

Mr. K. C. Neogy : But Dr. Fox may at least be expected to be truthful. Anyway, may I ask another very short question? My Honourable friend stated that the Udaipur Durbar had to be persuaded to cancel the lease in respect of lead and zinc mines in that State, which had already been granted to a private party. Before getting the Udaipur Durbar obligingly to cancel this lease, was any attempt made by the Government to find out whether an agreement could not be arrived at with that private party for the purpose of enabling whatever activities the department wanted to carry on to be carried on ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : I must have notice of that question.

3

* “Bevin Boys ” Returned to India and their Employment

23. Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh : Will the Honourable Member for Labour please state how many “ Bevin boys ” have returned to India and if all of them have got employment ? If not, what are the reasons for their unemployment? Are any of them taking any part in Trade Unions?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : 149 Bevin boys have returned to India of whom 26 arrived only on the 5th September and are now being tested by an Examining Board. Of the remaining 123, 105 have been placed in employment with an average increase of salary of 145 per cent. Of the balance of 18, nine boys who arrived at the end of July have been allotted to posts and will be appointed very shortly; two who do not wish to take up factory work are being considered for Emergency Commissions—one in the Indian Army and one in the Indian Air Force ; three have refused the posts offered to them and efforts are now being made to find them other appointments ; one is being returned to his original employment on increased pay; one is undergoing tests with a view to appointment as Welder Instructor

* Legislative Assembly Debates (Central), Vol. III of 1942, 15th September 1942, pp. 112-113.

at a training centre ; one has been earmarked for a post but cannot at present be traced; and the last man was returned from England for misconduct without completing his training.

It is too early yet to say whether any of the returned trainees are taking part in Trade Union Affairs.

Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh : May I know if their unemployment is not due to the fact that they are taking part in Trade Union movements ?

The Honourable Dr. B.R. Ambedkar : I do not think so. I do not see any evidence of unemployment among the trainees.

Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh : My question was “ if all the ‘Bevin boys’ have got employment ” and the answer was that all the ‘Bevin boys’ who have returned are not employed, that some are being tested, that some are employed that some are sent back to their old jobs. I want to put this question whether their unemployment is in any way due to the fact that they are taking interest in trade union activities.

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: I am sure it is not.

Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh : What sort of misconduct was reported against one of the ‘Bevin boys ’ ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: I have not got the information at present. I want notice.

Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh : Has it got anything to do with his labour activities ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : I would not like to spoil the chances of this young man, did not the Government think it advisable to make enquiries about what that misconduct was ?

Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh : When this case of misconduct was reported against this young man, did not the Government think it advisable to make enquiries about what that misconduct was ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : I have no doubt that Government have got the information about the sort of misconduct he was found guilty of. I have not got the fact with me at present. I want notice.

Dr. Sir Zkuidin Ahmad : May I know whether the ‘Bevin boys’ come from the labouring classes ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: The Department is examining that aspect of the case.

Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh : In view of the fact that the ' Bevin boys ' return to India after obtaining proper training in England, where is the necessity for testing them again ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: Most of the employers would not accept the word of the Government of India that they were trained, and the employer would like to satisfy himself that the man whom he is employing is properly trained. We cannot prohibit the employer from doing so.

4

* Depreciation in Labour Wages

27. Mr. Amarendra Nath Chattopadhyaya: (a) Will the Honourable Member for Labour be pleased to state if he has ascertained the exact depreciation in wages in proportion to the increase in value of food-stuff and textile commodities and general cost of living ? If so, what is the ratio ?

(b) Is it not a fact that the dearness allowance and wartime bonuses granted to Railway workers is not sufficient to make up for the proportional fall or depreciation in wages ?

(c) If the answer to part (b) be in the affirmative, does the Honourable Member propose to reconsider the matter of wages of labour on the Railways and increase their wages to an amount which would be sufficient?

(d) Do Government propose, during the war period, to set up food and cloth stores for supplying Railway labour with these commodities at prices commensurate with their present income and if it proves satisfactory to continue the arrangement as a permanent measure ?

(e) Will the Honourable Member be pleased to make a comparative statement of wages paid to the Railway labour in Government controlled Railways, in private Railways (i.e. Company-managed and private State Railways) and in textile mills, jute mills and the iron and steel factories in India, and also their hours of work in a week ?

