

CHAPTER XII.

LABOUR AND ADIBASI WELFARE.

COAL MINES WELFARE.

During the Second World War, by an Ordinance, dated the 31st January, 1944 (Ordinance VII of 1944), the Coal Mines Labour Welfare Fund was constituted in order to keep up the morale of the workers in the coal industry and to maintain their productive efficiency. The Ordinance was later replaced by the Coal Mines Labour Welfare Fund Act, 1947 (Act XXXII of 1947). With the resources of the Fund a well organised State enterprise for the welfare of workers in all the coal-fields has been set up. The functions are comprehensive and cover medical care and treatment, health measures, housing, adult education, recreational and other facilities, imparting of training in handicrafts to wives and children of miners, etc. The Fund derives its income from the levy of a cess on coal and coke despatched from the collieries at such rate not less than 4 annas and not more than 8 annas per ton as may, from time to time, be fixed by the Central Government. The present rate is 6 annas per ton.

The Fund is administered by the Central Government in consultation with an Advisory Committee consisting of representatives of State and Central Governments, owners of coal mines and workers employed in the industry. The Secretary to the Government of India in the Labour Ministry is the *ex officio* Chairman of the Advisory Committee. A coal-field sub-committee has been formed for each major coal-field in Bihar, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Vindhya Pradesh, Orissa, Assam, Rajasthan, and Hyderabad.

The collieries in the Hazaribagh district employ about 39,000 workers out of about 3,50,000 workers in all the coal-fields in India. Naturally, a considerable portion of the income of the Coal Mines Labour Welfare Fund is spent in the Hazaribagh district.

HEALTH FACILITIES.

Two Regional Hospitals of 50 and 30 beds each at an approximate cost of Rs. 9 lakhs and Rs. 5 lakhs in the Bokaro and Ramgarh-Karanpura Coal-fields, respectively of Hazaribagh district form an important measure. An X-Ray unit has been supplied to the State Railway Colliery Hospital, Giridih at the cost of the Fund on a nominal rent of Rs. 10 per month. The Fund also helps in running the Maternity and Child Welfare Centres under the Hazaribagh Mines Board. The Fund also pays subsidy to colliery owners at the rate of 8 pias per ton

of coal and coke despatched from the colliery to maintain dispensary services at their collieries conforming to the standards prescribed. Its anti-malaria section protects the workers against malaria at an annual cost of Rs. 1,20,000 by spraying D. D. T. and other measures.

HOUSING FACILITIES.

The Fund has started 8 women's welfare centres at Bokaro, Kargali and Giridih at a cost of Rs. 12,43,537. Each house consists of two rooms, a verandah, a back verandah-cum-kitchen, a bath room and an open compound. It pays subsidy of 25 per cent to colliery owners who construct miners' houses conforming to the plans and specifications prescribed by it. Under this scheme 370 houses have already been constructed.

Government have now decided to grant loans to colliery owners for construction of miners' houses to the extent of 37½ per cent of the cost of a house in addition to the subsidy of 25 per cent of the cost of the building but not exceeding Rs. 735. The loan is repayable in 15 years and the rate of interest which is yet to be finalised will not exceed 4½ per cent.

EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES.

The Fund has started 8 women's welfare centres at Bokaro, Kargali I and II, Bhurkunda, Religorha, Sirka, Karkatta, Dewarkhand and Giridih. At these centres elementary education to women and children is imparted. Training in handicraft to workers' wives and female dependants is also given. There are also 8 adult education centres at Bokaro, Kargali I and II, Bhurkunda, Religorha, Sirka, Karkatta and Giridih. The workers are taught in the evenings and there are various facilities for their recreation and educational training. The Fund also maintains 7 Miners' Institutes at the places mentioned above excepting Karkatta and at each Miners' Institute there is a provision of a children's park and a canteen.

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES.

There is plenty of provision for both indoor and outdoor games and other amusements at the adult education and women's welfare centres. The Fund maintains a mobile cinema unit which provides free shows at collieries.

PIT WELFARE FACILITIES.

The Fund is responsible for the administration of the Coal Mines Pithead Bath Rules, 1946, the Mines Creche Rules, 1946 and the Mines Maternity Benefit Act, 1941, as applicable to the coal-fields. Six pithead baths and 11 creches were completed up to the 31st December, 1953.

