

LABOUR IN MADRAS

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LABOUR IN MADRAS

By B. P. WADIA

WITH A FOREWORD BY

COL. JOSIAH C. WEDGWOOD, M. P.,



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To

KALYANASUNDARAM MUDALIAR, Esq.

MADRAS.

My Dear Friend,

This is your book as much as mine. If the speeches delivered here achieved any good among our friends at Perambur it is due to your excellent translations of them. What could I have done in the Labour work in this city without you? You translated my speeches—not my words merely but their very spirit. We have rejoiced and suffered together with thousands. Your unobtrusive manner, your loyal support, your sagacious advice have been priceless. Let me request you to accept this small gift of dedication for your all too splendid services.

Ever yours,

B. P. WADIA

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FOREWORD

BY

JOSIAH C. WEDGWOOD, M. P.,

There is no one in India who knows so well as does Mr. B. P. Wadia the needs of Indian labour, the legislation that has been passed into law, the legislation that is now required to help and establish labour's rights. He was the first to organise and establish a durable Trades Union. He is the first victim of the present state of Indian law which allows trades union leaders to be sued for loss caused to employers by Trades Unions action, legitimate in other lands. He therefore is well fitted to write this book.

As my friend of many years standing and as an old Trades Union colleague at Labour party Conferences, I am delighted to write this Foreword, and to be witness to the selfless work done for years by a man unjustly maligned both by rivals and by enemies.

There are many who are now helping Indian Labour to its place in the sun, great orators such as Lajpat Rai, great thinkers such as Mahatma Gandhi, but none has so resolutely given all his strength to the one cause—the organisation and emancipation of Labour.

If everything should be subordinated to Trades Union work, I think Wadia is right in keeping clea

of political parties. In England we have Conservative Trades Unionists; here in India is a large body of "Untouchable" Trades Unionists, who resent bitterly their social subordination under caste rule. All Trades Unionists must be kept together if they are to defeat capital; Nationalists who resent English domination and untouchables who resent Brahmin domination, must be kept together. For such reasons, Labour was of no party in England before it became its own party. For exactly the same reasons, Labour here too must eschew party politics till it can speak for itself.

I do not believe that Labour has been or is being "used" by politicians as some suppose. The thinking men who lead must have politics of their own, but it would be wise to keep nationalism and anti-Brahminism in the background, when they are doing their work for labour. Do not introduce politics into the Union.

It is inevitable that in the beginning Trades Unions must be organised and conducted by educated men from outside the Trade. The training of a General Secretary from a working hand is a long business. Just as in England the trained Unionists of the National Union of Railwaymen started, organised and trained the Agricultural Labours Unions, so in India the lawyers must be expected to organise the workers. It is a libel to pretend that they profit from the work and I wish

more would act as unselfishly. But Wadia is not even a lawyer. About such a man there is no thought or hope or prospect of gain. He is typical of India's spirit of self-sacrifice.

As soon as possible, and in the interests of the Unions, men who have worked at the Trade should be trained to lead the Unions. They know the trade and difficulties of jargon as no lawyer can. But when the employers ask for only such Unions as are led by workers, they are now really asking for tame incompetent Unions, and they drag in the terms "lawyer and politics" to create prejudice. Soon men of the trade will be leaders; but then they must be whole-time officials paid by the Union, and not the masters' servants liable to victimisation and, worse still, to corruption by promotion.

But the Trades Unions must use politics, even while they avoid party politics. The Unions are so weak and helpless at present—so prescribed by law—that they have to turn to Government. While they are voteless they can only turn as suppliants. They can only show that the politicians who help them, they will help by their voices now, by their votes in future.

At once a law is wanted legalising Trades Unions as in England. Then Factory Acts are wanted :—Employers' Liability Acts ; Minimum Wage Laws. Even now by using their friends on

the Councils they can, by Question and Resolution, press forward these laws. Leaders who say that Non-Co-operation bars out the use of any present Councillor, do not understand the urgency of Labour's need, or its ability to force its claim, even without the vote. In this book Wadia has indicated the nature of the trouble and the way out. I beg Labour Leaders generally not to suspend the use of a weapon which may help to put matters right for India's starving poor.

PREFACE

History in the making, however romantic, does not strike its makers as either history or romance. Like the gentleman who spoke prose without knowing it, almost all makers of history are unaware of the fact that they are such worthies. In rare instances when Nature is moving forward, as is sometimes her wont, in leaps, events of yesterday stand glaringly revealed to-day already as facts of history.

One such instance is provided by the Labour Movement in Madras. When it was started in the early part of 1918, no one dreamed of the effect it would have on its environment generally; it was hoped that besides bettering the lot of the poor drudges and slaves of the economic system it might slowly tend to the creation of class consciousness among the Indian workers. In very unexpected ways, in quarters the least suspected, the labour work in Madras produced effects. Who could have anticipated the aid it rendered to the cause of Indian Home Rule in Great Britain, especially with the British Labour Party in the summer of 1919? Very few could have dreamed of the readiness and capacity of the Indian workers to unite and organise, to educate themselves in the matter of their own rights and prerogatives and to

agitate for gaining them. Who among us, who went to them, had any irkling of the culture inherent in the labourers, who had any idea of their political instinct and practical sagacity?

The Movement, I believe, has come to stay. It cannot be killed, nor can its swift growth be checked for any length of time. A tiny seed sown at Perambur has sprouted and the winds of the world and national circumstances have swept some of its early seeds to other places.

How well I remember the forenoon when two men, unknown to me, whom I had never seen before, came and told me something about the "suffering labourers". They referred to the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills, of which I had vaguely heard, but of which I knew less than little. They referred to "a few minutes for food," "swallowing a few morsels," "running lest they be shut out". It was at *New India* office, where I was then working under my beloved and respected Chief, Mrs. Besant. She was not in office that day, and I was loath to leave it in her absence even for a couple of hours. But my Theosophical spirit got the better of my political duties. I immediately ordered my car, took the two strangers, and went to Perambur and watched outside the Mills where I saw the poor labourers at their noon-day meal. It was quick work. They came, they gobbled, they returned.

That was how it began. On the following Saturday we had a meeting, followed by another, and yet another—but the story will be found in the book. I agreed to the publication of my speeches and the narrative of the struggle—a struggle which is not over, nor is it likely to be for some time yet. We have not included the history of the work and progress of the first Trade Union in India since my return from abroad in August 1920. The wonderful unity and solidarity displayed by the textile workers of this city, the resort to Passive Resistance, the unjust lock-out of 5500 men from the Buckingham Mills, the effort on the part of the employers to break the Madras Labour Union as it is constituted now, the lawsuit against myself and nine other leaders for malicious conspiracy and alienating the affection of the work people, the order of injunction stopping our mouths, and destroying our liberty of speech and action—all that is well known to the Indian public. The strike is still on; the lock-out is not over on the 88th day as I write; the whole story must be told elsewhere on some future occasion.

This volume gives the story of the early beginnings of the Labour Movement in India and some immediate resultant factors. In this preface, however, I should like to indulge in the expression of a few thoughts as to its future and as to the methods of advance.

The educated classes in India have so far failed to realise the great value of the Labour Movement as a factor in the general political advancement of the country. Without the masses there can be no true Democracy. For that reason, on the 1st June, 1918, addressing an open Letter to the Home Rulers, I said :

“We want to bring the masses into line with the educated classes. Much lecturing work has been done already and what seems now necessary is to combine them in all sorts of ways. Agricultural Societies, Trade and Labour Unions, Ryot Combines, Craft Guilds—these should be started. Let common interests in each taluq and village combine to remedy the evils from which they are suffering. The masses do possess political outlook ; they have lost the art of making themselves heard, and our task should be to persuade them into speech and action.” /

It is very necessary to recognize the Labour Movement as an integral part of the National Movement. The latter will not succeed in the right direction of democracy if Indian working classes are not enabled to organize their own forces and come into their own. Unless this is done for all classes of labourers—peasants, plantation coolies, factory “hands” and miners—even the Montagu Reforms will only succeed in transferring the power of bureaucracy from foreign to native

hands ; that is not Democracy.

There is an additional reason why in the coming months, the educated classes should interest themselves in Labour problems. Because of the agitation carried on and the work done during the last three years, here, in Great Britain and at Washington, labour legislation is bound to come before our legislatures. The law-suit instituted by Messrs. Binny & Co. against me and nine others, will also force the pace of legislation for recognition of Trade Unions. If the educated classes lose the opportunity of evincing a genuine interest on behalf of labour, it will confirm the doubt Indian labour now entertains about the *bona fides* of those classes and their demand for political emancipation. Labour problems must be regarded as part of the general National problems and the interests of labour must be safeguarded against the inroads by Capital, both Indian and foreign. If at the very outset this is not done, we shall open an era of class struggle between Labour and Capital; and who wants that in India ?

To this end certain principles have to be borne in mind. First, the Indian labourer's right to citizenship must be fully recognized. Legislation must cease to regard him as a "hand", in letter and spirit. Citizenship implies a condition of freedom and the labourers are not far removed from a state of slavery. Wage-slavery is only one remove from

chattel slavery and has inherent in it aspects which are worse than those of chattel slavery. Citizenship in a civilized state carries with it a decency of life, a contentment of heart, and a cultivation of intellect. These our labourers do not evince to-day in their wretched existences. Their scandalous wages, their semi-nakedness, their ghastly hovels, their awful surroundings are of a nature of which any State ought to be thoroughly ashamed.

In the coming legislation, therefore, the fact to be remembered is that labourers are the prime consideration. In creating machinery we must bear in mind that it is put together to relieve the tension of the labourer's life, and not to facilitate the hoarding of profits at the expense of human suffering. Let it not crush men, women and young persons in the name of growing industries of the country. The legislation must not be undertaken from the employer's point of view ; nor must we be swayed by the dubious talk of growing industries. What good is it to a State to gain wealth out of misery and lose the soul of happiness which a contented citizenship yields ? Are we going to be benefited by the lesson afforded by the utter failure of the economic and industrial system of the age which is now fast closing ? Let me repeat, therefore, to our educated legislators: Do not mistake men for machines and remember you are legislating for human beings.

Next in the solution of general problems—and they are many and varied—it is absolutely necessary to recognise the fact that the old system has broken down. In most advanced countries it is evident that the solution of labour problems by old and time-worn methods is unfruitful. It is no more a question of increase of wages and decrease of hours ; it is no more a question of the utility of the weapon of strikes and lock-outs. It is a new orientation — the abolition of every vestige of slavery, of any kind whatever, from the body politic of the system as a whole, which tarnishes the life of labour ; the introduction of proper and adequate safe-guards for the control of production and of produce, economically and organically ; the full but also the only legitimate recognition of Capital by a deprivation of its power to exploit Labour and to accumulate profits ; the full measure of the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship to be secured for labouring classes as for others ; the recognition of the factor of growing importance in reference to the internationalism of Labour.

These are some of the points to be studied by our publicists. Let us not deceive ourselves with exploded theories of profit-sharing and the like ; let our legislators endeavour to lose their Indian provincialism and look abroad at what is happening—in Italy with the metal-workers, in Great

Britain with the builders in their new guild, in Georgia with its new socialist state, in Russia as described by Mr. H. N. Brailsford. In the midst of crashing systems is slowly but surely emerging a new order of things economic, in which Labour will wield a new power, and its method of collective bargaining will not be by the old use of the strike-weapon. Hear the Labourer chant his *mantram* the world over: he sings it as his ploughshare turns the soil, he sings it as the clatter of machinery makes him deaf, he sings it in the dark dungeon of the mine, he sings it as he earns his starvation wages, he sings it at home and abroad:—

We are the hewers and delvers who toil for another's gain,—
The common clods and the rabble, stunted of brow and brain.
What do we want, the gleaners, of the harvest we have reaped?
What do we want, the neuters, of the honey we have heaped?
We want the drones to be driven away from our golden hoard;
We want to share in the harvest; we want to sit at the board;
We want what sword or suffrage has never yet won for man,—
The fruits of his toil God promised when the curse of toil began.