* Legislative Assembly Debates (Central), Vol. III of 1942, 15th September 1942, pp. 115-17.

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : (a) The costs of living have not risen at the same rates throughout India ; there are reliable cost of living indices only for a few large towns ; the rates of wages even at one centre differ considerably for different classes of employees, and the movements in the rates of wages have been uneven at the same place and as between different places. In view of these factors, it is not possible to give a reply to the question as put by the Honourable Member. If he desires information regarding any specific class of employees at a place where there is a reliable cost of living index, I shall attempt to furnish it.

(b) No. I believe that the dearness allowance meets full the increased cost of living in the lower grades though to a diminishing extent in the higher grades.

(c) Does not arise; but I would add that recently the dearness allowance was enhanced by a considerable extent, in negotiation with the All India Railwaymen's Federation and there is no justification for a further revision at present.

(d) Grain shops have been and are being opened by a number of railways when the administration considered it necessary to do so. Commodities supplied in these shops are sold at prices not exceeding the control prices fixed by Provincial governments. It is proposed to run these shops during the war as long as the necessity for them exists. No cloth shops have yet been opened on the Railways.

(e) There is no known basis for making such a wide comparison; each factory employs specialised labour and comparison is difficult.

Mr. Muhammad Nauman : May I know from the Honourable Member whether it is the contention of government that there has been no rise in price since 1939 ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : That is not the contention of the Government. All that the Government say is that there is no uniformity in rise.

Mr. Muhammad Nauman : There is some uniformity taking the minimum. Are the Government not prepared to accept the minimum rise in all commodities, which is above 50 per cent ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : I am prepared to say that there is rise, but I cannot say that the percentage is as high as the Honourable Member suggests.

Mr. Muhammad Nauman : Will the Government make enquiries and find out whether the allegation is correct ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : I cannot commit myself to making enquiries, which will require additional staff and time which Government may not be able to spare. v

Mr. Muhammad Nauman : The Government ought to have had this information since three years have elapsed.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Adur Rahim): The Honourable Member is expressing an opinion.

Dr. Sir Ziauddin Ahmad : May I ask if the dearness allowance mentioned in this question will be extended to other departments of the Government of India, especially post office ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : This question should be addressed to the appropriate department.

Dr. Sir Ziauddin Ahmad : This question refers to railways, but my Honourable friend has taken up this question as one concerning labour. I should like to know whether the labour conditions mentioned with regard to railways will be extended to labour conditions in other departments ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : I think there has been an increase in dearness allowance given to all employees in the Government of India.

Mr. Muhammad Nauman : With reference to part (d), may I know whether Government have taken any pains to compare the control rates at which they are selling now and the rates at which the commodities were being sold in 1939 and 1940 ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : It is quite unnecessary to make any such comparison of percentage at all.

Mr. Muhammad Nauman : Otherwise, you do not know what percentage of dearness allowance should be given.

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : It is sufficient for Government purposes to know that there is an increase. In that case they may consider whether or not to increase the allowance.

Qazi Muhammad Ahmad Kazmi : What are the places where the rise in prices is the lowest ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : I want notice.

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5

* Representation of Scheduled Castes in the Civil Pioneer Units

Rao Bahadur N. Sivaraj : (a) Will the Honourable the Labour Member please state how many battalions of Civil Pioneer Force have been raised in the different Provinces ?

(b) to what extent are the Scheduled Castes represented in the ranks and as officers ?

(c) if the Scheduled Castes are not represented will he please state the reasons therefor ?

(d) what steps do Government propose to take to secure their proper representation ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : (a) Twelve units of the Civil Pioneer Force have been sanctioned in the first instance, as under:

Bengal-3, Madras-2, Bihar-1, Bombay-1, C. P. and Berar-1, N.W.F.P.-1, Orissa-1, Punjab-1, U.P.-1.

Most of these units are still in the process of forming. Seven additional units have recently been sanctioned, as under:

Bengal-3, Bombay-1, C. P.-1, Madras-2.

Recruitment for these has now commenced.

(b) At present Scheduled Castes are represented in the Civil Pioneer Force as under:

Bengal 2 per cent.

Bombay 10.5 percent.

C. P. and Berar 26 per cent.

Punjab 32 per cent.

U. P. 20 per cent.

Madras figure not known.

