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## * Welfare and Social Security of Workers

**The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar** (Labour Member): Mr. President, the object of this cut motion is quite clear from the notice which has been given by the Honourable Member. He proposes to discuss the failure of the Executive Council to provide for three specific matters which he has mentioned, namely, unemployment relief, adequate deamess allowance and social security benefits. The first point of comment that I would like to make with regard to this cut motion is this that if the cut motion was a general one, I have no doubt about it that it should have stood on a different footing but as the House will see the cut motion is restricted to the employees of the Central Government. And I venture to suggest that this is a very grave fault in this cut motion. I do not know whether it is the wish and the desire of the Honourable Mover of this cut motion that the Government of India should frame its policy with regard to the three matters that he has referred to in such a manner as to create a privileged class of workers in this country on no other account except that they happen to be employed by the Central Government.

In this country Government is not the only party that employs labour. There is a large amount of labour employed by private employers. As everybody in this House would agree the Government of India while framing its policy for the betterment of labour should frame it in such a manner that it should not create a privileged class on the one hand and an under privileged class on the other. The Government of India is not merely an employer of labour. It is a State. It is a government and it has not only responsibility for those who are in the immediate employment of the Government of India. It has also a responsibility for labour in general. If therefore all these complaints which have been

* Legislative Assembly Debates (Central), Vol. III-No. 7, 11th March 1946, pp. 2138-40.

referred to by the Honourable Mover have to be dealt with by the Government of India, it is incumbent on the Government of India, as in duty bound to frame its policy in such a manner that the policy shall benefit labour in general and not any particular class of labour.

Now Sir, my Honourable friend mentioned that the Government of India maintains various classes of allowances and salaries for different classes of its own employees. I confess that I am painfully aware of that fact but what I would like to ask is this—who is responsible for the gradation which one sees now in the scale of payment either of basic wage or of dearness allowance or of gratuity or any of the perquisites which the employees working under the Government of India are receiving today. I have no hesitation in saying that the fault entirely lies with the leaders of labour. Here we have got the Railwaymen's Federation. Any one who studies the policy of the Railwaymen's Federation, I think, will agree with me that it has always taken a parochial view of its own interests. The Federation happens to be in control of a strategic service on which the essential life of the community depends and they use that position for the purpose of coming down to the Railway Department and insisting that certain privileges shall be given to them. I may also say that they get certain Members of the Legislature interested in their case and there develops a partisan spirit which is blind to all other interests and concentrates itself on securing certain special privileges for railway workmen alone. The railwaymen, although there is no open declaration to that effect, maintain that they must always be in a leading position with regard to any other class of employees of the Central Government. If the Postal Department is given something which happens to equate the scale of wages of the postal employees with the railway employees, the railway employees immediately become dissatisfied and they say that owing to the margin of privilege which custom, usage or their position has enabled them to secure they must have a further increase, so that their privileged position is maintained. This sort of thing is going on and the position of (lie Labour Department has become completely difficult. My Honourable friend maintains or rather sugggested that the Labour Department was not establishing arbitration boards as it should do but what is the advantage of appointing adjudication boards for specific cases, for specific service each case being dealt with in isolation without

relation to the other. The result is you have *ad-hoc* boards, *ad-hoc* reports, *ad-hoc* decisions which have to be dealt with *ad-hoc*. The result is there is always a disparity, always a divergence. Therefore the situation which we have at present is entirely the result of the faulty organisation, if I may say so, of the working classes of this country and particularly those who are employed under the Government of India. I think the House will agree that the decision which the Government of India has recently taken in the appointment of a Salaries Commission is a decision in the wise direction because the whole question of the wage stracture in this country and the relation of wages paid by the Government of India to its different classes of employees and the relation of wages paid to them to the wages operating in private industry, will be examined by this Commission. I hope that we shall be able to get some recommendations from this Commission from which we shall be able to establish in this country some kind of a uniformity in the wage system, so that everyone would know the underlying principles on which the wages arc based.

