

though it would be risky to hazard a guess with so few days to go. But one may take that risk with the capital budget. That it will disclose a yawning gap is no secret, but how that gap will be filled is anybody's guess. Deshmukh has been carefully nurturing the 3½ per cent, saving certificates to scrape up the savings of the people. Bankers are up in arms against the Government for trying to ween away their fixed deposit holder by offering them higher rates of interest. Whether the bankers have really anything to fear or not, cannot be known for certain, until the response to this new overture to investors is officially disclosed.

The borrowing programme has been a miserable flop. Will it be any better next year? And will foreign capital eventually flow in to implement the Colombo Plan? If it does not, what are the Government going to do about it? They cannot cut down capital expenditure much further as it has already been very severely pruned. Have the Government then something else up their sleeve? Is it going to be a fresh hunt for black money? This is not likely to be very fruitful, judging by the poor results gained by the Income Tax Tribunal. Are they going to try more extensive and stricter price control to rest on savings margins to people, so that savings may eventually flow, or be forced into investments that the Government consider to be essential?

The budget session may be more exciting than usual this year, not because of the opposition which, though vocal, still remain unorganised and ineffectual, but because of the activities of the Estimates Committee. The opposition has been robbed of its thunder by this Committee which looks like usurping all the attention and lime-light of publicity today. A creation of the new Constitution, Dr. Matthai scarcely realised what he was letting the Government in for when he announced during his last bud set speech the decision of inviting Parliament to elect an Estimates Committee. The different ministries of the Government realised it then even less. Or else they would have done something about it, rather than face the exposure and the washing of dirty linen in public which has brought down the administration in the eyes of the people at home and abroad.

Though the Estimates Committee has spent its thunder, the Govern-

ment have reserved theirs. An unkind cartoonist has lampooned the Government for muzzling the most vocal of its critics on financial questions, by offering him a minister-ship. This is preventive detention *in excelsis*. Of course any gang can be broken up if the gang leaders are individually and effectively dealt with, but it is not yet known if the Government are going to handle the Estimates Committee that way. They have still reserved their thunder because they have not

said yet what they are going to do about the many recommendations and suggestions of this Committee. It is not binding on them to accept any of them or to act on them. Between acceptance or implementation and gently mending their way in the light of the findings of the Estimates Committee, there is a wide field which remains at this stage free and open. It will be of considerable interest to watch how the Finance Minister traverses it while presenting the budget.

From South India

Factory Workers in Madras

WHAT is the lowest wage of a worker in the Madras State, among all kinds of industrial labourers and to which category does he belong? The answer is: 3 annas a day and the honour goes to a sweeper in a foundry in East Godavari district. His confrere in West Godavari gets 4 as. 9 pies a day while in Tanjore, the seat of ancient Maharajahs, a watchman in a Printing Press gets 5 as. 4 pits a day. These are the lowest wages among labourers on record, according to the latest official statistics for the year 1949.

The average daily number of workers of all kinds employed in the various factories in the different districts in the State was 3,23,950 in 1949 as against 2,88,722 in 1948.

On the first day of April 1949, the Factories, Act of 1948, a comprehensive piece of legislation, replaced the Factories Act of 1934 which had been on the statute book since 1935. There were 5,598 factories in the State at the end of 1949, representing an increase of about 30 per cent, over the number of factories that existed in 1948. The increase was mainly due to the extension of the provisions of the Act to non-power factories employing ten and more persons.

A total of one million forty-six thousand and three hundred and five man-days were lost due to sickness, constituting an increase of about 38,000 man-days over those lost in 1948 for similar reasons. Whether this higher incidence of sickness was responsible for the lower number of accidents in the year (6,133 in 1949 as against 6/767 in 1948) is not stated but it might have been. The majority of the minor accidents (5,012) happened in railway workshops and

textile mills. The total amount of compensation paid in the case of accidents was Rs. 97.075-7-0.

Of the factories in commission, 2,787 (2,243 in 1948; employed women. Under the Maternity Benefit Act and Rules there were 3,641 claims, of which 3,301 were paid to the women concerned, in ten other cases, their nominees got it. In others, the claims were obviously not admitted. Such maternity benefit amounted in the case of Government and Local Fund Factories to a sum of Rs. 824-15-3 and in all other factories to Rs. 1,40,475-10-2 thus making up a total of Rs. 1,41,300-9-5.

So far as Printing Presses were concerned, the Government Press, Madras had to pay compensation in connection with an accident to the tune of Rs. 980, while the maximum compensation another press in the city had to pay was slightly over Rs. 1,500.