N.W.F.P. All Muhammadans.

These figures are liable to fluctuate as further recruits are enrolled.

At present so far as information goes there is only 1 officer classed as Scheduled Caste.

* Legislative Assembly Debates (Central), Vol. III of 1942, 22nd September 1942, pp. 385-86.

(c) The raising of Civil Pioneer Force Units under Ordinance No. X of 1942 was entrusted to Provincial Governments who therefore become responsible for deciding on the composition of their respective units.

(d) The Government of India addressed all Provincial Governments regarding the percentage of Scheduled castes to be recruited in future and directing that the percentage both of officers and men should be up to the percentage of Scheduled castes in the province and that where this percentage had not been previously met it should be made up in recruitment to subsequent units.

Mr. N. M. Joshi : May I ask what is the function of this Civil Pioneer Force ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : The function of the Civil Pioneer Force is more or less analogous to that of the Fire Brigade. When there is an air raid and property is destroyed, the Civil Pioneer Force will come into operation and do rescue work.

6

*** Prescribed Government Conditions for Contractors as regards Payment of Wages, etc., to their Employees**

Rao Bahadur N. Sivaraj : Will the Honourable the Labour Member please state if he is aware that in Western Countries conditions have been prescribed to be observed by the contractors in the matter of wages and benefits to their employees ; if so, whether the Government of India have prescribed any such conditions for the contractors in India ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : Yes. In certain western countries contracts require that contractors should observe certain labour conditions in respect of such matters as hours of work, wages and conditions generally. The Government of India have prescribed in the case of Central Public Works Department contracts that the

* Legislative Assembly Debates (Central), Vol. III of 1942, 22nd September 1942, p. 386.

contractor should pay his labourers not less than the wages paid for similar work in the neighbourhood.

Rao Bahadur N. Sivaraj : What steps, if any, are taken by the Government to enforce this clause in the contract ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : I cannot say offhand, but I will make inquiries and let the Honourable Member know..

Mr. N. M. Joshi : May I ask whether this condition about fair conditions to be given by contractors applies to the other Departments of the Government of India such as the contractors of the Supply Department ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : If my Honourable friend will give me notice I will make inquiries.

Mr. N. M. Joshi : The question was about contractors taking Government contracts, not only the Public Works Department. The Honourable Member only answered for the Public Works Department. He should have answered for the Government of India.

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : That question should be addressed to the Supply Department.

Mr. N. M. Joshi : May I ask whether there is a central Government of India or only a Government of India divided into ten or eleven or twelve members ?

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The Honourable Member knows that questions have to be addressed to the Departments concerned.

7

* Bevin Boys Selected from India for Training in the United Kingdom

Dr. Sir Ziauddin Ahmad : (a) Will the Honourable the Labour Member be pleased to state what is the total number of Bevin Boys selected by the Government of India for training in the United Kingdom ? In how many batches were they sent ? How many of those were (i) Muslims, (ii) persons belonging to scheduled caste, in each

* Legislative Assembly Debates (Central), Vol. III of 1942, 23rd September 1942, pp. 455-56.

batch, separately? (b) What minimum qualifications did the Government prescribe for selection? Were they all manual labourers in the factories?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: (a) 304 Bevin trainees have so far been selected for training in die United Kingdom. Five batches have actually been sent so far, one of 54 and four of 50 each. A tabular table is given below, showing the communal composition of the five batches already sent and the sixth batch now selected. It shows that 50 Muslims were sent out of 304.

		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	Total
Hindus	...	21	25	27	29	26	34	162
Muslims	...	13	9	8	8	8	4	50
Anglo-Indians	...	4	5	4	3	7	3	26
Indian Christians	...	4	7	6	8	4	4	33
Parsis	...	6	3	3	3	1	3	19
Sikhs	...	2	1	2	3	4	2	14
		50	50	50	54	50	50	304

No information is available as to the number of Scheduled Caste trainees in the first 5 batches. Particulars in the case of the 6th batch are awaited.