The other difficulty I find is that most of the employees of the Government of India, who arc employed in certain services which earn revenue, have come to regard that they have a first charge on the revenues of their Department. The railway employees think that because the railways are earning a profit, it is they who must get something, more than anybody else, out of the profits that the railways have earned. If the Postal employees find that the Postal Department has made a profit, they also raise a claim on the ground that their betterment, a rise in the standard of their living, should be regarded as a first charge on the revenues of that Department. Now, Sir, so far as I am concerned, I have not the slightest doubt that I cannot accept that position and I shall always resist it. The revenues earned by the Government of India—no matter whether they are raised by taxation or whether they are raised by any commercial undertaking—are the revenues of India. They are not the revenues of any particular class of people. They are not the revenues of any particular Department of Government of India. They are the revenues of the Government of India and the whole general public has a claim on those revenues and, as long as I am in charge of the Labour Department, I shall always resist any such claim made by any class of employees, namely, that because

their Department earns any profit, they have the first charge upon it. That would lead to chaos and I am certainly not going to be a party to it at all.

Now, Sir, my friend, the Mover of the cut motion, has raised the question of unemployment. I am not going to deal with the specific questions that he has raised, but I am going to deal generally with the question of unemployment benefit and I have no doubt that that is a most fallacious argument. Unemployment must be relieved by employment and not by any relief as such. Unemployment by the payment of relief is a possibility when unemployment is on a very small scale, when it is only a tail and not the body of it. In this country, as everybody knows, practically over 50 to 60 per cent, of the people are unemployed and we have to find employment for them. If anybody were to come forward and say that the 50 or 60 per cent, of unemployment that exists in this country ought to be relieved by the payment of relief, I have not the slightest doubt in my mind that the State would come to a ruination if it undertook that kind of obligation. My friend, therefore, must agree that so far as unemployment is concerned, relief must be sought in the direction of a greater industrialisation. It is only rapid and greater industrialisation that can give us relief from unemployment, and as this House knows, the Government of India has already prepared its plan and has already announced its decision with regard to Industrialisation. I will, therefore, not dwell on that subject at any great length but I would like to tell the House what exactly the Government of India has done with regard to the advancement of general betterment and providing for social security with regard to the workers in this country.

At the Honourable House knows, the Government of India has already announced its policy with regard to labour. I have no time to read the portions which deal with that question. This information will be found in the second part of the Reconstruction Committee of Council under Head XXV, pages 55 and 56. Nobody can, therefore, say that the Government has not an objective in this matter. We have and we have laid down the objective. I will go a step further and say that it is not that the Government of India has merely laid down its objective but the Government of India has also prepared programme of action. With regard to the programme of action, the House will know that the Government of India has appointed or did appoint two years ago,

a fact-finding Committee in order to take a survey of the entire condition of workers in this country. So far, we have received 34 reports from this Committee on 34 different industries besides one general report giving a bird's eye-survey of all the specific reports that have been made. Of these reports, 18 have been already printed and the rest of them are with the printers. Apart from obtaining this general survey of industrial condition of workers, the Government of India have appointed a Special Officer, Professor Adarkar, to prepare a report on the health insurance of workers in this country. As I said, we have not only an objective, but we have a programme, and we are now in possession of the facts on which any plan of social security could be based. The next step now for the Government of India is to decide how to plan for social security. As the House will know there are at present two views. One view is that we should go stage by stage, as other industrial countries will, dealing with each case of insecurity specifically and building an administrative machinery for the purpose of giving relief in respect of that case of insecurity. There is another school which is more or less influenced by the Beveridge Plan and which proposes to have an over-all policy of security covering all cases of insurance at one shot. I do not wish to approach the issue in any matter and to say as to which plan would be better. The Government of India propose to appoint a Committee or such other body as it may be advised to tell the Government of India, after examination of the reports that have been made as to the method by which they should proceed in this matter whether they should proceed stage by stage or whether they should take up such ambitious plan as the one adumbrated in the Beveridge report. This survey, which I have given which I am afraid is all too brief, I have had no time to elaborate or to develop, will convince the house that the complaint made by the Honourable Mover of this Cut Motion that the Executive council is complacent is indifferent and has taken no steps to provide for the welfare and security of the workers is entirely unfounded and I hope that the House will not accept the Cut Motion that is moved by him.

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