MICA MINES LABOUR WELFARE FUND.

By Act XXII of 1946, the Government of India decided to constitute a fund to promote the welfare of labour employed in the mica mining industry. The fund is called the Mica Mines Labour Welfare Fund and is collected as a cess on all mica exported from India at the rate of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent *ad valorem*.

The Fund is utilised, as under the said Act, to defray—

- (A) the cost of measures for the benefit of labour employed in the mica mining industry directed towards—
- (i) the improvement of public health and sanitation, the prevention of disease and provision and improvement of medical facilities,
 - (ii) the provision and improvement of water supplies and facilities for washing,
 - (iii) the provision and improvement of educational facilities,
 - (iv) the improvement of standard of living including housing and nutrition, the amelioration of social conditions and the provision of recreational facilities,
 - (v) the provision of transport to and from work;
- (B) the grant to a State Government, a local authority or the owner, Agent or Manager of a mica mine of money in aid of any scheme approved by the Central Government for any purpose for which the Fund may be utilised;
- (C) cost of administration;
- (D) any other expenditure which the Central Government may direct to be defrayed from the Fund.

The Central Government has the power to decide whether any particular expenditure is or is not debitable to the Fund, and its decision is final.

The Central Government has decided that 69.5 per cent of the Fund shall be the share of Bihar for financing welfare measures in Bihar.

The Central Government has also decided to constitute an Advisory Committee to advise it on the various schemes and the term of such a Committee was decided to be three years. The first Advisory Committee was appointed in January, 1948 with the Welfare Commissioner as the Chairman.

The Fund's office has been established at Kodarma, in the district of Hazaribagh.

In drawing up the schemes for the welfare of mica miners in Bihar, there were certain genuine difficulties. Mica being an uncertain deposit, it was necessary to carefully examine the location of each activity, so that money spent on the scheme may not be wasted in a few years' time, in case mines in that area are closed down. The estimates of expenditure also had to be conservative, because of the same difficulty. Due to the absence of suitable road communications in the hilly and jungle area where mica mines are mostly situated, it was neither possible to have a fleet of Mobile Welfare Units to serve the shifting nature of population, due to closing of old mines and starting of new ones. Thus, the welfare activities had to be concentrated in areas like Dhab, Dhorakola, Debour and Gawan, which were the important mining centres and where there was certainty of mining labour staying and working in near about mines. But even in these areas, no suitable houses could be available on hire or otherwise to start the Fund's activities straightway. Constructing the Fund's own buildings for activities was a matter of time, since the land had to be acquired, building materials had to be collected and the necessary technical staff to be appointed.

For these difficulties the Chairman of the Advisory Committee placed before the first meeting of the Committee the resolution : " The only amenity which can advantageously be introduced at present is the provision of a mobile shop for making essential consumer's goods available to the miners and this should be done." The resolution was accepted.

The Fund's office at Kodarma was established in November, 1947 and the mobile shop started functioning from July, 1948. Gradually the other welfare activities of the Fund were extended to important mining areas by taking on rent or otherwise such buildings as could be available and the Fund's staff have been putting up with the difficulties of accommodation and communications and doing their best to serve the interest of labour to the maximum. The Fund has also appointed a technical staff and has acquired lands for constructing its own buildings for efficiently organising its schemes and its construction work is also in progress.

The details in respect of the schemes as also the contemplated future programme of the Fund are given below.

Reservation of beds at the Kodarma Hospital.—Pending the setting up of the Fund's own Central Hospital, the Fund had reserved two beds for the mica miners at the Kodarma Hospital at a recurring cost of Rs. 13,000. Three thousand mining cases are treated every year in this Hospital.

X-Ray Plant.—The Fund had also decided to place an X-Ray Plant at the Kodarma Hospital until such time as its own Central Hospital was set up.

The Fund's Central Hospital.—The Fund has acquired an area of 38.43 acres at Karma, about two miles from the Kodarma railway station on Ranchi-Patna road and a 30-bedded Central Hospital with a separate 4-bedded T. B. Ward has been constructed. Expert medical and surgical facilities are available free of cost to mining labour at this Hospital. This is a unique institution in the district of Hazaribagh. The Hospital has started functioning since 1954.

