maintain a bogus register only to show that they are not taking more work. But the other day I brought to the notice of the Chief Inspector of Factories that he should pay a surprise visit and he would find that the work began in the evening and went on for the whole night.

*Mr. Gandhi.*—Does it also happen in the Monghyr factory?

A.—No.

Q.—Do you consider that certain more provisions are necessary for the purpose of bringing about better control and improving the lot of the labourers?

A.—The provision for 54 hours work in a week should be modified in view of what has been accepted at the International Conference at Geneva.

Q.—What should be done to minimise the troubles which often occur in different factories between labour and capital?

A.—Arbitration or conciliation board should be formed.

Mr. Chandra.—Do you consider that the cigarette making room is much crowded?

A.—Yes, there is congestion.

Q.—Is it that there are hundred men working in the room?

A.—I cannot give you the exact number, but it looks like that.

Q.—Is it that there are too many machines working in the room?

A.—Yes, there is a great congestion.

Chairman.—Is your answer based upon comparison with other tobacco factories?

A.—No.

Q.—With reference to the sweat room underground, do you find it stuffy, hot and low roofed? Would you suggest that an underground chamber should not be used for purposes of that kind?

A.—That is for experts to say. But my suggestion is that in their case also the number of hours of work should be reduced and their wages should be increased, considering the risk that they undergo.

Mr. Chandra.—The Royal Commission on Labour recommended that action should be taken against factories where conditions are worse. Does a remark of this kind in your opinion apply to the humidity conditions of the tobacco factory.

A.—Certainly. That is exactly my grievance.

Dr. Mukherjee.—What are the reasons for the wage rates being kept secret in this factory?

A.—That should not be kept secret. I can only say that the workers do not know the earnings of their other fellow workers. It is desirable to publish the wage rates. Wages vary for the same kind of work. Of course, now, the minimum daily wage is eight annas, but they have not accepted our term that was settled before the Government representative that increment should be allowed according to the length of service and a service record should be maintained by the Company in which the foreman will enter remarks quarterly. Now it is absolutely whimsical. A man working for the last 24 years is getting 8 annas a day and a man who is working for 5 years is getting 12 annas. So it is absolutely favouritism according to the whims of the immediate superiors.

Dr. Mukherjee.—Do you consider that standardization of wage rates would allay labour discontent?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Would you consider necessary the question of minimum wages for women workers also?

A.—Certainly. What we have agreed to is 8 annas a day as minimum wage *plus* Rs. 2 a month for good attendance. In the past some were paid four annas, some six annas and so on. There was no fixity at all. We have fixed the same scale for both male and female daily workers.

Q.—Do you think that a factory labourer is dissatisfied with low wages here because of the influx of landless labourers in the town of Monghyr?

A.—That is coupled with the serious problem of unemployment, but half a loaf is better than no loaf.

Q.—Do you think that minimum industrial wages can be safeguarded by regulation of minimum agricultural wages?

A.—I have some experience of agricultural labour at least in this district. Here their condition is pitiable. They have not even a home to live in and they get sometimes two annas and some times one anna. The maximum is four annas *plus* their share in kind also. I should say that they have been driven to the position of beasts. Their lot does require improvement but the condition of the *kisans* is qually bad due to the fall in prices. The holdings have become uneconomic by divisions and subdivisions and there has been considerable deterioration in the productivity of the land. So to fix a minimum wage for agricultural labour at this juncture would not be possible but it is desirable.

Q.—Is there any system of bonus or gratuity payment?

A.—I submit that so far as the monthly fixed paid employees are concerned, there is some system of bonus but that is highly unsatisfactory. It is at the sweet will of the Company. Sometimes they give one month's pay and sometimes they allow only 25 per cent. There are no definite rules. Some favourites get cent per cent, some get 50 per cent and some nothing at all. The bonus must be according to pay, i.e., one month's pay. It is administered in such a way that it is very much resented by those persons. Here I beg to refer to my demand that labour should also be given a share in the profit in the shape of bonus.

*The Chairman.*—Does the Company publish its balance sheet every year?

A.—No.

Q.—Do you consider bonus as deferred pay or something else which the employer may give according to his discretion?

A.—Yes, I consider it as deferred pay to be paid at the end of the year. My idea is that bonus should be a share in the profit.

*Prof, Saran.*—Profit or no profit the Company must pay bonus. Do you agree with this?

A.—When there is a loss the Company may not give bonus, but when there is profit then it must pay.

*The Chairman.*—Then it does not become deferred pay.

A.—I think that bonus when it is a share in the profit is not deferred pay.

*Mr. Chandra.*—Do you agree that the workers are entitled to a bonus for attendance, and also for increase in production during a certain period?

A.—The term attendance bonus was never used before. From the start of the Company they were getting Rs. 2 for good attendance. During the negotiation, in order to avoid that issue, they, for the first time, introduced the work "attendance bonus".

*Mr. Browne.*—As regards the payment of bonus, would you suggest that this should be paid yearly or should accumulate and paid at the end of the service?

A.—I would not mind it provided adequate interest is paid.

*Mr. Lall.*—Would you like it to be on time-scale and also on approved service?

A.—Certainly not, I should not be as unreasonable as that. If a man's record is approved he should be given promotion.

Q.—For each category there should be a different minimum wage for different industrial areas?

A.—So far as other industries are concerned, I have not studied the question.

Q.—What is the minimum wage for unskilled labour?

A.—As a matter of compromise as the weaker party I had to agree to Rs. 15 but nothing less than Rs. 20 should be the reasonable minimum.

Q.—Have you any objection about the method of payment?

A.—I want everybody to be monthly-rated.

*Mr. Gandhi.*—With regard to the minimum wage, do you consider that Rs. 20 should be the minimum wage dependent upon the cost of living or it should be flat for all time?

A.—That is the bare minimum that I have suggested.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—If the cost of living rises, would you demand higher wages?

A.—Certainly.



*The Chairman.*—Therefore your answer boils down to this that the amount of minimum wage is linked up with the cost of living. If it goes up then you will naturally demand more in the proportion in which it has risen? If it goes down, will you cut it down?

*A.*—That is the irreducible minimum I will not go less than that.

*Prof. Saran.*—If a person is on leave on account of sickness, does it disqualify him for attendance bonus.

*A.*—That depends upon the sweet will of the management.

*Mr. Gandhi.*—Would your minimum wage have any relation to the agricultural labourers' wages?

*A.*—Certainly. My points are that in India unemployment is very great because a large number of people cannot have two meals or even one meal a day. Therefore there is no reason why an industrial concern should deprive its employees of their legitimate rights of having two meals a day and on that ground I insist that they should be allowed an irreducible minimum of Rs. 20.

*Q.*—If the minimum is fixed too high, do'nt you think that the machinery will be affected?

*A.*—They are continually doing it and this has very sadly affected the labour.

*The Chairman.*—You claim as a trade union leader that bonus is a deferred pay. In Bombay, for example, there was a strike of textile workers. On the ground that the industry was losing, the Government of Bombay appointed a committee to go into the question whether bonus was a deferred pay or otherwise and the decision of the committee appointed by the Government of Bombay went against the workers and they held that bonus was not a deferred pay. Similar decisions have been reached in other countries also. Therefore what you claim as the definition of bonus may not be acceptable to the employers. That being the case, I would like to ask you whether you would prefer bonus to be paid at the end of the year as deferred, if it is accepted by the employer or would you prefer the amount of bonus being included in the wage itself?

*A.*—I would like that bonus should be given at the end of the year, because it will give great pleasure.

*Mr. Chandra.*—Would you like that the position may be made clear by legislation?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—If bonus is paid at the end of the year, would you suggest that in calculating the minimum wage bonus should not be included?

*A.*—Yes, bonus should not be the minimum wage.

*Mr. Chandra.*—You hold the view that the factory should contribute for the welfare of the children of the workers?

*A.*—My idea is that it would be difficult to open schools for the people residing in rural areas. The best course would be to contribute to the schools already established by the district board in those localities.

*Q.*—Would you suggest that the factory should bear the tuition fee of the children of the workers?

*A.*—Yes and also if they can help them by way of giving books.

*Q.*—Would you like this facility to be extended to all children of school going age?

*A.*—Yes, to all.

*Q.*—Would you like night schools to be run by them?

*A.*—Yes, to drive away illiteracy.

*Q.*—Is it your experience that the workers in remote villages are not able to secure medical aid? What remedy would you suggest and the cost of which should fall on the factory?

*A.*—My suggestion is that within a radius of 3 miles the factory doctors can easily go and attend cases and for places situated at a greater distance than that they can subsidize local doctors.

*Q.*—In the event of the present doctor being fully occupied in the factory, would you suggest employment of additional doctors?

*A.*—Yes. The employment of the present doctors does not cost them much. They draw Rs. 65 only.

*Q.*—Is he amenable to the control of Civil Surgeon?

*A.*—He is amenable to the control of the Chief Medical Officer.

*Q.*—Would you agree to the control being transferred to Government?

*A.*—The Civil Surgeon is the supervising medical authority for the factories but generally the Chief Medical Officer runs the whole show.

*Q.*—In that case would you agree that the factories might request the Government to lend to them the services of one of their own doctors who should be subject to Government regulations and should be liable to transfer?

*A.*—I would welcome that.

*Q.*—With regard to housing, is it your view that the factory should bear the cost of housing the labourers in this town?

*A.*—Houses for labourers who come from outside and do not own any house in this town.

*Q.*—Don't you think that the cost would be very heavy?

A.—No.

Q.—Would you suggest that the employer should build houses for the labourers?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Would you suggest that lands should be acquired by the factory?

A.—They have already acquired lands.

Q.—Would you suggest a scheme in which the State and the employees should be asked to contribute a share?

A.—The employees are poorly paid. That will be an additional burden to them. They have to go to their homes walking.

Q.—In that case the municipality should be asked to contribute a share?

A.—The municipality is a bankrupt municipality.

*The Chairman.*—It is a general question of housing whether the employer should build houses for the workers or whether the municipality and the State should build houses or contribute something.

A.—My reply to that is that the employers should build houses and the municipality should be responsible for the sanitatiton, hygiene and health of the occupants.

Q.—There has been some difficulty in such cases. In the event of disputes rights have been declared private and the workers might be asked to vacate the premises. How would you meet that situation?

A.—I do not think any employer would be so unreasonable as to drive out his employee.

Q.—What would happen in the event of a lock-out?

A.—Even in that case no employer would be unreasonable to ask them to vacate.

Q.—In order to meet the difficulties?

A.—That can very well be safeguarded by a recommendation of this Committee and by legislation that the employers will not be entitled to drive away their employees in cases of difference.

Q.—Would you suggest that the houses should be open to the public, where other people might have access?

A.—Yes. It will always be outside the factory.

Q.—For housing problem would you agree to a State loan for erecting those houses and getting contribution from the employers?

A.—I have no objection to that so long as the workers' pocket is not touched.

*Mr. Chandra.*—In your calculation of Rs. 15 a month, would you include any part for payment of rent?

*A.*—I am prepared to accept that on what I actually get. The rent should be in proportion to that.

*Q.*—Is it your experience that industrial workers are very heavily indebted?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—What is the average debt of a man earning Rs. 15 a month?

*A.*—It differs in different cases, but I do not think it would be less than Rs. 175 to Rs. 200 on an average.

*Q.*—Would you ascribe it to a large number of dependants or extravagance?

*A.*—It is low wages coupled with a large number of dependants. I can assure the Committee that labour here can hardly afford to be extravagant.

*Q.*—Will the Money-lenders' Act be of help to them?

*A.*—No, because they hardly take loan from registered money-lenders.

*Q.*—Would you agree that their debts should be automatically wiped out?

*A.*—That depends upon the strength of the men asserting their right. The best way is to have Debt Conciliation Act and a provision should be made in that Act that the Debt Conciliation Board will deal with such cases and where people are unable to pay their debts, they may be wiped out and those who are able to pay should be made to pay.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Have the workers here realised the benefits of literacy and education?

*A.*—They are trying their best.

*Q.*—You consider that on an average the workers' children, on the whole, are more at school than the peasants' children?

*A.*—Not exactly that. It is a village consisting of 10,000 people, out of which 1,000 are labourers and those who can afford to send their children to school do so and there is a constant demand on their behalf for education.

*Q.*—With reference to the difficulty and inconvenient conditions in some of those rooms where hazardous jobs are undertaken, do you consider that in these cases periodical medical examination should be enforced?

*A.*—That examination should be done by outside doctors, for instance the Civil Surgeon.

*Mr. Browne.*—(Co-opted Member). It will be very unpopular with the workers, I am afraid.

*A.*—There will be a chance of the workers losing their job, so I want the Civil Surgeon to examine them.

*The Chairman.*—Under the sickness insurance scheme, if it is undertaken by legislation, there is a net work of doctors provided whose job it will be to examine the workers and give them certificate where necessary, under which the workers will get leave and will be in a position to get some money during the period of illness. If such a system is adopted, all that we have been discussing now will be covered by such a scheme?

*A.*—I will welcome that, provided it does not saddle the workers with new expenditure.

*Q.*—We as a Committee have got to take into account all the interests and therefore it may not be quite easy for us to suggest an insurance scheme in which the workers may not have to share a part of the burden. For example, if it is a contributory scheme the State will have to contribute, the employer will have to contribute and the workers also will have to contribute. I can visualise the position under which the worker will have to contribute much less than the employer will contribute, but that contribution is worth making, because in the absence of that scheme the worker spends something on account of illness?

*A.*—I am prepared to accept the principle provided the contribution is proportionate to the wage that the worker earns.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—With reference to sanitary arrangements do you think that in the case of industrial labour population canteens or rest houses are absolutely indispensable?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—With reference to housing I would like to know the proportion of rent to the income earned?

*A.*—I have not worked it out, but it is very insignificant because 8 persons hire a room and live together.

*Q.*—If a worker has a single room to himself and his income is Rs. 15 what rent he will have to pay?

*A.*—He will have to pay at least a rupee.

*Q.*—Do you consider that proportion high?

*A.*—Yes. If the rooms are big enough, 2 or 3 persons can live in them.

*Q.*—Do you think that the Indian Factories Act should be amended to the extent that canteens and rest houses could be made compulsory?

*A.*—Yes.

