

system and a drinking-water supply. It was also the first company to promise to set aside 5 per cent. of its profits for the construction of permanent housing for the labourers. The report points out that such a scheme costs less in the long run than the maintenance of the temporary camps and that infinitely better conditions are obtained with less risk of epidemics.

FORCED LABOUR

The report records that a total of 4,507 men were ordered out for compulsory labour during 1933 for a total of 11,270 man-days. The corresponding figures for 1932 were 7,381 and 13,779. It is pointed out that in the case of portage and communal works these figures exaggerate the extent of compulsion, since many of the workers were ready to volunteer.

The reduction in the incidence of forced labour has continued since 1933. The report of the Kenya Government on the application of the Forced Labour Convention for the year ending 30 September 1934 shows that during that period 3,992 men were compulsorily employed for a total of 7,269 man-days.

Indian Labour in Ceylon in 1933 ¹

As appears from the Government reports for 1933 ², the estimated total Indian population of Ceylon at the end of the year was 750,000. Of these by far the greater part, namely, about 610,000, were living on estates, the chief crops grown with the help of Indians being rubber and tea.

LABOUR MARKET

On account of the slump, the recruiting of labour was stopped completely for rubber estates as early as 1930 and restricted for low-country and mid-country tea estates in 1931. In the latter half of 1932, the price of tea grown on up-country estates fell very low, and most estates could no longer defray the cost of production. From October 1932, therefore, no new recruiting licences were issued; and in November it was decided to cancel, on 31 January 1933, all licences then current. Thus recruiting from India ceased altogether.

¹ For an account of conditions in Ceylon in 1932, cf. *International Labour Review*, Vol. XXIX, No. 4, April 1934, pp. 537-543.

² INDIA : *Report on the Working of the Indian Emigration Act, 1922 (VII of 1922), the Rules issued thereunder, and of the Labour Ordinances of Ceylon during the Year 1933*, by the Agent of the Government of India in Ceylon. Delhi, Manager of Publications, 1934.

CEYLON : *Administration Report of the Controller of Labour of Ceylon for 1933*. Colombo, Government Press, 1934.

During the early part of 1933 rubber was quoted still lower than the average price of 1932 and the tea market continued to be gloomy. Consequently, there was no demand for labour and recruiting remained in abeyance. On the other hand, the reduction of wages in May, which was agreed to by the Government of India only on condition that any labourer unwilling to accept the new rates should be offered free repatriation, caused an important increase in the number of repatriates during the two subsequent months. From July 1933 onwards, however, prices of rubber and tea began to rise and by August there was a considerable demand for Indian labour. This led to the resumption of recruiting on a limited scale in September.

The number of recruiting licences issued during the year was 1,306, as compared with 2,842 in 1932. Estate labourers assisted to emigrate to Ceylon, inclusive of dependants, totalled 32,898 (50,869 in 1932), which is the lowest figure for the last decade. Moreover, 88,353 Indians (92,895 in 1932) entered the country unassisted to find work outside the estates, particularly in Colombo. The number of persons who left Ceylon for India during 1933 amounted to 178,903 (171,599 in 1932), among whom approximately 46,626 (58,157 in 1932) were estate labourers returning at their own cost, while 42,343 (14,338 in 1932) were repatriated at public expense.

In addition to the regulations for repatriation at public expense contained in Ordinance No. 1 of 1923, for labourers repatriated within one year of their arrival in Ceylon, and in the Ceylon Government's scheme of 1924 for sick and indigent labourers, two special schemes were enforced during the year. These were the scheme of 1930 for the repatriation of unemployed rubber estate labourers and the scheme of 1932 for the repatriation of labourers thrown out of work in consequence of the slump in the tea market. As mentioned above, the latter scheme was also extended in May 1933, at the desire of the Government of India, to all labourers who might be dissatisfied with the reduced rates of wages introduced in that month and who applied for repatriation within a period of two months from the date of coming into force of the new wage rates. Both the rubber and tea schemes were closed down on 9 July 1933.