Static Dispensaries.—The Fund has established three static dispensaries at Dhorakola, Dhab and Ganpatbagi. All the three places are very important mica mining centres in the district of Hazaribagh. The dispensaries treat 2,000 to 3,000 workers annually, free of cost.

The Fund is constructing its own dispensary buildings with two emergency beds, at the above places. Serious cases are to be transferred to the Fund's Central Hospital at Karma. In the near future, the Fund will establish three more static dispensaries in the district.

Mobile Medical Units.—The Fund has two Mobile Medical Units, one at Kodarma and the other at Dhorakola. The Units visit fixed patients attending centres in mica mines every week and between them cover the entire Kodarma Reserve Forest area.

Government have also sanctioned a Mobile Medical Unit for visiting mines in the Gawan zone. The Unit will be stationed at Ganpatbagi, and the dispensary staff will work on the Unit during afternoon hours.

Maternity and Child Welfare Centres.—The Fund has planned to establish nine Maternity and Child Welfare Centres in the mica field and is acquiring lands for putting up suitable buildings for the Centres.

Anti-malaria Scheme.—Since the mica mines are mostly situated in the forest areas, malaria is a great menace to mining labour. However, the Fund has been distributing a 3 g.m. Paludrine tablet to each worker every week and this has checked the menace to a very appreciable degree.

Government of India have also sanctioned a scheme for spraying the workers' dwellings with Gammoxine and this will exercise further control on malaria incidence in the mica mining areas.

Mobile Cinema.—In order to provide recreation to the workers employed in mica mines, the Fund maintains a self-contained Mobile Cinema Unit. The cinema visits all important mica mining areas of the district and exhibits regular full-length 35 m.m. films.

Multi-purpose Centres.—The Fund has decided to establish nine Multi-purpose Centres in the mica field for conducting Adult Education and Women's Welfare activities. The Centres are to be located near workers' dwellings so that they can participate in the activities during their leisure. These Centres will educate the complete family children, women and adults and completely reorganize the community life of the miners. Several of such Centres have started functioning.

One Multi-purpose Centre has already been set up in a hired building at Debour, about 12 miles from Kodarma on Ranchi-Patna Road. More Centres could not be set up immediately as suitable buildings were not available on rent in the mica field.

The staff at the Centre consists of an Adult Education Instructor, a Field Worker (woman), a Sevika (a woman helper), an Aya (a woman attendant) and an Attendant-cum-Watchman.

The Centres provide for education and instruction in 3 R's. Sports and Recreation for the adults, women and the children. Sewing and knitting classes are held for the women. There are ample provisions for outdoor and indoor games for the children. The Fund has also schemes for the provision of ambulance van, blind relief camp, safety propaganda and periodical competitive sports with prizes.

Provision of Drinking Water.—In order to improve the supply of wholesome drinking water in the area the Fund has sunk three wells at Khalakatambi, Dhorakola and Saphi.

The Fund has also decided to grant a subsidy upto 75 per cent of their cost or Rs. 7,500, whichever is less, to mine owners sinking their own wells at the mines.

Housing Scheme.—In order to improve the living conditions of mica miners, the Fund has decided to give a subsidy upto 20 per cent of the cost to mine owners building houses of prescribed standards at the mines.

The following standards are being prescribed for the purposes of this scheme :—

A room 12 ft. x 10 ft. with a 6 ft. verandah on either side and a kitchen in the back verandah should be provided for either two single workers or for one worker with family.

Flooring—The room and verandah should have cement floor.

Walls—Walls should be made of burnt bricks in mud mortar with cement plaster.

Roofing—The roof should consist of corrugated iron sheet with country tiles or asbestos cement sheets.

Height—Height in the centre should be 11 ft. and towards the edges in the verandah 7 ft.

ABORIGINAL WELFARE.

The socio-economic condition of the aboriginals in Hazaribagh district is far from satisfactory, chiefly due to their very limited income and social habits. The progress of education among the aboriginals has been rather poor. The little help which the aboriginals received in matters of education and other economic welfare measures before Independence was achieved in 1947 was due to the Christian Missionaries and the progress was more or less confined among such aboriginals who had become Christians. Certain Tenancy Laws had been passed during the British regime to save the aboriginals from the *mahajans* and other speculators.