Q.—Is there any provision for children where women labour is indispensable?

A.—A nurse has been appointed and she is supposed to look after the children.

Q.—With reference to indebtedness I observe that you remark that even though the Bihar Money-lenders Act be there its provisions will be evaded and loans would be taken on exorbitant terms?

A.—The net result of this Money-lenders Act is that if a man takes a loan of Rs. 100, he will have to execute a bond for Rs. 200.

Q.—Do you consider that with the Bihar Money-lenders Act and with no facilities of co-operative credit the Act may ultimately lead to increase in the rate of interest?

A.—Yes. My suggestion is that co-operative credit societies as it is in vogue at Jamalpur ought to be opened here by the Company.

Q.—In what ways you can inculcate thrift in them?

A.—They can hardly afford to be extravagant. Of course, there are persons who drink and we are trying to eradicate that evil habit. My submission is that there are two things which lead to drinking. When a man goes with empty hand to his house, he feels his position very awkward and therefore he indulges in drink to forget that position and the second thing is that by yielding to the temptation once, he contracts that evil habit. Of course, there are also people who work very hard and in order to get some relief they take to drink.

Q.—In what manner do you think thrift can be introduced in them?

A.—They cannot be called spend-thrift. Their debt is due to poverty.

*Prof. Saran.*—There is a law to-day that a loan is barred after three years; but that actually happens is that the loan is renewed to escape limitation. Are you in favour of making the limitation absolute?

A.—That will not be of much help to the poor labourers. At the initial stage if a man borrows Rs. 10 he has to execute a bond for Rs. 30. These petty money-lenders realise their money by the help of *lathi* because on the pay day they would be lying in ambush and snatch away anything the workers have got in their pocket.

Q.—The law might help you to certain extent?

A.—The law is helpful to those who can assert themselves. The law cannot help the poor. That is my experience as a lawyer of 28 years.

*Mr. Browne.*—Whatever laws are enacted to protect the borrower, the borrower himself with the connivance of the money-lender, tries to evade them?

A.—If the Debt Conciliation Board comes into force, they will enter into the merit of those transactions and can declare some of them illegal. They can go into the capacity of the man to see whether he can pay back his debt.

Q.—Debt Conciliation Boards are meant only for removing agricultural indebtedness?

A.—I think it should be extended to industrial indebtedness also.

*Prof. Saran.*—In many cases settlement about compensation is made by the factory with the workers without going to the court. Are these settlements fair?

A.—First of all my grievance is against the Compensation Act itself. There is no adequate provision for proper compensation. That Act should be amended and secondly under the existing rules the settlement made outside is not, in the majority of cases, fair. The union, when it becomes strong, will safeguard its interest.

Q.—You know in certain cases of accident the workers receive a lump sum payment or monthly allowance. Which would you prefer?

A.—I would prefer lump sum.

Q.—Don't you think that lump sum will be spent away?

A.—Under the Compensation Act we apply to the Magistrate to take care of the money and therefore we see that it is not grabbed by other people. By getting lump sum they can purchase a little bit of land and do cultivation.

Q.—Do you think that they do it?

A.—We are trying to induce them to do it.

*Mr. Gandhi.*—With regard to indebtedness while you have been complaining about it, what is your concrete suggestion to prevent the workers from going to these money-lenders for borrowing money? Don't you think that some activity on the part of the trade union is needed to bring home this fact to them?

A.—We are doing it, but when people are in want, they are forced by circumstances to execute such documents. Therefore my concrete suggestion is that the factory may be induced to open co-operative societies for loans to be advanced for certain period on a moderate rate of interest.

Q.—If he is improvident, then?

A.—If a man chooses to be improvident, nobody can save him. They are dumb millions. Supposing a *sradh* has to be performed, in some cases they spend Rs. 50 and in some cases Rs. 100 or even Rs. 300.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Do you think that a social legislation would prevent such expenses?

A.—It is an age long custom and I do not think any Government would welcome the hue and cry that will be raised over such a legislation.

*Mr. Gandhi.*—With regard to medical examination of workers you state that you would prefer it to be done by the Government medical officer. Don't you feel that if the examination was conducted by the medical officer attached to the factory that would bring in valuable data for prevention of such undesirable conditions of health?

A.—The factory doctor is welcome to examine them, but I object to that on the ground of declaration of unfitness of the workers by the doctor.

Q.—If the Civil Surgeon declares him unfit?

A.—Past experience compels me to make this suggestion.

Q.—Is the factory doctor very antagonistic to the workers?

A.—It is a struggle between capital and labour.

Q.—What benefit arises to the employer by a doctor declaring the worker to be unfit?

A.—The superior officers have the ears of the medical officer, whereas the poor worker has not. It is a very convenient way of dispensing with his services. I do not say that it always happens but that is my experience in certain cases.

*Mr. Chandra.*—Is it your experience that the doctor who is directly under the employer is likely to be prejudiced in safeguarding the interest of the employee as against employer?

A.—It might be either the one or the other or both.

Q.—Would not a doctor whose services will be lent by Government be expected to be free from that inclination?

A.—Yes, he is expected to be so.

*Mr. Gandhi.*—It has been generally admitted that something which is given free is not likely to conduce so much to the benefit of the employees. Do you think that if he is made to bear a contribution towards a welfare scheme in a small measure he might be able to take advantage of it?

A.—Yes, but my firm conviction is that they are not in a position to contribute anything at the present moment. By this I do not mean people drawing higher wages but people who are on low scales of pay. Therefore whatever contribution is made by the company will be considered as pay of the worker. My belief is that it will be hardship if he is made to contribute.

*Mr. Lal.*—Is a fair proportion of the workers still illiterate?

A.—I suppose majority of them are illiterate.



Q.—Has the attention of the union been drawn to the mass literacy campaign?

A.—I am myself very much interested in it, but in spite of that the best part of our energy is spent over the settlement of disputes.

Q.—Is there any mass literacy campaign working amongst your labourers?

A.—No. Only certain *Gurus* have been asked to open night schools but they are not working properly.

Q.—Would you consider the desirability of inculcating this feeling among the labourers who are educated that they should help their fellow workers in educating them?

A.—After their day's hard labour hardly any energy is left in them to resort to this sort of work. I can induce them to attend school if opened but to ask an educated labourer after his hard day's work to go to the school and teach a set of pupils is a little difficult.

Q.—Has the attention of the municipality and the district board been drawn to the necessity of providing adequate number of schools in these areas through the agency of your union?

A.—The municipality, of course, has opened schools. The district board has also opened schools but those institutions are running at a deficit and therefore they cannot afford to open more schools. The tuition fee and other expenses of the existing schools are so much that the low paid workers cannot send their sons to those schools.

Q.—What is the proportion of literacy prevailing among the children of the employees? Is it more as compared with the ordinary villages?

A.—Literacy is not great.

Q.—Is there no provision for reading rooms, etc., even as co-operative effort among them or the village people?

A.—In some villages there are libraries. Those libraries are called library by courtesy. Only a few books are put in a broken box.

Q.—With regard to health, has it come to the notice of the union that certain diseases are particularly the result of labour in this factory?

A.—Yes, such as asthma, certain skin diseases, etc.

Q.—Do a fair proportion of labourers suffer from asthma?

A.—Those who do hazardous work and work in dry conditions suffer from asthma.

Q.—Had your union put forward a demand for housing before?

A.—No.

Q.—They did not make the demand because they were not sufficiently vocal at the time?

A.—I should say that they were in despair. They did not know that they would get even those things which they have got.

Q.—What is the proportion of labourers which does require housing?

A.—About 30 to 33 per cent.

Q.—Has your union considered the desirability of introducing certain supplementary avocations in the homes of workers?

A.—By introduction of cottage industries. We find that the market is flooded by Japanese toys and apprentices might go out in the villages and teach the womenfolk how to manufacture those things. I think they can easily compete with Japanese goods. There are other small cottage industries which can be established there. Of course, it cannot be done with voluntary effort. Unless State aid is forthcoming it is not possible to establish these.

Q.—If State aid is available do you think that it will be helpful and the dependants will gladly take to them and utilise their time in earning some additional income?

A.—Yes.

Q.—In what respect the Compensation Act is inadequate?

A.—In respect of compensation. In cases of serious accidents the compensation given is not adequate.

*Mr. Gandhi.*—In case of the loss of arm what compensation is given?

A.—I am not in a position to say that.

Q.—Is the process also somewhat tardy? Have the labourers experienced any difficulty in getting redress through the procedure given in the Workmen's Compensation Act?

A.—Of course, every legal procedure is a little arduous, but all the same I would not object to that. The thing is that the scale of compensation fixed is inadequate. For different kinds of injuries compensation might be fixed.

*Prof. Saran.*—Many workers buy their provisions from shops on credit. Do you think that there is much difference between credit price and cash price? If so, what is the difference?

A.—The difference is almost double and there are a few more false additions to that.

Q.—That means that his wages are practically halved?

A.—I have suggested the establishment of co-operative stores.

*Chairman.*—You have said that you are in favour of the employers building houses for the labour. Suppose there are two thousand workers working in the tobacco factory and one thousand of them are housed in houses controlled by the municipality and one thousand of them are housed in houses controlled by the company. Cases have occurred in the case of prolonged strike where employers have given notice of eviction. Therefore there is risk of eviction during industrial disputes in the case of houses controlled by the employers while there is no such risk in the case of houses controlled by the municipality. What kind of house would you prefer?

*A.*—I would prefer houses in which there will be no risk.

*Mr. Chandra.*—What percentage of the workers are members of the union?

*A.*—Over 99 per cent. and among the clerical staff about 75 per cent.

*Q.*—In the recent strike how they were supported?

*A.*—They were supported by persons who live near the factory. Their union supplied food to some of them.

*Q.*—In discussion about industrial peace you have heard about the appointment of a labour officer by the management. In the neighbouring province of U. P. labour officer has been appointed by Government and it is he who is helping the workers and the employers to come to agreement when disputes occur. What procedure would be most suitable?

*A.*—I would welcome a labour officer appointed by Government.

*Mr. Browne.*—That is not for an individual factory?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a Government officer for the entire province or the other suggestion that each factory should have its own labour officer?

*A.*—The labour officer appointed by the factory will hardly be the right person who can settle our disputes. He will be more a welfare officer than a conciliation officer.

*Mr. Gandhi.*—What does your union really do now-a-days?

*A.*—Since the formation of the union we are struggling for snatching our elementary rights. Of course, whatever little thing we could do was to ask them to be sober, to be more disciplined, to give up the habit of extravagance, to give up superstition and to become united and to forget that one is Hindu or a Muhammadan or a Christian.

*Q.*—Who does all these things?

A.—It is sometimes done by haranguing, and sometimes by sitting and suggesting these things to them.

Q.—Are meetings of the trade union held very frequently?

A.—There are several kinds of meetings. One is a meeting of the inner cabinet and after that I have got a bigger cabinet and after that we get our things approved by a mass meeting of labourers.

Mr. Gandhi.—Who are in the inner cabinet?

A.—Four persons including myself. In the bigger cabinet we have 23 representatives from all the shops elected by the workers.

Q.—What is the fee for membership?

A.—One day's wage in the year.

Q.—Has it been paid for the year or is to be paid?

A.—Supposing a man has become member in December last, then he will not have to pay up to December next. In January he will have to pay.

Mr. Lal.—Have you some wholtime workers for looking after the workers?

A.—No. It is very difficult to find out honorary workers.

Prof. Saran.—Your union is not affiliated to any other union?

A.—No.

Q.—Are you contemplating affiliation of your union to any other organization?

A.—I will get it affiliated to the Trade Union Congress in course of time. Up till now we have been busy with our own affairs.

Mr. Chandra.—Is it your experience that the workers have been able to secure any substantial concessions or privileges without intervention?

A.—No.

Q.—Do you strongly hold that the right of workers to strike should be safeguarded to them?

A.—Certainly and we would vehemently protest if that right is taken away.

Prof. Saran.—Suppose it is laid down that in no case you are to go on strike without giving notice, would you resent that?

A.—Yes, because strikes are not resorted to on the spur of the moment. Some trouble goes on brewing for some time and when every avenue of settlement fails, then strike comes. But I would certainly resent any interference by legislation as to when I will strike and at what moment I will not.

Q.—Do you maintain that you should be free to go on strike at any time?

A.—I certainly consider it a valuable right of the workers to go on strike whenever they find that their grievances cannot be remedied otherwise. I would not like legislation on that point.

Mr. Gandhi.—Do you consider strike or settlement important?

A.—Certainly settlement is important.

Mr. Lal.—Suppose there was a legislation to the effect that unless and until methods of arbitration and conciliation have been tried and found ineffective, strike should not be resorted to?

A.—Supposing months are taken over that. It depends upon what sort of machinery is set up.

The Chairman.—Suppose we set up a machinery in consultation with the employers. There is a joint committee between the union and the employers. As soon as there is change in the conditions of service, you put the matter before the employer and the joint committee is called immediately and the matter is discussed. You do not reach an agreement. Under the machinery there may be further stage for further consideration of the dispute to which you and the employers may also be parties. If even there the settlement is not reached, you are free to declare a strike by giving notice, as the employers have a right to declare a lock out after 7 days' notice. So far as the period of discussion by way of negotiation is concerned, the first stage shall not take more than 7 days. The second stage will not take more than a week or a fortnight. If all the avenues of peaceful settlement which are previously agreed to are exhausted then according to you, you will be entitled to a strike?

A.—First of all I would not concede beyond the provisions of the Trade Unions Act. It is a game of tactics—they want to declare a lock-out and we want to declare a strike. The labour being in a weak position I do not think that the right which the present Trade Unions Act confers upon them should be snatched away.

Prof. Saran.—There will be same restrictions on lock-out as on strike?

A.—Not that. I have taken the points from the end. I strongly oppose it.

Q.—If they know that you want to go on strike, can they not declare a lock-out? But how is that position changed?

A.—Because I give them notice. It is a game of tactics. If capital has a right to declare a lock-out, certainly the employees have also a right to declare a strike. Whatever advantages have been given to the workers that must not be taken out.