B. P. W.

APPENDIX I

A propaganda note issued to the Labour Party Conference at Southport in June 1919, by Mr. B. P. Wadia, under the heading "Labour in India."

Textile factories employ workers for twelve hours a day.

Children between the age of 9 and 14 are employed for work for six hours a day.

Housing arrangements are non-existent and even discussions on the problem are meagre and academical.

Many workers live in villages several miles away from the factories employing them, and, therefore, they have to leave home at 4 A. M. and walk to the Mills so as to be at the gate by 5-45 A. M. They leave the Mills at 6 P. M. and reach home merely in time to eat their food and go to bed.

Thus labourers have neither leisure for recreation nor time for sufficient rest.

The twelve-hours working day has one break of 30 minutes. Observations have shown that on account of faulty exit and entrance arrangements a labourer does not get more than 12 to 13 minutes for his food—the rest of the time is spent in getting out and in again into the factories.

Young persons are employed on the shift system—each shift of six hours. The first one from 6 A. M. to 12 noon, and the second from 12 noon to 6 P. M. Like their elders they walk to the factories from adjoining villages and so their working day is of eight hours, which leaves them no time for education.

The sanitary conditions in many factories are primitive and objectionable.

Medical aid even in case of accidents is often not available.

Wages are scandalously low. In Madras an examination has shown that the average pay is 20 to 22/6 per month for a textile factory worker.

Even then the wages due at the end of each month are not paid till the 15th of the following month, and sometimes later.

After years of silent suffering the Indian labourers have begun to organize their forces.

In the City of Madras we have formed separate Unions for the Textile Factory Workers, the Tramwaymen, the Rickshaw Drivers, the Printers and Railway Workshopmen. This work was begun in April, 1918, and already we have about 17,000 members in Madras alone. Labourers in other towns have appealed for help in organizing them similarly.

We appeal for your moral and material support. When you ask for higher wages and better conditions you are met by the cry that the Indian Mill competes against you. When the Indian worker asks for better things he is told that you compete against him. Both you and he suffer because we are divided. The cause of labour is one. Give us your help!

B. P. WADIA,

President

Madras Labour Union, and representing
Madras Tramwaymen's Union,
Madras Rickshawallas' Union,
Madras Printers' Union and
Madras Railway Workshop Union
and

Fraternal Delegates from the Organized Workers of India to the Labour Party and the Trade Union Congress. - 1 0

APPENDIX II.

A memorandum on "Labour Problems in India" issued to the Trades Union Congress held at Glasgow in September 1919, by Mr. B. P. Wadia.

Labour conditions in India are exceptional, for in that vast country labour is not organised; it is exploited by the capitalistic class; its interests are not watched by the Government; the working hours are extremely long; the wages are miserably low; the housing problem is in the stage of mere academic and theoretic discussion. The only place where recently an effort has been made to organise labour is the city of Madras, where five Unions have been formed—the Madras Labour Union, Madras Tramwaymen's Union, Madras Rickshawallas' Union, Madras Printers' Union and Madras Railway Workshop Union. I am the President of the first of these and am in Great Britain as a representative of all of them (Sub-Appendix A.) I come here as a fraternal delegate to the Labour Party and the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress (Sub-Appendix B.)

Though labour conditions in India are exceptional they do not warrant Indian labour representation being shut out at the International Labour Conference which is to meet at Washington in the course of a few weeks. The tendency of the official policy is to regard Indian labour as subservient to the industrial development of India. Such an attitude may obscure the fact that Indian labour will be allowed to be exploited as hitherto. Capi-

talistic exploitation, in the name of growing Indian Industries, has already taken place, and that ought not to be permitted any longer. The welfare of the Indian labourer should not be sacrificed for the sake of "growing industries"; the betterment of his lot should not be relegated to a second place, and a primary position given to the improvement and growth of young or new industries.

HOURS.

The last inquiry into factory conditions in India was conducted in 1908, as a result of which the Factories Act was amended in 1911. That Act is now in force. *The Report of the Indian Factory Labour Commission* admits that "in textile factories excessive hours are frequently worked in cotton mills; in all jute mills weavers are employed for excessive hours," and it makes mention of seventeen and eighteen hours a day in ginning factories (P. 82); twenty to twenty-two hours in rice and flour mills (P. 82), the textile factories of Bombay working "for fourteen hours or more" (P. 82), those in Ahmedabad and Broach working in summer for fourteen hours and more (P. 80), mills in Agra working fifteen and a quarter hours per day in summer, and thirteen and three-quarter hours in winter (P.82), factories in Delhi working "fourteen, and even fourteen and a half hours" (P.82). What was the out-come of the Report? The Act was amended, and now "no person shall be employed, in any textile factory for more than twelve hours in any one day" (*Indian Factories Act*, Chap. V., para. 28). A textile factory can employ a labourer for twelve hours per day for six days of the week, i. e., seventy-two hours per week. What is the recess in this twelve hours working-day? The Act provides that half-an-hour's

recess should be given to the worker (Chap. IV., para 21). This thirty minutes period is divided between three functions—going out of the mills, taking a meal and returning to the mills. Careful observations carried on in Madras where arrangements are better than in other Mills (I am referring to the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills.) showed that a man does not get more than twelve to thirteen minutes for his actual meal.

The twelve hours day with its ridiculous thirty minutes recess has another side. The workmen in almost all cases live miles away from factories, and as was rightly pointed out by an I. C. S. officer recently, "from the standpoint of the worker, the time in going to and returning from the factory must be added to the length of his active day." In Bombay, where tram and train services are available, one hour at the least must be added, and I know instances, in Madras, where the distance has to be walked, that labourers have to leave home at 4-30 A. M. to be at the factory gate at 5-45, and do not reach home till 8 p. m.

The result of this excessive long hours system is far reaching. It tells on the efficiency of the work; it produces the phenomenon peculiar to Indian factory labour—*viz.*, loitering; it leads to premature exhaustion; it drives the Indian labourer away from the factory, as "the operative becomes unable to stand the strain of work under present conditions at a comparatively early age." (*Indian Factory Labour Commission Report*, p. 27) Dr. T. M. Nair, in his Minute of Dissent to the Commission Report characterises the system thus: "A system more likely to bring about degradation of labour is impossible to conceive."

WAGES.

I am in a position to give some detailed figures of payment received by workmen in textile factories, which go to prove the miserably low wages prevalent in India. It may be contended that living in India is cheap; but when the rise in the prices of foodstuffs and clothing material is taken into account (for this see *Rise in Prices*, a Government publication, the result of a careful study by K. B. Dutt, I. C. S.), when a personal inquiry into the lives of the workmen is made, and when we see the hovels they live in, the food they eat, the clothes they wear, and remember that they are *always in debt*, which is ever-increasing, we cannot but come to the inevitable conclusion that the scale of wages is scandalously low and is absolutely inadequate to meet the demands of sheer existence at the present time. It is said that the standard of living of the Indian workman is low. It is necessary to remember in this connection that the wage allowed him leads to malnutrition and that the latter has to be remedied before a better standard of living, housing, clothing, &c., can be thought of. The Indian labourer may be addicted to living cheaply; but the most frugal temperament would not choose malnutrition and all its consequences, for the sake of cheap living; and further, what about the debt the labourer is constantly incurring? Low wages compel him to borrow at high rates of interest, and with the help of his miserable earnings plus his borrowed money he manages to exist. Life in dingy hovel on scanty food shows the courage and patience of the Indian labourer. Malnutrition is provable, and all that need to do is to copy the following table, which shows

STATEMENT SHOWING THE AVERAGE WEIGHTS OF PRISONERS AND OF MILL OPERATIVES.*

Province.	Number of prisoners weighed	Average weight in lbs.	Number of operatives, other than weavers weighed	Average weight in lbs.	Number of weavers weighed	Average weight in lbs.	REMARKS.
Bombay... ..	2,666	119-19	785	109-098	288	104-810	Average weight of prisoners in the United Provinces, 115'8 lbs.
Central Provinces	1,746	110-45	100	100-92	52	107	
Bengal... ..	6,884	106-187	140	107-989	82	106-25	
Eastern Bengal and Assam ...	8,046	110-846	20	108	Average weight of prisoners in the Rajahmundry Central Jail Madras, generally, 114'88 lbs.
Burma	6,840	120-51	42	117-142	
Madras.	7,818	114-88	104	108-684	20	98	
United Provinces of Agra and Oudh.	9,880	115-03	117	107-016	200	110-705	
Punjab	5,998	120-42	115	118-808	

* *Indian Factory Labour Commission Report, APPENDIX C.*

that prisoners in Indian jails are better nourished than the Indian operatives. This explains the remark of the manager of a big Nagpur factory that "those accustomed to mill life regard it as worse than jail life." (*Indian Factory Labour Commission Report, p. 90.*)

NOTE.—In Bengal probably the most accurate comparison is with prisoners in the United Provinces; in Burma with prisoners in Madras generally, and more particularly with prisoners in the Rajshundry Central Jail, which is situate in the tract from which the majority of the Madras labourers in Burma are recruited.

The problem of wages was not examined by the Factory Commission of 1908. The Member of the Indian Civil Service quoted above says, "Labour may be cheap, but life is not," and it is not difficult to prove that India suffers, in more ways than one, on account of the scandalous wages paid to the labourer; this happens when all the time the capitalists are hoarding wealth—mill agents getting their handsome commissions, and shareholders their big dividends.

To substantiate these general remarks I give below a few typical figures which can tell their tale more eloquently than my words. Take these earnings of workers in the Cotton Mills of Bombay, of the Jute Mills of Bengal, of the Leather Works of Cawnpore, etc., and compare them with wages of Lancashire and Dundee and other factories in the United Kingdom generally.

Specimen Wages in the Cotton Mills of Bombay:—

	£.	s.	d.		
Drawer (card room)	...	1	11	2	} per month.
Reeler	...	1	3	0	
Warper	...	2	14	0	
Rover	...	1	12	1	
Doffer (card room)	...	0	16	10	
Weaver	...	3	2	7	

Wages are paid monthly, with two to three weeks in arrears.

These sample rates were prevalent in Bombay in 1918, and include War Bonus. Again, these rates are in Bombay, and wages are higher there than in other

places. Against this let me give a few items from the Bombay Exchange List for June, 1919.

	Dividend.		Share Value.	
			Original.	Present.
Ahmedabad advance ...	40	per cent.	500	1,410
Kasturehand ...	40	"	500	1,000
Mathradas ...	40	"	500	1,100
Crescent ...	50	"	100	251
Madhowji ...	50	"	500	2,317
Fazalbhaj ...	56	"	250	840
Bombay Dyeing ...	70	"	250	1,520
Central India ...	80	"	500	2,610
Sholapur ...	100	"	1,000	9,500
Khatou ...	120	"	1,000	3,700

The dividends do not indicate total nett profits; large reserves are carried forward.