(b) The following are the minimum qualifications required. Candidates—

- (1) must be young and healthy but not below die age of eighteen ;
- (2) must be intelligent, able to read, write and do simple calculations, and possess manual dexterity and a sufficient knowledge of English to understand and make themselves understood.
- (3) must belong to one of the engineering trades preferably fitting, turning or maching ;
- (4) must have had a minimum of three years' experience of factory work and have given proof of intelligence and adaptability ; and
- (5) must be medically fit and free from all traces of tuberculosis. A limited number of students were included in the first two batches, but it was then decided to restrict die Scheme to men of me working classes and mat rule has since been enforced.

Sir Cowasji Jehangir : Is it a fact that some of these young boys have not found employment ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : My information is that a great many have found employment.

Babu Baijnath Bajoria : How many have returned ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : 149, light believe.

Babu Baijnath Bajoria : What is the test of intelligence to which the Honourable Member has referred ?

Sir Cowasji Jehangir : Is it a fact that some of these boys have been offered less wages than they were earning before they left for this training ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : Not to my knowledge.

Sir Cowasji Jehangir : Will the Honourable Member inquire as to how many are unemployed ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : Very few, to my knowledge, are unemployed.

Mr. Jamnadas M. Mehta : Were they sent under a guarantee of employment ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : No guarantee of employment.

Dr. Sir Ziauddin Ahmad : Will Government consider the employment of Bevin boys for training as war technicians ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : I will consider that.

8

* Recruitment of Scheduled Caste Boys under the Bevin Scheme

Rao Bahadur N. Sivaraj : (a) Will the Honourable the Labour Member please state the number of scheduled castes boys recruited under the Bevin Scheme ?

(b) What steps do Government propose to take to secure adequate representation of these castes ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : (a) No particulars were kept in respect of the first five batches. Particulars are being collected

* Legislative Assembly Debates (Central), Vol. III of 1942, 23rd September 1942, p. 457.

about the sixth batch which will sail shortly and statistics will be kept of all future batches.

(b) Candidates for training under the scheme are selected by the National Service Tribunals and Government have suggested to the Chairmen of these Tribunals that when making their selections they should associate with the Tribunal non-officials of influence belonging to the Scheduled Castes preferably members of the local Legislature.

9

* Approved Contractors of the Central Public Works Department

Rao Bahadur N. Sivaraj : (a) Will the Honourable the labour Member please State the total number of contractors on the approved list of the Central Public Works Department according to classes ? (b) How many of them belong to scheduled castes ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : (a) The total number of contractors on the approved list of the Central Public Works Department is 1,171, according to the classification given below :—

1. Building contractors—

Class I (No limit)	...	115
Class II (below Rs. 50,000)	...	236
Class III (below Rs. 20,000)	...	620
		<hr/>
Total	...	971

2. Electrical contractors—

Class I (above Rs. 20,000)	...	28
Class II (below Rs. 20,000)	...	42
		<hr/>
Total	...	70

Furniture and Sanitary contractors (no classification).	...	130
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* Legislative Assembly Debates (Central), Vol. III of 1942, 23rd September 1942, p. 458.

(b) It is regretted that no information is available because the names of Hindus and of the members of Scheduled castes are indistinguishable. Moreover, it has not been the practice to enquire from contractors about their community.

Rao Bahadur N. Sivaraj : With reference to the last part of the Honourable Member's reply, will the Honourable Member make the necessary inquiries and get full information on the subject ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : I will.

Babu Baijnath Bajoria : Do the Government appoint contractors also on a communal basis ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : I am only answering a question which calls for information.

Babu Baijnath Bajoria : I want a reply to my question. Is it the intention of Government to appoint contractors on a communal basis, so many Muslims, so many Europeans, so many scheduled castes and so on ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : That is not a question that arises now. I am only giving information.

Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra : Are building materials also produced and purchased on a communal basis ?

(No answer).

10.

*** Applications under Payment of Wages Act by or on behalf of Employees of Federal Railways**

1. **Mr. Muhammad Azar Ali :** Will the Honourable Member for Labour please lay on the Table a statement showing the applications presented to the authorities appointed under the Payment of Wages

* Legislative Assembly Debates (Central), Vol. m of 1942, 24th September 1942, p. 507.

Act, 1936, by or on behalf of the employees of Federal Railways Between the 1st April, 1937, and the 31st August 1942, showing inter alia:

- (a) the application number;
- (b) the particulars of the parties, i.e., name and address ;
- (c) allegations in the application ;
- (d) amount of the relief claimed ;
- (e) findings of the Authority, and qualifications of the Authority ;
- (f) if appeal preferred, the result of the appeal together with the full description of the appellate court, and
- (g) if revision preferred, the result of the revision together with the particulars of the Revisional Court ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : The information asked for is not readily available and its collection would involve an amount of time and labour that would not be justifiable in war time.