*The Chairman.*—The position is this that so far as Trade Unions Act is concerned it does not deal with strikes at all. What it does deal with is that it prescribes a certain procedure under which a trade union can be registered. The Act further confers upon the trade union so registered certain privileges and certain rights during industrial disputes which an unregistered union does not enjoy. There is a Trade Disputes Act which deals with strikes and strikes are made illegal if adequate notice is not given. That is the legal position so far as I know. Apart from the legal aspect of the case, they have got a powerful bargaining strength on the basis of which they can settle terms with the employers at the point of bayonet with regard to any dispute and if you and the employers construct a machinery of negotiation which will deal with all cases of dispute and avoid cessation of work as far as possible and so long as you deal with the procedure, you yourself lay down in agreement with the employer, would you, during the course of the procedure, ask your workers to strike?

A.—How can that be? If Mr. Browne and myself are negotiating on certain points, unless we come to an end, how can we take any other step?

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Do you think that the bargaining power of the employers and the employees can be put at par?

A.—No.

Q.—If you agree to a definite procedure regarding the method of conciliation in a time of tension which may be followed by a strike or lock-out and if you feel at a particular stage of the procedure of agreement that in view of the circumstances in case a strike is not declared, the actual number of the workers will be so endangered or their economic position would be so weakened that the bargaining would completely collapse. In these circumstances do you think that the union must assert its right to strike irrespective of the time and the stage?

A.—That will depend upon the agreement between the parties.

Q.—You reserve to yourself the decision as regards the time to declare the strike?

A.—I would not like to be invaded by any legislation.

*Prof. Saran.*—You would not accept any restriction imposed upon your right to strike?

A.—I have never said that. I am prepared to negotiate with them as we do in every case.

*Mr. Lal.*—Have you any objection to a machinery being evolved for arbitration before you resort to strike?

A.—I shall be able to express my opinion when a concrete scheme is formed.

Q.—There is a scheme at Ahmedabad that before the labourers go on strike they have to refer the case to their representative, then the whole matter is placed before the arbitration board on which there is an employers' representative. If the matter is not settled there, then the whole thing is referred to an umpire and practically there is no necessity of a strike. Without taking away the right to strike, have you any objection to evolving a machinery whereby the disaster could be avoided?

A.—As I have told you I will be in a position to express my opinion after I study the scheme and not before that.

*Mr. Chandra.*—Supposing there is a strike in progress, is it your experience that the management resorts to methods of importing black leg labour with a view to drag on the strike?

A.—I have read in papers regarding other strikes but I have no personal experience.

Q.—Are you aware that the management take steps to import black leg labour to drag on a strike?

A.—Yes, I have read in papers.

Q.—In the United States of America there is a law making such strikes illegal. Would you advocate such a legislation in this country also.

A.—Certainly.

*The Chairman.*—Are you in favour of a conciliation officer being appointed by Government in order that the dispute may not be unduly prolonged.

A.—I will have no objection to that if it is done without legislative interference, if conciliation officers effect conciliation between the parties.

Q.—Are you in favour of rationalization? I should like to know what you mean by rationalization?

A.—If it means the introduction of new machinery and the effect of it on labour, then I will be in a position to answer. But if you mean something else then I would request the Chairman to explain it to me.

*The Chairman.*—The main object of rationalization is to reduce the cost of production with a view to avoid unfair competition in the market.

*A.*—To a certain extent I am in a position to give a reply. The thing is that mechanization is all very well in order to enable a particular industry to compete with a foreign manufacturer, but at the same time you have to take into account the vast number of unemployed in this country. Every country introducing rationalization has insured against unemployment. I would implore the present Government before long to ensure unemployment pension, or so long as employment is not secured, the workers should get certain living wage. Secondly, it has a very demoralising effect on labour also in this way that labour being illiterate and not being very conversant with their own interest will not know what they are doing. Ultimately it is just like the law of diminishing return. There may be a gross income which will be a little more than an individual worker was getting but on the whole he will be a loser and it will be a gain to the employer.

*Q.*—It comes to this that if there are safeguards provided against the evils which might arise out of rationalization, you are not against it. I will point out this thing. Rationalization may result in the beginning in the reduction of hands and if there is reduction in costs, goods produced get a better sale because of the competitive rates in the market. Now if the production increases, naturally there will be an anxiety on the part of the employer to engage more hands. So the theory is that for a time there will be unemployment but after a time the persons unemployed will be absorbed. If during that period there is reduction in hand, provision is made by way of unemployment insurance. You have no objection to the introduction of rationalization which may lead ultimately to the maintenance of the factory which may not otherwise be the result.

One other question I would like to put to you. Before rationalization the cost of production in a certain firm was Rs. one lakh, and after rationalization the cost is reduced. Now there is margin of Rs. 10,000. Is it your idea that this Rs. 10,000 should be distributed in certain proportion between the management and the workers—the management because they have spent some money on purchase of new machinery and the workers because they have to do a little more hard work.

*A.*—That is a saving in the cost of production and greater profits will come in to the Company.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—You have suggested that even though labour saving devices reduce the cost of production these lead to widespread unemployment and you have quoted the example of Monghyr itself where labour has been reduced to 40 per cent. Now in some countries they have decided to tackle the problem of rationalization in this



manner. Not merely does the State compile a full list of labour saving devices but it has also suggested a procedure of rationalization. It has suggested that in times of depression, it is true that rationalization may, reduce the cost of production, but the social and political dangers of unemployment are so stressed that rationalization is postponed and if any rationalization is permitted which would reduce both the number of labour force as well as the cost of production that rationalization is attempted through joint conciliation of not only the trade union and the management but also of technical experts. It is in this manner that detailed investigations regarding the present state of the labour saving devices and the reactions of its use to the whole question of the cost of production are undertaken and this joint committee of experts sits to discuss these matters. Do you think that for saving the dangers of unemployment specially in the years of depression these things should safeguard the procedure of rationalization if adopted in India?

A.—Certainly.

*Prof. Saran.*—There is bound to be unemployment in any case if there is foreign competition. If you do not allow the cost to be reduced we shall lose the home market?

A.—We can protect it by other means.

Q.—Then you want to tax the whole community in order to save a certain number of men?

A.—Yes.

*Mr. Lal.*—Through the process of rationalization and intensification has much suffering been caused to labour in your factory?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How far?

A.—I have not worked out the percentage.

Q.—You have heard from the employers that there is a reduction of 40 per cent due to rationalization. What was the previous number?

A.—It was 4,000.

Q.—When it went down?

A.—It went down in 1930 and later on they were re-employed. Previous to the earthquake new machineries had been introduced and after it they have imported more up-to-date machineries.

Q.—They say that because the building is small therefore they have less labour?

A.—They have got three factories in India and on enquiry you will find that there has been a corresponding increase in labour in those factories.

*Q.*—Although you cannot give a definite proportion of reduction which has taken place, there has been a substantial reduction due to rationalization?

*A.*—Yes.

*Mr. Browne.*—Am I to understand that you want to deprive the employer of the right to introduce improved machinery?

*A.*—I do not want to deprive anybody of his legitimate share.

*Chairman.*—Thank you.

The Committee met in the Finance Minister's Room on the 22nd April, 1939, at 9-30 A.M.

The following members were present :—

- |                         |     |                             |
|-------------------------|-----|-----------------------------|
| (1) Dr. Rajendra Prasad | ... | <i>Chairman, Presiding.</i> |
| (2) Dr. R. K. Mukherjee | ... | <i>Member.</i>              |
| (3) Mr. H. B. Chandra   | ... | <i>Member.</i>              |
| (4) Mr. A. M. Hayman    | ... | <i>Member.</i>              |
| (5) Prof. R. K. Saran   | ... | <i>Secretary.</i>           |

Oral evidence tendered on behalf of the Patna Electric Supply Workers' Union, Patna, of the following:—Mr. Vishwanath Sahay Verma, President, Patna Electric Supply Workers' Union, assisted by Mr. Chandra Deo Narayan, General Secretary.

*Chairman.*—When your union was started?

*A.*—My union was started in the month of November 1938.

*Q.*—Is your union registered under the Trade Unions Act?

*A.*—Yes, it is registered.

*Q.*—What is the membership of the union?

*A.*—Our membership is 433.

*Q.*—Who are the members of the union? Only you have got the workers as members of the union or are there any outsiders also?

*A.*—We have got 430 members who are actually workers of the Electric Supply Company, and besides them there are 3 outsiders also as members. These outsiders are persons interested in labour welfare.

*Mr. Hayman.*—You have said that there are 430 members of the union who are workers, but I see in the memorandum that there are about 14 or 15 officers and some office staff also members who are the employees of the company. How do you explain this?

*A.*—All the workers employed in the Electric Supply Company, including some clerks and heads of the outdoor staff, etc., are members.

*Q.*—What is the annual or monthly subscription of the union?

*A.*—The annual subscription of the union is one day's wages in the case of the workers.

*Q.*—Have you collected the subscription of the union regularly?

*A.*—Yes, we have collected the subscription from almost all the members except a few outsiders, just as ourselves who are also members of the union but the rule regarding payment of membership fee is not applicable to us. Out of the office-bearers one

assistant secretary and the treasurer are from among the employees, while the President, the Secretary and one of the two assistant secretaries were outsiders. We collect the subscription on the pay day.

*Mr. Saran.*—That is you mean to say that the outsiders do not pay the subscription?

*A.*—Yes, outsiders do not pay. They are sympathisers.

*Mr. Chandra.*—Now coming to the Trade Disputes Act, you have said in your memorandum that (*reads*).....there is the existing Trade Disputes Act, which has the power for settlement of labour disputes; what are your suggestions regarding the settlement of disputes?

*A.*—In the first place the Government, as it is doing in some cases, should enforce the Arbitration Award and try to secure some settlement between the workers and the employers. In case of this agreement not being acceptable to any party, I should like to suggest that Government should have powers to enforce the terms of the award of the arbitrators. The employers should also be made to see that the terms are implemented.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Can you cite any instance in which the employers have not abided by the decision of the arbitration award?

*A.*—I am not in a position to cite any instance regarding the Patna Electric Supply Company about which I am speaking. But I can tell one instance of some other place. There was some trouble in the Singhbhum district and in the Golmuri Tinsplate Company and in these cases the employers did not accept and carry out the terms of the award.

*Chairman.*—You are referring to the strike in 1929 or the strike of the last year in the Golmuri Company?

*A.*—Yes, to both.

*Q.*—Then you want that the Government should have the power to enforce the award against both the parties?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—You have given in the reply to the questions that powers should be given to Government to enforce the award. Should such award be enforceable against the workers also?

*A.*—Yes, by all means.

*Q.*—Have you got any definite scheme in your mind regarding this question? I hope, you must have seen the recent Act passed in Bombay called the Bombay Trade Disputes Act? Do you suggest any scheme like that for Bihar also?

*A.*—Yes, I should like to suggest some such thing. But I do not like that the Bombay Act should be transplanted here in toto; there should be some changes so as to suit our conditions.

Q.—Has your union discussed the Bombay Act?

A.—It has not, but I would discuss with the members of the union and let you know later on. At present I am not in a position to give my considered opinion.

Mr. Saran.—We should like to have your considered opinion on this question and please prepare a memorandum on this question and submit it to the committee?

A.—Yes, I will do that.

Chairman.—Now coming to the Trade Union, you have said in your memorandum that (*reads*.....), making the recognition of the properly constituted union by the employers obligatory, and both the employers and the union agree that a properly constituted union should be recognised and encouraged; but the only difficulty lies in the fact and the difference arose about the term "properly organised union". Can you tell us what you consider to be a properly organised union?

A.—My opinion is that a properly organised union should have in it the majority of the workers. Outsiders to the proportion of one-fifth of the total membership may be there but as soon as the workers are sufficiently conscious and well organised, outsiders would naturally go out. I have mentioned this in my memorandum which is based on my personal experience. The Patna Waterworks Union, though it was a well organised body, was not recognised by the authorities. Of course, the Patna Electric Supply Company recognised the union. So I say that a properly organised and constituted union should be recognised by the employer.

A properly organised union should be representative of the workers and it should be registered with the Government. I think that should be the order.

Q.—You like that certain proportion of outsiders to be the members of the executive of the union?

A.—Yes, we have been doing like this in our union. Only one-fifth of the executive are outsiders.

Dr. Mukherjee.—What is the proportion of outsiders in your executive committee?

A.—Our executive committee consists of 30 members out of whom 5 are office-bearers, and 3 are outsiders—the President, the Secretary and the Assistant Secretary.

Q.—There are no outsiders who are members of the Committee besides those whom you have mentioned?

A.—Yes, there are two.

Mr. Saran.—The Assistant Secretary is not a worker of the company?

A.—No, there are three Assistant Secretaries.

Q.—You have not got office-bearers from among the workers?

A.—I have told you that of the five, three are outsiders, two are from among the employees.

Mr. Hayman.—I like to be clear on one point. In the statement you have said that (*reads*).....What do you mean by the properly organised union and I want to know what do you understand by the difference between a properly constituted union and a properly organised union?

A.—In my opinion there is no distinction between the two terms.

Q.—Then you like that recognition should be automatic ?

A.—No, I should like to say that the majority of the workers should be the members of the union, before it is recognised.

Q.—What do you mean by the majority—can you fix it at 51 per cent of the members of the union? Will that satisfy you?

A.—I should say that it should be 75 per cent; why only 51 per cent of the total workers?

Q.—Can you say any definite proportion?

A.—Well, it is very difficult to stick to exact figures like this, but it is quite reasonable to have the percentage as 75 per cent. It cannot be laid down as a general rule.

Q.—Do you mean to say that it should be obligatory by law on the employers to recognise it in that case?

A.—Yes.

Dr. Mukherjee.—I cannot understand why do you insist on such a large majority as 75 per cent? Cannot you do with 55 per cent or 56 per cent or to take the least 51 per cent?

A.—In that case it would be very difficult to arrive at a decision. There will always be some trouble arising as on the side of the union there is only one per cent margin.

Q.—In the democratic principles even the 51 per cent should be quite sufficient as it gives you the majority? Then what is the use of going so high as 75 per cent?

A.—If the membership of the union was not sufficiently large, i.e., the majority of the workers were not in it, there was danger of a rival union springing up and frustrating the object of the previous one. I have no objection to 51 per cent if the employers like that, and they thought it sufficient for according recognition.