Specimen Wages in Jute Mills:—

	£	s	d.	
Carders ...	0	12	0	} per month.
Bovers ...	0	16	0	
Spinners ...	0	19	8	
Shifters ...	0	14	8	
Winders ...	1	4	0	
Beamers ...	1	9	4	
Weavers ...	1	16	0	
Maistries ...	2	0	0	
Coelies ...	0	17	4	}

Wages are paid weekly, with one week in arrears.

In 1916-17 there were seventy-one mills running with 39,404 looms, employing 260,199 persons, with a paid-up capital, including debentures, but excluding reserves amounting to two and a quarter million pounds sterling. The annual turnout is 1,000,000 tons of raw material.

The annual average value of the jute trade to Bengal has been computed at £. 42,000,000 at pre-war rate of exchange. In this connection the following,

taken from the *Financier* of August 7, 1918, will be found instructive: "Many commodities are scarce now-a-days through the want of tonnage to bring them from foreign countries. A further contributive cause is the dearth of bags, in which grain, sugar, etc., are shipped; the price of jute sacks has accordingly risen to unknown heights. Hence the prosperity of the Indian jute companies, three of which, the Victoria, Titaghur, and Samnugger, have doubled their dividend to 20 per cent. for the past year, against 10 per cent. for 1916. The shares are tightly held in Dundee.

Specimen Wages in the Tanneries and Leather Works of Cawnpore:—

		£.	s.	d.	
Un-hairers and fleshers	...	0	16	0	} per month.
Scourers and setters	...	0	16	0	
Slicker whiteners	...	1	1	4	
Machine operators	...	1	8	8	

Specimen Wages to Workman in Coal Mines:—

The average daily wage per head is $7\frac{1}{2}$ d.

The annual raisings per head of labour employed below ground for all India 169-4 tons.

In reference to wages must be mentioned some ways devised to throw dust in the eyes of the unwary. Some manufacturers have started what they call a gratuity fund. Mr. M.C. Sitaraman, a retired weaving master of the Carnatic Mills of Madras, where this "Gratuity Fund" is worked, has well described its mode:

The Gratuity Fund for women is a very ingenious device for securing constant and steady labour. It has its merits as well as its faults. A labourer after ten years of satisfactory and continuous service gets between 5 per cent. and 10 per cent. of his total wages. On the other hand, it turns a workman into an avaricious and spiritless slave of the system. Desirous of securing the gratuity fund, a workman gradually loses his self-respect,

puts up with treatments which under ordinary circumstances he would have revolted from, and invariably becomes a mere beast to dance to the tunes and insolent whims of his arbitrary superior in the department. It emasculates the workman and emboldens the foreman to stretch the exercise of his arbitrary power to the vanishing limit. Here I may mention a case that I know which has a touch of tragedy in its committal. A workman stole a lea (120 yds.) of red yarn to make a waist thread. He was found out at the gate, brought to the manager, who, after referring to the register, dismissed him without the least concern on his part. Usually stealing of a trivial nature is punished by the same manager by a fine of a rupee or two. This particular workman had faithfully served nine years and eight months and he was to get as his gratuity a lump sum of Rs. 150 (£ 10) in another four months. The man, brokenhearted, went home as if to his own funeral. I wish that workmen who have put in more than five years of service be treated more generously than in the above case by the mill authorities.

CAPACITY.

The inefficiency of the Indian workman is often adduced as the cause of low wages. The factory system in India is already fifty years old, and it is inconceivable that the Indian workman has made no progress. "India is the Mother Country of the textile industry and up to the time of Arkwright possessed the monopoly of fine yarns"; outside experts like Mr. James Platt and Mr. Henry Lee are of opinion that "in no country on earth, except in Lancashire, do the operatives possess such a natural leaning to the textile industry as in India"; Dr. G. Von Schultze-Gavernitz, a German expert, said in 1895 that the Indian labourer "does not stand far behind the German"—that was twenty-five years ago. Dr. Nair in his Minute of Dissent to the *Report of the Indian Factory Labour Commission* says:—

And at the present time, according to the very careful calculations made by Mr. Simpson, of Messrs. Binny and Co., of Madras, a cotton mill in Madras with 35,000 ring spindles, 800 looms, average count 16s., working 67½ hours a week, would employ 2,622 operatives all told. Whereas for a similar mill in Lancashire, working 54½ hours a week, the total number of hands required would be 982, which works out a proportion of 2.62 Indian hands to 1 English hand. And if we also consider that the average monthly wage of a Lancashire operative will be about Rs. 60 (£4), and the average monthly wage of a Madras operative is Rs. 15 (£1), it is clear that *for the same money the Indian millowner gets nearly double the work that an English millowner does.* . . . Before condemning the Indian operative as inefficient and incapable of improvement he ought to be given a fair hearing. In a memorial submitted to His Excellency the Marquis of Lansdowne, Viceroy and Governor-General of India in 1883, by the mill operatives of Bombay, it was stated that "it has been said to the detriment of your petitioner that an Indian mill operative is not as hard-working as his brother workman in England, and that a mill operative in England does the work of three men employed on the same work in an Indian Mill. The real cause of this, your Lordship's petitioners submit, is the bad machinery and the bad raw materials used in the mills. The breakage in the thread is so continuous here on account of the bad quality of the cotton that mill owners are compelled to employ more men. As the effect of the long hours has to be considered before judging of the idle habits of the Indian operatives, so the quality of the raw material they have to handle has to be taken into consideration before the extent of their skilfulness or otherwise is determined.

It is also very necessary to point out that the so-called inefficiency of the Indian workman is rooted in a diseased body, and on "the incessant strain on his nerves amidst the din and noise of machinery in the stuffy atmosphere of the factory." Major F. Norman White, M.D., I. M. S., Sanitary Commissioner with the Government of India, writes: "A large part of the relative ineffi-

ciency of the Indian labour is due to removable pathological causes. “(*Indian Industrial Commission Report, Appendices to the Report, Appendix L. p. 164*). He makes a pertinent remark and I quote it here with a request that it may be considered in the light of all its implications: “Had the large employer of labour a plentiful supply of really healthy material to start with, he would still be under an obligation to secure for his operatives an environment above reproach; how much greater is the present need for hygienic environment, when in most cases cure has to precede the conservation of health?” (*Ibid. P. 160*). One more quotation from this expert is necessary as it is an important deduction relating to the subject in hand: “All are agreed that the organised labour of India [he means factory labour, not labour organised in trade unions or labour centres] is relatively inefficient, and that the wage earning capacity is low. It is difficult to assess the importance of disease as a contributory cause of this state of affairs.” (*Ibid. P. 160*).

HEALTH AND SANITATION.

Progressive sanitation is not a feature of the official programme. The *Indian Labour Factory Commission Report* records how “one witness of long practical experience stated that any man would feel exhausted even if he merely sat in a chair in some of the work-rooms for eight or nine hours, the atmosphere was so foul.” Sir Bhalchandra Krishna, an eminent physician and publicist of Bombay, said to the Commission that there was physical deterioration among the millhands, and was careful enough to point out that it is due to bad

ventilation in the mills" (p. 18). Doctor Chavan, a medical man of Ratnagiri, the district from which a large number of mill operatives come to Bombay, and one who has a large practice among them, is of opinion that "the mill operatives suffer to a very large extent from phthisis and dyspepsia" (p. 87). The hovels in which they are compelled to live, the malnutrition which follows on low earnings, the premature exhaustion caused by long hours necessitate extraordinary sanitary facilities; but the Government of India are very backward in the matter of sanitation, and the necessity of special factory sanitation has not yet occurred to them. The recently published *Indian Industrial Commission Report* includes among its contents a paper on "Industrial Development and Public Health" by the Sanitary Commissioner with the Government of India, in which the expert says that "the subject of industrial hygiene has received remarkably little attention in India, until quite recent times and to-day its importance is not fully recognised in any part of the country". (Appendix I., p. 159).

EDUCATION.

Much has been said of the illiteracy of the Indian labourer. It is true that the average Indian labourer is not able to read or write. He and his educated countrymen have for many years demanded that primary education should be made free and compulsory, but the Government of India have failed to respond to that demand. In fact one of the strongest arguments for the universal demand in India for Home Rule is the extremely backward educational policy of the present inefficient administration. However, it must be noted that

the masses in India—and among them are the factory labourers—have a culture of their own. Their power of understanding political and economic issues and suggesting proper remedies in a practical manner is well known to those who have worked for and with them. Their political instincts are clear and strong. Their ability to organise themselves was recently manifested in the formation of the trade unions in Madras referred to above; and it will be an agreeable surprise to lovers of labour in Great Britain to note that a few months ago in Bombay a general strike of textile workers was declared and maintained for several days without any trade union organisation in existence there. That strike involved some 70,000 labourers. This instance is given to show that Indian labourers do possess the capacity to combine and organise effectively.

Lack of education, however, prevails. A few employers have opened schools for the children of their employees. Much is made by clever capitalists of such institutions, and instances are not wanting where the Government have given prominence to such ventures. But attention must be drawn to the important fact that it is one of the devices to enslave labour. To quote a retired weaving-master, Mr. M. C. Sitaraman, of the Carnatic Mills at Madras: "The school, general and technical in character, is the best part of the whole affair—the best part of the institute from the manufacturers point of view. This pays him in rupees, annas, pies. This school trains up boys to become intelligent and skilled labourers and cooly clerks. This serves as a strong link of connection as well between the employers and the employees even under strained relationship." Even the

Indian Industrial Commission Report, published a few months ago, disposes of the whole problem in two short paragraphs under the heading "Education of Factory Children." What hope is there, then for the future?

HOUSING.

As in the matter of education the problem of housing has not attracted very serious attention from the Government. Some manufacturers have started schools for the children of their employees, so others have put up chawls and houses for them. They have done this to secure some permanence in the fluctuating Indian labour, and as the *Indian Industrial Commission Report* says, "in such cases employers have often found it impossible to obtain labour without providing accommodation;" and again, "the more enlightened factory owner has found it advisable to provide accommodation on an increasing scale recognising that, though the rent which he can obtain will not pay him more than a trifling percentage on his outlay, the mill which houses its labourers best will command the pick of the labour market, especially in the case of such a fluid labour force as that on which the textile factories rely" (p. 181).

The actual conditions under which the labourers live are indescribable. In the City of Bombay—*Urbs Prima in Indis*—744,000 working men are tenanted in one-roomed houses; the room is generally 8 feet by 10 feet, and a death rate of 60 per 1,000 is known to prevail.

THE MORAL ISSUE.

In dealing with the problems of education, housing, gratuity fund, etc., I may have appeared to be unappreciative of the manufacturers who have tried to run schools

or build houses or start gratuity funds. The factor to be borne in mind in this connection is the innate culture of the Indian labourer, which loathes the idea of slavery in any shape or form. The Indian labourers want to have schools for their children, houses for themselves, better wages and shorter hours—all as a matter of right and justice. The efforts on the part of the employers to patronize the labourers are seen as fetters of slavery, albeit golden fetters instead of iron ones. I have not referred to the iron fetters of personal abuse, kicking and other brutal practices that still prevail on plantations and in factories. The Madras Labour Union is trying to put a stop to them by legal means. The new spirit is in evidence among Indian labourers who will not tolerate such brutalities any more; but it is well to recognise that even the above-named golden fetters are resented and the Indian labourer feels that he is not only a "hand," but also that he has a head and a heart, and aspires to come into his own.

NON-FACTORY LABOUR.