11

*** Summons Fees under Payment of Wages Rules for Delhi Province**

2. Mr. Muhammad Azar Ali: Will the Honourable Member for Labour please refer to Rule 18 of the Payment of Wages (Federal Railways) Rules, 1938, and to Rule 21 of the United Provinces Payment of Wages Rules, 1936, and Rule 21 of Delhi Province Payment of Wages Rules, 1937, and state the amount of the process fee for summoning the opposite party by the Authority and by the court which is prescribed for the Delhi Province ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : Government are advised that no process fee is leviable for issuing notices to the opposite party under the rules mentioned. This is, however, a matter of interpretation of the rules.

* Legislative Assembly Debates (Central), Vol. m of 1942, 24th September 1942, p. 507.

12

***Paucity of Muslim Gazetted Officers in the Printing and Stationery Office**

23. Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi: (a) Will the Honourable Member for Labour be pleased to state how many Gazetted Officers there are in the Printing and Stationery Office of the Government of India? Are there any Muslims among them? If not, why not?

(b) Is it a fact that recently the vacancy of a Second Assistant Controller in the Central Stationery Office was filled up by a Hindu Sub-deputy Collector from Bengal, ignoring the legitimate claims of Muslim candidates and in violation of the Government circular regarding the maintenance of a ratio for Muslim appointments?

(c) Do Government propose to take any steps to increase the existing ratio of Muslim Gazetted Officers for safeguarding the interest of Muslims?

(d) Is it a fact that Government propose to create shortly one post of Assistant Controller and another of Superintendent in the Central Stationery Office? If so, will they be pleased to reserve these appointments for Muslims?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : (a) Presuming that the Honourable Member refers to the Stationery and Printing Department as a whole, the number of gazetted officers is 24 of which two posts are at present held by Muslims. The last part does not arise.

(b) Yes. The reply to the second part is in the negative.

(c) All gazetted posts in the Stationery and Printing Department are selection posts appointments to which are made by selection on merits in accordance with existing rules. Assurance to increase the proportion of Muslims to such posts will not be in conformity with those rules.

(d) There is no proposal to create any additional post of Assistant Controller in the Central Stationery Office. A temporary post of Superintendent has recently been sanctioned for that office for a period of less than three months. Orders regarding communal

* Legislative Assembly Debates (Central), Vol. I of 1943, 11th February 1943, p. 71.

representation do not apply to the filling of temporary vacancies of such duration. The post in question will not accordingly be reserved for a Muslim.

Mr. Lalchand Navalrai : May I know from the Honourable Member if these officers are selected by the Public Service Commission or by the higher officer themselves ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : I must have notice of that question.

Mr. Lalchand Navalrai : May I know from the Honourable Member if appointments are made by promotion; and in case of promotion are recruitments made on a communal basis or otherwise ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : The communal ratio does not apply to promotions.

Mr. Lalchand Navalrai : Therefore, may I know whether in this case the officers are taken by promotion ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : Yes.

13

*** Paucity of Muslims in Calcutta Central Stationery Office, etc.**

24. Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi: (a) Will the Honourable Member for labour please state how many Superintendents and Head Assistants there are in the employ of the Central Stationery Office, the Calcutta Press and the Central Forms Store located in Calcutta ? What proportion of these appointments are held by Muslims ?

(b) What is the total number of Assistants and clerks employed in the Central Stationery Office, the Calcutta Press and the Central Forms Store located in Calcutta separately ?

(c) What is the proportion of Muslims in each office and in each cadre ?

(d) How many new posts of Assistants have been created in each of the above three offices and how many of them were filled by Muslims ?

(e) If the number of Muslims in employ is not commensurate with the ratio laid down by the Government circular, why has no attempt been made to rectify things ?

(f) Is it a fact that some junior Hindu clerks with minimum educational qualifications and meagre office experience were promoted to the cadre of Assistants in the Central Stationery Office during the year, thereby superseding the claims of senior Muslim clerks ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: (a), (b), (c) and (d). A statement containing the required information is laid on the table.