Mr. Saran.—You have referred that in that case the fear is of the formation of the rival union. I may point out to you that even with 51 per cent the danger of a rival union would be eliminated because the latter would have only 49 per cent?

A.—Yes, it may be practicable. But difficulty may arise.

Q.—No, it would not arise in 51 per cent?

A.—It is my experience that a rival union will spring up. In order to be a properly organised union, there should be an absolute majority on our side.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Even in that case there are 25 per cent who are not in your side and if the employers wish they can keep them over their side and not recognise the union? They can say that there is no proper organisation of the union? They may try to make it a majority?

A.—I have told you, technical difficulties can be raised in every case.

*Chairman.*—Do you maintain that the rival union should be discouraged?

A.—Oh, yes, by all means.

Q.—Do you agree that there should be only one Trade Union in one industry and in trade?

A.—Yes. There should be no rival union. That weakens the workers' cause.

Q.—You also want that there should be only one Trade Union recognised by the employers?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Now as this point has been raised I should like to point out that how far the Government should meddle with the Trade Unions, their formation and control? There may be technical difficulties always. Suppose after a registered union was recognised, the workers began to find it difficult to continue to be members owing to some reasons or the other and think that another union should be formed? What will happen in that case? This is an important matter and I would like you to give your considered opinion?

A.—I have given a reply to this question also in my memorandum. This is a matter that should not be left to the sweet will of the employers. I hold that Government should exercise some control not only over the working of the trade unions but even on their formation and if it was found that a particular union did not command the confidence of the workers and did not safeguard their interest, recognition should be withdrawn. Of course, there was bound to be some difficulty in the transition period.

Q.—How can the formation of the rival unions be discouraged? Why should Government be partial?

A.—I affirm that Government should be in constant touch with the Trade Unions through a suitable machinery and when it is felt that a particular union did not truly represent the workers, recognition should be withdrawn.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—In some countries the employers keep an attitude of neutrality. They neither encourage and discourage. Do you agree to such a thing in this country?

*A.*—Well, if it is benevolent neutrality, there is no objection.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Why not strict neutrality?

*A.*—Because if it is not benevolent, it may in most cases lean towards partiality.

*Mr. Chandra.*—You have suggested about the recognition that if certain number of members, say, 50 per cent of the members, have demanded another union to be started and ask the Government to register. This point is not clear to me?

*A.*—I have made this point clear in my memorandum when I say that labour union must be (*reads*).....

*Q.*—How do you distinguish generally with the employers in the work of recognition of the properly organised union?

*A.*—Yes, we mean recognition of the right to bargain collectively.

*Q.*—The labourers are at a great disadvantage in the case of collectively bargaining with the employers. That difficulty that you refer may not be generally practicable, e.g., coming to the factory there is workers' union and suppose the workers' point of view has not been adhered to and 50 per cent are with that, would you restrict the workers to say and ask the members to give up membership or what will you do?

*A.*—I am definitely of opinion that the rival union should be discouraged.

*Q.*—If the majority have dissented?

*A.*—I should like to suggest that if legislation is resorted to for regulating the trade unions we can prevent the formation of rival unions.

*Q.*—Then you meant to say that the Government should be partial to one party?

*A.*—There is no question of partiality. The Government should always be impartial. The union which is fully representative should be recognised by employers and encouraged by Government.

*Q.*—You mean to say that the minimum majority should be 51 per cent only and not 80 per cent, suppose tomorrow it is made 49 per cent?

*A.*—Then it is not a representative union.

*Q.*—In that case if it is not a representative union, you mean to say that the registration should be cancelled?

*A.*—Yes, in that case the registration may be cancelled.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Now you suggest that registration and recognition should be entirely a work of the Government, but there are some countries where the employers neither encourage nor discourage, but



they do one thing which is called the discrimination or in other words, it is called victimisation of the working class. In America there is such thing. Do you like that such practices should be prevented by law and legislation should be passed on such things which will lay down upon the employers that they should not encourage or discourage or victimise? In America people have solved many labour problems like this by legislation. This is called unfair labour practices in America. What do you say to this?

A.—Yes, I shall have no objection to that. If the employers' attitude is of benevolent neutrality.

Q.—This will give the workers the right of collective bargaining with the employers?

A.—Yes.

Chairman.—Now I come to the question of strikes and employment of black legs. You have submitted in your memorandum that (reads).....Have you got any definite suggestion to make regarding this?

A.—At present it is not easy to do this. But if I am allowed time I will submit another memorandum on this point, containing this as well as other points.

Q.—What do you think should be the procedure regarding the employment of black-legs? How will Government prevent the employment of 'black-legs' in time of strikes?

A.—I will give my considered opinion on this point later on.

Q.—What do you mean by black-legs?

A.—By the term 'black-legs' is meant new workers employed in place of old workers at the time of strikes. Also those who try to break the strike can be taken into the category of black-legs.

Q.—Suppose in a factory there are 250 workers and out of them 200 have gone on strike and 50 remain who are willing to join work and refuse to join the strikers? Will you call them black legs and would you like the Government to give the protection to the latter category of workers?

A.—In such a case it is clear that the majority of the workers want a strike. Here the position should be considered directly from the workers' point of view. The majority will prevail.

Q.—Is it not the duty of Government to protect the civil liberty of these workers who do not want to join the strike?

A.—But those workers who have gone on strike also claim civil liberty and the Government is bound to protect their civil liberty also.

Q.—Do you mean to say that those who want to join the work should be discouraged to go on duty? Do you also mean that the Government should complete the strike by preventing those 50 workers from joining the work because the majority of the workers are on strike? Should the Government play the role of completing the strike?

A.—No, what I mean is this that Government should not help the employers and frustrate the object of the strikers. The State has a much more important duty towards the general welfare of the workers than merely protecting the civil liberty of a few, and if it feels that a particular employer goes out of his way to help a few workers and disregards the demand of the general body, then the State should pull its weight in favour of the latter. I also agree that Government should go into the merits of the dispute and help the workers in case their demand was justified. It is neither proper nor possible for the Government to remain impartial. At least they were not doing it at the present time. Government should also not help the strike-breakers. If the strike is lawful and legitimate; then Government should help.

Q.—Should not the Government in case of a strike merely keep law and order and refrain from taking sides?

A.—The Government have a much greater responsibility than merely keeping law and order in such cases.

Q.—Then you like that in this matter the choice of the majority should prevail?

A.—Yes.

Q.—If the workers want to go to work how can the Government prevent them?

A.—The Government cannot prevent the workers from doing so; but there should be some machinery whereby an equitable adjustment may be possible.

Q.—If workers go on duty is it the duty of the Government as the saviour of law and order to help them to go to work? How can you explain this?

A.—This question should not be considered from the factory point of view. Supposing there are some workers who are working in some factory and they have put forward their demands before the management. The latter do not accept the demands, e.g., higher wages and so on, then there is no alternative for the workers but to go on strike, and the employers take the attitude of restricting the strike. Now the Government should come forward to compel the employers to accept the demands and should not side with the employers in combating the strike. There should be a reasonable attitude. The Government should not take the side of the employers and actually help them in breaking the strike and the morale of the strikers in the name of maintaining law and order. That's what is happening now. Whatever Government may say; in actual practice, it comes to this.

Q.—If the Government has come to the conclusion that the strike is unjustified and then will it not be right if the Government help the employers to recruit black legs?

A.—The case would be different if Government are so convinced after thorough enquiry.

Chairman.—Though I know nothing of the Government yet so far as I know that is what the Government say and do.

Mr. Chandra.—Then you want to put the case to conciliation?

A.—Why not? If I mistake not I can say that the Government do take sides. That ought not to be.

Chairman.—I think the Government do not take sides but they take the maintenance of law and order and they see that there is no breach of peace. If there is breach of peace, then they try to protect the life and property of the people rather than take sides.

Witness.—That will not serve the purpose. They have got a greater responsibility, than the maintenance of law and order.

Dr. Mukherjee.—Now collective bargaining comes in. The labour has the absolute right of collective bargaining and the prevention of the right to collective bargaining in other countries is called the unfair labour practice, and that the right should not be discouraged. Do you advocate right of bargaining for every worker? In the collective bargaining the employers are in a stronger position and the position of the workers very weak. It is in the interest of the workers that the exercise of this right should be prevented.

(As the question was very complex it was simplified by the Chairman like this):—

Chairman.—You mean to ask, Dr. Mukherjee, that on one side there is collective bargaining and on the other side the right to work, which do you like to be protected or should State remain neutral?

Witness.—In my opinion the right of bargaining should have preference over the right to work. And from the larger point of view the latter is included in the former.

Q.—Supposing in a factory there are 100 workers and 60 out of them form a union and out of them 31 decide at a meeting to go on strike. Would you like the Government to help those 31 or the rest of them, that is 29 plus 40, latter not being members and former do not want strike?

A.—This is an extreme case. If about 75 per cent of workers favour any strike then it should be regarded as just and proper.

Q.—Now suppose the case is like this. On one side there are 51 members who are for the strike and there are 49 who are against the strike, in this case what will you do?

A.—This is also a very difficult proposition. My idea of a strike is that it should be ruled by the majority verdict, the majority should be absolute. It is very difficult to fix a ratio. The only point to consider is that there should be absolute majority, who want the strike and then alone there should be strike.

Q.—Then what should be the way? There must be some rule?

A.—I would stick to 75 per cent.

Mr. Hayman.—If there are 75 per cent in favour of the strike then there should be a strike?

A.—Personally I am of that opinion.

Q.—The strike will be declared by the meeting of the workers or by the members of the union?

A.—I have already submitted that the union in which there is 75 per cent majority will declare strike. The question of the proportion does not arise. The union is a corporate body. It carries the verdict of the majority.

Dr. Mukherjee.—I cannot follow why do you stick to one particular figure 75 or 80 or 60, etc., why not say that if there is a clear verdict in favour of a strike, it should be recognised as representative?

A.—Yes, I mean that.

Chairman.—Now take another example. Out of 100 workers 60 are members of the union and out of that 75 per cent are in favour of a strike and it was not decided in an open meeting and those who are not members of the union are altogether not in favour, would you consider this to be the absolute majority? What do you say?

A.—In that case I would not advise a strike. If it is done then it will not succeed.

Q.—In that case do you not consider that the Government should come forward to help the employers and side with them in appointing black-legs and break the strike?

A.—That's a rather difficult question.

Q.—In this case you will justify the Government in siding with the management to help them and not to protect the strikers?

A.—Not exactly.

Mr. Chandra.—If a larger number of workers go on strike as a protest against the payment of lower wages and the company is not in a position to do it. Do you contemplate that the workers if they do not come the employers will declare lock-out? Do you maintain that the right of lock-out should be given to the employers?

A.—No, the right of lock-out should not be given to them.

Q.—But if the strike is resorted to after all methods of conciliation and arbitration have failed, then will it be lawful?

A.—It may be. But if these conditions prevail, strikes will not be normally resorted to.

Q.—If the decision is against the workers and the workers have gone on strike, would not the Government help the employers to get their rights restored?

A.—Yes, that is right.

Mr. Saran.—And if the Government enforce the terms of the award and carry it out against the workers, then what will be your position?

A.....

Q.—Suppose the employers do not agree, what will you say to that?

A.—We want that the award should be compulsory and there should be compulsory arbitration, and the Government should compel the employer to carry out the award.

Q.—Then you like that the arbitration should be penal?

A.—Yes, compulsory and penal arbitration.

Q.—Against both the employers and employees?

A.—Yes, the Government will take action against both.

Q.—If the employers resist the strike and encourage recruitment of fresh labour, would you make a distinction between the old workers and fresh workers?

A.—I think the employment of new recruits should be prevented. The employers should abide by the award.

Mr. Chandra.—I am not taking this but the strike is there and the employers want machinery and they do not press workers to join. Do you mean to protect the employers in this matter?

A.—This should not be encouraged.

Q.—You want it to be prohibitive?

A.—Yes, it should be prohibitive.

Mr. Hayman.—About the constitution of the arbitration boards is it your opinion that the employers and employee should have their nominees on it and you like the Government to provide it by law that there should be a board of arbitration?

A.—The Government should appoint the arbitration board.

Now the witness pointed out how the Factories Act was circumvented by the employers. In corroboration of this contention he placed before the Committee a chart showing the shifts in the Patna Electric Supply Company according to which a worker was at present getting 8 hours recess. He also maintained that sometimes the fines realised from the

workers were not entered into the books and thus no account was kept of them.

*Chairman.*—You have said in your memorandum about it that you will give some details of this?

*A.*—I propose to give a separate memorandum (*reads*)..... about the violation of the Factory Act (*and shows the chart*).

*Mr. Hayman.*—But this is the clear violation of the existing Factories Act and the Factory Inspector will take notice of it if his attention is drawn?

*A.*—You probably do not know what would be the lot of the worker who would approach the Factory Inspector.

*Q.*—You say that in many factories a different set of books is maintained for production before the Factory Inspectors. This is a serious charge against the employers. Can you cite at least half a dozen cases in support of your statement?

*A.*—Well, with due apology to employers, I am constrained to say that it is a common practice with them.

*Mr. Chandra.*—You please refer to the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Labour? According to that the worker must have 48 hours off in the fortnight and 24 hours in the week. You mean that it is not available?

*A.*—Yes, inspite of the recommendations of the Royal Commission there is no 48 hours off in a fortnight. I suggest, the number of Factory Inspectors should be increased.

*Mr. Chandra.*—Have you any instance of employment of child labour?

*A.*—There is no such case.

*Q.*—Have you any case of corruption in the matter of employment?

*A.*—Yes, I have.

*Q.*—Who is the appointing authority?

*A.*—He is the Resident Engineer. He is advised by the heads of departments. There is much preference to relations and friends. There have been four cases of bribes also.

*Q.*—Have you brought it to the notice of the manager?

*A.*—Yes, this kind of corruption should be prevented. A list of deserving candidates should be maintained and employment should be made from among them.

*Q.*—What is your suggestion for that?

*A.*—My suggestion is that the vacancy should be made known to the public by putting a notice on the notice board. There should also

be advertisement and announcement. It should be widely known and the employment should be made after that.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—In countries like Japan under the Factory Act provision, the workers should be provided protection in the matter of shocking of currents by cloth gloves in the hands, this is not included in the Factory Acts of India?

*A.*—There is no such provision here.