While there is a semblance of factory legislation—*nam ke vaste*, for the sake of the name, as we say in India—labour outside the factory has not even that much of protection. Agricultural labour, on plantations and other places, has its own untold woes. The conditions in the mine settlements—*e. g.*, Kolar goldfield—are not easily describable. Let me speak of the large body of clerks in shops—especially shops in the wholesale Indian markets. There is no Shops Closing Act to limit the duration of their working day; there is no shop-Inspector; the twelve-hour day of the factory labourer does not apply to the shop-worker; they are

“free to work” as long as they please, or, rather, as long as their benevolent masters like; they have no Sunday as a weekly holiday. Besides the occasional festivals—a few days in the year—only once a month on each new moon day, the bazaars are closed. The Indian bazaar does not recognise the value or necessity of a weekly day of rest. The bazaar opens early in the morning and does not close till very late at night. The European shops and Indian shops managed on European lines have fixed hours of work and Sunday as holiday, but Indian markets, with their thousands upon thousands of employees, have excessive hours without the weekly rest on Sundays. The wages of these shop employees are scandalously low and their prospects poor. The average man begins at £1 per month, and unless he proves to be exceptionally able he has no hopes of rising above £4 per month, or so, at the end of his career. He only lives on in the hope of a partnership or of setting up an independent business some day.

Lest it be understood that the capitalistic public is the only culprit in this matter, let it be made clear that Government sets them a good example. The Government is as much an exploiter of non-factory labour as any merchant-prince or capitalistic concern. Take Post Office wages and see the rise the Government has worked in that department in the course of nearly half a century :

1875—Wages ran between 5s. 6d. to 9s. 6d. per month.

1915—Wages ran between 8s. 6d. to 10s. 3d. per month.

I have purposely taken the Postal Department because

of an incident to which I wish to draw the very pertinent attention of the Labourites and Trade Unionists everywhere. Here it is:—

There was recently a postal strike in Calcutta, and the grievances of the postmen, as is generally the case with labour troubles, related to the question of improvement in their pay. The matter, however, went to the Police-Court, and six of the "ringleaders" in the strike were sentenced to three weeks rigorous imprisonment each, and eight others to a fine of Rs. 20 each, or in default, to ten days' rigorous imprisonment. Dealing with this particular matter a "Disgusted Briton" writes to the *Statesman* of Calcutta.

All of these men were striking as a method of protest against that "graded salary of Rs. 15 rising to Rs. 25" (£1 to £1.1, 13s. 4d. per month), which they hold to be insufficient to maintain themselves and their families, and which is below the rates paid to men in similar positions in Bombay. If the law obtaining in India permits the infliction of sentences of imprisonment for such so-called "offences" as these, surely it is about time the law was altered. If the sentences were permissible under the Defence of India Act [equivalent to D.O.R.A.], they would seem a gross misuse of power. It is easy, on Rs. 1000 (£66 13s. 4d.) a month or over, to damn these poor men for causing us inconvenience; it is shameful to misuse our powers to imprison them. The rise in the cost of living in Calcutta is known to all and when these men follow the countless precedents of the United Kingdom to endeavour to better their condition we give them an answer that not only smacks of disgruntled despotism, but damns British justice, whatever the law may be.

CONCLUSION.

The Government of India is an autocracy. The Indian Reforms under discussion in Parliament plainly indicate that the present machinery of autocracy will be maintained. The ears of autocracy are always deaf to

the groans of the sufferer. The voice of the poor factory labourer will not even reach those ears, for it will be drowned amid the droning of the machinery of the rich capitalist, and the latter is the friend of the Government. There is a serious attempt to establish a living brotherhood of the labourers of the world, and the Indian labourers fondly look to organised labour in the United Kingdom to champion their cause. As their spokesman, on their behalf, I am putting forward this condensed statement. I appeal to those who hold the cause of Labour and Trade Unionism sacred, to stretch their hands of fellowship to their comrades in India. Remember the Cause of Labour is one.

SUB-APPENDIX A.

To B. P. Wadia, Esq., President, the Madras Labour Union.

Beloved Sir,—

We, the members of the Madras Labour Union, beg to express our gratitude to you for having consented to proceed to England to place our grievances before the British Nation.

We request you to represent us before the Labour Party Conference, the Trade Union Congress, the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress, and the Secretary to the Labour Party; and enlist their sympathies to our cause.

You are thoroughly acquainted with our various grievances, and we have also given to you a memorandum explaining them, which we request you to publish widely for the information of the British people.

We pray God that He may afford you a safe and happy journey to England, a successful stay there, and an early return to our midst.

We remain,

Yours fraternally.

THE MEMBERS OF THE MADRAS LABOUR UNION.
Madras, 3rd May, 1919.

To B. P. Wadia Esq., President, the Madras Labour Union.

Beloved Sir,—

On the eve of your departure to England to work for the Indian labour movement, we, the Members of the Madras Tramwaymen's Union, desire, to express our gratitude to you for your work among us. You brought

our Union into existence and looked after it in the early days of its struggles, and we owe our present consolidated position greatly to you.

We request you to represent us before the Labour Party Conference, the Trade Union Congress, the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress and the Secretary of the Labour Party, and enlist their support to our cause.

You are fully acquainted with our various difficulties and grievances which we in most cases share with our countrymen and we would request you to bring them thoroughly to the notice of the British Democracy.

We wish you a safe and happy journey to England, a successful stay there, and an early return to our midst.

We remain,

Yours affectionately.

THE MEMBERS OF THE MADRAS TRAMWAYMEN'S
UNION.

Madras, 6th May, 1919.

To B. P. Wadia, Esq., President, the Madras Labour Union.

Respected Sir,—

We, the Members of the Rickshawalla's Union, beg to put on record your services on our behalf. At a time of great distress you came to our rescue and organised us and enabled us to form a Union. Our coming together has been of great help to us, and what little improvement we have attained is to a great extent due to you.

You are going to Great Britain, and we want to take this opportunity of requesting you to represent our

Union before the Labour Party Conference, the Trade Union Congress, the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress and the Secretary of the Labour Party, and enlist their support to our cause.

We wish you a pleasant and safe voyage, a successful stay abroad, and a safe return to our Motherland.

We remain, Yours fraternally,

THE MEMBERS OF THE RICKSHAWALLA'S UNION,
Madras, 6th May, 1919.

To B. P. Wadia, Esq., President, the Madras Labour Union.

Beloved Sir,—

On the eve of your departure to England, to represent the grievances of Indian Labourers before the British Democracy, we, the members of the Madras Printing Press Labour Union, beg to approach you with the request that you may be pleased to use your influence to improve the conditions of Printing Press Labourers of Madras as well, with which you are thoroughly acquainted.

We request you to represent us before the Labour Party Conference, the Trade Union Congress, the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress and the Secretary to the Labour Party, and enlist their sympathies to our case.

We pray God that He may afford you a safe and happy voyage to England, a successful stay there, and an early return to our midst.

We remain,

Yours faithfully,

THE MEMBERS OF THE MADRAS PRINTING
PRESS LABOUR UNION. Madras, 7th May, 1919.

To B. P. Wadia, Esq., President. the Madras Labour Union.

Beloved Sir,—

We, the Members of the Madras and Southern Mahratta Railway Workshop Union, on the eve of your departure to England to plead the cause of the poor Indian Labourers before the British Democracy, beg to approach you with the request that you may be pleased to use your greatest influence to improve the conditions of the poor labourers in India, with which you are thoroughly acquainted.

We request you to represent us before the Labour Party Conference, the Trade Union Congress, the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress and the Secretary to the Labour Party, and enlist their sympathies to our cause.

We pray God that He may afford you a safe and happy voyage to England, a successful stay there, and an early return to our midst.

We remain, Yours affectionately,
THE MEMBERS OF THE M. & S. M. RY. WORKSHOP
UNION.

Madras, 7th May, 1919.

SUB-APPENDIX B.

The following letter was sent to the Rt. Hon. Charles Bowerman, M. P., the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress, and to the Rt. Hon. Arthur Henderson, Secretary of the Labour Party.

The Madras Labour Union,
Perembur Barracks, Gate Road.

Dear Sir and Brother,—

The working masses of the Dominion of India are at last awakening from their slumber. The toilers are organising so that they may be able to control their lives even as their brethren in Great Britain have done. In Madras the first Labour Unions have been formed, and already much good has resulted because the workers have commenced to learn the value of combination.

But we are young, and have much to learn, and we desire help from our elder brothers in Great Britain. We have therefore sent our President, Mr. B. P. Wadia, over the seas to ask for your help and advice. We feel that we shall not appeal to you in vain.

We have noticed that when your Annual Congress meets there are fraternal delegates present from other parts of the British Commonwealth. We know that you welcome the representatives from Canada, and that your heart goes out to your brothers in that Great Dominion. We ask you to receive at your Congress this year our Brother Wadia as the first fraternal delegate from the toiling masses of the Dominion of India. You have declared that you are working for a great brotherhood of the working class without distinction of creed or colour, and we feel sure therefore that

you will welcome our Brother Wadia and will receive him as our fraternal delegate from the first Trade Union in India.

Conveying to you the greetings of the masses of Indian workmen, knowing now for the first time the joys of co-operating together for the uplifting of the working people, and trusting to receive your great assistance.

In the name of the Indian workmen, we salute you,

President,

Vice-President,

Treasurer,

Secretary,

THE MADRAS LABOUR UNION.

APPENDIX IIL

A Statement submitted by Mr. B. P. Wadia to the Joint Committee of the two Houses of Parliament on Indian Reforms presided over by Lord Selborne on behalf of Indian Labour, on August 12th 1919.

Labour in India may be divided into three classes: (1) Agricultural, including that on plantations; (2) Mining; (3) Factory. I am fairly familiar with the bad conditions from which labour in India in all these industries suffers, but my intimate experience is related to Factory Labour in Madras. I am the President of the Madras Labour Union, formed in Madras on the 27th April, 1918. This Union has already had an interesting career; it has had to struggle not only to grow, but even to exist, and has survived two lock-outs on the part of certain employers. Since then several other Unions have been established in the city of Madras. The Madras Tramwaymen's Union has emerged successfully out of two strikes; the Rickshawallah's Union came into existence in the midst of a strike; the remaining two, the Printers and the Railway workshops Unions were the last to be formed. At Negapatam a strong Union of Railwaymen has been formed and is rooted in firm ground. I have had the honour and privilege to initiate and organise this work in India and from Bombay, Calcutta, Cawnpore, and Lucknow I have received invitations from working men to visit their cities and organise unions. The pressure of public work in hand has made it impossible for me to visit them, but I am planning to organise them on my return to India.

On account of various causes labour troubles have been prevalent in India for many months; the strained

economic conditions and the great rise in prices have been the main causes of this unrest. The forces let loose by the War and the Russian Revolution have to a certain extent widened and coloured the political outlook of the Indian labourer. For many weary years his patience has been heavily taxed, and he has been on the look-out for means to improve his lot. Excessive hours, low wages, premature exhaustion due to malnutrition, lack of education for himself and his children, absence of any housing arrangements, and of general sanitary conditions, and the prevalence of apathy on the part of the authorities and the employers have made the Indian labourer restless. The Indian Factories Act was passed in 1881; during nearly 40 years twice only has that Act been amended. In September, 1890, an Indian Factory Commission was appointed, and again in 1908 the Indian Labour Commission went round. The reports of these Commissions led to the amending of the Factory Act, and the last occasion on which this was done was in 1911. The law now obtains as it was amended in 1911. This law enables an employer to engage labourers for 12 hours per day on six days in the week—*i. e.*, 72 hours per week. Women are allowed to be employed for 11 hours per day. Young persons—*i. e.*, boys and girls of 9 to 14 years of age—are employed for six hours per day; generally two shifts are used in textile factories. The long day of 12 hours has the ridiculously small break of 30 minutes in the middle of it. This 12-hour day lengthens into 13 or 14, or even more, as was recently pointed out by an able Indian Civil Servant: "From the standpoint of the worker, the time taken in going to and returning from the factory

must be added to the length of his active day, which cannot then be less than 13 hours."

