

INDUSTRIAL LABOUR IN INDIA

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BY

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PREFACE

The author believes that no apology is needed for the publication of the following pages after the issue of the report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India. Although it is one of the best of the numerous reports that have been compiled so far by various Government Committees and Commissions, it was circumscribed by the terms of reference that were laid down for the guidance of the Labour Commission. Moreover, many parts of the report, from its very nature, are too detailed and technical for the ordinary reader. Further, it was unnecessary for the Commission to provide in the report much of the historical and theoretical background that is necessary to the average reader for a proper understanding of the industrial labour problems. Finally, the Commission itself stated that it was conscious that exigencies of time and space prevented it from making full use of all the material supplied to it and that, whatever the value of its report, the volumes of evidence which accompanied it provided a source which for a long time could supply a wealth of information, not available elsewhere, for the study of the problems of Indian industrial labour.

The books on Indian industrial labour written before the appointment of the Labour Commission have now lost much of their utility because the Commission's work has thrown much new light on the subject. Of the two books written on the subject after the issue of the Commission's report, one, although well-written, is too sketchy and meant to be more popular and readable than critical, and the other is too partisan and entirely unbalanced. The author of the present work believes that the best interests of the country cannot be served either by condemning all employers as profit-grabbers and exploiters of labour and proposing the nationalisation of Indian industries or by condemning labour as

ignorant, conservative and apathetic and doomed to inefficiency, low wages and a fixed low standard of living.

The aim of the following pages is to show that the main obstacle to the industrial and economic progress of India is the absence of an efficient, steady and contented labour force: that it can be largely overcome in a few years by the adoption of certain measures: that the true interests of the Indian community, the employers and the workers are common: that their strength and prosperity are interdependent: that the workers are rapidly becoming more and more conscious of their power and of new needs and desires: and that there is a growing appreciation in the country of the vital importance of these considerations. Although the author has endeavoured to make the fullest use of all the available written material, he has not relied entirely upon it. For several years he has had good opportunities of studying first hand labour conditions in a number of industries, and the following pages are as much the result of his personal observations as of his study of the observations of others as recorded by them. In this study he has received the generous help of many persons, too numerous to mention here, and he takes this opportunity of expressing his gratitude to them. He also acknowledges his indebtedness to the University of Bombay for the substantial financial help it has granted towards the publication of this work.

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