*Q.*—Do you not get any protection from electric currents?

*A.*—No. I have got a long list of persons who received electric shocks and some of them died of the shock, some years back.

*Mr. Saran.*—You said about corruption, how is it effected?

*A.*—There is corruption in employing lower grade men, and after the formation of the union things have improved. Certain arrangements had been agreed upon and they were in the course of being worked out. Some differences have arisen and only yesterday the union gave an ultimatum. The company was making quite a good profit and even after reduction of rates, it would be on the same level.

*Q.*—Yes, because the consumption in Patna is rapidly increasing without proportionate increase in cost?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—As regards the wages you have given in the memorandum (*reads*).....what do you say?

*A.*—Yes, there was much trouble for that but since the union has been started, the situation has improved. We gave a memorandum to the company stating our grievances and in the meeting that I had with the management some arrangement was arrived at for the redress of grievances.

*Q.*—Now coming to the minimum wage you maintain that there should be the fixation of the minimum wage for the workers and you have recommended that the minimum should be Rs. 15 a month, considering the conditions of life in Patna?

*A.*—Yes, that is the thing.

*Q.*—Is there any graded scale for all classes of workers?

*A.*—Yes, as a result of the recent arrangement arrived at between us, the minimum and the maximum wages have been laid down for the unskilled workers. The unskilled worker will start at Rs. 15, and they will go up to Rs. 17. There will be an increment of 2 annas and go up to Rs. 17 in the course of 16 years.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Have you got any provision for provident fund scheme?

*A.*—Yes.

Q.—Is there any maternity benefits?

A.—No there are no women workers.

Q.—Is there any kind of leave granted or sickness leave?

A.—Yes, as a result of the efforts of the union the workers of the Electric Supply Company, have been given the facility of privilege leave up to three weeks in a year, sick-leave with full pay for one month and on half-pay for another 30 days. A system of bonus equivalent to one month's pay in a year and that of a provident fund contribution is already in existence. In case of sickness-leave the leave-taker will have to submit a certificate from the doctor of the company. If the company will have no doctor then it will authorise any doctor to do the job.

Q.—Can you supply us a copy of the terms of settlement?

A.—Yes, I will send it to the committee later on.

Q.—In case of privilege leave is there any distinction laid down between the monthly-rated and the daily-rated men?

A.—Those who are permanent get the same kind of leave. In our company, there is no temporary employment.

Mr. Saran.—Is the provident fund scheme for all workers?

A.—Yes, it is now applied to all workers. Formerly those who got above Rs. 35 per month were entitled to it. But now since the formation of the union they have allowed this privilege to all permanent workers. All the permanent workers contribute 5 per cent of their pay, and an equal amount is paid by the company. It is neither more or less.

Mr. Chandra.—Have you any idea of the general administration of the company and their relations between the employers and the employee?

A.—What little experience I have gained during the last few months, the administration of the company is very helpful to the workers and the employers consult the union on any point of dispute. Since the formation of the union things have changed for the better.

Q.—If there is any injury, they pay compensation? Have you examined the question of compensation?

A.—If there is any case of injury which is worth paying compensation, we try to arrive at a settlement and we see that the payment is made.

Q.—Has there been a general increment in the scale of wages?

A.—There was to have been an increase of 25 per cent in wages, but later on they agreed to time-scale. There may be a general increase of 15 per cent.



*Mr. Saran.*—Have you any idea of the profits of the company?

*A.*—I have seen the balance sheet of the company.

*Q.*—I think the company must be making profits? Do they pay bonus?

*A.*—Yes, they pay a bonus to the extent of one month's pay.

*Q.*—Is it in definite proportion?

*A.*—No, one month's pay.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Regarding the overtime work, is there any payment for the overtime work?

*A.*—Shift workers do not get any overtime. The rule requires that payment should be made. Formerly in this respect also, there was some confusion. Now things are better.

*Q.*—The union was formed in 1938. Have you seen any cases of violation or circumvention of the Payment of Wages Act, as you mention here?

*A.*—I have not mentioned anything regarding my company. I say there is circumvention of the Factories Act. The conditions in this company are not as bad as elsewhere.

The irregularities mentioned in the memorandum did not necessarily apply to the Patna Electric Supply Company where the conditions of service were more favourable than in many other industrial concerns in Bihar.

The Committee resumed its sitting on the 26th April 1989, at 8-30 A.M. in the Secretariat Building, Patna.

The following members were present :—

- |                         |     |                    |
|-------------------------|-----|--------------------|
| (1) Dr. R. K. Mukherjee | ... | Member, Presiding. |
| (2) Mr. A. M. Hayman    | ... | Member.            |
| (3) Mr. J. N. Lal       | ... | Member.            |
| (4) Prof. R. K. Saran   | ... | Secretary.         |

**Oral evidence of Mr. M. M. Ghoshal, Secretary, Gulzarbagh Government Press Employees' Association and supported by Babu Surajdeo Prasad, Compositor, Executive-member of the Association.**

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Your Association consists of 400 members?

*A.*—Yes, about 400.

*Q.*—How many workers of your press are monthly-rated, how many are monthly paid and how many daily paid?

*A.*—Number of piece-workers is 130 to 135. There are about 200 workers on monthly basis while about 40 are paid at the daily-rate. There is graded scale in the case of about 200 workers. The Fire Brigadiers are daily-rated people.

*Q.*—What are conditions of service?

*A.*—The conditions of service of forme-carriers, forme-washers and galley-proof men, etc., are that they are all Government servants but are on temporary basis. The Press cannot do without them. All these men are fixed paid men.

*Q.*—How many are they?

*A.*—About 20 or 25.

*Mr. Hayman.*—How many?

*A.*—About 20 or 25. These are regarded as temporary hands though they have 5, 10, 20 or even 27 years' service to their credit.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Is it a fact that your grant of leave is governed by the Government rules?

*A.*—Yes, but we are hardly allowed to enjoy the privilege of those rules. Though grant of leave is governed by the rules of Bihar and Orissa Service Code, they are hardly applied in practice. We are asked to work even on gazetted holidays. If the work is heavy the entire staff is called to work on holidays. The daily-rated men get no leave whatsoever but piece-workers have this privilege. The press was faced with great difficulties in the month of December when most of the workers who had leave due to them applied for it because if they did

not do so it would lapse. Sick leave was granted on the production of medical certificate from the Assistant Surgeon of the Patna City Hospital. If he did not recommend, leave was not granted.

Q.—Do you approve of the idea that the certificate given by private doctors is countersigned by the Press doctor?

A.—I have no objection if medical certificate given by a private practitioner is countersigned by the Press doctor to remove doubt. The Government of India rules which are liberal have not been introduced in the Press while the new rules which are disadvantageous are strictly observed. There is a general complaint of the piece-workers that the *distributor* is the most low paid hand in the Press and his remuneration does not exceed Rs. 8 or Rs. 9 in the month.

Q.—Don't you think that if the number of *distributors* is reduced, the average earning will increase?

A.—No, Sir.

Mr. Hayman.—You have said that there are many men who are working since 5 years and are still temporary? How many of them are like that?

A.—More than 25.

Q.—What is the reason that they have not been placed on permanent basis?

A.—I have explained this in my written memorandum.

Q.—Have you made representation to the Government about these 25 people?

A.—Yes, times without number, but no result. It is simply crying in the wilderness.

Q.—As for leave, are you refused leave when you ask for it?

A.—Yes. If we are made to work on any Sunday, the rule is that within 3 days one day's leave is given for working on a Sunday. But on all other gazetted holidays (except Sunday) very often when we are made to work, the rule is that the number of hours we work becomes compensation leave earned and due. But in actual practice this is not given when asked for.

Mr. Lal.—Are you governed by the Factories Act?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you get leave according to the Factories Act?

A.—No; though we are governed by the Factories Act in the matter of leave and service conditions, we are under the Bihar and Orissa Service Code and Fundamental Rules just like all other Government servants. Both the Factories Act and the Bihar and Orissa Service Code as well as the Fundamental Rules are applicable to the Government Press employees of Bihar.

Q.—Do you get leave on Sundays?

A.—Yes, but sometimes we are called for work.

Q.—So there is no grievance about Sundays?

A.—No.

Q.—Do you get pay for Sundays?

A.—Yes, salaried hands get but not the piece-workers.

Q.—You want leave according to the gazetted list of holidays?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is it a fact that the piece-workers do not want holidays?

A.—Yes, in the interest of piece-workers holidays are not good because holiday to them means no pay. They want holidays with pay or wages like the salaried hands. They also want that gazetted holidays be given to them with pay.

Q.—Do you get holidays for *Moharram* and *Dasahra*?

A.—No. It depends entirely on work. If the work is urgent or heavy, as many men will be called for work as the urgency or volume of the work demands.

Q.—Out of 200 how many will be called?

A.—Sometimes 20, 30, 50 or even the whole staff. That depends entirely on the volume or urgency of work.

Q.—Out of 150 men how many have got leave?

A.—On the last Easter, out of 5 gazetted holidays hardly few men were allowed to avail a day or two. Similarly there are holidays for *Dasahra* (12 days), for Christmas (10 days) and so on but all depend on work.

Mr. Hayman.—How many monthly-paid, daily-paid and piece-rated workers are there in the Press?

A.—About 200 monthly-paid and daily-rated. Their fixed pay is Rs. 30. Piece-workers are about 130.

Q.—What is the leave arrangement for the piece-workers?

A.—Piece-workers get one month's leave at class rate in a calendar year. If they do not avail of it, within the year, it lapses.

Q.—The leave is not cumulative?

A.—No, it is not so; and therefore the piece hands after waiting for some unexpected emergency for eleven months naturally want to avail the remaining portion of it in December, otherwise it will lapse. We want that on holidays work should be done by roster as it is done in the Secretariat, instead of no leave at all.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—In the Press we had some complaint about the medical authorities?

*A.*—Yes, about the production of medical certificate from the Assistant Surgeon of the Patna City Dispensary.

*Q.*—Does the doctor charge fees for issuing medical certificates?

*A.*—No. But knowing that no other certificate but his own would be accepted, he naturally becomes a stricter doctor than others. This is the grievance of the piece-workers only because the salaried hands can get leave on the strength of any medical practitioner's certificate. Only in cases of suspicion they are told to produce medical certificate from an Assistant Surgeon.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Then in case the doctor countersigns the certificate of private doctors, he will have to re-examine the man?

*A.*—Yes.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Has there been intensification of work, i.e., the workers have been reduced and the work has been increased due to improvement in machine and greater output demanded?

*A.*—It was not so. But since the introduction of the Lino and Mono, it has been so, e.g., the Superintendent wants that Lino and Mono matters should be finished with one or two readings. This throws extra labour and responsibility on the men concerned. We are told to finish two hours' work in one hour.

*Mr. Lal.*—Do you say that there is the Government of India Hand Book but there is no Provincial Hand Book?

*A.*—No, there is no Provincial Hand Book.

*Q.*—How your wages compare with the market rate?

*A.*—Our wages are better than the market-rate but the rules of Government of India Hand Book concerning wages are not applied. Our wages are not what the workers of other Provincial Presses receive.

*Q.*—What is the condition of the piece-workers?

*A.*—They do not get the rates according to the Government of India Rules. They used to get it before but now they do not.

*Q.*—Is there greater work and less pay?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—Can you give a list of such cases?

*A.*—Yes. Work is according to the new Hand Book and the wages are according to the old Hand Book.

*Q.*—On page 6 of your memorandum you have said about the minimum wages; what are least earnings of the piece-workers?

A.—Say about Rs. 25 for Compositors and Rs. 8 to Rs. 12 for Distributors. Fifty per cent of the Distributors get less than Rs. 10 or Rs. 12. The minimum wage is Rs. 8 to Rs. 10 per mensem. Some Distributors get Rs. 10, Rs. 15, Rs. 18 a month. They work for six days in the week and sometimes over-time.

Q.—If he works for six days in the week how much he gets on the average?

A.—Rs. 12 or Rs. 14 the average earning is very less.

Q.—Is it not the case that they earn about Rs. 20 a month?

A.—No, this is not the case.

Q.—If the number is reduced by the introduction of efficient machines like the Lino and Monotype?

A.—I am afraid Distributors will lose heavily. These machines have accentuated the trouble.

Q.—How many Lino and Monotype machines are there?

A.—12 Lino and 1 Mono.

Q.—Do you think that there is average increase of efficiency and more work?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What do you consider should be the minimum wage of the workers?

A.—Rupees 15 should be the minimum wage for the workers.

Q.—Do you think that there is reduction in work due to the introduction of the Lino and Monotype machines?

A.—Yes. The Monotypes were introduced in 1929 or 1928. Mr. Mackenzie introduced the Linotypes in 1918.

Prof. Saran.—The figure work take more time than ordinary letter work of solid page?

A.—One hour's work in figures gives us Re. 1 and the solid work gives annas 6 only.

Q.—I mean to say that solid work takes less time than figure work?

A.—No.

Mr. Lal.—The use of Linotype is economical to the Government and the work is good and easy?

A.—Yes, the work is good but the expense is great.

Q.—With reference to question 114, will the Works Committee be helpful in removing disputes between the management and the workers?

A.—Yes, but the Superintendent feels it inconvenient to deal with inferior staff.

Chairman.—Has there been cases of lead poisoning?

A.—Yes, during the years 1934—39 there have been six cases of lead poisoning out of which two resulted in death.

Q.—Was this referred to the Factory Inspector?

A.—Not only to the Factory Inspector but to the Government also lines without number.

Mr. Lal.—Does lead poisoning occur in private presses also?

A.—Yes, but who cares for the workers? They suffer silently.

Q.—Has any measure been taken to prevent lead poisoning?

A.—Government in their own interest are taking measures to stop lead poisoning and workers very much like those measures.

Q.—Is it a fact that lead poisoning took place because the workers themselves took food without washing and cleaning their hands properly?

A.—No, I deny that lead poisoning happened because employees took their meals during the recess without washing their hands properly. Even a *Dom* or a *Chamar* will not take his food without washing his hands at least.

Q.—What are names of persons who died?

A.—The names are Md. Siddique and Ramkhelawan Lal.

Q.—Did those who suffered from lead poisoning get compensation?

A.—Yes, they were certified by the Civil Surgeon and then they got.