In the matter of wages the law is dumb. In the matter of sanitation and factory inspection it speaks in halting tones, and those who have practical experience know how superficial is the actual inspection, and how ineffective really in bettering the lot of the labourer.

Thus it will be perceived that the record of the administration in improving and bettering the condition of the factory labourer is not a satisfactory one. This point is not only of academic interest, but becomes a matter of urgent practical importance when we see that the Report of the Functions Committee makes the "settlement of labour disputes" and the "welfare of labour, including provident funds, industrial insurance (general, health and accident) and housing" reserved subjects. I do not quite understand why the somewhat peculiar arrangement detailed below is resorted to in that Report. If we refer to p. 26 of the Functions Committee Report and look at items 24 and 25, and then turn to p. 46 and look at serial No. 15, we find that No. 24, "development of Industries, including industrial research and technical education," is a transferred subject, in all provinces, while No. 25, "Industrial matters included under the following heads:

- (a) Factories,
- (b) Settlement of labour disputes,
- (c) Electricity,
- (d) Boilers,
- (e) Gas,
- (f) Smoke nuisance, and
- (g) Welfare of labour, including provident funds, industrial insurance (general, health and accident) and housing"

are reserved in all provinces.

This is the first point which I respectfully submit for consideration to the Joint Committee. I would strongly urge that the whole of No. 25 of the Provincial subjects (Functions Report, p. 26) should be transferred. Of the seven items included in No. 25, (a) (b) (c) (d) are made "subject to Indian legislation": while I see the point of (a) factories, (c) electricity, and (d) boilers being made subject to Indian Legislation for the sake of obtaining uniformity, I fail to see why (b) settlement of labour disputes should be so treated. This is actually to sow the seed of future discord, and I think it my duty to strike a note of warning. Trade Unionism is bound to grow fast in India; the settlement of labour disputes will be claimed as one of their rights by the Trade Unions on behalf of the labourer, and if it is in the hand of Government, it will bring the Unions into conflict with Government and will inevitably lead the labourers to regard the Government as on the side of the employers. The Government should limit its work to the creation of permanent Boards of Arbitration to which labour disputes can be referred, on lines similar to a Labour Board suggested by some of us last October for Madras.

Presently we shall require in India some kind of legislation for the recognition of Trade Unions and other labour organisations. Why should a start not be made now, by transferring the whole of item No. 25 and making the popular half of the provincial diarchical government responsible for the entire subject of the development of industries—which is recommended to be a transferred subject (with the exception of large industries claimed by the Government of India)—and the

management of industrial matters, including the most important item (g) welfare of labour? It is my considered opinion that Indian ministers will be better fitted to carry out adequate factory reforms than the official executive. Anyway, the past record of the administration does not inspire hope or confidence in their capacity or zeal for bettering the lot of the misused labourer. Therefore, with all the force I can command I respectfully urge that item No. 25 of the provincial subjects should not be reserved but should be transferred.

This naturally brings us to the question of Indian Labour properly and adequately influencing the legislatures. So far back as 1911 Mr. E. S. Montagu, speaking on the Indian Budget in the House of Commons, said:—

The leaders of Indian opinion must set their faces against the degradation of labour, and they need to be specially vigilant because India's working classes, besides being themselves unorganised, are not directly represented on the Legislative Councils, whose Indian members come almost exclusively from the landlord and capitalistic classes.

I have only quoted one sentence, but I beg to draw the attention of the Committee to the whole passage in Mr. Montagu's speech.

It is true that in the past non-official members of Legislative Councils have been mostly landlords or capitalists or lawyers who did not familiarise themselves with the difficulties and complexities of the life and work of the Indian labourer. I am not forgetting such men as Gopal Krishna Gokhale of the Imperial Council or Dewan Bahadur P. Kesava Pillai of the Provincial, who have on more than one occasion championed the cause of the poor. But how are we going to remedy the evils of the past?

In the Bill before us I find no attempt made to introduce any measure of reform which will give the labourer any voice in safeguarding his own interests; in no way can he better his own conditions; he will have to rely, as in the past, on the goodwill of others, be they foreigners or be they his own countrymen; he has been exploited in the past and will continue to be so exploited. But what is worse, the people who exploit him are coming into greater power. Take Madras—the Franchise Committee recommend a Provincial Council of 120, of which 13 are unalloyed capitalistic seats. A factory manager, a shop-owner, a planter, can not only vote but get elected from his Chamber of Commerce, his Trades Association, his Planters Association. Capitalists will form a powerful element in the Provincial Council; and under the system of franchise recommended by the Southborough Committee, the labouring classes will not be able to influence the election. I am speaking specially with reference to the factory labourer, and Bombay affords a better example; the Millowners' Association returns a member, but no labourers' association exists. Commerce and Industry have eight seats—excluding landholders' seats—and not a single seat is made available for the representative of labour. I will grant at once that labour organisations do not exist to any great extent; but is that sufficient reason for allowing the exploitation of Indian labour? Is there no way to bring the Indian labourer into power? I maintain that the Indian labourer's interests must be safeguarded, and that the process of safeguarding them must be put into his own hands and into no one else's. I beg to submit that the masses in India—and among them are the factory

labourers—have a culture of their own. Their power of understanding political and economical issues and suggesting proper remedies in a practical manner is well known to those who have worked for and with them. Their political instincts are clear and strong. The factor to be borne in mind is that the Indian labourer loathes the idea of slavery in any shape or form. The Indian labourers want to have schools for their children, houses for themselves, better wages and shorter hours—all as a matter of right and justice. The efforts on the part of the employers or the Government to patronise the labourers are seen as fetters of slavery, albeit golden fetters instead of iron ones. This new spirit is in evidence among Indian labourers, and it is well to recognise that even the golden fetters are resented and the Indian labourer feels that he is not only a “hand” but also that he has a head and a heart, and aspires to come into his own.

Now, how is this to be done? What weapon can the Joint Committee put into the hands of the labourer to defend himself? The only adequate means that I can suggest is the vote. Enable the Indian labourer to send his own representatives to the Provincial Councils; let all matters relating to his welfare and betterment be in the hands of responsible elected representatives who have the confidence of the labourer. If my suggestion made above that all Industrial matters, including the welfare of labour, be transferred to the popular half of the future provincial administration is given effect to, we shall be on the right way to the solution and we immediately have to consider the enfranchisement of Indian labour.

I have carefully studied the problem of Franchise in the Madras Presidency. I have the honour to belong to a small Society of careful researchers in the city of Madras, who, after painstaking investigations, have embodied the results of their study in a 60-page volume of royal 8vo. size. I am referring to the Transaction of the Neo-Fabian Society on *The Problem of Franchise in the Madras Presidency*, and I beg to draw the attention of the Committee to that publication.* In drawing up our Neo-Fabian Scheme, we kept in mind the Labourer, and it will serve my purpose to give the qualifications for voters purposed by us.

- (1) All those who pay the income-tax, or the professional tax
- (2) Graduates of all Indian and foreign Universities recognised by their respective Governments.
- (3) Any person paying land revenue directly.
- (4) Occupants of houses and premises of the annual rental value of Rs. 48 in municipal areas and Rs. 24 in non-municipal areas.
- (5) Tenants of Zamindari and Raiyatwari holdings paying Rs. 10 rental.

As will be seen from pp. 40-41 the people thus enfranchised will be about four millions in the Madras Presidency. This may sound appalling in view of the Franchise Committee's 542,000 total electors, but with due deference to that body, I may point out that it tried to please a few somewhat obstinate and retrogressive Madras officials and did not view the problem from a

* I hope I shall not be considered as transgressing my province as a witness before this Committee if I also venture to draw their attention to another Transaction of the Society on *Problems of Reform in the Government of India* which throws light on the thorny subjects of the Indian Legislative Assembly, the Council of State and Electoral Methods.

really broad point of view in the light of the actual experience of other countries of the world in this respect. Also, I think the difficulties of election arrangements are overrated.

However, observing the way in which the reforms are shaping themselves, I regretfully abandon the 4 million voters for Madras, and in advocating enfranchisement for Indian Factory Labour, I beg leave to put before this Joint Committee two suggestions. My aim is to gain for the factory labourer direct influence in the legislature. My first suggestion gives him power, and a really suitable environment for political education; the second suggestion does this in a less effective manner. Both these suggestions are very bare outlines, and details will have to be filled in after further consideration.

I have appended to this statement a table showing the number of labourers employed in large industrial establishments, both governmental and private. From this it will be seen that some 950,000 Indians work in such factories. The total number of workers in all industrial establishments is about 17,515,250. Both my suggestions endeavour to bring on the electoral roll some at least of the employeés in large industrial establishments.

I

I propose that all labourers working in factories and earning a particular wage should be given the vote. The wage may differ in different provinces. For Madras, I should suggest that every labourer earning Rs. 15 per month in any large factory should be given the vote. In Bombay and Calcutta the figure will have to be higher. To members of this Committee who may not be fully conversant with Indian labour conditions

this figure of Rs. 15 per month may appear very low. May I draw their attention to the following figures taken from the Indian Industrial Commission Report :—

Specimen Wages of Calcutta Jute Mill Operatives in June, 1918, in Rupees per mensem :—

Carders	... 9	Beamers	... 22
Bovers	... 12	Weavers	... 27
Spinners	... 15½	Mastries.	... 30
Shifters	... 11	Coolies	... 18
Winders.	.. 18		

Specimen Wages of Bombay Cotton Mill Operatives in 1918 *including a War Bonus* in Rupees per mensem :—

Drawer (card room)...	23 6	Rover	... 24 1
Beeler	... 17 4	Dofier	... 12 10
Warper	... 40 8	Weaver	... 46 15

In Madras the wages are much lower than in Bombay, and I have, if the Committee wants it, a complete Schedule of wages paid in the well-managed Buckingham and Carnatic Mills.

The wages clearly show how necessary it is to give the factory labourer the power of the vote, so that his battles may be fought in the Legislative Chambers by his elected representative. It is difficult to say how many factory labourers could thus be enfranchised; but the authorities can produce statements of how many earn Rs. 10, Rs. 15, Rs. 20, and so on in different provinces, and that would be a guide to the Committee in considering the suggestion that I am making.

II

My alternative suggestion brings into play both election and nomination methods. Every factory employing

more than 50 but less than 1,000 labourers should be the unit ; all adult workers in such factories should be given the vote to elect one representative. All labourers working in factories employing more than 1,000 persons should have the right to elect one more representative for every thousand. Thus a panel will be obtained of several elected representatives ; and one or two for each province can be nominated to the Provincial Councils from this panel.

Instead of making every factory employing 50 persons the unit, the unit may be every Trade Union with a membership of at least half the number of the total employed in the factories in that city. Let me illustrate : There are some 175 textile mills in Bombay employing about 190,000 men. A Trade Union of Textile Workers with a membership of 95,000 should be given the right to elect a representative. Once again a Panel is obtained and nominations may be made from the Panel. The recognition of Trade Unions in this way will accelerate the formation and progress of Trade Unionism and will greatly assist India's political growth.