Since 1947 aboriginal welfare is a distinct State Department in the district. There is now an Aboriginal Welfare Officer for the district of Hazaribagh and 32 Thana Welfare Officers. The Aboriginal Welfare Officer is of the rank of a Deputy Collector. Each Thana Welfare Officer has been put in charge of a group of 20 villages and he has to work in the midst of the aboriginals as their friend, philosopher and guide. His main function is to ameliorate their economic condition and to save them from the tyranny of the rich and the *mahajans* or other speculators.

The *mahajans* had their grip on the economic life of the aboriginals. By nature the aboriginals are care-free and not thrifty. They would run to the *mahajans*, whenever they are in financial stringency and the *mahajans* would willingly give loans at a very high rate of interest. Once an aboriginal is forced to take a loan from the *mahajan* his indebtedness would become almost a permanent feature. To give relief the Money Lenders Act was straightened up and provided a particular rate of interest. Thirty-two grain *golas* have been opened in Hazaribagh district and each grain *gola* has been put under the charge of a Thana Welfare Officer. Paddy is advanced to the aboriginals from the grain *golas* at the time of sowing paddy and the dues are realised from them at the time of harvest with 25 per cent extra as interest and with no compound interest on the arrears.

Facilities for minor irrigation have been extended to the aboriginal areas by the Revenue Officials with the full help and co-operation of the Thana Welfare Officers. These Thana Welfare Officers bring the grievances of the aboriginals of their areas to the notice of the proper authorities and get their grievances redressed. They also help the needy ones in getting agricultural loans and land improvement loans so that they may cultivate more lands and use improved agricultural implements.

Village Panchayats have been formed by the Thana Welfare Officers in their areas. These Panchayats settle the village disputes as far as possible.

So far as education facilities are concerned scholarships are given from year to year to a number of aboriginal students. The Thana Welfare Officers have to keep in touch with the progress of the aboriginal students and schools.

As medical help is either not accessible or could only be had at a great cost the Thana Welfare Officers have been given a medicine box of both Homeopathic and Allopathic medicines and they are expected to administer medicines in the easily diagnosed cases.

Primary schools with many aboriginal students are functioning under the auspices of the Adimjati Sewa Mandal in this district with Government aid. Primary schools with some students are also running under the control of the District Education Council. High schools at Kasmar, Gola and Chatra serve the Adibasi boys. One high school is functioning under the charge of the Adimjati Sewa Mandal at Peterbar. Since the abolition of the District Education Council in 1956, the Education Planning Committee has taken up its work.

Buildings for hostels for Adibasi boys have been completed at Gola, Peterbar and Mandu. Besides there are two other hostels for Adibasi boys in hired buildings at Ramgarh and Kasmar. Better medical facilities have been brought within the reach of the Adibasis.

It is not easy to estimate the progress of Social Welfare in the rural areas and particularly among the tribes. But there is no doubt that there are now better facilities for education, health and agriculture. There has been, no doubt, a marked increase in literacy among the aboriginals. The second advance worthy of note is that their economic standard has risen. It appears that the work in the industrial centres is responsible for this. In most of the villages a percentage of the young men work away from their homes and send money to their

relatives in the villages. Many of the Adibasis did war service and had put their bonuses to good account in buying land or building better houses. There has been a steady flow of new aboriginal settlers from the Ranchi district into the Hazaribagh district. Most of them are Mandas. The Adibasis live a cleaner life than before and every Adibasi home has got a few good utensils, cattle or poultry and at least a small bit of land.

There is no doubt that with the impact of the present trends there has been a tendency for the family life and tribal customs to disintegrate. In the Christian villages it is due to the fact that most of the young wage-earners have left their village homes and are living in urban surroundings and often under conditions where no sanctions of their ordinary tribal life can be applied. In the non-Christian villages also this drift is seen. But the drift is not an un-mixed blessing. It holds back the advance of use of improved and modern methods in agriculture. The educated boy has little wish to work on the land.

The huts of the Santhals and other Adibasis are always neat structures and usually have conventional designs painted on the walls of the houses. There is a touch of modernism slowly coming in because replicas of cycles or motor cars or engines are now being made on the walls of the Adibasis' huts.