Q.—You have also suggested that there should be morning work in summer? Is it more convenient?

A.—Yes, the hours of work should be 6 A.M. to 12 noon.

Q.—You have no quarters provided by the Press?

A.—No, we live in private houses. My service is of 31 years.

Q.—As a grievance you want morning hours of work for 6 hours?

A.—Not as a grievance but for the sake of our health and life—the building is very hot because of its defective roofing and iron construction. People have to come from 5 or 6 miles and during summer it is very difficult to come at 9 A.M. and at the top of it to remain confined in a furnace-like building for the whole midday and afternoon. ...

Prof. Saran.—As regards pension, do you agree to the scheme that pension should depend upon the class earnings?

A.—Yes, I agree to the suggestion.

Q.—Do you like the idea of promoting Distributors and Compositors?

A.—They should be promoted by test in an open competition.

Q.—Do you agree to the suggestion that some percentage of promotion should be reserved for Distributors?

A.—Yes, I agree to the suggestion of reservation, as you say.

Q.—Do you think that the lighting arrangement is sufficient?

A.—No, the lighting is very insufficient, but it is a minor thing which can be removed with little effort on the part of the Superintendent.

Mr. Hayman.—Would you be satisfied if you are paid according to rates prevailing in other Provincial Presses?

A.—Yes.

Prof. Saran.—So far as I remember it was said in the evidence of the Superintendent that the pension depends upon the earnings of the last 6 years?

A.—No, that is not the real position. This refers to the average earnings of the last six years.

Q.—In your case there is a system of class promotion at the rate of one anna or one anna six pies?

A.—No. Class promotion depends entirely on the average earnings of the Compositor and Distributor concerned. They are supposed to be classified every 5 years but in practice they are not.

Q.—Are the Compositors and Distributors skilled workers?

A.—Yes, they are all skilled workers.

Q.—If a man goes on leave, does a temporary hand substitute him?

A.—No.

Mr. Hayman.—Is it your point that when a permanent man goes on leave then the vacancy caused is not given to the temporary man and that is filled by outsiders?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Your rates compare unfavourably with the Government of India's rates?

A.—Yes. Very much so.

Mr. Lal.—Do you intend that Works Committee should be opened in your Press?

A.—Yes; there is a talk regarding this for 8 or 10 days.

Dr. Mukherjee.—Thank you.



The Committee met in the Secretariat, Patna, on the 1st May, 1939, at 8-30 A.M.

Members present—

- |                             |                        |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| (1) Mr. H. B. Chandra ...   | ... Member, Presiding. |
| (2) Prof. R. K. Saran ? ... | ... Secretary.         |

**Oral evidence\* of Mr. Permanand Trivedi, Secretary, supported by Mr. Ehsan Ahmad, on behalf of the Patna Press Workers' Union, Patna.**

*Mr. Chandra.*—Are you the Secretary of the Union?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—What is the total number of workers who are the members of this union?

*A.*—What is the total number of members I cannot tell you exactly as we have not got the figures from all the places. The total number of press workers in the province is about 3,000.

*Q.*—When was this union formed?

*A.*—It was formed from the month of November last.

There are different unions at different places which are affiliated to this central body.

*Q.*—So to say there is a sort of federation of all the individual unions?

*A.*—Yes, we formed a federation on the 10th December, 1938.

*Q.*—Has it got an executive committee? What is the membership of the committee?

*A.*—Yes, we call it the Executive Council which consists of 21 members in which 7 per cent are workers and the remaining are the outsiders. The President of the Federation is Mr. Nazamuddin and Vice-President is Mr. Manilal Sen. There are two Joint Secretaries, named Amir Nawab and Mr. Vindeshwari Verma. The former is not a worker but the latter is. All the rest of the office bearers, named above are outsiders.

*Q.*—Do the executive committee represent all the press unions of other places? Do you take in the Executive Council members from all the other centres?

*A.*—Yes, take one person from each centre. And according to the constitution of the Federation the Executive Council is the representative of all.

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\*This evidence is not corrected by the witness—Vidyabhushan Shukla.

Q.—Have you got any constitution?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Can you supply us a copy.

A.—Not at present.

Q.—What is the subscription of the union?

A.—The subscription is taken from the different unions at the rate of Rs. 5 per year per union.

Q.—Is there any contribution? This Rs. 5 is the entry-fee?

A.—Yes, this is contribution also.

Q.—Do the members pay the subscription regularly?

A.—Yes, they do.

Q.—The outsiders also pay you regularly?

A.—This rule has been formed recently.

Q.—Can you say how much money have you got with you?

A.—Cannot say the exact amount.

Q.—You do not know how much money there is altogether?

A.—It may be about Rs. 300 or Rs. 400.

Q.—When each centre of the federation has been formed?

A.—It was formed in the month of December. At certain places like Gaya or Monghyr the organisation is very large but at other places the organisation is not so large. When our services are required, we go and help them in organisation.

Q.—What are the difficulties in the organisation of the workers' union?

A.—The most difficult position is due to the employers' disturbances. Whenever any union is formed they try to break it in all possible ways and if possible they try to form a rival union. They dissuade the workers from joining the union.

Q.—Has there been any case of victimisation by the press managers?

A.—Yes, we have had the example of the Kharag Vilas Press. There was one man who was dismissed without framing any charge and without giving him any chance to explain. The result was that there was a strike in the press and then 16 persons were discharged. There are men who are working there since 35 years but they are not getting any substantial pay.

Q.—How many strikes there have been since the formation of the federation?

A.—As regards the Patna union we had 4 strikes and at Muzaffarpur and Arrah we had one strike each.

Q.—What were the main demands or grievances?

A.—Generally we have got the 10 demands to be redressed, in each of these cases.

Q.—What are the main grievances; is it the increment of wages?

A.—No, not so. In the case of the Searchlight Press strike there was this demand, and also in the Kharag Vilas Press this was the main reason of the strike. In the latter place wages were due for six months. We impressed upon them to pay every month.

Q.—Does it not violate the Payment of Wages Act? According to that Act the payment must be made by the 7th of the month?

A.—Yes, in spite of the Act, there is delay in payment.

Q.—Have you brought it to the notice of the Factory Inspector? Did you make complaints to him?

A.—Yes, we have sent complaints to him but in one case only he took an active share and the result was that there was some payment of wages which were due. But it is a general practice that the payment is never made before the 18th, of the month.

Q.—You have said that.....(*reads*) what do you mean by saying that there is relative right of the workers to go on strike? Do you mean by law or agreement? What do you mean by saying relative?

A.—The meaning is that the workers should be given the right to resort to strike though I do not like or favour the idea of the employers being given the same sort of right which goes against the interest of the workers.

Q.—Do you want this right to be given by law?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you like to have the right to strike for the redressal of grievances?

A.—These are the minimum means for the redressal of grievances.

Q.—Will you not give the management a chance of redressing the grievances?

A.—We know that they will never do so. We want to restrict their right.

Q.—What for you exactly fear?

A.—Suppose you give them the notice of strike, they will at once try to employ black legs. They will be prepared to meet the strike by all possible means, and will bring undue pressure on the workers.

Q.—So your fear is that they will try to get the alternative supply of labour. But suppose that a law is passed which will restrict your right to strike? What will you do?

A.—We have not given notice of the strike and it is very difficult to prove and produce evidence. It has been put under the Bombay Act where there is some restriction during the conciliation period.

Q.—But I think that it is just to give them 15 days' notice for the consideration of the grievances?

A.—That provision is for settlement by compulsory conciliation or arbitration. If the same right is given to the employers, then it would not be possible to be successful in strike. That right should not be given to them.

Q.—Under the Bombay Trade Disputes Act, the right of lock-out has been given to them; what do you say?

A.—No, we do not favour that. They should never be given the right of appointing black legs.

Q.—What percentage of votes do you like should decide whether there should be a strike?

A.—If 75 or 70 per cent of the workers are in favour of the strike, it should be declared and the remaining 25 or 30 per cent should be prevented from working through peaceful picketing.

Q.—Why do you say that the employers should not be given that right?

A.—The employers are already very strong and the workers are weak. If that right is given then there will be still further weakness for the workers.

Q.—You would not agree that there should be some kind of regulation to prevent strikes before the dispute is put for arbitration?

A.—Yes, we would not, that would weaken the cause of the workers.

Q.—You would not agree to some kind of regulation for the control of the disputes?

A.—No.

Q.—Before the strikes you would not make your demands known?

A.—No.

Q.—Do you like to give notice that if the demands are not redressed, you can reserve the right to go on strike without any notice?

A.—No, we will submit our demands after the strike. We will not give notice but if the demands are not satisfied, we will go on strike straight away.

Q.—What is your idea about the provisions of the Bombay Trade Disputes Act recently passed?

A.—I cannot tell you because I have not studied the Act.

Q.—Do you like to prohibit the employers from employing fresh labour during the time of strikes by law?

A.—Yes, the workers should have the absolute right to strike.

Q.—Do you consider it as social justification?

A.—There is no question of social justification but that is my point of view.

Q.—I take that you are also against compulsory arbitration?

A.—Yes, we are against compulsory arbitration.

Q.—As regards the matters arising out of the day to day business, do you like that there should be a committee of the representatives of the union and these of the employers?

A.—Yes.

Q.—It has been seen that a smaller section of the workers want to strike and the strike is declared. Would you like that the strike should be declared if there is a majority of members willing to join the strike?

A.—Yes, 75 per cent.

Q.—Suppose you are the president of the union and you control the union and if the 15 per cent of the workers want to go on strike, what will you say?

A.—No, then there will be no strike. Only by the majority of 75 per cent there will be a strike. The majority must be an overwhelming one.

Q.—Suppose there is a majority of 51 per cent against 49 per cent?

A.—No, then there will be no strike. There must be an overwhelming majority of 75 per cent.

Q.—Will you tell us what is peaceful picketing?

A.—There should be no violence. The workers will be restricted by peaceful picketing.

Q.—In this respect you like to have amendment in the Factory Act?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Has there been any case of lead poisoning?

A.—Yes, in the Kharag Vilas Press, there have been cases of lead poisoning.

Q.—Has it been referred to the Factory Inspector?

A.—Yes, but no notice was taken by him. There is one most striking feature that has been introduced by the press owners. The workers are to give undertaking at the time of employment that they would not take part in strikes and if they would do so, they would be dismissed at one hour's notice.

Q.—Can you submit a copy of that?

A.—Yes, I would suggest that the Hindusthani translation of the Factories and other Acts should be distributed to the workers so that they may understand what is their right and what steps they should take in the case of accidents and in the matter of compensation.

Q.—Referring to the fixation of the minimum wage, what minimum would you like to fix?

A.—I would like to fix the minimum wage at Rs. 23.

Q.—As regards the wages and hours of work what do you say?

A.—The pay and prospects of the services of the presses should be exactly like the Government Printing Press at Gulzarbagh.

Q.—What do you say about the working by piece system?

A.—We emphatically say that the system should be entirely abolished. We want 36 hours work a week.

Q.—Have you got any precedent to say that the work should be 36 hours a week?

A.—Yes, in Russia there is work only for 7 hours a day.

Q.—Would you like to stop payment in kind altogether?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Referring to your demand no. 8, you have said that .....(reads), refreshments given to them in hotel or shops are not good?

A.—Yes.

The Committee resumed its sitting on the 24th April, 1939, at 10-20 A.M. in the Patna Secretariat.

Members present :—

- |                          |     |                   |
|--------------------------|-----|-------------------|
| (1) Dr. R. K. Mukherjee, | ... | <i>Presiding.</i> |
| (2) Mr. A. M. Hayman,    | ... | <i>Member.</i>    |
| (3) Mr. H. B. Chandra    | ... | <i>Member.</i>    |
| (4) Prof. R. K. Saran    | ... | <i>Secretary.</i> |

**Oral evidence of Babu Ram Nihora Singh, Visherad, Offg. General Secretary, Patna City Mazdoor Union, Patna.**

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Since how long is your union in existence? How many members are in your union?

*A.*—The union was started on the 28th February 1939. There are 1,000 ordinary members.

*Q.*—What is the subscription of the members?

*A.*—The subscription is one anna per month.

*Q.*—Is your union registered?

*A.*—No. But we are trying to get it registered.

*Q.*—You have said in your statement that in your union the clerks also are members?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—What are the hours of work?

*A.*—There are many labourers working on machines. There are no fixed hours of work. There are clerks, record-keepers, account keepers, and such others who have no fixed hours. They have got no holiday. Our main grievances are that we have not got sufficient leave and holidays. The hours of work is 8 hours on paper but a man never works less than 16 hours or even 22 hours in the course of 24 hours.

*Q.*—What are the factories from which you take members?

*A.*—Shree Bihariji Mills, Shree Madhoji Mills, Patna Iron Foundry, Sitaram Ramohani Mills, etc. In all there are the same complaints—long hours of work varying up to 22 hours and no leave or holiday.

*Q.*—What other grievances you have got?

*A.*—There is no security of service. Even on the *Dasahra*, *Dewali* and *Moharrum* we have got to work. We generally work up to 10 P.M. in the night.

Q.—On Sunday also there is work up to 10 P.M.

A.—Yes.

Q.—What is the arrangement of shifts?

A.—In shifts the work is up to 10, 11, 12 or 1 P.M. There is no interval for food. We come at 10 A.M. after taking food. There is no leave till night. Generally we go at 10 P.M. but there is no fixity.

Q.—What is the amount of load that women carry here?

A.—They carry more than one maund in the basket.

Q.—Can you say how much load they can carry?

A.—She can carry 1 maund if she is healthy. Otherwise  $\frac{1}{2}$  maund.

Q.—What maximum you like them to carry?

A.—Thirty seers or up to 1 maund. We would like from 30 seers to 1 maund.

Q.—If we regulate by some method the carrying of the head load, what is your opinion about that?

A.—Yes, it will be a good thing.

Q.—What is the minimum wage for men and women workers in your union?

A.—The minimum wage for women is annas 2 and annas 4 for men.

Q.—What do you want the minimum wage to be?

A.—I want that the minimum wage should be Rs. 15 per month irrespective of whether the worker is male or female.

Q.—Do you think that men and women workers do the same kind of work that you want the same minimum for both?