TRADE UNIONS AND CASTE SYSTEM

Working in Madras among the so-called lower castes of Hindus and the poor people generally, I have had special opportunities of gathering their views on the non-Brahmana question. As far as the Labour Unions are concerned, I may safely assert that Hindus of all castes and members of other communities, Muslims, Indian Christians, etc., can and do work harmoniously together for their common welfare, without the least difficulty. There are many members of the various

Unions who are Brahmanas and I have not heard any complaints against them. In fact, the Brahmana-non-Brahmana question has never arisen. A few months ago I invited some 200 members of the Textile Union to a dinner at Adyar, where I live. I invited Brahmanas, non-Brahmanas of all castes, Muslims, Indian Christians and Panchamas. At the dinner, next to me sat a Panchama and by his side was a Brahmana; on the other side of me sat a Brahmana, and next to him was an Indian Christian. All were served the same vegetarian food, they all were treated alike, and the function was a great success. On numerous occasions all castes and communities have joined hands in an active manner. Further, I know for a fact that non-Brahmana labourers regard as ridiculous the movement started by some interested people, and they will not allow caste questions to affect their labour work; and that is also true of politics. I am a member of the Madras Presidency Association, which is an organisation of non-Brahmanas. I feel that these non-Brahmana communities must be organised for national work and by means of this Association we want to help the non-Brahmanas, who include rich landlords and merchants and artisans as also the bulk of the population, to take their part in the political and general advancement of India. Unlike the movement inaugurated by Dr. Nair, this Association is not *anti-Brahmana*, but wants to co-operate with Brahmanas to bring about the desired result. Anyway, among the 20,000 poor people of Madras City with whom I come in contact through one or other of the Labour Unions, the anti-Brahmana movement finds no favour and most of them are non-Brahmanas.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I earnestly appeal to the Joint Committee to enable the Indian Labourer to obtain some political power, to set his feet on the road of political advancement, and thereby of his own uplift. The ghastly conditions under which he exists are not easily describable; he has suffered in the past, and his welfare should not in the future be made to depend on those who are not responsible to him. The success of these reforms to a great extent depends on the atmosphere in which they will be worked in India. On account of various reasons I anticipate trouble in the Labour camp. If something is done now which will satisfy the labourer and convince him that his representatives are looking after his interests and fighting his battles, he will allow his energy and impatience to flow into good constructive work; if nothing is done, then despair will seize him and impatience will lead him to ugly expressions which one wants to avoid in India.

CROSS-EXAMINATION OF MR. B. P. WADIA

Lord Selborne :—Would you like to add anything to it, before the members of the Committee ask you questions upon it?

Mr. Wadia :—Well, my Lord, first one word, namely of thanks on behalf of the labourers for calling me here, which will give them a great hope and confidence in your Lordship's Committee. I do not think I need read the Memorandum, because it has been put in, but with your permission I will make a very short statement, which will take me a few minutes only. There are in India some 17,515,000 workmen employed in industries, of whom some 950,000 are in large establish-

ments. There is an Indian Factories Act, which was originally passed in 1881, and was last amended in 1911. The law permits a twelve hours day; women are worked for eleven hours; children between the ages of nine and fourteen are worked for six hours. In the matter of wages the law is dumb; in the matter of sanitation it speaks in halting terms, and the inspection is superficial. Thus the record of the Administration in the past is not a satisfactory one from the view point of the labourer. Therefore I respectfully suggest that in the list of Provincial subjects both Nos. 24 and 25 and not only No. 24 should be transferred. I wish to draw the attention of the member for your Committee to page 26 of the Functions Committees Report. There we find No. 24 : Development of Industries, including industrial Research and Technical Education is a transferred subject, but industrial matters included under the following heads : Factories, Settlement of Labour Disputes, Electricity, Boilers, Gas, Smoke Nuisances, and welfare of Labour are all kept reserved in all the Provinces.

If both these items, 24 and 25, are transferred, then the Committee must contrive to get Indian labour to influence Provincial Legislatures in the future. As the Bill is framed at present and as the Southborough Report on Franchise stands, the Indian labourer is not at all enabled to better his lot through proper representatives; he will have to rely as in the past on the good-will of others, be they foreigners or be they his own countryman. I submit that the labourer's interests must be safeguarded and that the process of safeguarding them must be put into his own hands and into no one else's.

This raises the question of the fitness of the Indian

labourer. I beg to submit that the masses in India—and among them are the factory labourers—have a culture of their own. Their power of understanding political and economical issues and suggesting proper remedies in a practical manner is well-known to those who have worked for and with them. Their political instincts are clear and strong. The factor to be borne in mind is that the Indian labourers loathe the idea of slavery in any form or shape, and they want to have schools for their children, houses for themselves, better wages and shorter hours—all as a matter of right and justice. The efforts on the part of the employer or the Government to patronise them are disliked and resented. The Indian labourer feels that he is not only a "hand" but also that he has a head and a heart, and he aspires to come into his own.

Now under the proposed scheme a factory manager, a shopowner, a planter can not only vote but get elected to the Council Chamber from his Chamber of Commerce, his trades association, or his planter's association. In Madras 13 seats are unalloyed capitalist seats. Take Bombay: The Millowners Association returns a member, but their employees have no representation. Under the system of Franchise recommended by the Southborough Committee the labourers will not be able to influence the election.

The Joint Committee should enable the Indian labourer to send his own representatives to the Provincial Legislatures. To include him or his brother on the land or in the mine in a general electorate would be the best plan. A suggestion was made by a society in Madras on this basis, and the number worked out at

something like 4,000,000 to be enfranchised in the one Presidency alone. Observing the way in which the reforms are shaping themselves and advocating the enfranchisement of the factory labourers especially, I make two suggestions which I have given in my Memorandum. I do not think I could put them more shortly than I have put them in my Memorandum.

There is only one more point I would like to put before the Committee, and that is on the question of the much discussed non-Brahmana problem. Having worked among those 20,000 labourers in Madras, who are mostly non-Brahmana, I beg to bring to the notice of the Committee, that there is no feeling against the Brahmanas amongst the poor people in Madras. I do not think, my Lord, I have anything more to say.

MR. SPOOR

You are over here I believe, as delegate to the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress?..... I am.

And you have been received and recognised by those two bodies?.....I think so. I have not yet had an official answer from the Trades Union Parliamentary Committee, but I hope to have it in a day or two.

In the first part of the Memorandum, the statement rather, you have submitted to-day, you refer to the Union you have formed in Madras. How many members have you got in that Union?Altogether in those five Unions about 20,000 people.

Twenty thousand people confined to Madras. How long is it since you began to form that Union?...About sixteen or seventeen months now.

Have you reason to believe that in the days that

lie ahead you will be able to build up a trade union movement among factory workers in India?.....I think so. I can speak there with a certain amount of confidence because, as I say in my Memorandum, I have had invitations from various centres like Calcutta, Bombay, Cawnpore, Lucknow, and so on where factories in good shape and on a large scale exist and where the labourers are anxious to be organised. Work even now is going ahead.

Of course we understand that about 90 per cent of the workers in India are agricultural workers; do you think it will ever be possible to associate them together in any kind of trade union?I think so, and I think at a very early date—in fact I had, just before I started, a few requests, one especially from the district of Cuddalore in the Madras Pres. where agricultural labourers are anxious to unite themselves into a trade union.

Will this movement go pretty much along western lines?.....I should think so.

I ask that question because we are constantly reminded that any comparison between industrial conditions in India and industrial conditions, say, in this country or in other parts of Europe is quite impossible. I know it has been suggested now more than once, that really improvidence is responsible for the evil conditions which exist in certain parts of India rather than any individual or collection of individuals?.....I do not think so, I think the masses in India have of late taken very great interest in their own welfare and also in the big general problems that concerned Indian people, and one of the signs of the times is the desire on

their part to unite themselves; and I think the movement will, on the whole, go along the lines of trade unions here.

You state that the law in India does nothing at all with regard to the regulation of wages?.....That is so.

You have however factory inspection?.....Yes; but as I say, it is more or less superficial.

You give in your first Memorandum that was issued some time ago a comparison here between the wages?.....That is not the Memorandum I have given to this Committee but to the Trade Union Congress.

That is so—I beg your pardon. In that Memorandum you give a comparison between the wages paid, which run down to twelve shillings a month in the jute mills and the dividend paid to the shareholders in various companies, with, I imagine, Indian as well as European shareholders?.....Yes.

Does that rather striking contrast (because I see that some of the dividends run up to 120 per cent) influence feeling to any great extent amongst the workers themselves?...It does; more and more through the help of the vernacular newspapers these things come to be known among the labourers and the workmen in factories and in mines, causing discontent that while they are labouring the profits go to the employers of labour and the labourers do not get their adequate share.

We have heard about the change in India during recent years, I mean the awakening of a political consciousness in India. Do you think those economic conditions have had anything to do with that?...I think the economic conditions have mostly to do with that. I believe that the patience of the Indian masses, both

agricultural and factory-going people, has practically come to a saturation point, and they cannot go on any more without some fundamental change in their conditions.

The point is, assuming that that is correct, do you believe that the giving of a vote to an increasing number of industrial workers, increasing as time goes on, will enable the worker to improve his own condition?..... Certainly: Because he will be able to send his own representative into the Provincial Councils, and will practically compel his representatives to bring in measures which will better his condition. If I may illustrate it take this Factory Act which is in existence, and was last amended in 1911; as I have pointed out during the 40 years this Act has been in existence, since it was first passed in 1881, it has only been amended twice, once in 1890 or thereabouts, and in 1908 after the Commission went its round which came into force in 1911. Now if the labourer going into factories had the vote and if he had his representatives in the Provincial Legislatures, that thing would not have happened. The Act would have been amended much more quickly, and certainly in the year 1918—19 we would not have had the spectacle of a twelve hour day in the big Indian factories.

You believe that as a matter of common justice the Indian worker really requires the vote in order to protect himself?.....I think so, Yes.

You offer two or three alternative suggestions here as to how the electorate might be increased, and I would like to ask you which of the alternatives you think yourself would be most suitable?.....Of course I, myself, would prefer that the franchise should be widened alto-

gether for all the poor people and the most unfortunate agricultural labourer and the mine worker; but as I pointed out, and it has been very carefully worked out by the Neo-Fabian Society of Madras, in the Madras Presidency alone, on that supposition of a wide franchise, the figure would come to 4,000,000. That compares, from the point of view of the Southborough Report, very unfavourably, because they give only a few thousands there. So that, having to keep that in mind, and the Bill as it is framed and as it stands at present, I myself, as I say in my Memorandum, reluctantly abandoned the 4,000,000. Then I give, from the point of view of the factory labourer two schemes, one which enables him to elect a representative of his own on a wage earning qualification, and I suggest a certain figure of 15 rupees for the Madras Presidency. That figure I have given tentatively, because on account of various reasons, I think it will presently be raised, but at any rate it is my opinion that we must fix a particular wage-earning capacity, different perhaps in different cities, because the wages are higher in Calcutta and Bombay.

Just interrupting you a moment. It is correct that the Bombay Government did ascertain the figures of wage earners above a certain amount with a view to recommending their being given the franchise?...I have heard that: how far it is true I am not in a position authoritatively to say, but I have heard it.