As regards the various categories of workmen engaged in the printing trade, their respective average daily earnings ranged from Rs. 15 a day in Krishna district in the case of a Litho artist to 5 as. 4 pies a day for a watchman in a press in Tanjore,

Foremen get anything from Rs. 4-15-0 a day in Madras city to Rs. 1-15-0 in Anantapur district. There are only 444 establishments in the State connected with the printing and allied trades coming under the Factories Act, excluding four Government Printing Presses in Madras. Of these presses 115 are in Madras alone, Tiruchi district has 40, Coimbatore 33, Tirunelveli 30 and Mathurai has 29. There is, however, no district in the State without a printing press coming within the definition

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of a factory. Neither is the total number of workers employed in the printing and allied trade negligible. On an average, this industry gave employment daily to 12,201 persons 11,550 of whom were men and 69 women. Adolescents in the trade were 303, (302 men and 1 woman) and among children employed there were 277 boys and 2 girls. Legislation, permits employment of these under certain special provisions.

An indication of labour psychology is available from two instances of strike, one in Coimbatore and another in Visakhapatnam, in which 48,769 and 23,625 man-days respectively were lost. In Coimbatore the strike was a protest against the dismissal of four habitual absentees (the wages lost by the workers amounted to Rs. 1,17,000) and in Visakhapatnam the strike was in protest against the removal of a sweeper, a personal employee of one of the officers in a jute mill. The largest number of man-days (55,884) was lost, however, in a textile strike in Mathurai district, the cause of the strike being the refusal of the management to pay bonus- in a lump sum. The loss of wages due to this strike, (from 4th to 22nd Aug. 1949) is not known, but it must have been quite heavy.

Turning to accidents, carelessness of the workmen is still a contributory factor. In a Cotton Press factory in Anantapur district, a man of 30 was wearing loose clothing which was caught by the shaft of the engine driving the pump of the well. The man was thrown into the well and was drowned. In another factory in the same district, a woman of 18 was removing cake from the expeller of an oil mill, when her bangles got stuck in the cake Cutter. She was dragged into the machine and was injured as a result of which she died. These and other fatal accidents numbered forty-four during the year.

The number of strikes, (as also the number of accidents) was lower than in 1948, being 56 as against 147. There was also a slight rise in the earnings of workers. Seven cases of fire in the factories caused damage to property amounting to Rs. 15,83,250, out of which Rs. 15,34,400 was covered by insurance. The largest amount paid by why of compensation in any single accident cut of 143 accidents for which compensation was paid was Rs. 3,500 and the smallest was Rs. 9.

There was a slight variation in the cost of living index (average prices July 1936-37—100) from month to month during the year from 319.8 to 326.8, the maximum rise in any group being 402 in fuel and lighting in December 1949 and 379.2 in clothing in January and February 1949. There was a reduction of over 70 points in the clothing group in December (307.6).

So far as employment is concerned, Government and local fund authorities employed on the average slightly over 28,000 workers a day in their several factories in the State. Among all other factories the largest average daily number of workers employed was in textile mills, i.e., 1,03,358 or slightly over a third of the total (3,23,950) employed in all the factories in the State. Food, drink and tobacco industries provided the second largest employment for labour, i.e., for 83,112 workers daily on the average. This group includes bakeries, confectionery, breweries and distilleries, coffee, tea, dairy produce, flour mills, food canning bottling, ice and aerated waters, rice mills, sugar, oil mills, tobacco and other allied factories.

Engineering trades are the third largest employers of factory labour in the State with a daily average of slightly over 24,000, followed closely by wood, stone and glass trades in which over 22,000 are employed. Brick and tile workers belonging to the latter group number on the average 10,000, while stone dressers form but a meagre 341. Workers engaged in carpentry and cabinet factories constitute about 1,900 while those engaged in cement, lime and pottery factories are 2,500. Gins and pressing factories provide jobs for over 14,000 workers while chemicals and dye factories including matches, paints and soaps give work for about another 14,000.

So far as Madras City was concerned, the smallest average daily number of worker, employed in any factory was 10, in a stone dressing factory, while a gas works factory run under Government auspices had 13 workers.

Bone Crushing

Of a total estimated production of five to seven lakh tons of raw bones in India, at present only one and a half lakh tons are being collected and utilised either as bone

meal which is a valuable fertiliser, or for bone grist, for export. The reason is that bone crushing is now centralised in a few cities like Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. The mills in Calcutta alone account for more than 50 per cent of the total quantity of bones crushed which are collected only round about the railway centres while the bones in the interior remain unutilised. Even if it is not possible to collect all the bones, because they are widely scattered, if the collection is properly organised and a local market created for them, it should be possible to collect about three to four lakh tons of bones as against the present one and a half lakh tons.

A locally manufactured mobile plant, for crushing bones, the working of which was demonstrated to members of Parliament recently, can prove helpful in this direction. Preliminary estimates show that the cost of bone meal manufactured by such a mobile unit which costs about Rs. 8,000 would be a little over Rs. 150 per ton as against the present market rate of Rs. 200 to Rs. 250. Its daily production would amount to about one and a half tons.

Vigil

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