(e) The Government circular applies to direct recruitment and is being followed. No question of rectification arises.

(f) No. As posts of Assistants are filled by selection on merit the question of supersession of senior men does not arise.

Statement showing the Number of Assistants and Clerks employed the proportion of Muslims in those categories and the Number of posts of Assistants created owing to war in the Central Stationery Office, the Central Forms Store and the Calcutta Press.

(a) Two Superintendents and ten Head Assistants. None of them is a Muslim.

(b) and (c).

Assistants		No.	Proportion of Muslims per cent
Central Stationery Office	...	31	9.7
Central Forms Store	...	13	7.7
Calcutta Press	...	5	Nil
Clerks—			
Central Stationery Officer	...	329	19.1
Central Forms Store		166	21.1
Calcutta Press		49	20.4
(d)		Assistants' post created as a result of the war	No. of Muslims
Central Stationery Office	...	13 of which 11 filled	1
Central Forms Store	...	9 (none yet filled)	...
Calcutta Press	...	Nil	Nil

Note.—Figures given against the Central Stationery Office include the number of Assistants and clerks employed in the Stationery Store Branch to which the communal orders were applied from the 18th June, 1942.

14

*** Working Hours of the Central Stationery Office**

25. Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi: (a) Will the Honourable Member for Labour please state if it is a fact that the working hours of the Central Stationery Office have been extended by thirty minutes ?

(b) Is it a fact that a concession of thirty minutes allowed to Muslim employees in the Central Stationery Office during the last Ramzan was disallowed ? If so, why ?

(c) Is it a fact that the working hours in certain branches of the Central Stationery Office have been further extended by sixty minutes ? If so, are Government prepared to sanction overtime allowance to the employees of those branches for the extended time ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: (a) Yes.

(b) Yes. The concession was previously allowed on the analogy of local Government orders. It was disallowed in 1942 as the Government of Bengal withdrew the concession in view of earlier closing hours.

(c) Yes. As a temporary measure for a short period only. To tide over the rush of work in connection with Defence supplies the staff of certain branches was required to remain in office one hour more. It is not customary to pay for such additional overtime to non-industrial staff.

15

@ Announcement re Grant of Inadequate Dearness Allowance to Workers

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim) : The next one is also in the name of Mr. Jamnadas Mehta. He wishes to discuss a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely, the extreme discontent created among nearly three lakhs of workers in the employment of the Government of India by the action of the latter in

* Legislative Assembly Debates (Central), Vol. I of 1943, 11th February 1943, pp. 72-73.

@ *Ibid.*, 12th February 1943, p. 169.

failing to consult their respective Trade Unions, before announcing a very meagre and inadequate grant of Dearness Allowance to the workers concerned.

When was this announcement made ?

Mr. Jamnadas M. Mehta : On the 23rd January this year.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): After the last Session ?

Mr. Jamnadas M. Mehta : Yes, Sir.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Who is the Member in charge ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (Labour Member): I do not think that the failure to consult Trade Unions is a matter of urgent public importance.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Why ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : It is not a definite matter, because there has been no obligation placed upon Government by any.....

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): That may be an answer on the merits. This announcement was made on the 23rd January ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : That is so.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The allegation is that there is considerable dissatisfaction among the workers who number three lakhs. That suggests that it is rather an important public matter. I hold that the motion is in order.

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : I object to the motion.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): As objection has been taken will those who are in favour of leave for the motion being granted rise in their places ?

(More than 25 Members stood up.)

As not less than 25 Members are for leave being granted, the motion will be taken up at 4 p.m. or earlier, if the business on the agenda is finished earlier. I take it that that is the desire of the House.

16

*** Desirability of Raising the Standard of Labour Wages**

86. Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad : (a) Will the Honourable the Labour Member please state what is the standard by which the wages of labourers are determined ?

(b) In view of the fall in the purchasing power of a rupee from sixteen to six annas, have the Government of India taken any action to enforce proportionate rise in the daily wages of labourers ? If not, why not ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : (a) The question of wages is generally a matter of contract between the employer and labour.

(b) The rise in the cost of living, which amounts to a fall in purchasing power, has not been uniform throughout India.