Owing to the excess of departures over arrivals the Indian estate population dropped from 650,577 at the end of 1932 to 609,535 at the end of 1933. Of these, 194,633 were men, 187,026 women, and 227,876 children.

WAGES

In consequence of the catastrophic fall in the prices of all grades of tea in the latter half of 1932, the tea industry was faced with such a difficult situation that a reduction of wages became inevitable. It was carried through with the concurrence of the Government of India and came into force on 10 May 1933. In agreeing, however, to the proposals of the Ceylon Government the Government of India stipulated *inter alia* that reductions should be treated as temporary and that an increase in wages should be considered as soon as the industry revived. Accordingly, when the prices of tea and rubber

improved from the middle of the year and the need for additional labour was felt, the representatives of the planting community agreed voluntarily to raise wages. Consequently, wages were raised from 1 November 1933 to a rate somewhat below the one in force at the beginning of the year.

During 1932, the Supreme Court of Ceylon decided, in a test case known as the Perth Estate Case, that under the Minimum Wage Ordinance the payment of *pro rata* wages is illegal, and that even if a labourer agrees to work for less than eight hours a day he must be paid the full minimum wage and not a ratio thereof.¹ It is reported this year that an appeal to the Privy Council in Great Britain failed and that it was made clear beyond doubt that an estate labourer is entitled to a full day's wage even if the work available on the estate is for less than eight hours.

INDEBTEDNESS OF INDIAN ESTATE LABOURERS

A problem treated in some detail in the report of the Agent of the Government of India is that of the indebtedness of Indian estate labourers. The Agent states that the Tamil worker, although away from his homeland, sticks to his old customs and unthrifty habits which involve in particular lavish expenditure on occasions such as marriages, funerals, and festivals. Moreover, there is a lack of facilities for saving. Various measures have been taken so far to reduce the worker's indebtedness : thus in 1909 the law secured his immunity from arrest for debt, in 1921 the system of advances, known as the "tundu" system, was abolished, and in 1923 advances made by a recruiter or others in India to induce a labourer to emigrate to Ceylon were declared irrecoverable. Most of these measures were based on the principle that security for debts should be removed, but although they have no doubt done some good the result, owing to their purely negative nature, has been a very limited one. In this connection the Indian Agent observes : "Time and education alone will impress on him [the labourer] the advantages of thrift. What would be of great help to him in the immediate present is not provisions of law which are likely to place impediments in the way of his borrowing but the offer of adequate facilities to save and to raise money on easy terms at the place where he is employed. This could be done by starting co-operative credit and thrift societies on groups of estates if not on each big estate."

HEALTH

The birth rate among the Indian estate population increased from 36.6 per thousand in 1932 to 39.4 during 1933. The death rate was somewhat in excess of that of the year 1932, being approximately 18.9 per thousand as compared with 18.7 in that year. There was a slight increase in the number of deaths from pneumonia and bronchitis, which were jointly responsible for 16 per cent. (14.3 per cent. in 1932)

¹ Cf. *International Labour Review*, Vol. XXIX, No. 4, April 1934, p. 540.

of the total deaths. These diseases, largely produced by exposure to cold and wet weather, are most prevalent among labourers on estates situated at a high altitude. The decrease in the number of deaths from dysentery, which has now been recorded for some years and is attributed to the improved water supply on estates, continued during the year 1933.

Infant mortality dropped from 188 per thousand in 1932 to 181 in 1933 ; the decrease is attributed by the Ceylon Controller of Labour partly to the fact that the flow of migration was for the most part outward, a considerable number of infants under one year accompanying their emigrant parents.

On the 505 estates visited during the year by the Inspecting Medical Officers, sanitary conditions were on the whole found satisfactory, but there was still room for improvement.

EDUCATION

The number of registered estate schools increased from 544 in 1932 to 578 at the end of 1933. This increase is mainly due to the fact that the registration of several schools for the purposes of State grants; which was deferred in 1932 for want of funds, was permitted during the year. Owing to the depression and the consequent departure of a large number of labourers to India there has been a decrease in the total number of children of school-going age on estates. But the percentage of such children attending schools has increased from 50.31 in 1932 to 52.74 in 1933.