A.—Yes, the same work that is done by men can also be done by women. In European countries wages for both men and women are the same. In Russia there is no such distinction. We want that both should get the same minimum wage.

*Mr. Hayman.*—Do you think that in India the conditions are the same and do women of India work to the same capacity as men? Do you think that the comparison of India with European countries is right?

A.—Yes, many people are like that.

Q.—Do you know that in foreign countries in the factory work, 40 men of India are equal to 20 men of foreign countries? The capacity of work is in the ratio of 40: 20?

A.—Yes.



Q.—At present the Factories Act is applied to the factories which are employing at least 20 men and use power. Do you like that the factory which is employing less than that number and is not using power should also be included in the Act?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Does the Factory Inspector visit your factories?

A.—No, it is not that. We have written in the memorandum that the Factory Inspector does not take cognisance of the victimisation and other irregularity in account.

Q.—Is it a fact that those who take part in the labour union are put to trouble?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How did you come to know?

A.—Those who take part in the union are victimised and they come to my office and tell their woes. Some of them have been dismissed also. Those who are the members of the union are victimised.

Mr. Chandra.—When the union was formed there were some cases of victimisation and the employers declared a lock-out?

A.—Yes, then Pandit Vidyabhushan Shukla, the Labour Assistant to the Ministry went there and a conciliation board was formed to settle the matter.

Q.—There are men in the executive of your union who do not work in the factory and are outsiders?

A.—Yes, there are some.

Q.—Why did you make them members?

A.—As we are in service, we could not do the work and so we had to take the help of outsiders in order to place out troubles because they are competent men and take keen interest in the matter.

Q.—How many outsiders are there in the Executive Committee do they pay subscription?

A.—Yes, they pay subscription. There are about 900 members who are workers. We shall have a new election this year on the May day, i.e., 1st May 1939.

Q.—Are there any Congressmen who are outsiders?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How many are outsiders?

A.—There are twenty members in the Executive Committee of which ten are outsiders and they are Congressmen.

Q.—Who is the president of the union?

A.—Pandit Rambriksh Benipuri.

Q.—How have you mentioned that the Factories Act is violated? Can you give instances of that?

A.—The daily payments for over-time work are not mentioned in the register and are paid at the rate of ordinary wages.

Q.—Can you give the names of the factories where this happens.

A.—Yes, Shree Bihariji Mills, Madhav Mills, Shyam Lal Mills and Patna Iron Foundry. Sitaram Mill is an oil and pulse mill engaging about 35 workers but has not been registered under the Factories Act. There are smaller mills working without power, where there are 10 people. They are not under the Factories Act.

Q.—Do you like that the Factories Act should be extended to them?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is there any more factory where you like it to be extended?

A.—Yes, *Biri* factory, Castor seed factory, Oil, Pulse, etc.

Q.—In your memorandum you have mentioned that.....(*reads*). Is there any deduction from the wages?

A.—Yes, there was deduction for *Gaushala* fund, etc., before the formation of the union but since the formation of the union this is not being done.

Q.—You have said in your memorandum that sheds should be constructed for work. What kinds of work do you mean?

A.—There is no place for food, rest, etc. I want that sheds should be constructed for taking food and rest. There is no fixed place for this purpose at present.

Q.—You say that there have been many deductions in wages?

A.—I have given it in my statement. Wages have been reduced from Rs. 60 to Rs. 40. A man was working on Rs. 21 and then he suffered from T. B. He went to Itki for treatment. When he came back from there after recovery he was appointed on the same post on Rs. 15. There are many cases of reductions like this in the department.

Q.—Can you give names? Is there any general reduction?

A.—Yes. No general reduction but there have been some special cases. The names of employees whose pay has been reduced will be supplied by me later on.

Q.—Is there any graded scale or increment in wages?

A.—No, men are working since 5 or 10 years but are getting the same wage.

Q.—Is your union recognised by the employers?

A.—No.

Q.—Are the matters arising out of the workers' grievances discussed by the union?

A.—Yes.

Q.—All are monthly paid?

A.—No, some of them are daily paid. Rs. 12 in the minimum. We demand that Rs. 15 should be the minimum wage and there should be a general increase in the scale of wages.

Q.—Are there any holidays?

A.—No grade and no holiday.

Q.—What are the kinds of victimisation and ill-treatment?

A.—Abuses, threats, etc. Generally these are perpetrated on the office bearers of the union.

Q.—Do you get acknowledgement of the letters sent to the management?

A.—We have sent letters but have received no reply.

*Prof. Saran.*—You have said that there is no security of service for the monthly-rated and the daily-rated men?

A.—Yes, those who are getting Rs. 40 are turned out and in their place new men are taken in at Rs. 20.

Q.—Do you want that the daily-rated men should be made monthly-rated?

A.—Yes, because they get leave with pay on Sundays. The daily-rated men get payment only for 26 days in a month. They do not get wages for 30 days as the monthly-rated men do. Their earning also is less. We want leave like the monthly-rated people.

*Mr. Chandra.*—If you also get leave like the monthly-rated, e.g., on Sundays, will you like to be daily-rated?

A.—The monthly-rated are given one month's notice whereas daily-rated men are given only a week's notice.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Weights of the sacks also have increased?

A.—Yes, in all cases.

*Prof. Saran.*—There is one mill known as the Shyam Lal Mill which suggest that daily-rated may be made monthly-rated if they premise to do the same work which the monthly-rated men do.

A.—I do not know exactly.

Q.—They say that the dailies also get payment for 30 days?

A.—No.

The Committee resumed its sitting in the Secretariat, Patna, on the 2nd May, 1939, at 9-50 A.M.

Members present :—

(1) Mr. H. B. Chandra ... *Presiding.*

(2) Prof. R. K. Saran ... *Secretary.*

**Oral evidence of Mr. Narayanji, President, Digha Labour Union, Sadakat Ashram, P. O. Digha, Patna.**

*Mr. Chandra.*—How many members are there in your union?

*A.*—One hundred sixty-nine.

*Q.*—When was your union formed?

*A.*—About a month ago.

*Q.*—Have you framed any constitution of your union?

*A.*—Yes, but we have not got a copy of the same now. I will send you later on.

*Q.*—How many members are there in the Executive Committee?

*A.*—Eleven.

*Q.*—How many of them are workers and how many are outsiders?

*A.*—There are 10 workers and I am the only outsider. The Secretary, is the worker of the company. There is no Assistant Secretary.

*Q.*—What is the subscription of the union?

*A.*—One day's wages in the year.

*Q.*—That is the kind of your constitution?

*A.*—Our constitution is just like that of the union of the Textile and other industries of Ahmedabad.

*Q.*—Do the workers pay the subscription regularly?

*A.*—Yes, it is just started and we have realised the entry fees and the subscription is being paid.

*Q.*—Did you get any difficulty in organising the union?

*A.*—Yes, we had many difficulties in the beginning. The manager of the company put many obstacles in the way.

*Q.*—What they actually did? What was the nature of the disturbance?

A.—Persuaded the workers and threatened them not to be members of the union. Some of them were told "We do not want your service". The workers were victimised. We put the grievances before the present new manager.

Q.—What was the result of putting up of the grievances before the new manager?

A.—Manager called me and there was a conference between me and the manager.

Q.—In the matters of recruitment what is the nature of the complaint?

A.—In matter of recruitment there is good deal of bribery and corruption. The Head *mistry* who is in charge of recruitment will not recruit any man unless he takes Rs. 15 or Rs. 20 per man. So long as bribes are not paid, he refuses to take the workers on duty.

Q.—Has there been any difficulty in the matters of settlement?

A.—Yes, in 1936 there was a strike on account of the turning out of some of the workers.

Q.—.....(*Reads from the memorandum.*), you have said in your memorandum that whenever there is any grievance it is the practice that a notice is given to the management for settlement?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What is the result?

A.—It does not produce any effect.

Q.—You have said in your memorandum that.....(*Reads*)..... regarding the payment of compensation? What is your suggestion?

A.—Compensation is not paid generally when workers die on duty specially when the work is done under contractors. There are different departments of the factory. Workers have got to take loads from the stores to the ships and that is very difficult thing to do and as they have got to go up the incline some of them fall down and die. In this case no compensation is allowed.

Q.—In which company the conditions are better? Are the conditions better in both?

A.—No, the conditions are comparatively better in I. G. N. Co., than in the R. S. N. In the latter company one case of death occurred while the worker was on duty and compensation was not paid. An application was made to the District Magistrate and as a result of that some got the compensation though not adequate.

Q.—How the man died?

A.—He was carrying heavy load and he had to pass through a smaller and thin plank in order to load on the ship. The result was that he fell down and died.

Q.—He died in the course of employment?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How much he was paid?

A.—He was paid Rs. 82 as the result of the intervention of the District Magistrate.

Q.—How many years ago?

A.—About a year ago.

Q.—What ought to have been the compensation?

A.—Rs. 400 or Rs. 500. At that time there was no union to help them.

Q.—Can you say anything of the contract labour? Was that case under the contract labour or under the labour of the management?

A.—Yes, under the contractor's labour, perhaps. For the contractors labour they are not responsible for payment; the management say like that.

Q.—What do you think and what do you want to suggest about leave with pay?

A.—I want sick-leave with pay.

Q.—Regarding the system of payment I understand that there are two kinds of payment, the monthly-rated and the daily-rated? What do you like to say about the daily-rated workers?

A.—The daily-rated workers are at great disadvantage. We want that all the daily-rated workers should be converted into the monthly-rated workers.

Q.—Are there any temporary workers? What is the practice about temporary workers being made permanent?

A.—There is great difficulty in that. A worker has got to remain temporary for a considerably long period. We want that a worker should be made permanent after the completion of six months' duty.

Regarding leave and other privileges we want that the leave should be according to the Government service rules.

Q.—Is there any security of service?

A.—No.

Q.—Is it your suggestion that dismissal and suspension should be done after proper enquiry..... (Reads)?

A.—Yes, there are workers who are working since many years but after some time they are dismissed or dismissed for some time and then re-employed. All these workers should be made permanent.

Q.—Then you like that all the piece-workers should be transformed into monthly-worker?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What do you mean by that? Will you please explain that?

A.—By that I mean that those workers who are getting at present at the rate of 8 annas a day should get Rs. 15 a month on the monthly basis. At present they are not getting for Sundays. At the rate of 8 annas a day they get, in the month, only for 26 days but if they are paid on monthly basis they will get Rs. 15, that is 8 annas  $\times$  30 days. That is the difference between the two. The total earning will increase.

Q.—Do you like that Sunday should also be included?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Are you in favour of the fixation of the minimum wage?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Are you in favour of the rise in wages?

A.—Yes, there should be a general rise in wages. By making the wages of the workers on monthly basis from daily basis the earnings of the workers will increase.

Q.—What is the amount that you fix as the minimum wage?

A.—The payment should be made for 30 full days at the rate of Rs. 15 a month, or 8 annas a day. In the case of daily workers they get only for 24 days and so they lose for 6 days; but in the case of monthly that will not happen.

Q.—What are the hours of work?

A.—The hours of work are 8 hours but one never works up to that.

*Prof. Saran.*—Coming to the industrial disputes and the question of strikes, are you in favour of arbitration by Government?

A.—Yes, I am.

Q.—Do you like that the arbitration should be compulsory?

A.—Yes, the arbitration should be compulsory. I am in favour of compulsory conciliation when all attempts at conciliation have failed.

Q.—What will you do if either of the parties do not accept the award?

A.—I favour that the employers should be forced to close down their factories, if they refuse to accept the award. That should be done by means of legislation.

Q.—Do you like that the strike should be resorted to after giving the management proper notice of the strike?

A.—For proper reasons strike may be resorted to but after giving due notice to the management.

Q.—How will you compel the employers to close down the factory?

A.—By application of section 144 of the Indian Penal Code.

Q.—If the workers do not accept the award, then what will you do?

A.—They should be sent to jail.

Q.—If the management refuse to close down the factory, what will you do?

A.—Then the matter will be referred to the share-holders. They are ultimately responsible for the management of the factory.

Q.—But the closing down of the factory will affect the workers also. They will lose their jobs and they might reach the position of starvation level?

A.—But that risk will have to be taken.

Q.—You say that if the workers do not accept the award they should be sent to jail. Supposing there is a factory like the TISCO of Jamshedpur where there are 34,000 workers, will you send them all to jail? Is it possible for the democratic Government to do that?

A.—It is not necessary at the first instance to send people to jail. If the workers do not accept the award the company may be allowed to get fresh recruits and in this if the workers put obstacle, they may be sent to jail, but I am sure if things are managed and handled properly that contingency will not arise.

Q.—In the case of strikes do you like to give powers to the employer to engage fresh labour or what is called 'black legs'?

A.—No, I told you that there is difference of strength between the two. They should not be allowed to recruit fresh labour. They should be prohibited by law.

Q.—What amount of minimum wage do you like for the area of Digha?

A.—I want Rs. 12½ *with house free*.

Q.—What is the condition of housing in your company?

A.—It is very inadequate. There are 1,300 workers in the Company but there are no houses for any.

Q.—In dealing with this amount of minimum wage, what do you take to be the size of the family?

A.—I take into consideration of 5 persons, 2 adults and 1 invalid and 2 children; that is the minimum for eating of *Dal* and *Bhat*. I have calculated this to be the amount. I have taken Rs. 2-8-0 per head.



Q.—Do you want that the minimum should vary if there is change, rise or fall, in the cost of living? Do you like that it should be fixed according to the cost of living?

A.—Yes.

Q.—If the cost of living rises and the employers are not able to pay higher wages, what will be done?

A.—If they cannot pay they must close down. It is irrespective of the capacity of the industries to pay.

*Chairman.*—Thank you.

The Committee met in the Circuit House, Ranchi, on the 19th March 1939 at 9-25 A.M.

Members present :—

Dr. R. K. Mukherjee	...	...	<i>Presiding.</i>
Mr. A. M. Hayman	...	...	<i>Member.</i>
Prof. Abdul Bari	...	...	<i>Member.</i>
Prof. R. K. Saran	...	...	<i>Secretary.</i>

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**Oral evidence of Mr. S. K. Roy, S. P. G. Mission, Kanke, Ranchi.**

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*Dr. Mukherjee.*—You are not an employer of Labour, but you know generally about labour conditions in this district?