The Government of India has not taken action to enforce increase in wages or to grant any specific dearness allowance for the following reasons—

(1) Government has not as yet accepted the policy of fixing a minimum wage by law. That is a matter which needs to be considered before any compulsion is enforced.

(2) There are no index numbers throughout India which can be relied upon to measure the actual cost of living and consequently no specific dearness allowance can be prescribed.

(3) The rise in the cost of living not being uniform, it is not possible to lay down from the Centre a policy which could be applicable to all Provinces having regard to the diversity of circumstances obtaining in them.

The appointment of Labour Commissioners and the provision made for adjudication under the Defence of India Rules in the case of disputes occurring in war time are steps taken by Government to ensure fair conditions of work for labour.

Mr. N. M. Joshi : May I ask when Government propose to undertake legislation for fixing up the minimum wages ?

* Legislative Assembly Debates (Central), Vol. I of 1943, 16th February 1943, pp. 267-68.

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : It is not possible to undertake any such legislation during the war period.

Mr. N. M. Joshi : May I ask what is the difficulty created by the war period to undertake legislation of this kind ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : It is a controversial legislation.

Mr. Hooseinbhoy A. Lalljee : Has any attempt been made to find out the cost of living or the Index number ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : There is only one province where Index numbers are framed, namely, Bombay.

N. M. Joshi : May I ask whether Government realises that the Act prohibiting the strikes and lock-outs is a step which necessitates a dispute and whether such a necessity of creating a dispute the war time is in the interests of war effort ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : I do not think the premise is correct.

Mr. N. M. Joshi : May I ask which part of the premise is correct.

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : The fact that we have on the statute book a legislation does not necessarily involve that it will give rise to disputes as mentioned by the Honourable Member.

Mr. N. M. Joshi : May I ask whether the Government does not realise.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): That is arguing.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad : Will the Government try to find out the price Index of bigger towns having a population of more than 200,000 ? This information is rather important for us.

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : Unless we have an Act which enables the Government to collect statistics, it is not possible to have Index numbers prepared throughout India.

Mr. N. M. Joshi : May I ask whether the Honourable Member is aware that there is an Act of the Central legislature which enables the Government to collect statistics ?

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Next question.

17*** Discontentment among Factory Labourers**

87. Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad : (a) Is the Honourable Member for Labour aware that there exists great discontentment among the factory labourers on account of the fact that the capitalists who are making abnormal profits do not give an adequate share to their labourers in the form of rise in their wages ?

(b) What action has the Honourable Member taken to force the capitalists to give a share of their profits to persons by whose labour the profit is achieved ?

(c) Is the Honourable Member aware that the unrest in the factory labour is not due so much to political consciousness as it is due to economic coercion of their employers ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : (a) Where there is, as now, a tendency for prices to rise and where profits are being made, labour is always likely to claim an increase in emoluments. Government are aware that such claims are being put forward.

(b) A considerable portion of the profits of industry goes to Government in the shape of Excess Profits Tax. Out of the part left to the employers, many employers are distributing bonuses. Government has not found it necessary at present to take any action, for the purpose indicated.

(c) The question is not understood.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad : Have the Government found out the names of those factories which are giving the bonus to their employees ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : Yes, we have. If the Honourable Member wants the information, it can be supplied to him.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad : Are all these factories giving this bonus or only some of them ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : If my Honourable friend puts down a question, I can give the detailed information on the point.

18

* Household Budget of a Labourer

88. **Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad :** (a) Will the Honourable the Labour Member please lay on the table the normal house-hold budget of a labourer for 1943, who earns eight annas a day and who has to support his family which normally consists of six persons ?

(b) What is the grain consumption of such a family and what price is to be paid ?

(c) What action have the employers of labour taken to feed their labourers ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : (a) There is no uniform budget for a labourer throughout India. It is regretted also that no family budget figures for 1943 can be supplied for any area. The statistics about family budgets in Bombay in some previous years can be supplied if the Honourable Member so desires.

(b) In the absence of statistics it is not possible to say what the grain consumption of a labourer's family is. Diets and prices vary in different areas.

(c) A number of employers have opened grain shops or canteens and the Government of India are advising the main All-India Employers Associations that they regard such opening as very desirable. The attached statement gives a summary of information so far available with the Government of India.

Statement

(The information is the latest available but is not up-to-date.)