What you are really seeking is not so much the addition of these people to the electorate as a class, you are not asking for class representation so much as you are wishful to extend the franchise generally?...Yes: but as I say, if that is not possible, and I can quite see

that at this stage it may not be possible, then on behalf of my factory-going labourer I claim that his case ought to be specially considered, and for this reason; that in the general franchise which has been framed by Lord Southborough's Committee, the whole basis has been naturally the present agricultural labourer, because 90 per cent of our population is agricultural. Every time you consider the proposition of the franchise you will have to take that into consideration, so that while their case has been considered I submit that the case of the labourer, working in the big factories in big towns, has not been considered. There is one thing to be said for the factory-going labourer in the towns.

CHAIRMAN

Did you give evidence before the Franchise Committee?...No. I was not called.

Did you ask to be called?...No, I did not.

Was not that rather a mistake?...It did not occur to me to speak specially on behalf of the Indian labourer as a separate class.

Mr. SPOOR

I just want to ask one more question: Assuming that the Committee cannot see its way to grant an extension of the franchise at once, as you suggest, do you think that the promise of an extension of the franchise, say, when the second election came along—if it was incorporated in the Act when the next election came it would be on a proper Franchise? Do you think that would in any way meet the desires of the organizations you represent and of the public opinion that you have been voicing here?...If it is definitely promised and incorporated in the statute so that we are sure that at

the next election we—that is the labourers working in factories—would have their representatives on the Provincial Councils, I think to a certain extent, not altogether, it would meet the desires and wishes of the labourers I have the honour to represent.

But what you really want is to have the franchise widened immediately, if at all possible?...That is of course what would be the first and best thing I would ask for. But when you are speaking of promises I would not be satisfied with a promise which is not absolutely incorporated in the Statute, as it comes to be framed, so that at the next step we are sure of getting in as a matter of course.

SIR J. D. REES

May I ask you one or two questions? But not to approach you like a wolf in sheep's clothing, I must say that I am a director of railways, mines and tea and coffee estates in India. You have only 20,000 in your unions in Madras?...In the city of Madras, Yes.

It is the day of small things in that respect? Yes.

You had what you yourself described as a well-managed strike at the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills? No, there was no strike but there were two lock-outs in the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills. The strikes I referred to were of the tramwaymen.

You referred to various causes which are likely to give trouble in labour—forces let loose by the war and the Russian Revolution which have widened and coloured the political outlook. So far as your association is concerned did you point out the appalling results of the Russian Revolution?...Yes: All the vernacular newspapers and the English newspapers naturally give the

reports of whatever is appearing in your English papers and all the ghastly reports which have appeared about the Russian Revolution have been copied in the Indian papers.

You yourself would not conceal those results from your people?...No, certainly not.

You speak of the excessive hours and the premature exhaustion and so-forth. Does that come to you really as the result of complaints or from the observation of yourself and your friends?...As complaints reached me from labourers working in a few of the mills, I made investigations and researches at first hand, and then, as the result of them we decided to form a labour Union, and we have been working at it for the last sixteen months.

Have you in mind always the danger that too much or too sudden action of the character you indicate might check the influx of British capital which I think you will agree is very desirable in India?...I do not know that I would fully agree with that statement; it would take us altogether into a new line of thought.

I do not wish to raise any economic question at all; if you do not think the influx of British capital into India beneficial, I have no more to ask you about that; I think your attitude is, that it is not beneficial is it not?

CHAIRMAN

Mr. Wadia did not say that; he said that it was a large question, and that he could not answer in one sentence?...I would have to cover a fair plot of ground.

SIR J. D. REES

Could you not say whether you thought it was beneficial or not? His Lordship does not mean to check

you?...From one point of view it is beneficial, but from various other points of view, also, it is not beneficial.

On the whole which weighs most?...Unless a certain amount of reform is introduced in the method of bringing in of British capital, I would rather not have British capital as matters stand at present.

You demur to the reservation of the settlement of labour disputes do you not?...Yes.

I am not quite clear about that. Do you feel that if different Local Governments can deal with a question like that, it would be possible, so far as Government intervention occurred, if it must occur, to establish anything like uniformity of treatment?...The question first to settle is this : Do you want, and that is what I am really driving at in my question, do you desire that the Government in future should be made responsible for the settlement of disputes between private capitalists and private labour? You have to recognize the new power that is now springing up of the united action of trade unions ; for instance, during the two strikes that we have had with the tramway men in Madras, and the two locks-out that we have had in the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills in Madras, the Government did not think fit to interfere; it left the conditions as they stood, and all the interference that we got—and I think very wisely got—was from the Police Commissioner, who saw that things did not go into excess; but they do not ever settle disputes.

But you think they did well?...I think they did well.

So do I.—Now as to the future, if the settlement of labour disputes is a reserved subject in all the provinces, and if the trade unions should claim the right to speak,

as I believe they will, then I do not see how we can reconcile these two points....I think the trade unions will claim a certain right and privilege to speak on behalf of their labourers in the settlement of any disputes that arise.

Do you contemplate the development in India, whether for good or bad, which has been so marked in Europe. of the general interference of the Government in the settlement of labour disputes?...I hope that we may not come to such a point, and to safeguard that, as I pointed out in my memorandum, we are already, at this very early stage, building up what in Madras we have called a Labour Board, where we try to get the representatives of the employers and the representatives of the trade unions to come together and work independently of the Government. As I suggest the Government might limit their action to the creation of such Labour Boards.

You say that in the Bill before us you find no attempt to introduce any measure of reform which will give the labourer any voice in safeguarding his own interests. You mean by that that the Franchise proposals are not such as to give him a representation?...Yes.

You know that special representation is given to Indian commerce through the agency of the Indian Chamber of Commerce?...Yes, but I may point out that I am not here putting forward a claim on behalf of the Indian merchant. The Indian landlord is a capitalist, and the Indian merchant is a capitalist also.

You say is there any way to bring the Indian labourer into power, you mean power to deal with his own interests?...Yes.

You say that their political instincts are clear and

strong. You really feel that?...Yes, from my personal experience at these various Labour Unions, I think I can safely say that their political instincts are strong and their judgment sound and full of common sense.

You did not make this recommendation as to the occupants of houses and premises (this is the one you chiefly rely upon) of the annual rental value of 48 rupees in towns and 24 rupees outside, and so on anywhere?... Yes, it was published in a little transaction of the Neo-Fabian Society of Madras, which I hold in my hand. Those are my data.

And you think that the Madras Government adopted a very obstinate and retrogressive attitude towards you?.....That is my opinion.

What is the authority for the figure—it may be perfectly right but it astonishes me—that the total number of workers in large industrial establishments is $17\frac{1}{2}$ millions?...It is in the Statistical Abstract of British India, which the India Office publishes.

I can look that up for myself. You propose that all labourers working in factories and earning a particular wage should be given the vote, and then you make certain proposals: Again, were they laid before the Madras Government when they were making their recommendations?—No.

Then you finish your very interesting memorandum, if I may venture to so describe it, by saying that in Madras, Muslims, Indian Christians, and Panchamas work harmoniously together for their own welfare, and no Brahmana or non-Brahmana question has ever arisen, which is a ridiculous movement started by some interested people, but that workers will not

allow caste questions to affect their labour work, which is also true of politics.... Yes : and I have given as an instance one of the best cases of the inter-dining about which so much has been talked. You see that at a dinner of 200 people, including Brahmanas, and Panchamas, the left and right extremes, they come together, and as far as our Labour Union's works are concerned, they have found absolutely no difficulty.

I thank you very much, and I want to say how deeply I agree with you in what you have just said.

LORD SINHA

Mr. Wadia, are your present proposals directed to enfranchise labour as such?...Factory going labour as such.

That is in towns I suppose?...In towns mostly.

Practically the biggest towns like Calcutta, Bombay Madras and Cawnpore?...Yes, and also there may be a certain number of smaller towns in Madras and the Bombay Presidency, where there are factories and mills.

Would not they come in under the Franchise laid down for big municipalities and towns by payment of municipal taxes?...I do not think under the Franchise scheme of Lord Southborough's Committee for instance the labourers of Madras would come in.

The payment is something very small is it not?... Yes, but when you come to think of it, when a weaver in Madras earns between 15 and 20 rupees a month, it is not likely that you will get people—as there are others earning still less in the carding and spinning departments,—to be able to pay municipal taxes to that extent. I speak there tentatively because I have not made enquiries into it.

You have not considered as to whether the Franchise recommended by the Southborough Report would enfranchise the labour population in those big industrial centres, or to what extent?...No; I have not gone in a direct fashion into the matter. Under the recommendations that have been made, certain municipal rates and taxes have to be paid. Now I do not think that the ordinary labourer in Madras would be in a position from the earning capacity that he possesses to pay those taxes.

Would they come in under the rural franchise, because I understand most of these people labour only in the factories for a portion of the year and go back to the land during the rest of the year?...Well, that is so to a very limited extent, and the Indian factory labour is getting less than less in that direction. It is not that for a few months they work in the factories and they go away, but rather that for a few years they work in the factories and then go away.

At any rate your position is that the Franchise proposals of the Southborough Committee do not enfranchise the labourers in those industries?...That is so.

You would not put it higher than that?...I would not put it more emphatically than that because I have no first hand information on the subject.

CHAIRMAN

You would not say that you had sufficiently examined the facts and figures with regard to Madras to see how far they would have affected your view of the Franchise proposals?...No; I read the Franchise Report after leaving India, and I have written to Madras, and in the course of a few weeks we may get

some information, and if it comes I presume that I may send it to your Lordship?

Chairman...Certainly.

LORD ISLINGTON

Have you arrived at any idea of the number of agricultural labourers who will get the vote under the Southborough proposals?...I should think that the whole number that is given in the Southborough Committee's Report, would bring a portion of the agriculturists, whether they be landlords or peasant proprietors.

I am asking about labourers. Out of 500,000 odd electors to be established in Madras under the Southborough proposals, how many of those should you say would be agricultural labourers?...The actual figure of the electors is 542,000.

How many of those would be agricultural labourers?...I cannot say. I am not prepared to give the figure.

Have you any idea whether it would be an appreciable figure at all?...Of those 542,000?

Yes, of the 542,000 proposed to have votes, would you say that the agricultural labourer as such would have any appreciable representation?...He would have some representation, but I would not say appreciable representation. There however I speak very tentatively, because I have not looked into the figures carefully, as I just said.

You have looked into the question of the factories?...Yes.

And as far as you can see under those proposals there would be no representation?...As I say, when you take into consideration that 15 rupees is the wage earning capacity of the weaver in textile factories which is

higher in Bombay and Calcutta then you will see, as I have just said in reply to Lord Sinha's question, he is not in a position to pay that municipal rate or tax, and thus he will not be able to come into the number.

How many do you say that you estimate would get votes if the basis were fifteen rupees a month?—Have you worked it out? You say that 4,000,000 would be too many in proportion to the number proposed?...Yes

Then you proceed on the other suggestions?...Yes.

One of those suggestions, as I understand it, is alternative to the original proposal, but for Madras would you suggest that every labourer earning fifteen rupees a month in a factory should get the vote?...In the City of Madras.

How many do you think would get the vote on that qualification? ...Between 20,000 and 25,000 people in the City of Madras would get extra votes who are labourers.

You are anxious to see the Services which deal with these factory and mine administrations transferred subjects?...Yes.

Would you like to see them transferred subjects if the present electorate was established without any representation?...Yes, certainly, because as I put forward the plea in my Memorandum, the Indian Ministers would be in a better position to understand and therefore to deal with the troubles which are existing now, than the official executive. Already in the past, the administration has had the chance of improving the factory legislation and of dealing with this problem, and my contention is that they have not done sufficient for the factory labourer.