*A.*—Yes.

*Q.*—Are you familiar with the conditions in other parts of Chota Nagpur?

*A.*—I know the conditions of labour at Ranchi and near abouts. I do not know what you mean by other parts.

*Q.*—Well, there have been very few people whom we have met, who are familiar with the agricultural conditions and I think you are one of the very few witnesses we have examined. I would like to know from you the conditions of industrial labour as far as the plantations of this district are concerned and also something about agricultural labour. Now, what are the months when the people work in the fields?

*A.*—It begins from June as the rains start and goes on till the end of the year. They begin ploughing, and manuring and so on early in June and keep the field ready for the rains.

*Q.*—Is there any fluctuation in agricultural wages?

*A.*—I think it has remained more or less the same for the last 6 or 7 years.

*Q.*—What is the general system of payment?

*A.*—They are generally paid in kind.

*Q.*—How many *Pailas* are they paid?

*A.*—The *Dhangars* are paid, I think for the whole year, about one *kat* and a half besides daily food.

*Q.*—What would be the value of that  $1\frac{1}{2}$  *kats* of paddy?

*A.*—One *kat* would be something like 30 seers, but *kats* vary as the *pailas*. Sometimes the *Dhangars* are paid an annual sum of 18 *kats kutchra* or 15 *kats pucca* at the end of the seasonal contract.

Q.—That means when there is no work there is no food for them?

A.—I should say that the *Dhangars* get meals throughout the season even if there is no work in the field. Generally, it is more like a contract—though nothing is written—and it is binding on both the parties. It gets its sanction through custom.

Mr. Hayman.—The labourers get food throughout the year?

A.—No, only during the season.

Q.—Do they get daily food?

A.—Yes. Throughout the season and at the end of the season he gets his one *kat* and half of rice and he goes away, unless the arrangement is that he should be paid a lump sum at the end.

Q.—And if the labourer is paid in cash what would the amount be?

A.—I cannot say; I do not know of cash payment.

Q.—So far as our information goes it is  $2\frac{1}{2}$  annas and for sowing it is 2 annas. Is that the general rate?

A.—Well, I have heard about that. I do not know from personal experience. It is on the maximum side. What you have said is the maximum.

Q.—The minimum would be about how much?

A.—What you have said is the maximum. I should say that the minimum will vary between 6 pies to 2 annas.

Q.—What is the relation between agricultural employment and industrial employment?

A.—Well, I had occasion to make an investigation into this question in connection with migration. The general impression and consequently the charge was that migration was very excessive, but my investigation showed that migration was not so excessive as supposed. I have not here my report which has been published. I shall send one copy of that to the Committee. I have got statistical information to prove what I say. I find that migration of labour is generally found during the lean months of August and September. There is a depot—a *cooly* depot—at Argora and I strongly advise you to go there and see for yourselves the state of affairs with regard to migration of labour. It is just two miles from here.

Q.—Is it an emigration depot?

A.—Yes, you will see labourers going to Assam, and other tea gardens.

Q.—Your investigation showed that the volume of migration is not so big as it was thought to be?

A.—Big is a relative term. We thought it was very much bigger.

Q.—When is this emigration at the maximum?

A.—During the month of March and April. Some people do return in June.

Q.—Emigration would be on the increase during months when agricultural work is slack?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What are the months?

A.—January to April, I should say.

Q.—Will it not be the harvesting season?

*Prof. Bari.*—Here in Chota Nagpur they have only one crop?

Q.—The main questions that I would like to put to you are those concerning the relations between agricultural employment and the work in the tea and other plantations. Could you tell the Committee about that?

A.—Plantations are so few here that it is practically nil? I should say that working in the plantations is very small in proportion to the agricultural population. There is only one limited tea company that is now working in the whole of Chota Nagpur that I know of.

Q.—Have you noticed the fact that when work is slack in the field the labourers go to the plantations as casual labourers?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Now, have you any idea about the wages they are giving in these plantations? I want to know whether they synchronise with the agricultural wages, whether they are lower or higher?

A.—They are not higher; practically the same, I think.

Q.—Have you had any occasion to investigate into the indebtedness of the labouring classes?

A.—Yes, I am connected with the co-operative movement. I am a deputy-chairman of a co-operative bank and I am also connected with several co-operative societies here. I had a good deal to do with the indebtedness of the people.

Q.—What do you think of a programme of prohibition for this district? Do you think it will be successful?

A.—I certainly hope so. But there will be a lot of private home distillation which cannot be controlled. How far that will help the cause of prohibition I am very doubtful.

Q.—Have you got any lands here?

A.—Yes, I own a little village near Ranchi.

Q.—A landlord?

A.—Yes, just one little village. It is situated 16 miles from here. I find about 60 to 70 per cent of the labourers drink in the morning just before they go for work.

Q.—Drink in the morning?

A.—No, they drink in the evening and night but you can see them in the morning with the effect of drink all over them. You generally find them in the morning in a drunken condition.

Q.—What have you to say against home brewing?

A.—It is for the Hon'ble Minister in charge of Prohibition to decide about it. I would suggest that he must allow that for sometime and try to stop that gradually. It must not be allowed daily but during certain seasons only, because the village-folk cannot get on without it. Specially during marriage and other festivities among these labouring classes, it is indispensable.

Q.—With regard to prohibition, have you any constructive proposals to make?

A.—One is that if drink is taken away, it must be substituted by something else, say tea, which would be good. Physical recreation should be provided. I have been the head of a school for so many years and connected with a school and college activities that I can realise the importance of physical recreation for boys and men. I think the people here, if they are given sufficient encouragement and incentive will take up physical culture keenly.

Q.—Do you think that drink is to a large measure responsible for the terrible indebtedness of the people?

A.—I do. That is my point.

Q.—Where do they get money to drink from?

A.—They always pay for the drink in kind.

Q.—Is it converted into cash first and then the drink is bought or the grain or lac, or whatever it is, is directly given in payment for a measure of drink?

A.—The conversion is made in the liquor shop itself.

Q.—What is the system of payment in their case?

A.—Practically, three annas per man and 10 pice per woman, that is the standard rate in these parts, more or less.

Q.—Have you any idea of contractors' labour in these parts and what kind of wages are being paid? What form of contract labour have you come across?

A.—Building contract *mistries* and the like?

Q.—What about the stone-cutters?

A.—They receive generally piece payment.

Q.—Have you any idea of their daily earnings?

A.—I think they would be able to earn something like 6 annas a day.

Q.—But the whole family is employed; is it not?

A.—Yes, when I said that he earns 6 annas, I meant the actual cutter who shapes the stone.

Q.—The masons, what do they get?

A.—Seven annas to twelve annas; one or two head *mistries* may get more.

Q.—Are these rates that you are giving similar to those that are paid in the shellac industry and also in plantations?

A.—I think wages of unskilled labourers are about the same.

Q.—Now, with regard to social service, I would like to know how far your Mission has been able to do in that direction?

A.—We did some service at the Tatas and at Dhanbad. The best of intentions is often handicapped by bad finances. We were not able to concentrate on it very much as it was beyond our means. The provision of libraries, for example, which we tried carried away a large amount of money. The world depression has much to do with this: Our foreign subscription is not as much as it used to be.

Q.—What was the nature of your work at Tatanagar and at Dhanbad?

A.—We have men there and the Chaplains would be able to give you a better idea of the work than I can.

Q.—Have you had occasion to go about in villages and find the percentage of labourers returning back to their homes, either from Dhanbad or from Tatanagar? Can you tell us under what circumstances they return.

A.—Except the seasonal emigrants, invariably in a diseased condition. I have got definite evidence for that. There is a decline in their longevity from this district of those who work in mines and in other industrial centres. They work say from 5 to 10 years and come back in a miserable condition. Very few come back from Tatanagar as the conditions of living, etc., are much better than any other industrial centre.

Q.—Out of the people that come back how many recover and go back to their work centres?

A.—Few recover.

Q.—The majority of the people who return come back to work in the fields; is that not so?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you think that it is because they hope to get more by work in the fields that they come back?

A.—Of course. He saves something—very little—to begin work when the agricultural season commences.

Q.—How is it more profitable to him?

A.—In most cases the men will have their people and their lands here. It would certainly be more profitable to work themselves than employ *coolies* to cultivate their own lands. Very little money is sent from the industrial centres to the relations of the worker. In most cases he himself returns with something in his pocket.

Q.—Why do you assume that they bring money from their industrial places?

A.—I know from experience.

Q.—Do you think that industrial wages are high enough to save anything for the worker?

A.—Not very much.

*Prof Bari.*—Have you got a farm of your own? How many workers are there?

A.—My farm is about 10 to 12 acres. I have got another 45 acres which I am trying to bring into cultivation.

Q.—You are re-claiming the land for cultivation?

A.—The lands are my own but they are not in a proper condition for cultivation.

Q.—Are you employing any people; if so, how many?

A.—I have got about 5 or 6 men.

Q.—Do you pay them monthly?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How much?

A.—Six rupees a month.

Q.—For all the six men?

A.—Yes. One man looks after the farm who is always there. The rest are merely daily workers.

Q.—You said sometime back that when the workers work in the fields during agricultural seasons, they get daily food and at other times they do not?

A.—Yes, they get food throughout the cultivating season.

Q.—Do they get meals or rice or what?

A.—Rice.

Q.—Not paddy?

A.—No. They get rice here.

Q.—Throughout the season?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You are sure about it.

A.—Yes that is the custom here and in my case I am paying.

Q.—You are giving food and also the *kat* or rice in the end?

A.—Yes.

Mr. Hayman: What is the composition of the food please?  
(Laughter).

A.—I give 2 seers of rice per day.

Q.—For the 6 men together?

A.—No, for one man.

Q.—Is there any village you can name from which migration is largest to any one industrial centre?

A.—No.

Q.—You cannot say from what village people migrate to the Tatas or to Jharia.

A.—No.

Q.—With regard to plantations?

A.—I shall give you a list later on.

Prof. Saran.—Is it your experience that the *Santals* and the *Mundas* do not like factory work?

A.—They are less inclined to leave their homes. Their main job concerns their own lands and fields.

Q.—They do not like to work in the mines or in factories, that is they are more inclined to work on the land and therefore, work in nearby tea plantations. Am I correct?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is it a fact that it is due to the preachings and other activities of the missions? They were encouraged not to go?

A.—From the letter of the Lord Bishop it appears that they were disinclined to go to industrial centres, because of the inadequate arrangement of housing and bathing facilities.

Q.—If they are properly provided, do you think they will go?

A.—I cannot say. That is the one reason for their disinclination for factory work. Moreover, they are used to their land and surrounding



and like to work on the land than in a factory. Now that the economic pressure is greater I think they will also migrate to industrial centres.

Q.—The point I want to make is this: If they avoid the town, because of bad housing and inadequate facilities for bathing and other things which can be got rid of very easily, do you think that they could thereafter migrate to industrial places?

A.—I cannot say that that would help migration, but I know the economic pressure would.

Q.—You said you have been connected with the co-operative movement in Chota Nagpur? Do these people borrow money largely?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do they pay back regularly?

A.—Well, the economic depression is rather great and so the payments are not regular. Before that the men used to pay fairly regularly.

Q.—They mortgage the land to the Society to raise the loan?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What about the *Bhugut* lands? They cannot raise the loan through mortgage? Even if they organise themselves into a group?

A.—They cannot do it directly.

Q.—Leaving out the years of acute depression, do you think that co-operative movement here has been successful?

A.—Speaking generally, I know that it has been a success. The one or two banks with which I am connected are successful. The societies in other parts of Chota Nagpur are not successful, I am told. For some reason or other, some of the new organisations failed. I think that there was something wrong with the management and also because of the general depression.

Q.—Now, under the act a Munda cannot sell his land. No tribal man can. I want to know under what security do they raise the loan and whether it is repaid. You see, the land cannot be sold at all for Society to realize the money.

A.—That difficulty is got over by surrendering the land to the *zamindar* and the land is sold by the *zamindar*.

Q.—That is only for arrears of rent?

A.—No, that is the form in all cases of land liability. He cannot directly sell the land that is all.

Q.—Do you mean to say that the *zamindar* can sell a Munda's land?

A.—Yes. Had he been allowed to sell the land in the open market he would have got more. Now, under the circumstances, he gets much less value from the land by surrendering it to the landlord to be sold to another party.

*Mr. Hayman.*—You said with regard to the workers returning to industrial centres that they come their health completely shattered. Would you approve of the suggestion that they must be medically examined before they are allowed to go back to their villages?

*A.*—Yes, that is desirable.

*Q.*—The definite policy of your Mission in the past has been to discourage emigration or to go in for industrial occupations. Could you tell us whether you took any measures to stop them from going? Do you preach about it in villages?

*A.*—Yes, Sir. Perhaps you are not aware that the migration figures, some 25 years back, were something very appalling.

*Q.*—Do I understand you to say that your policy has entirely changed during the last few years?

*A.*—I do not think our Mission looks to industrial areas as suitable for the people of this place to go to. They are also faced with the economic depression and it is practically impossible to check emigration.

*Q.*—Will you please tell me the reason why the Mission discourages emigration to industrial centres?

*A.*—Both from the moral, spiritual and other points of view, it is not good.

*Q.*—Why have you then stopped your good work of improving the morale and culture of the people in industrial areas?

*A.*—Because of lack of funds. We used to get money from the West for our propaganda but that has also stopped due to the world depression. The Lutheran Mission used to have many men employed in this line, but now their number has down because of the depression. I do not know anything about other British Missions, whether they have been getting their contribution from England, but our Mission's contributions have been reduced and the Lutheran Mission has not received anything for the last three years from Germany. Where they used to have 36 men they have now got only 3 or 4.

*Q.*—Regarding the Co-operative Societies in this province, do you think that organisations have been successful in India and have you seen the report of the Co-operative Societies in 1929—32?

*A.*—No.

*Q.*—Do you provide the housing and social welfare scheme?

*A.*—Yes.

*Dr. Mukherjee.*—Do you think that the cause of the poverty of the agriculturist and industrialist is the over-population? Do you think it desirable to restrict population by the use of contraceptive methods? What does your church say on this point?

*A.*—I do not favour the restriction of population by these external methods.

*Chairman.*—Thank you very much.

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