Madras.—Thirty-one factories have grain shops ; 13 of them have been opened by employers and 18 by workers' Co-operative Societies, which are in several cases assisted by employers.

In 50 factories employers have laid in reserves of essential food articles against an emergency ; in six factories arrangements have also been made to supply cooked food to workers in an emergency.

In two factories employers are running canteens for workers.

Bengal—In 146 factories there are grain shops and emergency reserves are also held by them. Besides emergency grain stocks alone are held by 35 factories. Arrangements for supply of cooked food during an emergency exist in 73 factories.

Bombay/Punjab.—Detailed information is not available. But many employers have opened grain shops and have made arrangements as far as possible to hold emergency stocks of grains.

* Legislative Assembly Debates (Central), Vol. I of 1943, 16th February 1943, pp. 268-69.

Bihar.—Seven employers, including the leading employers, have opened grain shops for their workers and are maintaining as far as possible emergency stocks of foodstuffs. One prominent employer has advanced capital to a Co-operative society of workers for running grain shops and has also provided storage accommodation at reduced rent.

United Provinces.—All the large Cawnpore factories have grain shops and emergency reserves are laid in as far as possible.

Central Provinces and Berar.—About 14 grain shops have been opened by employers ; one employer is helping a trade union to open such a shop. About seven prominent employers and one Co-operative society have made or are making arrangements for storing food grains for an emergency.

Sind.—Seven leading employers in Karachi and Hyderabad (Sind) have opened grain shops.

Employers of all essential services have been required to keep within the work premises emergency stocks of foodstuffs with cooking arrangements and prominent employers have complied.

One leading concern at Karachi has set up a canteen for supplying cooked food and milk to its employees.

Assam.—Employers of industrial labour have made adequate arrangements for supply of foodstuffs by opening grain shops, etc.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: May I know whether the Labour Department has any hand in the fixation of the prices for the poor people ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : No.

19

* Measures for Making Essentials Available to Labourers

89. Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad : (a) Will the Honourable the Labour Member be pleased to state what action his department has taken to safeguard the interests of labourers in getting their essential of life specially food stuffs ? If none, why ?

(b) What steps, does the Honourable Member propose to take to ensure that the poor people get enough to eat and prices comparable to their wages ? If none, why ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : (a) and (b). The question has been engaging the attention of Government for some time and is now considered in the Food Department. Instructions have been issued to Provincial Governments to give priority of supplies to essential civil personnel, including industrial labour engaged in essential employments.

* Legislative Assembly Debates (Central), Vol. I of 1943, 16th February 1943, p. 269.

20

*** Measures for Ameliorating the Economic Condition of Labourers**

90. Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad : (a) Will the Honourable the Labour Member be pleased to state what steps he has taken to ameliorate the economic condition of labourers ?

(b) In what manner does he propose to safeguard the interests of labourers ?

(c) Is he prepared to reorganise the unions of labour and to place them in a position to safeguard their own interests ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : (a) Both in legislative and executive action Government have striven to ensure fair conditions to labour. A copy of Press Note issued when I met the Press is attached for Honourable Member's information. It will give some idea of the ameliorative provisions. If the Honourable Member desires any more detailed information on specific points, it will be supplied.

(b) This is already replied to under (a).

(c) It is not for Government to reorganise labour unions.

@ Labour Welfare in Wartime India

In view of the appointment of a number of Assistant Labour Welfare Officers who will soon be posted to important industrial areas, we may take stock of what is being done for Labour's betterment in wartime India.

The old concept of a government's job being to govern, to maintain law and order, has given place to a new ideal in which the responsibility of an administration for the material and cultural well-being of the people is recognised. In India Labour is mainly a provincial subject and we at the Centre have heretofore been responsible mainly in securing uniformity in Labour legislation and adherence to such of the International Labour Office Conventions as are practicable for India. Our legislation though comprehensive has been confined more to conditions of service and industrial relations than to such matters as wages and welfare.

In wartime some curtailment of Labour's rights is necessary to ensure continuance of production but in the very process of effecting

* Legislative Assembly Debates (Central), Vol. I of 1943, 16th February 1943, pp. 270-71.

@ *Ibid.* Press Note, dated 30th October, 1942. (Summary of Statement made by the Hon'ble Dr. B. R. Ambedkar.).