Have many efforts been made in the Provincial Councils on the part of Indian members to get ameliorative legislation from the Government ?...Not many as far as Madras is concerned : and that again is because there is no representative of the labourers in the Provincial Legislatures as at present constituted.

So that you would admit that these subjects, becoming transferred subjects, would be incomplete in what you would like to see them realise, unless coupled with them was a worker's electorate ?...That would be the first factor I would put forward. But even supposing that nothing is done to enfranchise the factory labourer, if No. 25 of the subjects is transferred instead of being kept reserved, the Indian minister will have to deal with the subject and he will be able to deal with it better than the official executive. That is my view, especially as No. 24, which is the development of industries, including industrial research and technical education is to be transferred. That is going to be a transferred subject and the legislation regarding the welfare of labour and regarding other things connected with the factory is kept a reserved subject, and my contention is that both should be transferred.

MR. ACLAND

I forget for the moment the numbers that you told us belonged to your Unions, ?...Roughly, 20,000, of the five Unions.

Can you tell us what proportion of those are literate? ...Literate in the sense of reading and writing ?

Yes ?...I think on the whole, perhaps, you will find a few hundreds who can read or write.

Is that proportion increasing or tending to increase ?

...It would be, to give my own personal experience, too short a time to judge; but I think from the general movement that is taking place in India it is on the increase. I have come into contact with them for the last sixteen or eighteen months, and it is too soon for me to say whether it is appreciably increasing.

Do you know of any movement that is taking place in Madras to found schools or anything of that kind, where they would learn to read and write?...Since the establishment of the Labour Unions we have done certain constructive work, like opening dispensaries, selling rice and others stores, and a night-school for the labourers and there are other night schools in the vicinity of the Mills now.

There is just one thing I would like to understand about the ordinary life of men of this class. You said that generally they spent some years of their lives in working in a factory in the town and other years in the agricultural districts. I am much impressed with the low rate of wages you quote to us. Is the general system that they come in and do the work in the factories for a certain number of years until they have earned and accumulated a certain amount of money which they carried back to their country districts, or is it, as one would perhaps be more led to think from your evidence, the fact that they appreciate life in the town so much that they come in from the country with the money they have made in the country, until they have spent it all in supplementing their wages in the town?...I think I can explain that in this way: Generally the factory labourer is some kind of an agriculturist in a village. He is there living under very bad conditions, with an increasing debt and so

forth, and then, out of sheer impatience, he makes the change in the hope of making some money and goes to a factory. He works there for a few years under the conditions, and then I believe and I think it can be proven from records, on account of the severe conditions under which he has to work, he retires after a few years broken down in health.

Without being able to save much money?...Yes: and that produces the very curious phenomenon which was observed by two Commissions appointed by the Government, that they did not find labourers in the factories above the age of forty as a rule. That is due to the premature exhaustion which steps in on account of the factory conditions.

MR. BENNET

Mr. Wadia, do you know the industrial conditions of Bombay as well as those of Madras?...Not so well of Bombay as of Madras.

You are member of a well-known Bombay family, are you not?...Yes.

I thought so. Will you give me your view of the manner in which the Mill owners of Bombay as a class—they own something like eighty Mills do they not?—have performed their duties towards those whom they employ?...Some of them have done very well by their labourers. It is a very interesting question because it relates to the new conditions that are arising in India. The labourer now is not satisfied to take better conditions as a matter of favour which the Indian capitalist in Bombay is willing to provide for him. I know of instances of Mills owned by Indian capitalists who make admirable arrangements for their labourers in several mills. I cannot

speaking the same of all mills—but when you take into consideration the wages which are actually earned by the Bombay labourer and the dividends which are declared by some mills, you will see where the grievance of the labourer lies. He wants something as a matter of right and not as a matter of patronage.

Would you call that patronage which the great firm of Tata have exhibited in their mills in Central India where, as you know, they have established welfare schemes; they have taken welfare experts from this country to assist them in establishing welfare mills?...

Yes.

You speak in rather an ungracious way of services of that kind rendered by employers. However I do not think it is very relevant to the question. You represent, I think, five establishments in Madras. Have the people employed there shewn any capacity for organising for what we call nowadays self-government?...Yes. In those Unions we have various organising committees for various kinds of work and managing committees to carry on the work of the Unions, which are entirely composed of the labourers themselves. They elect their own representatives, they plan out their own work, and they carry through the work and really what I do for them there is to plead their cause and their grievances in public, and generally to keep the movement going from outside, but the entire work of organisation of those Unions is carried out by the men themselves, and visitors have been surprised at the intelligence and capacity which those labourers have displayed.

I do not want to put it in an invidious way, as you will understand, but could they possibly have done with-

out you? Could they have organised themselves and placed themselves before the public without you?...I doubt it.

In your Memorandum you say that you have had invitations from Calcutta, Bombay and various other places to organise their unions. Does not that seem to suggest that there is at all events an imperfect capacity for organisation among the labourers themselves?...The labourers themselves, yes; but at the same time you must bear in mind this, that any particular set of labourers who come forward to organise trade unions at the present moment in India would be marked men and would naturally suffer in their factories and in all organisations to which they belonged.

You think there is organising capacity among the people?...I am sure of it.

Do you infer from that that they would be capable of organising themselves for political purposes?—I should think so, yes.

We were asked the other day why it was that there was no representation of labour. I think it was Bombay factory labour, but labour at all events, upon Lord Southborough's Committee. Would it have been possible to have found a single man in one of the mills who, if he had been selected for that Committee, could have spoken English or any language which was common to the whole of his colleagues?...If the language bar could be removed I am sure that you could find men in Bombay. I have now in mind a man in Madras who could very well advise such a committee as the Southborough Committee, if his own language

Tamil, or Hindustani was spoken. He would not be able perhaps to talk of subjects which were outside his province, and would not be able to advise, say, on agriculture or other matters.

Let us carry that to the Legislative Council. You speak of the language bar; do you think you could have found a mill hand in Bombay who could have taken his place in the Legislative Council, where of course English is the official language? Do you think you could have found a man?...No.

You would have had to go outside the mills to get a labourer's representative....Yes, at the present moment that would happen. Supposing you give the vote to the factory labourers in Bombay, Calcutta or Madras at the present moment, I think an outsider would have to represent them.

As to their power to form opinions and to guide the representative, is it not the case that the factory hands in India are in a peculiar sense a gregarious people and follow their leaders, very often not knowing what they are doing and what they are following?...I should not think so. From my own experience and I have had to deal as I have said with two lock-outs and two strikes in a short period of 16 months, I can tell you that it took us many hours of discussion and debate to come to a settlement. They are not in a position to follow very meekly, and to say yea to everything their leaders say. They are rather given to a thorough discussion and debate of the points which are raised, and to come to an agreement after certain discussion.

MAJOR ORMSBY-GORE

I take it that you suggest that if this Committee

cannot see its way to widen the Franchise so as to include factory hands, we should try to make one or two special constituencies in the towns where there are mills and to give a special franchise to the factory worker. That is your alternative. Would you suggest that that Franchise should form, as it were, another communal electorate, or do you wish them thrown in with the rest of the voters to vote as part of the general constituency?...I would not mind at all their being thrown into the general electorate, provided that they had the vote, because they would be able to influence the election.

Do you think it would be just as valuable to them to have votes for one of the ordinary politicians as it would be for them to have a definite representative of their own?...Yes : because I am sure that the labourers will extract good terms from the ordinary politician before they send him into the Provincial Councils.

Now for this experiment you suggest—that it should be applied in about five great towns?...Well, I have suggested a wage-earning capacity for large industrial establishments, and I think it would be more than five towns.

About how many people would be enfranchised, do you think, in Calcutta?...As I said, I have no data for that yet.

CHAIRMAN

If you get the further information you have referred to later, you will kindly send it in?... I will do so my Lord.

To the Rt. Hon. the Earl of Selborne,

President, Joint Select Committee on Draft Rules under the Government of India Act, 1919.

MY LORD,

I had the honour of appearing as a witness before the Joint Committee presided over by you on August 12, 1919. My evidence is recorded in the volume of Minutes of Evidence, pp. 201-208.

Representing the Madras Labour Union, I drew the attention of the Committee to the necessity of enfranchising the wage-earning factory-going workers. In a statement submitted to that Committee two schemes were put forward to achieve that end.

The Report of the Joint Select Committee recommended the enfranchisement of wage-earners in cities. The Report says: "They also think that an attempt should be made to secure better representation of the urban wage-earning classes." (Page 7).

The Government of India in their Draft Rules have endeavoured to respond to this recommendation, and the wage-earners of Bombay and Calcutta have been enfranchised to a very meagre extent. This cannot be regarded as satisfactory, and yet a beginning has been made, for which, as a friend of Indian Labour, let me record my grateful thanks to your Lordship's Committee and the Government of India.

It is, however, a matter of great disappointment that the Government of India have not extended even this very limited franchise to wage-earners in other cities like Cawnpore, Ahmedabad, and Madras. Why this anomalous distinction is made between Bombay and Calcutta and other industrial centres is not clear. The recom-

mentation referred to above inspired hope in the minds of the working classes, and that has been unfortunately destroyed by the Draft Rules.

Some arguments were put forward by me last year in support of the enfranchisement of the wage-earner. Those arguments remain true to-day, and if the principle is accepted as right in the cases of Bombay and Calcutta, it is also right in the case of the Southern capital, Madras, and such important centres as Ahmedabad and Cawnpore. In Madras labour is better organised than elsewhere in India. The first Labour Union was founded in Madras in April, 1918. That Union was of the textile workers of Madras, consisting of thousands of men and has showed its efficacy in several ways: it was the pioneer institution which decided that its representative should bring to the notice of the British public the very unsatisfactory conditions of Labour in India. It was principally on behalf of that Union that I came before your Lordship's Committee last year. As President of the Madras Labour Union, I beg to draw particular attention to the disadvantage to which that Union of textile workers is put, and with all the force that I can command request that the Joint Select Committee over which your Lordship is now presiding should remove the disability imposed on the wage-earners of Madras textile industry by the Draft Rules. However small, a beginning has been made in Bombay and Calcutta, and it is not only desirable but necessary in the interests of fair-play that a similar beginning be made in the capital of the large Southern Presidency.

In Madras, commerce and industry return no less than five members to the Provincial Legislative Council.

Under the Act, capitalists will form a powerful element in the Madras Council, and even the nominal device to be utilised in the case of Bombay and Calcutta is not proposed for Madras. This is very undesirable, for in it one cannot but see the seed of future trouble in Madras.

In my evidence last year I referred to the growing restlessness of Indian labour. May I draw your Lordship's attention and that of your Committee to the fact that during the last few months there have been a number of strikes, some of them very serious, in Sholapur, Ahmedabad, Bombay, Madras, Jamshedpur, Lahore, etc. Also may I point out that the textile workers of Madras, with their Union, have not gone on strike? Perhaps for the reason that we passed through a satisfactory struggle in 1918. Further, that when those men of the Madras Union were struggling there was no manifestation of disorderly conduct. If that be so, are the Madras textile workers to be penalised for their enterprise in organising themselves? Or is it reasonable to suppose that their good conduct will continue if they feel that they have been discriminated against in the matter of the franchise? Hence may I suggest that it is very essential that a beginning should be made in Madras similar to that in the two other Presidencies? I sincerely trust that this appeal on behalf of the textile workers of Madras will find favour with your Lordship's Committee.

I have the honour to be, My Lord,

Your Lordship's obedient servant,

B. P. WADIA,
President, Madras Labour Union.
